

ARCHITECTURAL POLICIES AND BUILDING CULTURE FOR CROATIA IN EUROPE

*Architecture is an expression of culture.
Architectural accomplishments, construction quality, harmonic
integration into environments and respecting of natural and urban
landscapes, as well as of cultural heritage are of public interest.*

(French Act on Architecture, Art. 77 (2) (3), January 1977)

Europe is uniting not only on political and economic, but also on cultural level. Area disposal and management, construction and architecture are its integral parts.

Present European built environment is a result of cooperation of professionals - architects and engineers. It is fundamental for development of construction culture and only through an advanced infrastructure it can become a civilisation. It is not givenness, but interactivity of politics, profession and each individual in creating everyday use value of high quality for all social classes.

The goal of unique European area has been defined in *Lisbon Charter* from year 2000 as *creation of the most dynamic and the most competitive economy in the world, which is based on knowledge that enables support of sustainable economic growth and offers even more and better workplaces, as well as guarantees greater social binding and environmental protection.* Europe is therefore uniting in comparison with the rest of the world, imposing its position in knowledge and quality, connecting of formal and content-related, as its great comprehensive advantage. Market match between cheap labour in Europe and Far East has been lost long time ago.

Resolution on Architectural Quality in Urban and Rural Environments introduced in year 2000 and adopted by European Council, created a political context for promotion of qualitative architectural expression and living environment, for recognizable European construction culture.

European Forum for Architectural Policies (EFAP) is a platform for uniting of architectural European policies, representing a collection of national architectural policies, guidelines for promotion of architectural quality, harmonisation, founding and execution of regulatory basis, defining the role of a principal and an investor, as well as systematic education of architects. Ten-year operation of EFAP has resulted in membership of 25 European countries with 46 institutions, some of which are state institutions (ministries of construction, transportation, culture, environmental protection, etc.), professional institutions (chambers, professional associations) and cultural institutions. Its goal is to influence the European Commission and afterwards,

the European Parliament, to proclaim European architectural policy as unique cultural and natural area with all national specific qualities. Richness of Europe is based on its diversity, which is also reflected in the architecture. Finland, France, Ireland, the Netherlands, Turkey, Estonia, Germany, Scotland, Great Britain, etc. have so far declared and adopted their architectural policies and Slovenia, as state presiding over European Union, shall do so by June this year.

Ministry of Environmental Protection, Physical Planning and Construction and Department of Architecture of Croatian Chamber of Architects and Civil Engineers represent Croatia in EFAP. Relevant to national platform is including of Ministry of Culture, which, we hope, will take place in near future.

Cultural policy of architecture and construction quality can only be maintained through accepted guidelines, in form of strategic document that determines policy in accordance with the architecture, determined by the Parliament. National architectural policy is inseparably linked to national development policies in all fields. It promotes architectural philosophy as component of operation at all political levels, from state to local levels and brings the state into European network of creation and harmonisation of European area management policy. Planning, designing and construction quality standards reflect directly on economic, social and cultural development in urban and rural areas, on health, mobility, safety and environmental protection.

Architectural policy is a process catalyst as: a) precondition for sustainability of development; b) taking care of public area as social and not area of exclusivity, commercialization and privatisation; c) measure of aesthetic criteria of global value with elements of local specific qualities; d) criterion for designing, material and building quality, health, environment and safety protection.

Croatia does not have a defined architectural policy at the moment, even though legal preconditions are fulfilled. Physical Planning and Construction Act prescribes enactment of Strategy for Physical Planning of The Republic of Croatia, which should be a starting point for Croatian architectural policy. Why? Because of listed basic guidelines for

- environment use and behaviour in it,
- national recognizability and positioning in European context,
- branding of Croatian natural und constructional assets,
- supporting interactivity and identification of people with environment with goal of its improvement, protection and reduction of vandalism grade,
- construction culture,

all for the purpose of determination of

- relationships of public and private sphere in planning and construction,
- land policy,
- protection of heritage and environment,
- protection of coastal strip as one of the greatest European assets recognized throughout the world,
- protection of ownership, health and safety,

- criteria of construction order, designing and construction,
- housing strategy.

Construction culture is not primarily directed to single masterpieces of modern architecture, but to quality of the widest construction spectrum, which represents the largest proportion of built environment. Many European countries have founded broad platform for its introduction and colloquially accepted name for it is a German expression, Baukultur.

Construction culture platform must represent a set of all important institutions involved in construction and shaping, such as universities, higher-education institutions, institutes, academies, museums, archives, galleries, state authorities, governments, regional and local governments, chambers, professional institutions, associations and federations, employer's associations in building sector, citizens initiatives, publishing, professional publishing, internet portals, material and equipment producers, construction companies and individuals. Just to illustrate, nowadays, German federal foundation Baukultur has about 1,500 members, having respectable professional and financial strengths.

Architecture itself represents everyday contact of people with culture and art; it is a tangible use value and differentiating factor in life of every individual. Networked knowledge and experiences shall provide for »spreading« of quality designing and construction into all social layers, but also provide for top accomplishments not only in formative, but also in technical-technological sense.

Top accomplishments of architecture become symbols of social environment, like a lighthouse. Development of cultural society must strive toward avoiding darkness in its foundation, moreover to make this »lighthouse« into a bond (or an »acupuncture point«) in network of qualitative construction that development is based on, that provides for sustainability and development of human activities, no matter if it concerns living, working, mobility, accessibility of education, fun or tourism. The more such »acupunctural points« there are, the safer prosperity and vitality of society in whole shall be.

Nothing of the above-mentioned can be conducted without political willingness and awareness that we are all on the same side of the »network«, striving together and sharing responsibilities.

Architects should attend to their work with high professional responsibility and independent from capital influence, protect public interests, create formatively, technically and functionally high quality environments as a reflection of national and European cultural surrounding in cooperation with other professions, as well as nurse not only artistic, but also engineering components of education and training, increase own social sensitivity and social engagement at cost of professional elitism.

Fundamental guidelines for defining of Croatian architectural policy are pointed out in some of the summaries of the 1st and 2nd Congress of Croatian Architects:

- Architectural policy and construction quality may only be conducted with declared guidelines in form of a strategic document that determines policy in accordance with the architecture.
- Strategy of protection of natural, healthy environment built in civilized manner has no alternative. Tools used for such and achievement may also be tools of destruction.
- Cities, settlements and buildings that surround us are witnesses of civilisation and culture that affirmed us as a nation, individuals and experts.
- We are all together responsible for protection of given assets and for creation of new assets that shall be affirmed in the future.
- A qualitative environment must be sustained in whole, within the context of harmonisation of Croatian economy with European standards.
- Building of Croatian area must be a result of thought over multidisciplinary procedures as a follow-up on state environmental policy and national architectural policy.
- Protected environments where people live also include construction works. Each attempt to stop this process and freezing in present state shall end in failure. If they are to be successful, management strategy shall take account thereof.
- Sustainable development without inhabitants is not a sustainable development. Preservation of landscape structure that would otherwise be totally changed or lose its inhabitants cannot be of interest to Croatia. State must provide measures that would make remaining of local inhabitants in their environment easier.
- Inseparable part of Croatian identity is its construction heritage. New constructions in Croatia must be an expression of modern Croatian society that takes into account all classes of historical values. Under no circumstances should import of recycled romantic projects foreign to our climate and tradition be allowed.
- Coast and islands are our greatest assets, which includes a special status and care. Declarative repetition without serious investments and concrete support by the state cannot bring any results.
- Privatisation and fencing of the coast is totally unacceptable model, foreign to Croatian tradition of relationship with the environment. Concept of closed resorts or sales of bays or even whole islands definitely does not belong to coastal area.

Croatian architectural branch is nowadays actively involved in European and worldwide branch associations: International Union of Architects (UIA), Architect's Council of Europe (ACE), European Forum for Architectural Policies (EFAP), EUROPAN, Mies van der Rohe Foundation and others. It entitles it, but also binds it to participate in work and fulfilling of jointly defined goals.

All of this can be fulfilled, like in countries that have declared national architectural policies, through establishment of qualitative cooperation of branch organisations with the state over bodies of Ministry of Environmental Protection, Physical Planning and Construction, Ministry of the Sea, Transport and Infrastructure, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Science, Education and

Sports and of Physical Planning Council of the Republic of Croatia. A Resolution (or document with similar title) on architectural policy of the Republic of Croatia adopted by the Croatian Parliament would contribute to inclusion into European Baukultur network, as well as provide for preconditions for founding of organisations such as Platform for construction culture, National architectural centre or Institute for Architecture.

In the end, I shall paraphrase one of the conclusions made on 2nd Congress of Croatian Architects.

Croatian policies and professional public are willing and would like to mend the reality. Systematic organizing of the regulative and sticking to principles in its implementation give hope that the reality can be and must be mended.

It is the right time to become involved in geographical and cultural community of European nations by protecting and pointing out of our national specific qualities, advantages and quality in accordance with the »zipper« principle- i.e. as we go, without catching rhythm and subsequent demonstrations.

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