SECRETARIAT GENERAL

Architects' Council of Europe
Rue Paul Emile Janson, 29   B-1050 Bruxelles
Tel: (32) 2 543 11 40   Fax: (32) 2 543 11 41
E-mail: info@ace-cae.org   Website: www.ace-cae.org

PRESS RELEASE
1st December 2008

TOWARDS INDICATORS OF THE QUALITY OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

In the context of its second General Assembly in 2008, the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE-CAE)[1] organised, at the end of November in Brussels, a Special Session on *Indicators of the quality of the built environment.*

On this occasion, several experts and representatives from the Member Organisations of the ACE-CAE underlined the importance of having, at European level, indicators of the quality of the built environment, particularly architectural quality, for the purpose of improving the quality of life of citizens.

The guest speakers were:
• Robin Nicholson, former Vice-President of the *Royal Institute of British Architects* and member of the *Commission for Architecture and Built Environment (CABE),* United Kingdom
• Rainer Mahalmäki, President of the *Finnish Association of Architects (SAFA)*
• Maria Berrini, President of the Research Institute *Ambiente Italia*, Milan
• Ronan Uhel, Head of the *Spatial Analysis* Group of of the *European Environment Agency*.

Based on the idea that "quality of the built environment is not a matter of opinion", the four guest speakers underlined the importance of technical and professional expertise in the assessment of quality as well as in the elaboration of pertinent policies. For them, as for the Member Organisations of the ACE-CAE, it is not necessary to formalise quality indicators in European legislation, but these must be clearly defined by the stakeholders concerned, so that they can be used systematically to measure the quality of the built environment, notably of architecture. Therefore, only qualified professionals from this sector are able to provide the expertise needed for their elaboration.

It is important to note that, on the day before the Special Session of the Architects' Council of Europe, the Council of Ministers of the European Union (Culture) adopted Conclusions on the contribution of architecture to sustainable development (20th November 2008).

A few days later, the ACE-CAE concerns were reflected in the final Declarations of the ministerial meetings on housing and urban development held in Marseille (France), on 24th and 25th November 2008 respectively. Housing Ministers asked for the commencement of work aimed at defining quality indicators for housing, notably on notions such as "adequate" and "decent". Ministers in charge of urban development highlighted the importance of having urban statistics and indicators comparable at European level. In an annex to the Declaration on urban development, which concerns the creation of a European reference framework for the implementation of the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities, the Ministers called for the elaboration of a Thesaurus of indicators "which would also allow to devise the necessary methodologies for the definition and assessment of quality indicators when it proves more difficult to measure these from a purely statistical point of view".

The ACE welcomes the adoption of the Council Conclusions and of the Declarations on housing and urban development, and it is very pleased about the declared intention of the Ministers to involve professional associations in the work related to the reference framework already mentioned.

---

[1] The Architects' Council of Europe (ACE-CAE) is the representative organisation for the architectural profession at European level: it aspires to speak with a single voice on its behalf in order to achieve its aims. Its growing membership currently consist of 45 Member Organisations, which are the regulatory and professional representative bodies in all European Union (EU) Member States, Accession Countries, Switzerland and Norway. Through them, the ACE-CAE represents the interests of over 470,000 architects from 32 countries in Europe.