



ARCHITECTS' COUNCIL OF EUROPE  
CONSEIL DES ARCHITECTES D'EUROPE

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## **The EU Institutions Finally Wake up to the True Importance of Architecture**

**The Architects Council of Europe (ACE)<sup>1</sup> applauds the launch of the new Buildings Policy of the European Commission which, when added to other political initiatives at EU level, demonstrates that the EU Institutions have finally woken up to the added value that architecture and a quality, sustainable built environment brings to society and the economy.**

The new Buildings Policy is the first in a series of steps that the Commission is planning to undertake with the aim of significantly improving the value for money that it gets from its expenditure on the buildings it occupies. The Communication adopted by the Commission a few days ago highlights the main principles to effectively integrate quality in its buildings. It is coupled with an ambitious urban development objective to make the currently sterile administrative area of the European Quarter in Brussels a vibrant city area, with increased residential, commercial, cultural and leisure facilities. The new master-plan was jointly announced by the Commission Vice-President, Siim Kallas and the Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region, Charles Picqué.

An essential element of the new master-plan for the European Quarter will be the holding of a major International Architectural Competition for the axis of the Quarter, Rue de la Loi.

Included in the Buildings Policy is a commitment to draw up an architectural policy for the Commission buildings (whether owned or leased), a policy that will ensure that higher architectural quality and greater sustainability will be used as criteria in all new acquisitions made and transformations. This move brings the Commission in line with the other main Institutions of the EU who have already, through their actions, shown that they realise the importance of architectural quality and sustainability.

The first Institution to formalise this recognition was the Council of Ministers when it adopted a resolution on architectural quality in the urban and rural environment in 2001. Arising from this there have been a number of initiatives over consecutive Presidencies that recently culminated in the adoption of the Leipzig Charter on sustainable Cities (24 May 2007) in which architectural quality is highlighted as an essential element of our cities past, present and future.

The three main EU Institutions (Council, Parliament and Commission) also ensured that architectural quality is included in the new Regulations for the Cohesion and Regional Funds for the period 2007-2013. By so doing they have recognised that high architectural quality contributes to a greater well-being in the population and so to more productive, healthy and happy lives.

The ACE has influenced all of the steps mentioned above, repeatedly promoting the message that society benefits from higher architectural quality and constantly working towards that end through its contacts with the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission, among others. It will not falter in its efforts to ensure that all commitments now made will be carried through in all EU Policies.

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<sup>1</sup> The ACE is the professional representative organisation of the architectural profession in Europe. It currently has 44 Members who are the representative and regulatory architectural bodies from 31 Countries including all of the EU Member States. It therefore represents, through its Members, about 450,000 architects across Europe.