



ARCHITECTS' COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
CONSEIL DES ARCHITECTES D'EUROPE

AG1/09/Recommendations  
Agenda Item 4.1.  
For Adoption

Date: 3rd March 2009  
Ref: 084/09/SEC

## Policies of the ACE

---

Policy Recommendations - 2009

---

Final Draft Version for AG1/09

---

Final Draft

---

## ARCHITECTURE FOR A BETTER QUALITY OF LIFE IN EUROPE

### Policy Recommendations of the ACE<sup>1</sup> Addressed to the Institutions of the European Union and the Member States

Keeping in mind that a new legislature for the period 2009-2014 is about to commence. It is also addressed to all decision-makers and stakeholders that have a role in the creation and management of the built environment in Europe.

#### Preamble

It is a fact that over 70% of the population of the EU lives in urban, built-up locations and that these locations consist mainly of architectural creations from the XIX and XX centuries, thus forming a major part of our common cultural heritage and thus providing the basis for good living conditions and for migration and tourism within the EU.

It has been acknowledged that the attractiveness of European Cities and Regions, and hence the productivity, prosperity and the well-being of their inhabitants is closely tied to the architectural, functional and technical quality of the built environment that forms our human habitat<sup>ii</sup>. As a result, there is a clear responsibility towards future generations to properly manage the built environment that they will inherit.

It is increasingly recognised that good governance is essential to ensure that the conditions are created in which a high quality built environment can be conceived and constructed. In this context, it is particularly important that the main Institutions of the EU have officially taken account of the specific nature and features of architecture as demonstrated by, among other documents, the Directive on the Recognition of Professional Qualifications<sup>iii</sup> (2005/36/EC – Recital 27), the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities<sup>iv</sup>, the Council Conclusions of the Contribution of Architecture to Sustainable Development<sup>v</sup> and the Declaration of the Urban Development Ministers<sup>vi</sup>.

Furthermore, the architectural profession is one of the key actors in the construction sector, the most important industrial sector that, in the EU in 2007, was worth about €1,300 billion and that directly employed about 16 million workers<sup>vii</sup>. More recently, it has been recognised, notably in the European Economic Recovery Plan for the EU<sup>viii</sup>, that in the economic crisis that we now collectively face, the construction sector can play a significant role in stimulating an early recovery but that fundamental changes in how construction activities are organised will be required to achieve the potential identified.

#### Urgent Societal Challenges

The EU has committed itself to tackling the question of climate change through its 2020 Commitments and it plans to play a leading role in developing an ambitious global agreement for the Post-Kyoto Protocol period<sup>ix</sup>. In preparing for the implementation of these commitments, it has been pointed out that the existing buildings of the EU represent a vast energy reserve that can be tapped by dramatically improving their energy efficiency and performance. In this context that architectural profession is, through best practices and examples, committed to playing its part in bringing about the changes necessary to address this huge challenge. In addition to the importance of energy efficiency, the efficient use of resources, the creative management of our heritage and the inclusion of the built environment in the review of EU Sustainable Development Strategy will be necessary to underpin the potential of the EU to take leadership in this work.

Quality architecture should not be the preserve of high society, expressing itself only in opera houses, museums, stadiums and so on. It must be harnessed in order to benefit all in society, particularly through the provision of high quality, decent housing for all. These dwellings must be embedded in neighbourhoods that are conceived in a sustainable, holistic manner. The creation of such places where we all can live, work and play forms the basis for true quality of life in Europe.

#### IX Facilitate Globalisation of Services

Complete the negotiation of architectural service agreements, including the mutual recognition of architectural qualifications, in the context of existing and ongoing trade negotiations between the EU and third countries or regions so as to open up, in a truly reciprocal and equivalent manner, new markets for the architects of Europe and the world, now and for future generations.

#### X Identify, Recognise and Strengthen the Role of Architecture in Innovation, Research and Development

Put actions behind the words of the Economic Recovery Plan by giving to the construction sector, and thus to the architectural profession for its specific skills in synthetic and holistic problem solving, the necessary resources for it to achieve its Strategic Research Agenda, especially in relation to the energy efficiency of buildings, thus allowing the emergence of the necessary innovations that are needed for the achievement of the targets of the EU, having regard, in particular, to the existing building stock.

The ACE and its Member Organisations are ready to directly contribute with their knowledge, expertise and experience in order to assist the EU Institutions, Member States and all relevant decision-makers in the elaboration and implementation of the recommendations set out above. In particular it offers to prepare a proposed operational action plan for the consideration of the EU Institutions as a realistic contribution to the development of new approaches and to the review of existing policies and strategies such as the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, the upcoming Strategic Review of the Construction Sector and other legislative instruments that will be drafted or consolidated during the upcoming mandate of the European Parliament and Commission.

End

#### Note:

The ACE has prepared an extensive background paper that sets out, for each of the recommendations contained herein, the complete picture of the reasons why the ACE believes that the implementation of these recommendations is a matter that cannot be ignored by the European Union and its Institutions. It is available on request by e-mail to [info@ace-cae.eu](mailto:info@ace-cae.eu) - the Secretariat of the ACE.

#### Footnotes:

<sup>i</sup> The ACE is the representative body of the architectural profession at European level, representing, through its Member Organisations, about 480,000 architects in 32 Countries that include all EU-27 States.

<sup>ii</sup> This has been reaffirmed in the European Commission Strategic Guidelines for the EU Cohesion Policy 2007-2013, which can be accessed via the website of the European Commission at:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/newreg0713\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/regulation/newreg0713_en.htm)

<sup>iii</sup> The recital reads: *Architectural design, the quality of buildings, their harmonious incorporation into their surroundings, respect for natural and urban landscapes and for the public and private heritage are a matter of public interest. Mutual recognition of qualifications should therefore be based on qualitative and quantitative criteria which ensure that the holders of recognised qualifications are in a position to understand and translate the needs of individuals, social groups and authorities as regards spatial planning, the design, organisation and realisation of structures, conservation and the exploitation of the architectural heritage, and protection of natural balances.*

<sup>iv</sup> In particular the contribution of architecture to the concept of *Baukultur*, which should be understood as the sum of all cultural, economic, technical and ecological aspects influencing the quality and process of planning and construction. The document is available at: [http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/download\\_docs/Mai/0524-AN/075DokumentLeipzigCharta.pdf](http://www.eu2007.de/en/News/download_docs/Mai/0524-AN/075DokumentLeipzigCharta.pdf)

<sup>v</sup> Adopted at the formal meeting of the Council of Ministers of Culture on the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2008 – OJEC of 13<sup>th</sup> December 2008 (2008/C319/05).

<sup>vi</sup> Adopted on the 25<sup>th</sup> November 2008 in Marseilles, this declaration recognises the need to pursue integrated and holistic approaches to the creation and management of urban areas and it set out a reference framework for the implementation of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities.

<sup>vii</sup> Statistics collected by the European Construction Industry Federation (FIEC) for the EU-27.

<sup>viii</sup> Communication from the European Commission to the European Council COM(2008) 800, adopted at the Summit of EU Heads of States and Governments on 12th December 2008.

<sup>ix</sup> Negotiations are underway to establish a common EU approach to this serious issue and it is hoped that a conclusion can be reached on a new agreement at the Copenhagen Summit scheduled for late 2009.

<sup>x</sup> The ACE is the representative body of the architectural profession at European level, representing, through its Member Organisations, about 480,000 architects in 32 Countries that include all EU-27 States.

Finally, the ACE notes the complexity of the role that the architectural profession must play and is aware of the intense responsibility that architects hold in relation to society as a whole. It is clear that quality must therefore extend into the manner by which architects serve their clients and carry out their daily work as nothing short of quality-based practice will permit the profession to meet the expectations of society.

### **Recommendations**

With the foregoing in mind and given that the architectural profession intends to fully play its part in these societal challenges, it is asking for the full support of the incoming European Parliament and European Commission for the period 2009-2014. Furthermore, the Architects Council of Europe (ACE)<sup>x</sup> calls on the Institutions of the EU, on all EU Member States, Regions, Local Administrations and other stakeholders to adopt the following recommendations in order to move European society closer to its stated goals:

#### **I Architecture and the Creation of a Quality Environment for Living in Europe**

Elaborate and build upon the policies and other relevant political conclusions and declarations, relating to the built environment, that have been adopted over recent years such that their recommendations become truly integrated into all EU policies and legislation that have an impact on the built environment and, furthermore, see to their effective transposition in the Member States.

#### **II Highlight the Positive Role of Architecture and Architects in Society**

The European Commission, Member States and Local Authorities, through the adoption and implementation of coherent and well-thought out architectural policies, must ensure that decision-makers at all levels and the public at large are aware of the positive benefits that architecture can bring to their daily lives so that they will strive to enhance the overall quality and sustainability of the built environment.

#### **III Develop a Harmonised Approach to the Level of Qualifications of Architects**

The Professional Qualifications Directive must be revised to change the required minimum duration of studies for architects from four to five years (or the equivalent on a part-time basis) supplemented by a period of two years qualifying professional practice experience. This is essential so as to ensure that those who provide architectural services have acquired the necessary skills and experience commensurate with a task that has a profound effect on society and, at the same time, guarantees a high level of quality of the service and of protection of the end-user.

#### **IV Ensure Procurement in the Built Environment is Quality-Based**

Ensure that the procedures used for the procurement of buildings and all structures that constitute the built environment, in particular for those projects that receive public funding, are conceived and implemented in such a way that they permit the selection of the best quality proposals having regard to sustainability, architectural quality and life cycle costing. Furthermore adopt relevant measures to ensure that the market for architectural services remains open in a level-playing field, especially for innovative and emerging talent.

#### **V Devise Criteria for Enhancing Quality in the Built Environment**

Develop new approaches and methodologies to describe and assess the quality of the built environment so that new criteria are made available to procurement and local authorities for use when they are judging the quality and sustainability of projects and taking decisions about the management, development or re-development of the human habitat.

#### **VI Make Holistic Approaches the Mainstream**

When seeking the means to achieve all and any objectives and targets set out by the European Union that affect the quality and sustainability of the built environment, adopt holistic approaches that take more than economic and technical aspects into account so as to include social and cultural considerations, thus answering the expectations of society and of future generations for a better life.

#### **VII Review Institutional Structures at all Levels to Deliver More Efficiency**

Ensure that the structures of the European Commission, the European parliament and other relevant bodies are able to respond to the challenges presented by the objective of achieving true sustainable development by streamlining the manner in which the built environment and all related issues are managed and coordinated within the services of the Commission so that a more integrated and holistic approach can be applied in policy and legislative developments in this field. In particular the ACE call for the continued existence of the parliamentary Intergroup Urban Logement.

#### **VIII Improve Internal Market Conditions**

Critically review the manner in which the regulatory environment of the architectural profession is understood by the services of the European Commission so that it takes full account, in its policies and legislative work for the Internal Market, of the specific nature of architectural services and, in the public interest, of their fundamental impact on the health and welfare of society as a whole.