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COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION

Guide to the Commission's architectural policy

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In its Communication on buildings policy¹, the Commission announced that a guide would be produced on architectural policy to ensure the proper application of the policy guidelines laid down in the Communication.

This document, laying down the main lines of the Commission's architectural policy, will be widely disseminated among market operators in order to explain the Commission's wishes as regards architectural quality and will also be incorporated into the information guide on procedures referred to in the Communication on buildings policy.

It will be used as a reference when drawing up all architectural competitions involving the Commission.

¹ COM(2007) 501, 5.9.2007.

ANNEX

TOWARDS A COMMISSION ARCHITECTURAL POLICY

1. INTRODUCTION

In September 2007, the Commission adopted a new Communication on policy for the accommodation of its departments in Brussels and Luxembourg² as a result of which it took on a number of tasks. These include the drafting of this guide on architectural policy in order to guarantee the proper application of the policy principles set out in the Communication.

2. BACKGROUND TO THIS DOCUMENT

The aim of this guide is to determine the main lines of the Commission's architectural policy, which should be taken into account by all operators when implementing the Commission's buildings policy.

It is also a response to the Council's request in its Resolution of 12 February 2001 on architectural quality in urban and rural environments³ and in its conclusions of 13 December 2008 on architecture and the contribution of culture to sustainable development⁴, inviting the Commission to "ensure that architectural quality and the specific nature of architectural service are taken into consideration in all its policies, measures and programmes", and to "encourage innovation and experimentation in sustainable development in architecture, urban planning and landscaping".

It forms part of a set of documents which define the rules and procedures to be followed by the Commission in relation to buildings in Brussels and Luxembourg. These documents will all be identified and set out in an information guide on buildings procedures⁵ available to building market operators, which is currently being prepared.

With regard to its objective of achieving architectural quality, the document complements the MIT⁶ which is intended to ensure technical quality and compliance with standards in every building occupied by the Commission.

It should be used as a reference for drawing up all architectural and other competitions in which the Commission is involved in some respect.

It is therefore designed mainly for new buildings and for large-scale renovation of existing buildings.

It will thus constitute a reference for property market stakeholders in that it will make known the Commission's wishes regarding architectural quality.

This guide will be applicable to the buildings to be occupied by the Commission's departments in Brussels and Luxembourg including, where appropriate, those

² COM(2007) 501 of 5.9.2007.

³ 2001/C 73/04, OJ C 73, 12.2.2001, p. 6.

⁴ 2008/C 319/05, OJ C 319, 13.12.2008, p. 13.

⁵ URL: http://www.ec.europa.eu/civil_service/audience/real_estate/index_en.htm.

⁶ Manual of the Standard Building, a document drawn up in accordance with the departments concerned with buildings (OIB and OIL, DG ADMIN) and with the staff representatives) – see also the following website: http://www.ec.europa.eu/civil_service/audience/real_estate/index_en.htm.

occupied by the executive agencies. It will not apply to Commission delegations and representations, but they can use it as a reference if they wish.

The Commission will inform the other European institutions that this document exists and will make it available to them if they wish.

In the case of the Commission, implementation of the architectural policy is the responsibility of the OIB for Brussels and the OIL for Luxembourg. DG Admin is responsible for supervising implementation.

This guide will be modified over time. Checks should be carried out periodically in order to adapt the guide to the Commission's needs and to developments in architecture.

3. ARCHITECTURAL QUALITY

Architectural policy is based on the concept of architectural quality and more particularly on the architectural quality of each building.

Despite the complexity of this concept and the problem of defining it because of its highly subjective nature, it is possible to identify a series of fundamental elements which are set out in this document and must be taken into account throughout the life cycle of a building.

It is worthwhile noting in particular the close interdependence of these elements and their evolving nature. These elements must be taken into account at the same time as the "best practices" referred to below. The tools for evaluating these fundamental elements will be established in each individual case, for instance when preparing and running the various architecture competitions.

The organisation of competitions to obtain ideas based on these reference elements, which will result in the definition and observance of a transparent programme, should ensure the best possible results in terms of value for money.

4. THE TEN REFERENCE ELEMENTS

4.1. *Urban integration*

The buildings occupied by the Commission must be integrated into the urban environment in which they are situated in a harmonious and coherent way.

Particular care must be taken to ensure an appropriate urban mix between office, residential and commercial property, not to mention the possibility of a public space which facilitates cultural and social integration.

4.2. *Accessibility and mobility*

To fit in with the Commission's mobility policy which is aimed at promoting and encouraging environmentally-friendly modes of transport (walking, cycling and public transport), the Commission's buildings must be quickly and easily accessible by public transport and they must be accessible and usable by persons with reduced mobility, based on the "design for all" concept. Prospective buildings must be located near the Commission's central buildings, the other European institutions and social infrastructure, and/or have easy access to them.

4.3. *Respect for the environment and energy efficiency*

The Commission's key objectives include respect for the environment and reducing energy consumption.

Its efforts in this domain include in particular gradually extending the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) to all its buildings in Brussels and Luxembourg.

In particular, all future Commission buildings must comply with the most stringent energy efficiency parameters, for instance:

- each building must be developed in line with a global energy concept;
- polluting emissions must be limited;
- the use of renewable energy sources must be encouraged.

The Commission will also promote the following environment-friendly measures:

- the use of materials with a low environmental impact during their production, implementation and recycling phases (life cycle);
- design which takes account of sustainable/environmentally-friendly use of the building (waste management, water saving, etc.).

Special attention will be paid to the proposed orientation of a building and its façades in order to reduce energy expenditure, mindful of the urban context in which it is located.

To ensure that implementation of these principles is properly evaluated, the Commission could make use of the most advanced methods for evaluating the environmental performance of buildings⁷.

4.4. *Quality of construction and well-being*

The Commission attaches particular importance to the quality of construction of buildings and to the actual way in which construction is carried out.

Buildings should be designed and built in line with the rules and standards in force in Europe, in particular, at the moment, the Directive on construction products⁸ and the Eurocodes⁹.

The choice of materials and the technical solutions applied (especially for façades) are particularly important because they affect the maintenance, sustainability and ageing speed of buildings.

The architectural concept, the quality of the air, the acoustics, the brightness, etc. must all contribute to ensuring the health and well-being of the building occupants.

In addition to developing an identity and image, building design must focus in particular on ensuring user-friendliness and a "feeling of belonging".

⁷ Since there is no European method, the following examples may be used: BREEAM (UK), HQE (FR), DGNB (DE).

⁸ Council Directive 89/106/EEC of 21 December 1988.

⁹ European standards for the design, size and justification of buildings and civil engineering structures, laying down a set of technical rules with a view to subsequently turning them into European standards, the aim being to make up for the lack of harmonisation of such rules in Europe (<http://eurocodes.jrc.ec.europa.eu/home.php>).

4.5. *Innovation*

With regard to the various aspects linked to architecture (technologies, materials, functionality, layout) and urban integration, the Commission will make every effort to ensure innovation, in particular to obtain significant energy savings and ensure respect for the environment.

4.6. *Clarity of purpose and comprehensibility of buildings*

The distribution of volumes must be straightforward and there must be a balanced building environment in order to ensure that buildings are easy to use and readily-understood by both occupants and visitors.

4.7. *Aesthetic aspect and image*

The aesthetic element is the most difficult to evaluate because of its highly subjective nature.

Yet there is always a case for taking into account the aesthetic value of a building and its contribution to the well-being of the various beneficiaries, mindful of the different functional requirements. Aesthetic value cannot be judged intrinsically but must be looked at in relation to the building's context.

The Commission considers that, in any case, it is important that a building's appearance should reveal its function and its role within its urban environment. It should project an image and display certain values.

Special attention should be paid to ensuring that the message communicated by Commission buildings is consistent with the principles and values of European integration and the functioning of its institutions.

With due regard for safety constraints, which have an impact on various aspects including the type of material used, the Commission will ensure that the image conveyed by the façades and volumes of its buildings reflects, partly by incorporating slender curved lines, the boldness, transparency and dynamics of the European project.

4.8. *Functionality, modularity and flexibility*

Commission buildings must be functional, modular and flexible so that they are as adaptable as possible.

– Functionality

Buildings should facilitate communication through efficient management of internal flows and of incoming/outgoing flows (for instance visitors and suppliers).

A high efficiency ratio (yield by surface) will permit optimal use of the areas available.

– Modularity and flexibility

The buildings must, where possible, be modular so that internal spaces can be easily rearranged. It must be simple to adapt the ways in which they are used (for instance good scope for extension in the case of additional needs, technical evolution, changes in working methods, reorganisation of departments, etc.).

Such flexibility should make it possible to introduce innovative working environments in terms of allocating space, mindful of the need for well-being and

efficiency¹⁰. Taking these features into account will provide the required flexibility when changes are made to Commission buildings in the long term.

4.9. *Costs*

The Commission is aiming for an architectural approach which will result in an overall reduction in investment, operating and maintenance costs and a limitation of present and future expenses¹¹.

The architectural quality of a building must be consistent with medium and long-term investment which is sustainable and defensible since it is coming out of the Community budget.

4.10. *Cohesion: a common thread*

The establishment of a symbolic common thread linking all the buildings and building clusters occupied by the Commission will make the Commission more visible and recognisable in the city.

This symbol should be applicable to all future buildings and, where possible, to existing buildings in which the Commission has a medium or long-term interest. A European-wide competition for ideas will be launched in 2009 among architectural, arts and design institutes.

5. BEST PRACTICES

Generally speaking, the architectural quality pursued will be easier to attain if, in the meantime, it has been possible to have access to properly-defined programmes, correct monitoring of project processes and systematic use of the various mechanisms for organising competitions to obtain ideas.

5.1. *Architectural programme and monitoring*

Defining an architectural programme prior to design is an essential stage in the success of a project. The architectural programme should cover the following four aspects: the architectural concept, spatial dimension (communication), functionality (needs) and technology. The Commission must be involved during the definition and monitoring of the project.

If, when a building is put into operation, it fulfils the requirements of the predefined programme, this is a guarantee of a quality result.

5.2. *Competition for ideas*

As stated in Communication COM(2007) 501, the Commission considers that in order to guarantee good architectural quality, European architectural or similar competitions should be organised for all major property development projects. In principle, this is planned for all new buildings and for large-scale renovations to existing buildings.

Special attention must be paid to the composition of competition selection boards: an effort must be made to ensure that they are multidisciplinary and that the board members are properly qualified.

¹⁰ In this context, special attention will be paid to the design, ergonomics and quality of work stations.

¹¹ For example: smaller number of entrances, easy-to-clean façades, maintenance-friendly machinery, etc.

The adoption of this approach should not give rise to additional costs. Moreover, account should be taken of the benefits, for instance in terms of financial aspects, quality, functionality and efficiency, which are relevant throughout the life of the buildings.