



ARCHITECTS' COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
CONSEIL DES ARCHITECTES D'EUROPE

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## Access to the Profession

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### Work Group Education

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#### Reports on matters arising from the application of the Bologna agreements

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Final - Original version in French - Adopted by the AG2/2003

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#### **Political context**

On 19 June 1999, the European Ministers of Education signed a joint declaration in Bologna on higher education. This declaration was followed on 19 May 2001 by a press release issued by the Ministers of Higher Education after a conference held in Prague. Lastly on 19 September 2003, the European Ministers of Education met in Berlin and issued a joint declaration. These additional declarations call on all those concerned to sketch the outlines of a European area of advanced education. What they want is a system with sufficient consistency between courses to enable the free circulation of students within a common area. They also want to give Europe a single reference system making various educational courses compatible and enabling comparison of different training systems.

Six objectives were set out to achieve this:

- Adoption of a system of easily understandable and comparable diplomas
- Adoption of a system based on two courses: a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree.
- Setting up a system of credits, 180 for a Bachelor's and 120 for a Master's allowing holders to have a common qualification reference.
- Promoting student, teacher, researcher and other staff mobility throughout the various European countries.
- Promoting European cooperation in quality control.
- Promoting the European dimension in higher education.

#### **A system being applied**

Based on this general framework, every country has introduced reforms to make their higher educational training systems compatible with the Bologna proposals. It would be rather complex to examine in depth the way in which Bologna is being translated into concrete measures in particular concerning architectural training. The differences are too great and the various situations forming a joint vision are still too unclear. We simply wanted to point out certain characteristics of the current situation and show the possibilities such as the risks that this reform may have on the quality of architectural training in Europe.

#### **All depends on the existing framework**

It should be firstly noted that depending on the status of the various educational institutions in Europe, the effects of Bologna are varied. The faculties of architecture or schools of engineers which are part of a university establishment will be involved (if they are not already) in global reform implemented by the universities to which they belong. Architectural training can be considered as a special academic discipline study of this or that university. However, there might also be the reverse where schools of architecture are not part of a university and in this case, reform will have to be rather specific.

#### **Bachelor's and Master's, 3+2=5, 180 ECTS and 120 ECTS**

A system based on two courses of study means three years of at least 180 ECTS credits to get a Bachelor's degree and then two years of at least 120 ECTS credits to get a Master's degree. The whole course takes five years to complete. For those schools whose study courses already last five years, compatibility with Bologna is easy to achieve. However, this is not the case with establishments which have four year courses such as, for instance, professional schools in Germany. This is also not the case with France which operates on the basis of a six-year course organised in three, two-year cycles. Britain has a system consisting of three parts but includes professional practice in the form of a

training period of at least two years (spread out or done once). It is clear that the application of Bologna to these types of situation gives rise to specific adaptation problems. It should be noted that Bologna said nothing about honorary degrees and research which can take place three years after obtaining a Master's.

### **Making a diversified landscape more understandable**

The question being discussed is not make all courses the same - this is neither possible or useful. Variety is after all a source of riches. It is simply making the architectural training situation more understandable for all Europeans by means of the compatibility criteria laid down by Bologna. To this end, the Bologna requirements should be considered both useful and positive.

### **What common requirement should be promoted in a European context?**

For some time now, the ACE has maintained that the minimum level for advanced training in architecture enabling the proper training of architects is five years of an academic course of study in a university or school of advanced education complemented by two years of supervised and validated practical training. This means in total at least seven years to be able to take on architectural responsibility. This is the indispensable basis for the high-level training of architects in Europe.

These provisions are compatible with Bologna provided supervised professional training is considered as complementary to a Master's. The ACE has reaffirmed this requirement of 5 years + 2 years even if it calls certain diplomas into question once again that do not correspond to these criteria. Of course these courses must correspond to advanced education in the form of all the various credits which constitute a consistent route.

To this effect, the ACE notes that the Ministers of Education of the European countries meeting in Berlin on 19 September 2003 reaffirmed in their joint declaration their goal for 2005 to establish a system of quality control in every member state to evaluate educational programmes.

### **A real risk - a degree regarded as a professional diploma**

There is a genuine risk that some educational institutions in certain countries relying on Bologna consider architectural training at degree level after three years as sufficient to train a certain type of "architect". It appears that this type of diploma is already being accepted in some countries granting the title of Junior Architect which could lead to confusion.

ACE's task is to reaffirm that this three-year degree course can under no circumstance be considered as an architectural diploma but as a diploma of the first cycle in general architectural training. We must be vigilant in this case to detect and denounce or even put a stop to any anomalies that may occur.

### **The question of professional practical training was not raised in Bologna**

Bologna appears to be only interested in its field of reference operating smoothly and not in specific problems of training courses. Nevertheless, it is an opportunity to ask questions about the place of practical training in the architects' training system. In this respect, it is clear that the European system, five-year academic training should be completed by gaining practical experience supervised and validated within a professional framework following specific procedures.

### **Lifelong learning (CPD).**

While the Prague declaration, made following that of Bologna, recalled the importance of lifelong education and training, it did not result in the working out of a joint system applicable to all. In actual fact, lifelong learning, while it is unanimously acknowledged as a necessity, has hardly developed due to the lack of a proper financing system and a clearly defined framework of obligations. The problem of the obligatory nature of lifelong learning, if discussed, has yet to be clearly resolved. On this point the experience of the RIBA in Britain is interesting due to its efficiency and global consistency. It could serve as a basis for reflecting on our profession in a European context.

### **Enumeration of initial training, professional practice and lifelong learning is essential for the profession of architect**

Reflection should emphasise global consistency of the training system. Progress still has to be made in this respect as neither supervised professional practice nor lifelong learning are the norm throughout Europe.

Following the views expressed in Bologna and to respond to specific training needs, the whole training chain has to be examined. Bachelor's and Master's should be examined but also the terms for

obtaining project management as a qualified architect after supervised practical training resulting in a professional licence together with an obligation to participate in continual lifelong learning.

There are European requirements that the ACE could determine covering the whole construction. As a basis we should use Bachelor's/Master's compatibility as laid down in the Bologna declaration as well as terms governing supervised practical training whether or not integrated in training courses and finally a continual and lifelong training system adapted and regularly followed by professionals. All of this training structure should have an evaluation mechanism enabling European architects to negotiate reciprocal agreements under the best conditions with architects from other countries in the world, in particular the United States.

#### **How to evaluate the effects of Bologna**

Regarding establishing compatibility criteria as demanded by Bologna, there is clearly more to be gained than to be lost by playing the compatibility card. A discussion should be instigated on training courses which do not come up to Bologna standards. This also concerns professional schools in Germany whose course only lasts four-years, private courses in Portugal or training courses in Italy which only take three years as well as all restrictive situations which will no doubt arise. Implementation of the Bologna declaration is therefore good news for the training of architects provided it does not remain at the level of a Bachelor's degree i.e. three years. Furthermore, it is clear that global consistency of the architectural training system must be looked for beyond Bologna. It is now up to the ACE to remind others of this fact.

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