



ARCHITECTS' COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DES ARCHITECTES D'EUROPE

SECRETARIAT GENERAL

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PRESS RELEASE
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A MIX OF ANXIETY AND HOPE

The Architects' Council of Europe (ACE)¹ - that represented 480,000 architects from 32 countries in 2008 - has published on its website the first, reliable study of the Architectural Profession at European level, featuring a tentative typology of the profession. From the results of the study it was estimated that the total revenue generated by the profession was €22 billion in 2007 and that it is housing projects (both private and public of all sizes) that make up the highest percentage (45%) of this revenue.

In 2008, the ACE commissioned Mirza & Nacey, a UK-based specialised consultancy, to carry out a comprehensive study of the architectural profession in Europe. The results of that study have now been published, in English and French, on the website of the ACE (<http://www.ace-cae.org/MemberN/Content/EN/pub/int/sectors.html>). The study was achieved through the close cooperation that the Member Organisations of the ACE offered to the consultants and to the fact that over 8,050 individual architects answered the questionnaire that formed the basis of the enquiry.

In relation to the structure of the profession, the study confirmed that there are about 480,000 architects in Europe of which 37% are female, that 42% of architects are aged under 40 and that 86% of all architectural offices employ 5 or less architects. This profile demonstrates that the profession is clearly dominated by micro, small and medium sized enterprises and is thus very vulnerable to fluctuations in the economic cycle. (Note that the study was running over summer in 2008, whereby the financial and economic crisis became very serious only later. See last paragraph below and ACE Press release of 28th April 2009). It also underlines the very personal nature of the services that are offered by architects to their clients, who generally have direct contact with qualified architects, in a relationship that is essentially based on mutual trust.

Other key facts that emerge indicate that 7% (33,810) of architects work outside the country in which they are registered, although the study did not break down the proportion of those who work in other European countries and those who work outside of Europe. Such information would be useful for the development of the policies of the ACE in relation to trade in services. Indeed, the ACE is currently further analysing the results of the study in order to identify how the knowledge gained should influence the development of its policies.

It is the intention of the ACE to repeat the study of the profession on a 2-yearly cycle so as to build up a detailed knowledge base of the profession and its overall economic impact. The next study will therefore normally be run during February 2010 with the results being published by mid-year.

In a later snapshot online survey, the ACE recently carried out the first of a series of quarterly surveys on the impact of the current economic and financial crisis on the profession. The results of that survey are also available on the website of the ACE and it shows a worrying trend whereby 1 in 6 architects, on average across Europe, have become unemployed since September 2008 (http://www.ace-cae.org/MemberN/Content/EN/documents/sdoc/structure.asp?id=aceinfo_overview). It also shows that there is little optimism among the architects that the slump in enquiries for new projects will change until much later this year. The ACE will be repeating the survey in the second half of June and the second half of September in order to identify any trends as they emerge.

In this rather dull environment and in order to also bring a note of optimism it is worthwhile underlining that the fact that the architectural profession is comprised primarily of very small economical units it might be better armed to resist the crisis and adapt to change. Furthermore, it is also a profession that has an important role to play in the context of new strategies and approaches that are increasingly being called for at the political level towards improving the quality of the built environment, and hence also architectural quality, notably in relation to energy efficiency and climate change.

¹ The Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) is the European organisation representing the architectural profession at European level. With its headquarters and Secretariat based in Brussels, the ACE speaks on behalf of the profession in order to achieve its aims. Its Member Organisations are the regulatory and professional representative bodies of all European Union (EU) Member States, Accession States, Norway and Switzerland. Through them it represents the interests of about 480,000 architects in 33 countries of Europe (in 2009). The principal function of the ACE is to monitor developments at EU level, seeking to influence those areas of EU Policy and legislation that have an impact on architectural practice and on the overall quality and sustainability of the built environment.