



European Forum for Architectural Policies (EFAP-FEPA)

Draft Strategic Agenda and Action Plan

to promote architectural policies and increase resources for sustainable, quality-oriented development of the built environment within the EU and its Member States

A. Introduction

The built environment represents a vital dimension and asset for the future growth and successful development of European localities and regions. In order to create high-quality living and working environments, appropriate and quality-oriented protection, maintenance and development of these environments should form an integral part of all European development policies and programmes.

The European Forum for Architectural Policies (EFAP-FEPA) is an informal Europe-wide network whose aim is to promote Architectural policies.¹

In pursuing its goals, the EFAP-FEPA seeks to foster, disseminate and raise awareness of architectural quality in the broadest sense among architects, urban planners and other design professionals, governments and other institutions, and the general public. Furthermore it seeks to facilitate co-operation between interested stakeholders and to facilitate the exchange of good practice, as well as to launch and/or support initiatives and actions that can contribute to achieving its objectives.

This document is a draft for a combined strategic agenda and action plan designed to structure the activities of the EFAP-FEPA² and strengthen its unique role and orientation within the architectural and environmental community in Europe. It is also a contribution to ensuring effective implementation of the Council Resolution (2001/C 73/04)³ on architectural quality in Europe.

The document was prepared as a common initiative of the EFAP-FEPA Co-ordination Group in close co-operation with the Finnish EU Presidency⁴. It is proposed that the EFAP-FEPA Steering Committee considers and adopts the main principles of the proposal at the EFA-FEPA Steering Committee meeting in Helsinki on 19 October 2006. It is intended that a final document, as amended and developed on the basis of the preliminary discussion in Helsinki, could be formally adopted at the next EFAP-FEPA Steering Committee on the fringes of the planned event in Hamburg in April 2007 during the German EU Presidency⁵.

¹ The European Forum for Architectural Policies (EFAP-FEPA) was created in July 2000 during the French Presidency of the EU, following the launching of a common initiative by the French and Finnish Governments in 1999. It is an informal network of interested persons and specialists in the field of architectural policies in Europe comprised of three pillars, representing: culture and other relevant ministries and government bodies; professional organisations; and relevant cultural institutions of each of the EU member States. The roots of the network can be traced to the Dutch EU Presidency in 1997, when the results of an Expert Meeting on architectural policies held in Rotterdam were presented to the European Commission.

² At the meetings of the Steering Committee of the EFAP-FEPA held in Edinburgh (October 2005) and Vienna (January and June 2006) it was agreed to consolidate the governance structure for the Forum, and it was decided, notably, to set up an association to facilitate and support its activities. Formalities to establish the association (under Belgian law) are in process and it is planned to hold an Extraordinary Assembly of the association in Helsinki (October 2006) that will take the decisions necessary so that it can become operational.

³ Council Resolution of the 12th February 2001 on architectural quality in the urban and rural environments wherein the Commission is called upon, in consultation with the Member States and in accordance with the rules governing the Structural Funds, to ensure that, in the application of those Funds, a wider consideration of architectural quality and the conservation of cultural heritage is included.

⁴ Integrated in the preparation of the conference "Celebrating the Everyday – Aspects on Architectural Policies" to be held as part of Finland's EU Presidency programme on 19-21 October 2006 in Helsinki.

⁵ During the Vienna meeting it was furthermore agreed that the EFAP-FEPA would seek to adopt a multi-annual Strategic Action Plan, and it was underlined that no less than six countries/Presidencies have indicated their willingness to play an active role to facilitate the process for the adoption and the effective implementation of such a plan during the next two years, namely, Austria, Finland, Germany, Portugal, Slovenia, France.

B. General objectives

The main objective of this Strategic Agenda and Action Plan (SAAP) is to enable the EFAP-FEPA (the Forum) to implement its overall goals: to promote the emergence of adequate architectural policies in all European countries and, more generally, to promote quality in architecture and architectural heritage in Europe, in a creative manner while preserving cultural heritage and creating new environments for human activities, notably through the Forum network and the launching of various activities

A further objective is to contribute to ensuring a thread of continuity between Forum gatherings and relevant activities organised in the context of the rotation process of the EU Presidencies, and to offer the 'host countries' of the Forum events (normally countries holding the EU Presidency) a framework to allow them to specifically contribute and co-operate with other countries and stakeholders within the Forum and hence, progressively, to increase the influence of the Forum and to foster the adoption of its objectives within the EU and its Member States.

Architecture and architectural policies are notoriously cross-sectoral issues that affect many aspects of various policies impacting on the life of European citizens; these policy areas are also very often spread administratively across the remit of several ministries. Thus there is a genuine need for broad-based promotion work to foster a balanced development and appropriate use of creative resources in the production of the living environment of European citizens in the EU and its Member States. Yet, whilst aware of the extent of the task, it is strategically of the utmost importance to focus and limit the scope of the mission of the Forum so that it can find its appropriate place in the European context.

Operational goals

1. The Forum endeavours to hold two meetings every year that are organised/hosted by, or in the framework of, the EU Presidency at the time.

Each country holding the Presidency is expected to be in its turn a driving force for the advancement of the policies and activities debated/decided in the framework of the Steering Committee of the EFAP-FEPA, in which all interested parties (the three pillars from each country) are represented, including the launching of initiatives of its own that it may wish to take.

The secretariat of the EFAP-FEPA undertakes to provide the host country with the basic information and data (to be published principally on the Forum website), such as the address and contact list of the Forum 'members', the programmes and participants of previous gatherings, etc.

The EFAP-FEPA Association can provide further specific support, as appropriate.

2. The division of tasks between the Forum and the EFAP-FEPA Association will be clarified and documented.

The relations between the network EFA-FEPA and the International Non-Profit EFAP-FEPA Association (AISBL under Belgian law) – established in Brussels (deed signed on 23 September 2006, currently being processed through official channels) which aims to aid the EFAP-FEPA in promoting architectural policies in Europe, in attracting funding and supporting the activities of the Forum – as well as the role and responsibilities of the secretariat in relation to these two bodies, will be described and defined in a separate agreement between the Forum and the Association.

3. The organisation and activity of the EFAP-FEPA are to be developed in a democratic and open manner so that as many members/participants as possible can enrich the various activities with their input. The Forum will foster and favour transparency, commitment and the optimal use of all possible experience and knowledge in all its activities.

One of the means to be used in this process, is the appointment of working groups and/or the creation of voluntary interest groups to research/prepare background information and proposed strategies to be submitted to the Steering Committee concerning relevant thematic areas.

Note! For the proposed interest groups, it is natural to favour the continuation of topics for which some groundwork has already been done within the Forum or its associated institutions, or such topics that can, due to their content, naturally be integrated as part of the activity of the Forum⁶.

Proposed Action Plan

The discussions in the Forum events and gatherings under the EU Presidencies from 1997-2006, and the areas highlighted in the Council Resolution (2001/C 73/04) mentioned above, form the basis on which the themes and actions of this Action Plan are built.

The aim of the Action Plan is to set focused and prioritised goals and to devise an outline description of the concrete steps of the process to achieve them. There is also a need to create a clear division between short-term and long-term goals so as to keep the tasks realistic in relation to the resources available. Consequently, the programme of activities is to be discussed in an open and clear manner, so that interested stakeholders can understand the context and relate their approach and action to the elements of this programme.

Note: The basic idea when defining the action areas is to keep them simple and clear, almost as if they were slogans, so that each of them can also be easily adopted by non-architects. These areas, introduced here as a simple list, will be defined and described in more detail in the next chapter. How many areas there should be and what they will entail is a discussion that should take place in Helsinki. The next step after Helsinki will be to define the final focus and priorities of the concrete tasks within each action area, which will then be the same as Chapter C.

The following action areas/topics are proposed initially as a relevant, though not exhaustive, selection for an action plan.

1. Integrating architecture and architectural policies as a natural and permanent aspect in relevant EU policies and programmes (ensuring that they are included in the rolling agenda in the areas of culture, environment, urban issues, territorial development...⁷)
2. Supporting architectural policies in the Member States
3. Encouraging the adoption and implementation of architectural strategies at regional and local level (cities, local authorities, and also in the private sector)
4. Promoting the demand for and commissioning of quality in architecture and architectural services (best practices and the exchange and dissemination of knowledge)
5. Promoting the cultural and overall sustainability of the built environment
6. Strengthening the appreciation and understanding of built heritage and contemporary architecture as part of the same cultural 'continuum'.
7. Enhancing civic education in architecture and built environment issues.

⁶ This could perhaps even include some projects, the content of which seamlessly supports the mission of the Forum and the existence of which might in the course of time be threatened (Gaudi, young Architects etc.?!).

⁷ See in particular the resolution of the EFAP in Luxembourg 27 June 2005 presented to the Ministers of Culture and the letter to the Finnish Presidency (Minister of Culture) in connection with committee of cultural affairs meeting in Porvoo in July 2006.

8. Enhancing the financing of research programmes that catalyze and support high-quality architecture and sustainable development of the built environment.

The action areas mentioned form a basis for prioritising the operational focus of the Forum and for the creation of thematic working and interest groups.

In the next chapter the key issues are set out after a general description of each action area, followed by the immediate actions and the actors to be entrusted with them.

C. Action areas

NOTE! THIS CHAPTER SHOULD BE PREPARED IN A BROAD CONSENSUS AFTER HELSINKI AND BE DISCUSSED, AND MOST LIKELY FORMALLY ADOPTED, IN HAMBURG.

THE PROPOSAL FOR HELSINKI CONCERNS ONLY THE OUTLINE AND TITLES OF THIS CHAPTER.

The text in blue only offers some hints and points of view for the topics and tasks that could be included in the action plan.

1. Integrating architecture and architectural policies as a natural and permanent aspect in relevant EU policies and programmes (ensuring that they are included in the rolling agenda in the areas of culture, environment, urban issues, territorial development...⁸)

The promotion of architecture and of architectural policies should be natural, inherent elements of any adequate holistic and integrated approaches to ensuring the quality of space in Europe and hence in relevant EU Policies and Programmes

Influencing and lobbying policy-making in the EU and, intertwined with that, co-operation and task-sharing with other international bodies fostering architectural and environmental issues is an important field for influencing the preconditions for the emergence of good architecture and built environments.

The task includes ensuring organised monitoring and dissemination of information as well as analysis of what appropriate networking activities, at what levels and through what processes, require the most urgent and essential attention.

or perhaps

(The primary goal of the EFAP-FEPA is to ensure that the topic of architecture and of the cultural industries around architecture becomes a priority on the political agenda of the EU in line with the Council Resolution mentioned above.

The EFAP-FEPA will strive to ensure that this priority is also adequately reflected in all relevant Community Policies and Programmes, notably in the framework of the Culture 2007 Programme, in the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Urban Environment and of the EU Strategy for Sustainable Development. Moreover, and maybe more importantly from a strategic perspective, the EFAP-FEPA must ensure that architecture and architectural policies are duly taken into account, in a concrete manner, in the implementation of the 7th Framework Programme for Research and in the new period of the Structural Funds, in particular the EU Cohesion Policy, during the period 2007-2013.)

Key issues:

- Dissemination of information about the Forum and existing architectural policies /their objectives within the European Union.
- Analysis of EU processes and policies essential for architecture.
- Scope and tools for lobbying policy-making within the EU, and definition of priorities.
- Strategy for networking with relevant stakeholders and bodies.
- Guidelines for undertakings in the Member States.

Immediate actions 2006—2007:

- Create a working group of interested EFAP-FEPA members to monitor and analyze the present situation and policies and measures, and how to advance in this action area.
- Publish and circulate information in order to generate discussion (including the development of the website).

⁸ See in particular the resolution of the EFAP in Luxembourg 27 June 2005 presented to the Ministers of Culture and the letter to the Finnish Presidency (Minister of Culture) in connection with committee of cultural affairs meeting in Porvoo in July 2006.

Long-term actions:

- Catalyse networking with relevant promotional bodies in the field of architectural and urban development. (building up 'trust')

2. Supporting architectural policies in the Member States

The Forum encourages and promotes the launching of strategies and actions that aim to support the adoption of relevant architectural policies and their implementation in the Member States, as appropriate, by the active dissemination of information and by offering national stakeholders international visibility and credibility through networking.

The ongoing process has been and will be supported by bi-annual meetings and conferences integrated within the programmes of the EU Presidencies in accordance with the Presidency rotation.

The task includes systematic support for Member States in arranging the bi-annual meetings /events, as well as structured updating of existing data and effective dissemination of it.

Note. In 2005 the Forum launched a survey on the current status of architectural policies in the Member States, which forms a valuable resource for a data base on architectural policies.

Key issues:

(to be completed)

Immediate actions 2006—2007:

- Complement and update the study on architectural policies in the Member States.
- Revitalise and restructure the EFA-FEPA website so that the information on existing policies forms one vital category in it and, as part of this, build up a system where the policies from all countries are directly linked to the website and can easily be found there.

Long-term actions:

- Build up a portal to provide a free channel to the information of architectural policies in different European countries.

3. Encouraging the adoption and implementation of architectural strategies at regional and local level (cities, local authorities, and also in the private sector)

National programmes are vital, but practical implementation takes place at the local level. In some countries the voluntary architectural policy programmes adopted and implemented by regions and municipalities are growing strongly. These encouraging examples should be published more generally.

Without the interest and active input of the private sector, architectural aspects and a quality-oriented approach will not reach private and commercial developers and the actual producers of the built environment. Information on architecture-oriented private strategies and best practices should be gathered and published.

Key issues:

(to be completed)

Immediate actions 2006—2007:

- Launch a survey /research on local architectural policies.
(Finland can offer funding for starting the process.)
- A specific category for local policies will be opened on the EFAP-FEPA Website, where regions and municipalities can link to and publish their architectural policies.
(A monitoring group will be established for the proposed study on the theme, or the task will be delegated to the Association that will also seek to secure the financing needed).

Long-term actions:

(to be completed)

4. Promoting the demand for and commissioning of quality in architecture and architectural services (best practices and the exchange and dissemination of knowledge)

This theme has been one of the major concerns of the Forum gatherings in 1997-2006. It is a natural and necessary aspect of work to be fostered. As a consequence of the earlier efforts within the Forum, there is much potential for this kind of interest group.

The promotion of good practice in the commissioning of architectural services in both the public and private sectors will support and catalyze the delivering of quality in architecture and in the built environment more generally

Note! Increasing demand for architecture and architectural quality in society requires long-term efforts in all action areas.

Key issues:

(to be completed)

Immediate actions 2006—2007:

- Creating a working group of interested members to analyse the present situation and the policies and measures required to advance in this action area.

Long-term actions:

(to be completed)

5. Promoting cultural and overall sustainability of the built environment

In relation to citizens' right to a good environment and in order to ensure the role of architecture as one of the basic expressions of human culture, it is urgent to highlight cultural sustainability as a fundamental aspect of the built environment alongside ecological, economic, technical and social sustainability.

(To achieve these objectives the EFAP-FEPA, through its own dynamics and the development of close co-operation with the countries holding the Presidency of the EU, must create appropriate linkages with relevant other political activities and programmes, in the fields of culture, the environment, urban and territorial development, to name the main areas, while further enshrining architecture as an important element of sustainable development.)

Key issues:

(to be completed)

Immediate actions 2006—2007:

- Creating a working group of interested members to analyse the present situation and the policies and measures required to advance in this action area.

Long-term actions:

(to be completed)

6. Strengthening the appreciation and understanding of built heritage and contemporary architecture as part of the same cultural "continuum"

To ensure a balanced development of the European built environment it is vital to promote general understanding of the common roots of cultural heritage and contemporary architecture, as well as to persuade different stakeholders to see areas of common ground in terms of enlightened commissioning and the need for sustainable development.

Architecture and the built environment are outstanding evidence of Europe's common heritage and the diversity of its cultural expressions. Architectural policies aim at a broad understanding and cultivation of this richness in order to increase the well being of European citizens and communities. High quality contemporary architecture is tomorrow's cultural heritage!

The built environment should be a holistic chain of protection, maintenance and development.

Key issues:

(to be completed)

Immediate actions 2006—2007:

- Creating a working group of interested members to analyse the present situation and policies and measures required to advance in this action area.

Long-term actions:

(to be completed)

7. Enhancing civic education in architecture and built environment issues

This is a necessary precondition to advance the understanding and commissioning of architecture. There are plenty of private initiatives in many different countries. Architectural cultural institutes, which form one pillar of the Forum, run educational and quality promotion activities, as do some grassroots level movements (e.g. the network of 'architectural centres').

Integration with these networks is strategically important in order to focus and strengthen the message of the Forum to society at large.

In today's societies inhabitants have a central role both as participants in decision-making processes and as private consumers. Therefore the use and appreciation of architecture depends greatly on the attitudes and understanding of the general public. As part of our culture the built environment is the most visible and concrete part of the quality, attraction and functionality of our living settings. Despite this, architecture does not have an adequate role in European media and discussions, nor does it form part of the curricula in European schools.

In most countries architectural education for children and young people is in the hands of enthusiastic volunteers - educators, museum curators and architects - who over the last two decades have devised a considerable number of projects, courses, events and educational and promotion material. A channel has been created for civic education for adults (e.g.) in a number of architectural centres that offer an opportunity for citizens to participate in events, discussions, lobbying and other voluntary efforts for architecture and the quality of their environment.

This is indispensable basic work for the implementation of the objectives of the EFAP-FEPA.

The networks within the educational sector are still searching for their status and position. They could benefit from a more comprehensive NGO platform and, at the same time, strengthen the Forum.

Key issues:

(to be completed)

Immediate actions 2006—2007:

- Creating a working group of interested members to promote cooperation and exchange of information.
- Exploring the interest of relevant NGO networks in the field of architectural education to integrate their activities under the umbrella of the EFAP- FEPA and developing co-operation forms in collaboration with these bodies.

Long-term actions:

(to be completed)

8. Enhancing the financing of such research programmes that catalyse and support high-quality architecture and sustainable development of the built environment.

(to be completed)

Key issues:

(to be completed)

Immediate actions 2006—2007:

(to be completed)

Long-term actions:

(to be completed)

D. Implementation and follow-up

The European Forum for Architectural Policies should:

The European Commission should:

Member States should:

Architectural Institutions and Professional Associations should:

The working groups

Time schedule and information