

Guidelines on Continuing Professional Development for architects in Europe

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Adopted by majority Vote – BAIK (Austria) voted against

CAE/ACE. Groupe de travail Education et Recherche- Task Force Education & Research

Continuing Professional Development for architects – Guidelines

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Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for architects is, at European level, related to profession and to public interest. Its necessity has been affirmed in the directives and its relevance is even greater with the new enlarged configuration of Europe. As the diversity of training and practice has increased, CPD has become an obligation for professional architects and their organisations.

ACE considers that the development of this permanent training is a very important issue (refer to Annexe). It intends to promote, at European level, the most efficient approaches to this subject. It recalls that it is an objective to ensure the adoption of CPD by all of its Members Organisations by 2010. This should materialise for architects in an annual and systematic practice 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. This activity aims at the maintenance and improvement of their personal culture, practice and competence and to update their knowledge regarding arts, science and technology, where there is permanent evolution, as well as in the field of aesthetical, social and legal regulations.

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.

The professional organisations, Members of ACE, who adopted the CPD charter in 2001, undertook to promote for their architect members CPD programmes of a high and equal level in all of Europe that would draw on existing examples. These programmes will be developed in order to be fully operational by 2010.

The present document proposes some general guidelines that could be useful to such professional organisations for their actions regarding their CPD policy.

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, the consumers, the clients and the politicians that throughout Europe, the architects' competence is maintained and improved by an adequate process of CPD during their professional life which expresses a high level of qualification.
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. This need to guarantee the competence of the profession to clients and users should act as a significant motivator for the profession.
5. The areas where architectural intervention is requested 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 do not have sufficient opportunity to be involved.

How can Continuing Professional Development be organised?

The guidelines that are developed here 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 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 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 architects to be 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 fields of knowledge concerned while allowing every architect the freedom to define his own course.
 - c) Proposing architects to realise an individual evaluation of their own CPD plan and to maintain it in an appropriate form of record.

4. To organise a system of recognition to CPD 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 the architect's professional 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 the adoption of an ethical approach into which conforming to a CPD programme is natural.

How is CDP financed?

1. In order to be effective, a CPD programme must be a balance between offer and demands. 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 often used in a non-optimum way. It is important to realise a better allocation of these resources for one purpose: instil the professional life time learning.

2. We can initially set down some of the financing sources available. 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 approach.

b) Funds coming from joint organisations collecting money for social purposes such as CPD.

c) Private sources 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 programmes regarding CPD.

How should these guidelines be used?

The Architects' Council of Europe is convinced CPD activity is relevant to the mid-term and long-term practice of architecture. Each national body has its own particular professional history. There is a great diversity of CPD initiatives according to different national situations.

A systematic approach starting from common criteria is therefore essential. This will allow for the creation of an European label expressing the maintenance by architects of a high level of CPD.

What is needed is nothing else than a voluntary commitment of each Member Organisation in this process. This commitment will be based on a moral and ethical approach, not 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 needs a real and active commitment of all the organisations member of ACE in the approach and 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 which 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 keep 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 which 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 ACE undertakes to follow the guidelines on CPD published by ACE.*
- 3. The practice of architecture is a cultural pursuit. The Member Organisations of 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 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.*