



ACE 20th Anniversary Conference



European Parliament

December 3, 2010

CONTENTS

I. SUMMARY	1
II. OPENING SESSION	2
III. MOBILITY OF ARCHITECTS IN EUROPE	4
The Professional Qualifications Directive (2005/36/EC)	5
Directive on Services in the Internal Market (2006/123/EC)	6
IV. BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT FOR ARCHITECTS IN EUROPE	10
Public Procurement Directive (2004/18/EC)	10
Recast Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (2010/31/EU)	12
ACE Sector Study	15
Construction Products Regulation	16



I. SUMMARY

In the **OPENING SESSION** Jos Leysens, ACE Vice-President, welcomed members on behalf of ACE President Selma Harrington. Belgian MEP Frieda Brepoels emphasised the importance of EU legislation in our daily lives and how the ACE can influence this. Participants heard how Belgian Minister Sabine Laruelle wants legislation to improve architects' working conditions, and how European Commissioner Antonio Tajani sees the construction industry as a EU key sector. It finished with an inspiring keynote speech by Danish architect Bjarke Ingels on how architects need to create a 'Pragmatic Utopia' where sustainable living is more fun than everyday life.

The **SECOND SESSION** looked at the Mobility of architects in Europe. Two inter-related EU Directives: The Professional Qualifications Directive and the Directive on Services in the Internal Market were presented by members of the European Commission and ACE members gave their response. The major issues for ACE members were the need to increase the training period for architects to maintain high standards, and concerns that deregulation of the architectural profession would lower standards.

The **THIRD SESSION** on the Business environment for architects in Europe discussed a number of EU Directives and Regulations affecting the profession: the Public Procurement Directive, the Recast Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and the Construction Products Regulation. These were presented by the European Commission and ACE members and representatives of industry responded. There was also a short presentation on indoor air quality in buildings.

ACE members called for public procurement to be dictated by quality, not price, and for energy performance to include the built environment, not just the building itself. Industry representatives were concerned about too much regulation of construction products, and gave example of how they were working to cut energy use.

The ACE Survey of the architectural profession was presented, giving a rather bleak picture of the future, but showed that despite a downturn in the profession, architects still believe strongly in what they do.

II. OPENING SESSION

In the Opening Session Jos Leyskens, ACE Vice-President, welcomed members on behalf of ACE President Selma Harrington. Belgian MEP Frieda Brepoels emphasised the importance of EU legislation in our daily lives and how the ACE can influence this. Participants heard how Belgian Minister Sabine Laruelle wants legislation to improve architects' working conditions, and how European Commissioner Antonio Tajani sees the construction industry as a EU key sector. It finished with an inspiring keynote speech by Danish architect Bjarke Ingels on how architects need to create a 'Pragmatic Utopia' where sustainable living is more fun than everyday life.



JOS LEYSSENS, ACE Vice-President, welcomed the participants on behalf of ACE President Selma Harrington. He thanked Frieda Brepoels for her support in enabling the conference to be held in the European Parliament, as this is where "politics happens", Directives are formed and regulations made, and the ACE's presence here symbolises its relationship with the EU institutions. He also thanked the companies, which had sponsored and partnered ACE in holding the conference.

Some people in the ACE had felt it was inappropriate to celebrate the 20th Anniversary, given the troubles facing the architectural sector, he said, but it was important to look at the crisis, and the consequences for those affected.

Mr Leyskens described how the conference would discuss a number of European Directives which are relevant to the architectural sector: the Professional Qualifications Directive, the Services in the Internal Market Directive, the Recast Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and the Construction Products Regulation. The ACE has achieved a considerable amount since its foundation in 1990, and its members must now decide on the future.

FRIEDA BREPOELS, Belgian MEP and Member of the European Free Alliance, described how important it was for the conference to discuss EU legislation, as this has an ever-greater influence on our daily lives – 80% of national or regional legislation originates from the EU. With the changes brought in by the Lisbon Treaty, the European Parliament is now a co-legislator in 95% of all legislation. With its 736 MEPS from 27 Member States the Parliament works in transnational political groups, and it welcomes input from the relevant stakeholders, which provide valuable information from the field.

As a trained architect, Ms Brepoels said she realised the important advocacy role the ACE can play, particularly in helping to draw up a coherent policy on the liberal professions (including architects), which falls under the Services Directive. She was concerned that under this Directive, architecture is considered as a purely commercial activity. She closed her presentation saying she felt the conference discussion would provide the policy-makers with valuable information.





TOM DALEMANS, speaking on behalf of Sabine Laruelle, Minister for SMEs, the self-employed, agriculture and scientific policy, said one sees the results of architects' work everyday in the world around us.

More than 90% of architects are self-employed, working to improve the public good, but they need to work under better conditions and to have more financial security.

For this reason Minister Laruelle has suggested that architects should be encouraged to affiliate within companies, in order to have limited personal financial liability.

MATTIA PELLEGRINI, Member of the Cabinet of Vice-President of the Commission Antonio Tajani, responsible for Industry and Entrepreneurship, speaking on behalf of Commissioner Tajani, said the construction sector was a key industrial EU sector, accounting for 10% of EU GDP. This sector has been growing in importance, because it is economically important, employs 32 million people, and can provide solutions to help the EU achieve its target of cutting emissions by 20% by 2020.



In 2012 the Commission will issue a Communication on Sustainable Construction. It is considering launching an EU award for the company that has achieved most in the field of sustainable construction; is planning a stakeholder conference and a consultation exercise. The Commission will be discussing the new Construction Products Regulation with the ACE and other organisations in this sector. It will adopt a 'life-cycle approach' to products, for example assessing how much CO₂ they emit over their lifetime, rather than just during their manufacture.



BJARKE INGELS, BIG Architects, giving the keynote conference speech, said architecture is responsible for recreating the buildings and cities for the way we want to live, so its function needs to be properly discussed.

Mr Ingels said that as this conference is being held in Brussels, the capital of comic books, he would use his comic-book, entitled 'Yes is More' to introduce the discussion. Giving an historical overview, he said modern architecture began with Mies van der Rohe, who liberated architecture, and whose minimalist style was then popularised by US architect Philip Johnson.

As society evolves, so should architecture, and recently Barack Obama ran for President of the United States by introducing an optimistic, rather than an oppositional form of politics. In a similar way that President Obama wants the US to be united and inclusive, architecture should be inclusive not exclusive, reacting to society's concerns.

He felt Charles Darwin understood this when he said the most intelligent being was the one most able to adapt. Mr Ingels said his own architecture takes account of how a city evolves, bringing the public realm into buildings, for example, with his design for the 'Danish Steps' in Copenhagen.

He described how the 'starchitect' had developed since Frank Gehry had designed the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, generating the idea that good architecture must be expensive and grab global attention. However, with the dual crises of climate and finance, the world of architecture has sobered up and architects are becoming designers of ecosystems, channelling the flow of resources through our cities and buildings.

We need to create public spaces, and find ways to reappropriate our cultural heritage, and design buildings that are both economically and ecologically sustainable. We also have to reinvent vernacular buildings, and find ways of injecting new life and new uses into the ever-changing functions of the fabric of our cities, said Mr Ingels, and illustrated this with examples from his own buildings.

He finished his talk by proposing a 'Pragmatic Utopia', where architects have to show today's citizens that sustainable buildings and ways of living are more fun than normal life. Architects must listen to the conflicts and contradictions in society, and act as midwives to assist society to continually give life to itself.

The European Union can play its role in this by investing in, and regulating for, a conscious and strategic deployment of architecture, so in addition to being a political and economic union, it is a place of holistic planning and sustainable architecture. In the same way that the idea of a united Europe is a utopian vision, the idea of a sustainable Europe can be a pragmatic utopian masterpiece, where the vision of a future Europe becomes a practical objective.



III. MOBILITY OF ARCHITECTS IN EUROPE

During the session on the Mobility of architects two interrelated EU Directives were presented by members of the European Commission: The Professional Qualifications Directive and the Directive on Services in the Internal Market. ACE members gave their response, and the major issues that arose were the possibility of increasing the training period for architects to maintain high standards, and concerns that deregulation of the architects profession would lower standards.

The Professional Qualifications Directive (2005/36/EC)

Implementation and evaluation



JÜRGEN TIEDJE, Head of Unit, Professional Qualifications, Directorate-General of the Internal Market and Services, European Commission, said since 2005 regulations concerning professional qualifications in all the different sectors have been brought together in a single Directive. This has finally been transposed into Member States' legislation.

The European Commission is responsible for checking architectural diplomas and each week receives information about new diplomas and the curriculum on which they are based. Each one must be verified to ensure that it complies with the Professional Qualifications Directive before it can be listed. This constitutes a major activity, and Mr Tiedje asked any of those present who submit diplomas to focus on the essential information, possibly adding an English translation to speed up the process.

He urged universities to register diplomas as this enables graduates to work in other countries, which is particularly important during an economic crisis and decline in the construction industry.

The next few months are crucial, he said, as they lead up to the modernisation of the PQD in 2012, with a public consultation, followed by a Green Paper in autumn 2011.

Turning to the related issue of growth and jobs, Mr Tiedje wondered how far public budgets would be able to provide jobs, and how much flexibility architects would have to modify their careers.

An important issue is the length of architectural courses: in most countries this lasts five years, but the Directive states a minimum of four years. The Commission official was concerned that if it were standardised at five years, this would make the diploma less flexible, and increase the length of the course during a time of economic hardship. In addition to completing their studies, architects have to undertake a period of supervised work in architectural practice. This varies between countries, and in some, such as Italy is not required at all.

Commissioner for Internal Market and Services Michel Barnier introduced the idea of a 'professional card' for regulated professions, as this will enable them to move between countries, said Mr Tiedje. This will be optional (not obligatory), could facilitate recognition procedures and benefit consumers, employers or users of architectural services.

Mr Tiedje suggested that Member States could make the process of registering diplomas more efficient through electronic communication, using the Internal Market Information system developed by the Commission.



ACE response and concerns

TOAL O'MUIRÉ, Chair of the ACE Work Group on the Professional Qualifications Directive felt the Directive had changed from a technical matter to being part of a wider policy on the Single Market. He was concerned that the desire to boost growth and jobs might lead to deregulating the profession.

Most Member States agree that architectural courses should be five years as reaching a high standard helps architects find work anywhere round the world. This is reflected in the UNESCO/UIA Accord, which suggests five years' study, plus at least two years' supervised professional experience as the basic standard for architectural education and training. However, he realised that it would be easier to reach consensus about the length of academic courses, than on the length, or need for, supervised training.

In terms of the ability of the holder of an architecture diploma to migrate, the ACE would like to see Article 1 of the Professional Qualifications Directive, which says that "qualifications may be gained in one or more Member States" properly implemented. This could curtail some Member States' practice of refusing to allow someone who holds a diploma from another EU country undertaking supervised architectural training in its territory.

Turning to the professional card, Mr O'Muiré said this would only be effective if all the competent authorities recognised it. There are also related issues, such as the ability to use electronic signatures on contracts. The Internal Market Information (IMI) system has proved very useful for facilitating administrative cooperation in the processing of applications, and has great potential. It could be used for a system of alerts that already exist under the Services Directive, but at present it cannot deal with architects who are suspended or struck off.

Directive on Services in the Internal Market (2006/123/EC)

Implementation and evaluation



GUIDO BERARDIS, Director, Directorate-General, Internal Market and Services, European Commission, said there was a clear relation between the Services Directive and the Professional Qualifications Directive: between them they cover training and the circulation of services for the relevant professionals. The Professional Qualifications Directive covers diplomas and other professional qualifications, while the Services Directive (adopted in 2006 to allow for the free circulation of services, including those provided by architects) covers, among other matters, commercial communications, administrative cooperation, insurance, fee structures and codes of conduct.

The Services Directive stipulates that service providers must comply with all regulated aspects of the service they offer in the State in which they operate. As part of the Services Directive, the Member States are required to set up Points of Single Contact through which all necessary procedures to be permitted to work in the Member State can be completed.





The Services Directive, as it relates to architects, focuses on two different ways of practising the profession:

- Architects who are established and provide 'services' in a Member State;
- Architects who provide temporary services - for example where they are involved in the construction of a house in another Member State - they have to abide by the country's regulations dealing with public order, security, health and the environment;

Certain countries, such as Germany, have abolished some of the requirements for foreign architects, using temporary agreements and insurance requirements, but each Member State interprets the rules according to local norms. The position is often unclear – for example some architects may have difficulties finding an insurance policy outside their home country.

The implementation of the Services Directive has caused some problems, partly because of the lack of trust about the transfer of services between Member States. Here the Internal Market Information system has proved useful in facilitating cross-border provision of services where authorisations are needed. Another aspect concerns the quality of service, and the Directive encourages professionals to voluntarily develop, for example, codes of conduct. This is a priority for community institutions in general so the aim is for the Services Directive to be a “flagship of transparency and cooperation in job creation”, said Mr Berardis.

This Directive is also useful for workers who want to work in different EU countries, in line with the objectives of Europe 2020, and maximising the EU's potential for growth and jobs. A series of meetings is planned to look at ways of putting in place an innovative Single Market and the Member States are currently engaged in a mutual evaluation and assessment process on the provisions of the Directive and its implementation to date.

Mr. Berardis closed his presentation by saying that ensuring that architectural services are part of a proper legal framework is important, as it guarantees that the profession is properly practiced and controlled to provide good professional services in the public interest.

ACE response and concerns



The response from **DAVID FALLA**, Coordinator for the ACE Thematic Area on Practice of Architecture and Trade in Services, was presented on his behalf by Wolfgang Haack. Mr Falla was concerned about the 'ugly' consequences of inappropriate legislation in Member States, where deregulation of architectural services results in standardisation for its own sake, with buildings that are designed by ill-trained, poorly-controlled commercial organisations.

While much of the proposed deregulation is desirable, one must ensure that in the long term it does not degrade architecture in Europe. The push to promote competition in the EU must not result in the exclusion of important quality and social considerations. One needs to balance regulation against the need to create high quality environments.

On the positive side, the Services Directive has eliminated undesirable restrictive legislation that hindered service providers from setting up within the EU, but at Member State level, some of the existing professional organisations for architects have been threatened with closure, and in others architects independence is being threatened. A serious risk of this Directive is the possibility that the ownership of architectural companies will be opened up to developers or building merchants who are not qualified architects. He said that from the architects' perspective the Professional Qualifications Directive provides the best safeguard for the consumer, society and the environment, and this must go hand in hand with the Services Directive to create a European framework to regulate entry into the profession and the conduct of service provision. The Services Directive should not undermine the professional institutes' responsibility for ensuring the good working of the Professional Services Directive.

Open Debate

LOUISE COX (President of the International Union of Architects -UIA) said Europe should increase the duration of architectural courses to five years, as this would put it in step with the rest of the world. However stipulating that supervised training is two – or even three – years is more problematic; some people consider architects should do one year in their host country, and one year abroad.

ALBERT DUBLER (UIA Vice-President) wanted the EU to be more committed to fighting climate change and to introducing climate-adaptation measures. This requires high-technological leadership, for which a period of five years study and three years supervised working is needed.

MR TIEDJE responded that these training periods were too long, as with Europe's ageing population, one needs to get young people into the job market. He pointed out that education is a national, not an EU competence.

RAFAEL PELLICER (Consejo Superior de los Colegios de Arquitectos de Espana) asked whether binding membership of professional organisations was contrary to the free movement of workers.



MR BERARDIS responded that case law stated that if architects provide a temporary service in another Member State, that Member State can ask them to become members so they are subject to the same disciplinary rules. However, as this also relates to training, it must be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

SVEN SILCHER (Bund Deutscher Architekten) said that given the extra issues architects had to deal with compared with 50 years ago, it was not logical to simply maintain or even reduce the length of study.

GEORG PENDL (Bundeskammer der Architekten und Ingenieurkonsulenten - AT) said that in Austria supervised training is highly regulated, and Nordic countries would like to introduce this system of supervised internships.

ROGER SHRIMPLIN (Royal Institute of British Architects – UK) said he was helping Kosovo to establish architects chambers and is suggesting the 5 + 2 formula as the best way to achieve high European standards.



In summing up, **JOS LEYSSENS** said the profession as a whole agrees on a five-year teaching schedule, but it was better to talk about competences than years of study. Europe will not win on prices, but on having good, well-educated young people.

IV. THE BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT FOR ARCHITECTS IN EUROPE

This session discussed a number of EU Directives and Regulations that affect the architectural profession. The Public Procurement Directive, the recast Energy Performance of Buildings Directive and the Construction Products Regulation, with presentations by the European Commission and responses by ACE members, and by representatives of industry which would be affected. There was also a short presentation on indoor air quality in buildings.

ACE members called for public procurement to be dictated by quality, not price, and for energy performance to include the built environment, not just the building itself. Industry representatives were concerned about too much regulation of construction products, and gave examples of how they were working to cut energy use.

The ACE Survey of the architectural profession was presented, giving a rather bleak picture of the future, but showed that despite a downturn in the profession, architects still believe strongly in what they do.



Public Procurement Directive (2004/18/EC)

Evaluation and prospects for revision

CLAUDIO ROMANINI, Directorate-General Internal Market and Services, European Commission, said the Public Procurement Directive was a harmonisation of existing regulations, which gives guidelines for Member States to follow. According to the Directive Member States must select a contractor on the basis of one of two criteria: either by the lowest price or the most 'economically advantageous' offer, and in 2009 two thirds choose the latter.

Authorities are also encouraged to use design contests, but this is not very widespread: – of all the contests across Europe, 66% take place in France, totalling between 1100 and 1300 a year, in Germany there are 150 to 450, and in the UK only between four and 24 a year.

Public authorities have to tender for all work or products, from paper clips to suspension bridges, and this is either by an open, or a restricted procedure. Across Europe 80% of works contracts are awarded by open procedures. The Directive leaves it up to Member States to decide whether to have separate tenders for construction work, covering design (architecture) and engineering (mostly construction), or whether this is done through a single tender.

The Commission has started an evaluation exercise for this Directive. This will mean handing back more responsibility to the national level, but will not mean that the public tendering process will take place in an EU policy vacuum, Mr Romanini assured the audience.



A Green Paper on the specific use of procurement was launched in October to open a consultation procedure and a second Green Paper on modernising the legislation will be published soon with legislative proposals ready in late 2011.

ACE response and experience



GEORG PENDL, ACE Executive Board Member's presentation focused on the tension between price and quality in public contracting. He began by describing the importance of cities and buildings for European citizens, who spend 90% of their time inside buildings. Europe wants to become the most competitive market in the world, and its unique contribution is its intellectual services, so we need quality, and not necessarily at the lowest price, he insisted. As the Public Procurement Directive suggests that price is the main criteria, we have to question whether architects who are working for a sustainable environment, are necessarily going to be the cheapest, said Mr Pendl.

How can one balance price with quality, he asked? While local and national authorities believe they are deciding on the basis of quality, in reality most awards are based almost solely on the price of the services they are buying – and this can lead to disaster. There are also problems if price is the main criteria – for while this can be suitable for items like toilet paper, it is less suitable for judging intellectual criteria.

Mr Pendl said that in public procurement 60% of contracts are awarded by open procedure and 36% by restricted procedure. He favoured design contests for architectural services, but said that at present only 2% are decided in this way. Architects invest time and money in competitions, which are based on a good system of transparent rules, but can prove expensive. Mr Pendl insisted that architecture belongs to everyone, and architects want to create a built environment for citizens that has beauty and character. A quality-based public procurement procedure provides the opportunity to create a good environment for everyday life. This supports both welfare and competitiveness, making architects the true believers of the European community and its legislation, he finished.



THOMAS MAIBAUM, Chair of the ACE Work Group on Public Procurement, shared many of the same concerns as Georg Pendl. Many smaller architectural practices have difficulty getting access to public contracts because of the selection process, it appears that some public authorities are using the Public Procurement Directive's selection criteria – which was intended to open up the procedure - as a tool to cut down the number of applications. For example, many authorities stipulate a minimum financial turnover for the last five years, or a minimum number of employees, which excludes 95% of small, possibly more innovative architectural practices.

Mr Maibaum suggested using another tool - the 2008 Small Business Act. Member States are urged to have a close look at their practice in this field, rather than to misuse the selection criteria. He requested the European Commission to return to the legal practice in which Member States are encouraged to open up their markets, encouraging the use of good design.

Recast Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (2010/31/EU)

Key developments – the EU Energy Efficiency Strategy



MARIE DONNELLY, Director, New and Renewable Sources of Energy, Energy Efficiency and Innovation, European Commission, gave the political background to the recast Directive – the EU targets of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20% compared to 1990 levels, a 20% increase in energy efficiency and a 20% share of renewable energy in overall EU energy consumption by 2020. These put buildings at the core of EU prosperity.

While there is extensive legislation relating to energy efficiency, this is not enough, as it must be accompanied by financial and fiscal tools, she said. Although Member States play the main role in energy efficiency, the EU has some financial instruments, such as EU Cohesion Funds, and the European Local Energy Assistance (ELENA). The ELENA provides financial and technical assistance to help local and regional authorities attract funding for sustainable energy projects. This will be extended in 2011, working with the European Investment Bank to make at least €50 billion available for social housing. In addition, a €146 million fund has been approved by the European Parliament to finance energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

The Energy Performance of Buildings Directive is ambitious, but realistic, she said, and introduces the notion of cost-effectiveness and nearly zero-energy buildings. Taken together with the public procurement legislation, it has the potential to be an important tool in influencing policy in the public sector.

The Directive has the capacity to produce an additional 5–6% saving in EU energy consumption, a 5% saving of total EU CO₂ emissions, and create up to 450,000 new jobs.

Returning to the question of the energy efficiency targets, Ms Donnelly said that the EU was not on track to achieve the 20% energy savings, as it will only achieve between 9 and 11%. In addition, the scientific and political environment is not sufficiently developed for the EU to introduce legally-binding targets for energy savings. An energy efficiency action plan will be adopted on 2 March 2011, as part of EU low-carbon economy and transport policies, and there will be moves to achieve economies of scale.

ACE response and opportunities for architects



LIONEL DUNET, Coordinator of the ACE Thematic Area on Architecture and the Quality of Life, said energy saving measures provide architects with an opportunity to become actors for sustainable development. When considering energy efficiency legislation and policy, architects want to broaden the scope to include urban planning and to take human beings into account. This is the only way to build in broad-ranging, holistic energy saving measures.

The first step towards sustainable development is to base it on sound research, as sustainable development is not a dream, but something that touches our daily lives, he insisted. Architects' duty is to raise awareness among the decision-makers, and to help people understand the role architecture can play. The most important measure will be to focus on the refurbishment of existing buildings, most of which are "greedy for energy". Architects are like an engine driving forward the challenges of sustainable development, which will be the future of our planet, he finished.

DALIBOR BORAK, ACE Executive Board Member and Chair of the ACE Work Group on the Environment and Sustainable Architecture, said this was a good opportunity to look at the role architects can play to help people live sustainably. He used examples from the ACE exhibition to illustrate this.

First, one must look at the building in the context of the existing structure of the city or landscape. Here one must note the position of the building in the total built environment, the cost of the infrastructure and energy, traffic connections and the movement of goods and people, and the cultural aspects. Architects have to ensure that the building is in harmony with its surroundings and topographical aspects, and take account of the priorities for the definition of quality of the built environment, social aspects and biodiversity. One also needs to take the building itself into account, said Mr Borak. This includes elements such as flexibility, the social space for its inhabitants, the quality of light and thermal comfort. It also covers accessibility, energy efficiency, energy production from local sources, water management, materials and structures, and built-in energy in use and maintenance process. Architects are trained to balance all these elements to create a holistic, quality environment for the future.



Indoor Air Quality at Stake



PROFESSOR OLLI SEPPÄNEN, Federation of Heating, Ventilation and Air-conditioning Engineers (REHVA), said the indoor environment in EU buildings is neither healthy nor comfortable. More than 2 million life years are lost annually through poor indoor air quality.

Most pollution comes from combustion products and bio aerosols, leading to occupants suffering from asthma, cardiovascular disease, sick-building syndrome, etc., which also reduces their performance. Fortunately, tests have shown that an investment of €110/m² results in improved productivity, and will repay costs in just 18 months.

Unfortunately the existing European standards for the indoor environment are not used, and are only mandatory if they are included in national legislation, said Professor Seppanen. Finland is a good example of how this can be carried out in practice, and it has introduced a voluntary labelling system for building materials that promotes low-polluting materials. All materials which pass the test are entitled to carry the stamp of approval.

In order to promote a similar EU-wide system, the Belgian EU Presidency requested an EU strategy on improving indoor air quality by 2015. The European Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers (DG Sanco) has proposed a series of actions including holistic integration of indoor air quality and energy performance and the selection of low pollution materials and moisture-safe construction. It has estimated that this could save 1.7 million life years annually.

Open debate

ALAIN SAGNE (Fédération des Architectes de Belgique) took up the issue of public procurement, saying that it was more important for a local authority to make choices based on quality than on cost, and asked whether architects would be involved in the consultation process for the Green Paper on changing the Public Procurement Directive.

He also raised the issue of the cost to architects when they submit entries for a design contest, saying this can jeopardise their financial situation if they lose.



MR ROMANINI responded that many public authorities choose a service or a professional based on quality rather than price. However, he stressed, it was local decision-makers not the European Commission who need to be convinced.

MR PENDL said it was important to have a mixture of open and closed design competitions, or a two-stage process, in which 15 practices are chosen during the first round, which are then remunerated for their work at the second stage.

MR BORAK said that, according to the ACE study, more than 70% of architectural work in Europe is privately commissioned, with only 30% in the public sector.

GEORGI BAKALOV from the Bulgarian Union of Architects, felt there should be some obligatory building codes on sustainable issues, which would stimulate the private sector to look into energy-efficient buildings.

PATRICK COLOMBIER (Syndicat d'Architecture - FR), said there was a problem for young architects trying to enter design competitions in France, as they need references for three years' work. He asked ACE and the Commission for help in changing this.

ACE Sector Study



VINCENT NACEY, of Mizra and Nacey Research, described the results of the survey of architects (undertaken in 2010) in which nearly 10,000 architects from 23 countries took part.

The survey showed that construction output fell by 15% between 2008 and 2010, with the architectural sector feeling the worst effects and the size of the architectural market falling by 22%. This decline affected revenues in architectural practices, with the greatest effects in the smallest practices; and a reduction in the average annual salary from just under €35,000 to €29,500.

The predictions for 2011 are that more countries – such as France, the UK and Germany - expect to have less work, while for architects in countries which are currently hit hard – such as Greece and Ireland - things can only get better.

Looking at the work carried out by architects: nearly 50% of revenue is generated by private housing, and nearly 1/3 of this is for individual housing. In terms of clients, architects anticipate less work from the private individuals in coming years, but more from public limited companies. Of the services offered, 2/3 is for building design (similar to 2008) which is disturbing as it shows that architects have not diversified to get more work during the economic downturn.

Turning to how architects believe they are perceived: public authorities do not rate architects very highly (31%), but the general public, and individual clients view architects quite highly, particularly in Scandinavia and the Netherlands. In terms of their own satisfaction, architects in Scandinavia are satisfied with their pay and the business environment, the quality of life and the choice of career, and this has not changed despite the difficult economic times and the fall in salary. Thus it seems that architects are prepared to balance reduced pay with high job satisfaction.

Finally, in terms of age and gender balance – one third of architects are women, most of whom entered the profession in the last fifteen years, with more young architects in Southern and Eastern Europe.

Debate on the results and impact for the profession

SOTIRIS PAPAPOULOS (Association des Architectes Diplômés - EL) was concerned about the lack of awareness among the general public about the role architects play in improving the social fabric of society. Citizens mistakenly believe that architects only work for privileged people. Instead they ought to demand that politicians engage architects to construct a high-quality built environment.

JÜRGEN RAUCH (Vereinigung Freischaffender Architekten - DE) wanted more people to recognise the wide role that architects play, and how they have recently acquired technical knowledge to cope with changing climate conditions.

LISA SIOLA (Union Internationale des Architectes – EL) wanted the results widely publicised, showing both that architects are contented with their role in society, and want to take more responsibility.

Several members of the audience were shocked at how little architects earn.

Construction Products Regulation

Presentation of the main features of the new Regulation



VICENTE LEOZ ARGUELLES, Head of Unit, Construction, Pressure Equipment, Metrology, European Commission, said the Construction Products Regulation is a harmonised system for assessing and delivering information about construction materials. The objective is to create conditions for the correct functioning of the Internal Market across Europe.

The Construction Products Regulation offers the means to have harmonised standards, and an appropriate system for the assessment and verification of performance. The Regulation will, when finally adopted, apply to manufacturers, distributors, importers, notification bodies and national authorities.

Mr Arguelles stressed that the Regulation was not a piece of environmental policy, nor a piece of legislation guaranteeing safety at work, but rather a system to ensure that construction products adhere to the same standards across Europe. It is enforced by Member States so that all building materials are certified.

He explained that micro enterprises can derogate from the main provisions of the Regulation, although he did not see why they would wish to. He stated that if they choose to join with other organisations to form a research laboratory, their products can readily be brought into compliance with the full range of provisions of the Regulation without high costs arising. This Regulation will not change standards, he insisted, its aim is to uphold and enforce them.



JOS LEYSSENS, moderating the debate, was concerned about the reliability, security and transparency of the information that architects receive from the manufacturer, as they – not the manufacturer - will be responsible if there is a problem with the finished building. He added that the Regulation might pose a problem for smaller companies in the construction sector as the mechanism proposed means that smaller companies in the market can be forced to comply with the requirements of the Regulation by larger players when they decide to assess their products against the requirements set down in the Regulation.

Response by industry

ARMIN MAYER, Institute for Building Efficiency, Johnson Controls, said while the Construction Products Regulation was not an environmental piece of legislation, climate change would have an impact on building systems and products. As a result, all buildings must be designed so energy use is as low as possible but takes account of occupants' needs and welfare. He suggested the Regulation should add the words 'products must be based on future climatic conditions', as one cannot base standards on past averages - new materials will need to withstand increases in temperatures and precipitation.



HEINZ HACKL, SunLightHouse project officer, Velux, presented the Model Home 2020, which takes a holistic approach to house design. It uses as little energy as possible, but maintains excellent lighting and indoor air quality, is highly liveable, is adjusted to the climate and designed to fit into the local culture. He explained that, as part of its sustainability strategy Velux is building six of these prototypes.

VINCENT BRIAD, Head of Strategy and Sustainable Development, Knauf Insulation, said quality construction products were a prerequisite to meet the objective of nearly zero energy buildings. Knauf fully supports the Construction Products Regulation as it allows full transparency and is mandatory in all countries, but believes a better option would be to cover a smaller range of products. In the future we will need to design more sustainable buildings, and ensure that the whole construction process – from producing materials, taking them to the site, installing them, etc., - is sustainable, he said.



PAUL JACOBS, Director at Camfill Farr, Belgium, stressed the importance of indoor air quality, as people spend 90% of their time inside buildings. In school buildings it has been proven that children perform better with better ventilation and better air filters. Camfill Farr has produced a clean air solution called Eurovent, which results in better health and improved productivity and has low energy consumption. He suggested a form of energy labeling for these products, in the same way as the one used for 'white goods'.

BOBBY O'NEILL, Technical Manager Europe, Eternit, said his company supported any initiative that ensures quality products and a good minimum standard, is suitable across Europe, and simplifies regulations, but was concerned about products that are imported into the EU.



He believed future emphasis will be on renovation, with a need for low-energy materials. Eternit's new construction materials are designed to prevent internal condensation, have a cooling effect, have no thermal bridges when insulated externally, have a structure with low moisture and temperature variations and with cladding materials that have dimensional stability.



PASCAL BAR, Technical Affairs Manager of the Council of European Producers of Materials for Construction (CEPMC), (nominated to the panel by Team Stainless), said the organisation would continue to use this Regulation and to supply information to product-users.

The Construction Products Regulation gives continuity and consistency, and is oriented to European-based products, but there are still some issues to be solved, such as providing information on hazardous substances and that European Technical Assessments prepared for one manufacturer should never be made compulsory for others. He also called for simplified procedures for very small series rather than introducing differences between very small enterprises and other enterprises in applying the Regulation.

KAY RAUWERDINK, Research Coordinator for lighting systems in CELMA and ELC, said that lighting products were not covered by the Regulation, but they use energy, and that energy use can be halved by employing energy efficient lighting products, and using well designed, installed and operated lighting systems. Of EU-27's buildings, 85% of existing building stock has no intelligent lighting. If this was installed it could half the electricity consumption for lighting, and improve the quality of light, with a payback of between just two to five years.



As the lighting designers in buildings, architects play a crucial role in good energy performance. They can suggest energy-efficient lighting products and systems. Lighting-system legislation, which could accelerate the renovation of existing lighting systems could make a concrete contribution to the 2010 Energy Strategy.



STEFAN VANDERSTRAETEN, Environment Research Centre, Daikin, Europe, concentrated on heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) - saying that buildings are the main consumers of energy and that HVAC consumes 33% of this. The Energy Performance in Buildings Directive will lead to better insulation of buildings, enhanced ventilation/purification to maintain indoor air quality, with a lower heating load, and a limited cooling load. Efficient ventilation/purification, reversible heat pumps and hot water production will become more important.

Eco design will set the minimum energy requirements and ban the worst ones. In this case customers' perceptions will influence product design, Being sustainable means being one step ahead, assuring drivers for innovation and avoiding unnecessary over-regulation.

Commission response

MR LEOZ ARGUELLES responded, saying he agreed that the Construction Products Regulation will bring reliability, transparency and security into the production of construction materials. Manufacturers are responsible for the declaration of the characteristics of the product, and architects are not responsible if the information is incorrect.

He explained that as far as the Commission was concerned, Article 37 of the Regulation will not have the effect of wiping out smaller companies. Unfortunately, the industry did not agree with this, so the proposal has been changed.

The purpose of the Regulation was to create the conditions for the market to function correctly. The CPR is designed to be simple, he said, don't make it more complex!



Closing Remarks

In closing the Conference, Jos Leysens thanked all of the speakers and noted that the Conference had succeeded in exposing several key differences in the approach of the Commission to the architectural profession and the views of the profession itself. He said that the ACE has much to do in order to succeed in its mandate over the coming years.

End of report