



ARCHITECTS' COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DES ARCHITECTES D'EUROPE

TA2: Practice of the Profession

Quality Charter - Summary and Charter

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Summary

Architecture is of fundamental importance to society as it is the physical manifestation of our cultural identity and it is the principal contributing factor in the creation of a quality built environment. Furthermore, it is accepted that our well-being is affected by the quality of our surroundings and, as we all spend more than 80% of our time in buildings, conceiving and constructing high quality buildings is a significant responsibility that rests on the architectural profession.

In consequence, the Member Organisations of the ACE whose members make up the body of 480,000 practising architects in Europe have adopted the attached Quality Charter as an outward sign of the profound commitment of the architectural profession to ensuring that it lives up to the expectations of society by assuring that the services it provides to its clients are quality based and that built outcome of its work makes a positive contribution to the overall quality of the built environment and hence to the quality of life of the citizens of Europe.

The commitments adopted by the profession and set out in this Quality Charter are grouped under six headings:

1. A Profession Dedicated to Quality

The profession ensures that it delivers a high quality service, high quality of works and a high quality of architecture in all buildings on which it works.

2. A Competent Professional

Clients can be assured that the architects they appoint have received a high level of education and training and that they keep their knowledge permanently up to date.

3. A Responsible and Reliable Professional

Taking its responsibilities to heart, the profession acts independently of vested interests, respects ethical principles and offers, through appropriate insurance, security to its clients.

4. A Professional Dedicated to the Client

Ensuring that the needs of the client are fulfilled in an optimal way, the architectural profession ensures a balanced and functional result, whilst being ready to address any disputes openly.

5. A Partner Conscious of the Public Interest

Solutions proposed by the profession to the particular of each and every client also take account of the wider impact of its work on current and future generations of users and occupiers.

6. A Recognised and Organised Profession

The profession is organised in a manner that respects European and local laws, culture and traditions, via regulations that are proportionate, non-discriminatory and transparent.

The detailed commitments made by the profession under each of these headings are further elaborated in the full Quality Charter attached.

QUALITY CHARTER ON THE PROVISION OF ARCHITECTURAL SERVICES TO SOCIETY

Introduction

The Architects of the European Union, represented by the Member Organisations of the ACE, undertake to follow the principles set down in this Quality Charter, which go beyond the accepted European minimum practice. While the Charter is not legally binding, it supports general and professional legislation on quality where these already exist in the Member States of the EU.

The Quality Charter includes references to further papers and European legislation that provide information on details and procedures. It also gives links to the Member Organisations of the ACE, so that users of the Charter can find information relevant to the respective legal context of each Member State.

The Charter sets out voluntary rules for the architectural profession that form part of the overall framework that is needed in order to fulfil the expectations that consumers (both clients and users) have of the profession. It is only the combination of architectural creativity and the perfect delivery of quality services that can guarantee the result expected and deserved by consumers and society as a whole – the continuous expression of quality in the built environment: architectural culture.

A Profession Dedicated to Quality

The engagement of an architect in a project represents certitude about quality for the consumer (client):

* Quality of Service: the architect puts all of the capabilities, human resources, technical ability and financial resources of his or her office at the disposal of the client in order to achieve the best result in the best timeframe for the client's project. To this end, the architect subscribes to a Quality approach that may be formalised through a certified Quality Assurance system (*Link to the ACE Reference Manual on Quality Assurance*)

* Quality of the Works: over and above the services provided, the intervention of the architect aims to offer to the client, and to society, buildings and products that are sustainable in all aspects, appropriate to their site, to the needs of the client and to their context.

* Quality of the Architectural Concept: the involvement of an architect offers the unique added value of creativity that is capable of integrating and overcoming constraints to devise a global response that is fair and valuable for the client and for the environment.

A Competent Professional

Engaging an architect represents, for the client, a guarantee of competence that relies on:

* Academic training that is lengthy, of a high level, recognised at European level (*link to the Professional Qualifications Directive 2005/36/EC*), often completed by a period of professional experience and the acquisition of a licence to practice (which is often a requirement for certain complementary tasks) or (for certain kinds of work) additional qualifications are sometimes required.

* Continuous Improvement and Updating of Knowledge through continued professional development.

* Professional Experience that is essential to the correct application of acquired knowledge and skills, to the profound understanding, based on experience, of the environment and of the cultural context, to correct and professional management of projects and to a realistic appreciation of their development.

A RESPONSIBLE AND RELIABLE PROFESSIONAL

Given the importance of his or her function and of the long-term consequences of his or her work, the architect must respond to the expectations of the client and of society.

* The defence of the clients' interest and of the long-term public interest are priorities for the architect in the choices and decisions taken.

* By virtue of his or her status as an independent professional, the architect acts with integrity and impartiality while respecting ethical principles that go beyond the simple regulatory requirements (these principles may ultimately be enshrined in a deontological framework) (*Link to ACE Deontological Code*).

* Thanks to this independence, the client finds in the architect a reliable partner who offers a personalised service and with whom he or she can work in total confidence and confidentiality.

* To ensure this reliability and trust, the architect assumes his or her responsibilities in the knowledge that they are correctly evaluated and covered by appropriate insurance that reflects the importance of the work undertaken.

A Professional Dedicated to the Client

By virtue of his or her central role, the architect can offer to the client a tailored, efficient and effective service whose scope goes beyond the conception of the works to be realised (*link to the ACE Reference Manual on Quality Assurance*)

* The architect can give to the client a clear presentation of the services that are necessary and desirable (as well as details of the most appropriate contributors) to ensure the best delivery of the works envisaged.

* The architect can assist the client in a realistic definition of his or her needs and wishes (relevant to available resources) thanks to an open and attentive approach that draws on experience.

* The architect can also usefully assist the client with the necessary administrative procedures (relating to the building permit or the building work itself), in the choice and identification of partners, in the preparation of agreements and contracts, in the execution of the works and in the hand-over procedures etc.

* The architect is always vigilant to avoid conditions and situations that are likely to undermine the correct progress of his or her appointment and the project. When, despite all of this, a conflict arises, the architect spares no effort to resolve the problem in a diligent and courteous manner, taking care to minimise any harmful consequences. If it becomes necessary, the architect informs the client of the range of options available to resolve the problem (mediation, arbitration etc.).

* In relation to his or her intervention, the architect provides an upfront, written, clear and unambiguous definition of the conditions under which the services will be provided that includes clear details of remuneration.

A Partner Conscious of the Public Interest

Whilst conceiving of the most appropriate and correct responses to the needs and budget of the client, the architect naturally takes into account the protection and well being of present and future users together with the preservation, the exploitation and the development of the natural, social and cultural heritage to which he or she is contributing.

A Recognised and Organised Profession

In calling on the services of an architect, clients and society benefit from the supervision and cross-referencing of an organised profession that offers an additional assurance of quality. (*Link to ACE Deontological Code*). It also benefits from the security that derives from the appropriate regulation of the profession.

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