

Statement on

The importance of architecture as a fundamental element of Culture and Cultural Policies, in the context of the consultation of the Commission “Culture for Europe – Europe for Culture”

Participants¹ from all EU Member States and Accession Countries gathered in Helsinki 19-21 October 2006 on the occasion of the meeting of the European Forum for Architectural Policies (EFAP) and of the international conference “Celebrating the Everyday Aspects of Architectural Policies” organised in the framework of the official activities of the Finnish Presidency of the EU;

- Recalling that the European Forum for Architectural Policies was established in July 2000 during the French Presidency following a joint initiative of the French Government and Finnish Presidency taken at the end of 1999;
- Recalling the Council Resolution on Architectural Quality adopted in 2001 by the Ministers of Culture of the EU²;
- Whereas the Council of Ministers affirmed that “architecture is a fundamental feature of the history, culture and fabric of life of each of our countries, that it represents an essential means of artistic expression in the daily life of citizens and that it constitutes the heritage of tomorrow; and that “the cultural dimension and the quality of the physical treatment of space should be taken into account in Community regional and cohesion policies;
- Whereas the Council of Ministers furthermore affirmed that: “architecture is an intellectual, cultural, artistic and professional activity. Architectural service therefore is a professional service which is both cultural and economic”;
- Whereas in particular the Council called on 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 seek, in consultation with the Member States and in accordance with the rules governing the Structural Funds, ways and means of ensuring in the application of those funds a wider consideration of architectural quality and the conservation of cultural heritage”;
- Noting that during a joint session between the European Forum for Architectural Policies and the 25 EU Ministers of Culture held during the Luxembourg Presidency in June 2005 on the occasion of an Informal Culture Council Meeting the Forum presented specific Recommendations to the Ministers; the Forum still looks forward to these recommendations being implemented;

¹ Representatives from governments, professional organisations and cultural institutes in the field of architecture

² Council resolution on architectural quality in the urban and rural environments on 12 February 2001 (2001/C 73/04)

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- Recalling, in particular, the request of the Forum that architecture should be included in the rolling agenda of the EU Council of Ministers for Culture and Audiovisual;
- Having regard to the strong declarations of President José Manuel Barroso in favour of the cultural dimension of the construction of the European Project;
- Welcoming the fact that many Member States of the EU - and also in certain countries cities and local authorities - have already adopted Architectural Policies and that an increasing number of countries are in the process of adopting such policies;
- Recalling the Commission Staff Working Paper on Cohesion policies³ and cities which stated that “People want (...) attractive and sustainable architecture that locals are proud of”;
- Having regard to the Communication from the Commission to the Council and Parliament on Cohesion policy and cities of July 2006; having regard in particular to the chapter on Culture and to the Guideline for action which states that “Cities – through a sustainable cultural policy – should promote a vibrant culture based... on the preservation of the architectural and cultural heritage...” and that “An active cultural policy is a valuable tool for building bridges between communities fostering the integration of immigrants and other newcomers to the city”;

Adopted the following statement in the context of the consultation of the Commission on Culture:

1. Welcome the initiative of the Commission to prepare an official communication on the policy area of Culture and to widely consult on the subject before presenting that communication;
2. Encourage the continued adoption and development of architectural policies at national, regional and local level whenever possible as an effective means of adopting holistic and integrated approaches to the quality of the built environment notably in relation to the preservation and improvement of cultural and architectural heritage for future generations;
3. Welcome the commitment of the architectural profession in the New Member States to address in the context of the implementation of the Structural Funds 2007-2013 the acute challenge of both the housing provision and the rehabilitation of the existing housing stock while improving the quality of the built environment and further developing their cultural identity and preserving their valuable architectural heritage;

³ Commission Staff Working Paper on ‘Cohesion policies and cities: the urban contribution to growth and jobs in the regions’, November 2005

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4. Emphasise the need for reinforced exchanges, co-operation and coordination of activities within relevant frameworks and networks, at local, regional, inter-regional and European level, in particular through the European Forum for Architectural Policies so as to develop and spread best practice;
5. Strongly recommend
 - The appropriate recognition of architecture, urban design and landscape architecture as an essential component of our common European cultural heritage in the planned communication on culture;
 - The adoption of architectural policies across the EU to assist in the care and development of both the historic and future built environments, and particularly relating to responses to social and environmental change;
 - The funding of research into the effectiveness of architectural policies and integrated and holistic approaches across the EU in order to develop best practice examples;
 - That in the development, management and care of the built environment, solutions must be adopted and implemented that are sustainable, durable and of high quality, and that these criteria must be taken into account when allocating EU Structural Funds;
6. Request that the Commission takes better account of architecture in its actions and policies concerning the cultural industries;
7. More generally, call on the Commission to give adequate attention to the matters raised in this statement and to recognise the importance of architecture, as a cross-sectoral issue, in future relevant policies of the EU.

End of Statement