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Access to the Profession

Guidelines on CPD Systems

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Final

Introduction

Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for architects is, at European level, of professional and public interest. Its necessity has been affirmed in directives of the European Union and its relevance is even greater in the enlarged European Union. As the diversity of training and practice has increased, CPD has become a necessary obligation for practising architects and for the organisations that represent them.

The ACE considers that the development of CPD is a very important issue (refer to Annexe). It intends to promote, at European level, the most efficient approaches to this subject and it recalls that it is an objective of the ACE Charter on CPD to ensure the introduction of a CPD System by all of its Member Organisations by 2010. This should permit all architects to undertake an annual and systematic course of CPD.

CPD for architects may be defined as a structured and organised activity carried out by architects in the context of an appropriately conceived programme and framework. Participation in CPD aims to deliver to architects a means to maintain and improve their personal culture, practice and competence and to update their knowledge regarding arts, science and technology, where there is permanent evolution, with due regard for the aesthetic, social and legal regulation of their activities.

CPD is to be considered as the third part of a complete architectural education programme. It is the complement of the initial education period during which the basic principles of architectural culture and approaches to the design process are learnt and to the second level where professional experience is gained. Overall these activities seek to ensure that the new objective of ensuring lifelong learning, now cherished by our society, becomes a normal pursuit for architects.

The Members Organisations of the ACE, who adopted the CPD Charter in 2001 (see Annexe), undertook to promote, for their architect members, systems of CPD programmes of a high and equal level in all of Europe that would draw on existing examples. These programmes are to be developed in order to be fully operational by 2010.

This document proposes some general guidelines that will be useful to the Member Organisations of the ACE in their actions to put CPD systems in place.

Why Organise Continuing Professional Development for Architects in Europe?

1. It is one of the most important challenges in the new European context to assure society, consumers, clients and politicians that, throughout Europe, architects maintain and improve their competence by a high level, adequate, process of CPD throughout their professional life.
2. Sustainable development, understood as concern about what will be left to future generations, implies the development of new approaches to architectural practice as architecture strongly contributes to the spatial and environmental organisation of society.

3. Technologies, legal rules and available materials are constantly changing. Therefore it is necessary for architects to constantly develop their knowledge in these different subjects in order to maintain their initial ability.
4. The requests coming from clients and users are, likewise, constantly evolving and this has important repercussions both on briefs and on architectural responses to the problems that are posed. The need to guarantee the competence of the profession to clients and users should therefore act as a significant motivator for the profession.
5. The areas where architectural intervention is required are various and numerous. Architects must have the opportunity to develop their education throughout their life in order to maintain their competence and to acquire new abilities in many different and specific fields in which they may otherwise not have sufficient opportunity to be involved.

How can Continuing Professional Development be organised?

These guidelines propose a flexible approach to CPD for architects that must take into account the diversity of European situations while, at the same time, throwing light on the goals to be reached and the way things can be done by each Member Organisation.

1. Preparing, in each country, an inventory and evaluation of all the public and private sources of CPD, relevant for architects, that exist, is an essential prerequisite for any action concerned with CPD.
2. The approval of these CPD programmes should only be granted after checking that they match a quality standard (see below) and a real professional need through an adequate evaluation process.
3. To offer architects a voluntary approach for CPD based on three principles:
 - a) Making available, in an accessible form, all the information regarding CPD programmes, the contents, the costs and the financial help available.
 - b) Proposing to all architects that they are involved in a continuous CPD approach and allowing them to define and realise their own CPD plan. This CPD plan should be balanced according to different, relevant, fields of knowledge while allowing each architect the freedom to define his own course.
 - c) Proposing that architects undertake an individual evaluation of their own CPD plan and that they maintain and record it in an appropriate form.
4. To organise a system of recognition of CDP programmes fulfilled by architects in order to create a European label regarding CPD. This label would provide, as quality assurance processes do, criteria for recognition at European level. This label would be guaranteed by a procedure suited to the situation and realised at a national or European level.
5. To encourage Member Organisations who may want it, to make CPD compulsory for each of its members. Membership of an organisation usually implies respect for a particular code of conduct and of the adoption of an ethical approach into which conforming to a CPD requirement is natural.

How is CPD financed?

In order to be effective, a CPD programme must be a balance between offer and demand. It is necessary to put in place the financial resources needed to allow the offer to develop and to meet the demand. Many sources exist, but they are not often used in an optimum way. It is important to ensure a better allocation of resources for the purpose of instilling lifelong learning in the consciousness of the profession.

We can initially set down some of the available potential sources of financing. They have to be gathered together in order to find out how they can complement each other:

- a) Participation of architects and architectural firms themselves within their professional practice.
- b) Funds coming from joint organisations collecting money for social purposes such as CPD.
- c) Resources from private companies providing materials or services in the construction market. Such money is part of their marketing action.
- d) Directly sourced from public authorities involved in each country in the support of CPD actions.
- e) European sources helping promotional and coordination activities regarding CPD for architects or for specific programmes arising out of European obligations.

What are the Criteria on Which a CPD System Should be Based?

Member Organisations that intend to establish a system of CPD for their architect members should ensure that:

- a. Individual architects taking part in the CPD system follow a structured and relevant approach to their CPD that permits them to keep up to date with relevant developments in the field of architecture and related disciplines over a specified period defined by the relevant contract conditions.
- b. There is a wide choice of courses available through the CPD system that allows participants the possibility to cover the full range of skills and aptitudes required of an architect.
- c. The system is structured and financed so that all architects, of all means and circumstances, have access to the system and have the opportunity to participate.
- d. The existence of the ACE Label must be properly advertised, by the administrators of those systems, to participants of national or regional listed systems.
- e. The courses and CPD materials are available through a number of different delivery mechanisms.
- f. There is an appropriate balance, taking cultural and regional circumstances into account, in the courses provided by the CPD system between cultural, regulatory, technical, sustainability and business aspects of architectural practice.
- g. There is a properly constituted means of administering the labelled programme.
- h. There is a means for the evaluation of the rigour with which the participants respect the CPD system requirements.

How should these guidelines be used?

The Architects' Council of Europe is convinced that CPD activity is relevant to the mid-term and long-term practice of architecture. Each Member Organisation and each country has its own particular professional history. There is a great diversity of CPD initiatives arising out of the different national situations. A systematic approach starting from common criteria is therefore essential. This will allow for the creation of a European label that will attest the maintenance, by individual architects, of a high level of CPD.

Therefore, what is needed is a voluntary commitment based on a moral and ethical approach at European level. Rather than basing these systems on a penalty system - always difficult to enforce - this label will put our profession in a good position in terms of competence and credibility toward society.

The realisation of these guidelines will require a real and active commitment by all the Member Organisations of the ACE in the approach and in the sharing of experiences.

ANNEXE

The ACE Charter on CPD adopted in November 2001:

CHARTER ON CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Academic training, architectural research, professional practice and Continuing Professional Development are the inseparable elements that must be pursued in order to produce architects of high calibre who create, maintain and ensure the sustainability of our built environment. In a world where change is the norm and expectations of high performance is increasing, the necessity for Continuing Professional Development is clear. Each profession must find its own method of ensuring that its Membership keeps abreast of developments in the domains of concern to that profession.

In preparing this present Charter the Member Organisations of the Architects Council of Europe affirm that Continuing Professional Development is an absolute necessity for ensuring that the profession discharges its responsibilities to its clients, society and posterity. The objective this Charter is to set down five principles of importance in the realm of Continuing Professional Development that must be incorporated by each signatory in the development of their individual programmes on this topic:

1. In adopting a programme of Continuing Professional Development each Member Organisation should ensure that participation in such a programme is a moral obligation built into its Code of Conduct for each of its members. In certain Nations it will be appropriate to work towards legislative obligations making it a legal necessity for members to follow a programme of CPD.
2. Within the framework of closer harmonisation of professional practice among Member Organisations each Member Organisation of the ACE undertakes to follow the guidelines on CPD published by the ACE.
3. The practice of architecture is a cultural pursuit. The Member Organisations of the ACE undertake to ensure that programmes of CPD will ensure ways to improve architectural culture, artistic expression, technological innovation, optimisation of practice and above all the maintenance of a high level of professional competence in the practice of architecture.
4. It is the recommendation of the ACE that each of the signatories to this Charter will introduce obligatory minimum requirements for CPD acquisition for its members. The objective should be that, with an increasing acquisition requirement in the interim, by 2010 all architect members of Member Organisations across Europe should be keeping up to date with technical & legislative changes affecting their work within each calendar year.
5. Each Member Organisation undertakes to put in place the necessary financial and administrative structures to ensure that the objectives of this Charter are deliverable.

End of the Document