The meaning of the protection of the architects title in European countries

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Abstract

The title 'Architect' is legally protected in many countries. Only designers who have successfully completed the required academic education can be registered in the Architects' Register and use the title. The purpose of this regulation is to give some basic quality assurance to consumers when hiring an 'Architect' for their design work. This should also contribute to the general quality of the built environment. In addition, it enables architects to work more easily in other EU countries. However, the requirements for registration as Architect differ considerably in the various countries. In some countries just the academic education is required, in others registration can only follow after a certain period of working in practice, sometimes with a prescribed programme. An extensive survey under young Dutch Architects that took part in a structured practice programme and others that just started in the working at the ordinary way, made clear that some years of experience adds considerably to the competences.

Keywords: Architects, title protection, profession, education

1. Introduction

In most countries not everyone that designs buildings is allowed to call himself an Architect. The title is then legally protected. The requirements for registration vary among countries. Sometimes candidates can register with their diploma of the appointed academic courses. In other countries an additional post-academic period is needed in which the candidate architects gain experience in the architects practice and may have to follow some additional courses. The purpose of this regulation is to give some basic quality assurance to consumers and also some basic contribution to quality of the built environment in general. In addition, it also enables architects to work more easily in other EU countries. Since 1985, EU Directive EEC 85/384, also known as the European Architects Directive [1] has regulated the legal position of architects in the European Union. The directive's greatest asset is its provision for the mutual recognition of qualifications in architecture in EU Member States. The purpose of this provision is twofold: to safeguard the freedom of movement of architects within the EU, and to guarantee that architects from the different member states have the same basic skills and competences.

Since the requirements for registration varies in the countries, it is useful to examine the value of the post-academic requirements. What is the contribution to the competences and skills of the young architects of some years of practical experience and how should this be structured? These questions arose in discussions about the functioning of the Dutch law to protect the title of Architects. The responsible secretary of state had the intention to abolish his responsibility for the quality of the professions of Architects. He initiated an evaluation [2]. The conclusions were very clear: most of the people in the field were positive about the use of the legal protection, but they also found that the quality requirements of the protected title should be expanded with practical experience and 'life time learning', a professional code of conduct and indemnity insurance. Since then a study was undertaken to get an overview of the regulations in fifteen EU countries. This was followed by a series of discussions by a group of some 15 Dutch top architects to define the required qualifications of young architects to be ready to work as a professional. In 2003 an experimental structure for professional experience of young architects was set up by the State architect. About 40 young architects followed a programme that consisted of working in practise, the mentorship of an experienced architect and a series of workshops. After The Experiment was finished it was evaluated [3]. The opinion of the participants of The Experiment and mentors were compared to those of young architects working in ordinary architects' practice without any specific programme. This paper is build upon the results of the above mentioned studies. The purpose is to present some striking evidence of the use of a structured period of professional practice or internship that is of great value for young architects.

2. Professional requirements for architects in member states of the European Union

Although the European Architects Directive provides a common basis for the mutual recognition of diplomas and certificates from certain educational institutions, we encountered wide variations in the requirements regulating the (quality of the) architectural profession in different Member States. (See, for example, Orbasli and Worthington 1995 [4]; Dankelman; 1999 [5]; and Priemus et al 2001 [2]). This section focuses on the how the current European Architects Directive is implemented in the Member States? A comparative overview is given of the similarities and differences between the 15 Member States in this study. More than 350,000 architects are now active in the 15 member states, but their legal position varies greatly. We summarise the situation within 15 (old) member states of the European Union in table 1. Table 2 contains more elaborate information about legal requirtements. The EU member states can be divided in five groups with regard to the legal position of architects (see table 1), varying from a wide ranging regulatory system (group A) to no legal regulations.

Group A. Belgium, Germany, Luxembourg, and Portugal

In this first group not only the title is protected, but also the profession of architects. This means that the submission of building plans to the local authorities for obtaining a building permit is restricted to architects. To become a registered architect in Belgium it requires five years of study and an additional two years of internship. The National Order of Architects issues the licence to practice, manages the architectural register, determines the duties and rights of

architects, and is responsible for (the formulation and execution of) disciplinary rules. The obligation for professional insurance is laid down by (public) law. In Germany architects are registered by the State Chambers of Architects. Architectural education can be obtained at universities or academies. After completing the educational requirement, a minimum internship period of two years is required before registering as an architect. Once registered the architect is subject to the professional and disciplinary rules of the chamber. In Luxembourg architects (and civil engineers) must register with the Order of Architecture and Consulting Engineers. To become registered, the aspiring architect must have a degree as defined in the EU Architects Directive plus one year of practical training. In Portugal the requirement to become a member of the Portuguese Association of Architects is a degree from a university of architecture as well as an additional period of two years practical training. Once registered a member has the right to practice architecture and to use the title of architect.

Table 1: Characteristics of the legal position of architects within the EU

		Protection of title	Protection of profession	Practical experience	Disciplinary codes
A	**Belgium**	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Germany	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Luxemburg	Y	Y	Y	Y
	Portugal	Y	Y	Y	Y
B	**Spain**	Y	Y		Y
	France	Y	Y		Y
C	**Italy**	Y	Y		Y
	Austria	Y		Y	Y
	United Kingdom	Y		Y	Y
D	**Greece**	Y			
	Netherlands	Y			
E	**Ireland**				
	Denmark				
	Sweden				
	Finland				

Group B. Spain, France, and Italy

In Spain a person is authorised to practise architecture by registering at a College of Architects. In order to register, a candidate must have a university diploma. Only registered architects may authorise and sign blueprints. Internship is not required to register. Architects in France must be registered at one of the regional Councils of Architects. After completing a course of study, no internship is needed to register. For buildings with a floor area that exceeds a certain number of square meters architects are required. In Italy architects register at one of the provincial rolls of

architects. After completing a course of study, the candidate must pass a government qualifying exam, which is usually taken at least half a year after obtaining the degree.

Table 2: Overview of the main characteristics of the legal position of building architects in the fifteen EU member states in 2004

	Number of architects (approx.)	Number of architects per 1 million inhabitants	Educational institutions total	universities	academies	Minimum years of study	Protection of title	Protection of profession	Obligatory registration	Internship required (months)	Disciplinary code	Insurance required
Austria	2400	279	6	5	1	5	+	+	+	3	+	+
Belgium	10500	1014	19	5	14	5	+	+	+	2	+	+
Denmark	6500	1207	2	-	2	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
Finland	3500	672	3	3	-	5	-	-	-	-	-	-
France	25000	452	22	22	-	6	+	+	+	-	+	+
Ireland	2300	667	2	2	-	5	-	-	-	2	-	-
Italy	94000	1640	18	14	4	5+	+	+	+	-	+	+
Germany	102000	1236	72	15	57	4.5	+	+	+	2/3	+	+
Greece	14500	1315	2	2	-	5	+	-	+	-	-	-
Luxembourg	550	1227	-	-	-	-	+	+	+	1	+	+
Netherlands	8520	526	8	2	6	5	+	-	+	-	-	-
Portugal	8600	826	18	14	4	5	+	-	+	-	+	-
Spain	32600	705	14	14	-	5	+	+	+	-	+	+
Sweden	5400	603	3	3		4.5	-	-	-	-	-	-
UK	30400	512	39	18	21	5	+	-	+	2	+	+

+ yes; - no

Group C. Austria and the United Kingdom

In Austria registration at the federal Camber of Architects and Consulting Engineers is obligatory, and a minimum three-year internship is required (following five years of professional education). Furthermore, the regulations of the disciplinary code and professional insurance are mandatory. In the UK it takes five years of academic study and two additional years of practical work to become registered at the Architects Registration Board (ARB) [6]. The registered architects must comply with ARB standards of conduct and practice. This means that they must carry adequate professional indemnity insurance and that they must maintain their professional competence.

Group D. Greece and the Netherlands

In Greece the law requires architects to be licensed. Graduates of a five-year course of study from one of the two recognised universities of architecture are eligible for registration at the Technical Chamber of Greece (TEE). In the Netherlands architects register at the Architects Registration Bureau. Architects are eligible for registration if they have a degree from one of the two recognised five-year universities of technology or one of the six four-year, part-time academies of architecture. These academies admit students only after four years of vocational training. There are no legal requirements for practical experience or vocational training yet. This is going to change soon. The Architects Title Law will be renewed and will contain also requirements for 2 years internship, permanent education etc…..

Group E. Ireland, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland

In Ireland the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland (RIAI) is the representative body for professionally qualified architects. A member of the RIAI must have a degree from a recognised university, two years of approved practical experience, and pass an examination in professional practice. It is also possible to become an associate member or an architectural technician member. Some 80 per cent of the qualified architects are members of the RIAI. Irish architects are liable for the projects they carry out, but professional insurance is not obligatory. The Federation of Danish Architects is a private non-profit organisation of architects with qualifications that conform to the European Directive. Minimum length of study is five years. Student members are also admitted. The federation represents about 80 per cent of the Danish architects. In Sweden the National Association of Swedish Architects (the SAR) is responsible for the quality of architects. To become a member, the candidate must have a diploma from one of the recognised architectural training centres (at least four and a half years) and one year of additional experience as an apprentice architect. Approximately 80 per cent of Swedish architects are members of the SAR. In Finland a degree in architecture (representing five years of study) from one of the three recognised universities is required to be permitted to use the title of architect. No professional experience is needed. Almost all of the building architects are members of the Finish Association of Architects.

One of the goals of the European Architects Directive was to improve mobility for architects in the EU member states. Reliable figures on this are lacking, but the Dutch Architects Registration Board (SBA) believes there is a great deal of ‘free exchange of architects’. The Dutch experiences show that this process does not always run smoothly, however. Every year the SBA has to assist Dutch registered architects obtain their legitimate rights to practice elsewhere in Europe. And the Registration Board (SBA) believes these are not isolated incidents. The Architects Directive is interpreted very differently in different European countries. Although this variable interpretation has gradually improved, there are still some difficulties. An example can illustrate this point. Some years ago relatively many Austrian architects enrolled in the Dutch register. Austrian Law requires three years of practical experience before an Austrian architect can register. The market for architects is tight in Austria, so it is difficult to gain practical experience. Thus, Austrian architects are able to practice their profession in the Netherlands but not in their home country.

3. Experiment with structured internship in the Netherlands

In 2005, a two-year experiment came to an end in the Netherlands in which young architecture graduates were given the chance to gain experience in a structured way in every field of architectural professional practice. It was known as The Experiment and was organised by the Atelier of the State Architect. The initiative was the result of the evaluation of the Architects' Title Act. In a series of discussion meetings involving a group of leading Dutch architects in 2001-2002, besides the earlier intentions of giving more meaning to the title of Architects also consideration was given to what was needed to strengthen the role of the architect in the construction process. This led to the plan to offer young architects a programme of experience on a structural basis for two years, under the guidance of a personal mentor and a series of study meetings. The Experiment was evaluated [3]. This involved questioning the young architects and mentors taking part, as well as a large comparable group of young architects who entered regular practice without following any specific programme. It is precisely that comparison between participants and non-participants which has provided an insight into whether a period of structured practical experience offers added value. This section presents the evidence found in the Dutch Experiment for the added value of various elements of eduction and gaining experience. This can be compared to the results of other international studies. See e.g. Glasser, D. E. 2000 [7], Jones, C.B. 2006 [8], Nicol, D. and Pilling S. 2000 [9], and Quinn, B.A. 2003 [10].

In The Experiment, around forty recent architecture graduates were given the opportunity of acquiring experience at architectural firms where they would be supported by a mentor. For the practical side, a list of aspects of the profession of architects was drawn up, ranging from the initiatory phase all the way to the implementation phase of the construction process, with the intention being that the participants gained sound experience throughout. At the same time, several tools were deployed to lend the process structure and to monitor it. They included Personal Six-Month Plans, which laid down agreements between the young architects and their mentors about the activities to be undertaken in the six-month period. The architects kept a logbook of their progress, their findings and the results of their work. Visits were also made by the organisers of The Experiment to the place of work of the participants to discuss their programme. In addition to this practical part, The Experiment consisted of a joint programme. This took the form of a series of meetings with an educational character, during some of which the participants held project presentations on the designs they had been involved in. The other meetings were of an informative nature, and here the focus was on matters such as rules and regulations, local authority procedures, contract negotiations, and procedures for selecting construction companies. The research consisted of questionnaires completed by the young architects and mentors, and a comparative group of recently graduated architects who have worked in regular practice, but not specifically in a structured way. Around 80% of the young architects responded to the questionnaire, while the figure for the mentors was 65%. We looked at the added value of the structure of The Experiment by polling the comparative group. For this purpose, we sent a questionnaire to every architect who graduated between January 2001 and December 2003, and who is registered in the Architects Register (about 500). There was a

remarkable large response, with some 200 completed forms being returned. It showed that these young architects that were not in anyway involved in the project, were very driven to answer this long questionnaire. The questionnaires revealed a great deal of information as to what degree architects working over a period of time acquired practical work experience in the various aspects of the profession of architects and to what degree they considered themselves able to perform in those aspects independently.

In general, the mentors and young architects were highly satisfied with the content and organisation of The Experiment and joint programme of study meetings. The relevance and the quality of all aspects were judged positively, while the score given by the architects to the importance of the meetings fluctuated from important to very important, around the eighty to ninety per cent mark. Of the architects in the comparative group, about sixty five per cent said they would have been interested in informative meetings after their studies that dealt with the subjects covered by The Experiment. The quality of the introductions to the joint meetings was, according to the young architects, very good, and although the quality of the accompanying documentation met with approval, this was to a lesser degree on average. They were less satisfied by the time given to the subjects being covered. The quality of the assignments, the expertise and availability of the mentor at the office was judged positively. Three quarters of the architects, and nearly seventy per cent of the mentors, thought that the number of projects they were involved in during The Experiment was sufficient to enable them to gain experience in all aspects of the architectural profession. Remarkably, the score of the comparative group was higher, with almost ninety per cent of them saying that they had worked on enough projects to gain experience with every aspect of the job. The difference is probably due to varying levels of expectation. The use of the Personal Six-month Plan, the logbook and the appraisal interviews were generally considered positive by architects and mentors alike. Finally, more than ninety per cent of the participating architects and mentors described the quality of the overall programme of The Experiment as good to very good.

Table 3 shows that the meetings on Construction methods versus budget, Local authority procedures, Construction process and Contract negotiations were considered as most important by the architects, while the meetings on Research at architectural agencies, the Programme of Requirements and the Mentor meetings were thought in relative terms to be the least important. The mentors were most enthusiastic about the Start meetings, the Project presentations and Building Decree (building regulations), describing them as important to very important. They were not as keen on Research at architectural agencies or the Programme of requirements. About sixty to seventy per cent of the architects in the comparative group indicated that they would have been interested in information meetings after completing their studies, in particular where Contract negotiations, Office and design management and Construction methods versus budget were covered, all of which scored well.

Table 3: The average scores for study meetings

	Participants	Mentors	Comparative group
Start meetings	4.1	4.5	-
Workshop project presentation	4.0	4.5	-
Building Decree (building regulations)	4.3	4.2	3.1
Office and design management	4.0	4.2	4.0
Social position of architects	4.0	4.2	1.7
Research at architectural agencies	3.7	3.6	3.0
Selection procedures	4.0	3.9	1.9
Contract negotiations	4.3	4.2	4.6
Partnership relationships	4.1	3.7	3.0
Giving direction in the construction process	3.9	4.0	2.9
The programme of requirements	3.9	3.6	2.7
Construction methods versus budget	4.4	4.2	3.8
Local authority procedures	4.4	3.9	3.4
The construction process	4.4	4.1	2.6
Positioning of the agency and publicity	4.1	3.7	3.2
Mentor meetings	3.8	3.7	1.7
Average	4.1	4.0	2.9

(average scores on a scale of 1-5: 5 = very important, 4 = important, 3 = neutral, 2 = not very important, 1 = not important at all)

The research produced a great deal of information about whether experience was gained with the different areas of architectural practice and to what degree the respondents felt they had a sufficient grasp of those areas in order to be able to carry them out independently. This was all highlighted by the questions of whether they could work as an independent architect and were experienced enough to run an agency of their own. We have pooled a lot of the information that emerged from these questions and worked out average scores in order to gain insights at a higher abstract level. This has led to the following observations: for the participants in The Experiment and the architects in the comparative group, the period of practical experience has made a significant contribution to their being sufficiently competent in the different areas of architectural practice. Before working in practice, there was already a reasonable grasp of the areas in the design phase, while this was much less the case in the assignment, construction preparation and construction process phases. The period of acquiring experience was useful for each phase in approximately equal measure. The result was that, after participating in The Experiment or gaining practical experience elsewhere, most respondents mastered the different areas of the design phase to the extent that they can carry them out independently. This does not apply to the other three phases. Based on the information received, it has not been shown that organising practical experience in the form of The Experiment gives added value when compared with experience gained in a conventional practical environment. Indeed, in some

areas the comparative group scored better than those taking part in The Experiment. The question remains, though, to what degree the group of participants is comparable to those in the comparative group. However, there is no indication among the various characteristics of either group to suggest that one is ‘qualitatively’ superior to the other. The self-perception of both groups as to their own level of experience before working in practice was also very similar.

The mentors and architects taking part in The Experiment, as well as the architects in the comparative group, attached great value to a structured approach in gaining experience, with the former being very convinced of the added value it offered. The comparative group, too, believed that being involved in a structured programme may have provided greater opportunities for gaining experience than being in regular practice, although they were in fact satisfied with their own period of practical experience. Regarding the question of whether the respondents had gained enough experience to begin their own company, the comparative group scored noticeably higher than the participants. A possible explanation for this could be that the group of participants, by being involved in The Experiment and therefore focusing more attention than otherwise would have been the case on all the different fields of the architectural profession and analysing whether they had a sufficient grasp of them, had a more critical view of themselves than the average young architect.

The experience acquired by the young architects in The Experiment in the different areas of architectural practice, and the degree to which they, and the members of the comparative group, now have a good mastery of those areas, were measured extensively (see table 4). This covers the opinions of the young architects themselves and is therefore not necessarily an accurate reflection of the actual abilities of the respondents.

For both groups the period spent in practice made a very large contribution to gaining a good grasp of the different areas of the profession. Before starting work in practice, there was already a reasonable mastery of the various aspects of the *design phase*, while for the *assignment*, *construction preparation* and *construction process* phases there was only a very limited level of competency. The experience gained during the relevant period was spread fairly evenly over all the phases. The result was that most respondents, either after taking part in The Experiment or acquiring experience in practice, have a sufficient grasp of the aspects of the design phase to be able to perform them independently. This did not apply to the other three phases. From the research it appeared that those in the comparative group built up a similar level of experience of architectural practice to the participants in The Experiment. In some areas, the comparative group actually scored more than those in The Experiment. The question remains, though, to what degree the group of participants is comparable to those in the comparative group. There is however, as has already been stated, no indication among the characteristics of either group to suggest that one is ‘qualitatively’ superior to the other. The self-perception of both groups as to their own level of experience before working in practice was also very similar. On the basis of this information it therefore cannot be demonstrated that organising practical experience in the form of The Experiment (the mentors and the Personal Six-Month Plans) lends any added value when compared to gaining experience in regular practice. The architects and mentors involved in The Experiment, as well as the architects in the comparative group, believed there is great

Table 4: Percentages of respondents that are able to carry out the aspects of the profession of architects independently before and after the period of practical experience

	Independent before		Independent after		Independent (b+a)		Not independent	
	P	**C**	**P**	**C**	**P**	**C**	**P**	**C**
ASSIGNMENT PHASE	14	13	47	41	61	53	39	47
Acquisition discussions	19	16	31	51	50	67	50	33
Contract negotiations	3	4	19	28	22	32	78	68
Drawing up contract	22	4	78	27	100	30	0	70
Programme of Requirements	9	4	41	48	50	51	50	49
Assignment presentation	19	36	66	51	84	87	16	13
DESIGN PHASE	25	29	66	60	91	89	9	11
The design	22	29	69	63	91	91	9	9
Other projects	28	28	69	62	97	90	3	11
Presentation of the design	34	49	63	44	97	93	3	7
Repors of planning team	19	15	66	64	84	80	16	20
Correspondence	22	23	63	68	84	90	16	10
CONSTRUCTION PREPARATION PHASE	8	11	41	56	48	67	52	33
Construction preparations	6	12	44	64	50	76	50	24
Managing the project specifications	6	8	31	54	38	62	62	39
Contracting procedures	3	5	19	35	22	40	78	60
Correspondence	13	19	53	60	66	79	34	21
Consultation local authorities	9	13	56	68	66	80	34	20
CONSTRUCTION PROCESS PHASE	11	14	42	57	53	71	47	29
Attending the construction meeting	16	16	47	61	63	77	38	23
Reports of planning team	9	14	53	56	63	69	38	31
Correspondence	9	17	56	64	66	81	34	19
Inspecting drawings of third parties	9	15	44	63	53	78	47	22
Visiting the construction site	16	17	44	56	59	73	41	27
Attending the progress meetings	13	16	44	62	56	78	44	22
Delivery report	3	6	9	37	13	43	88	57
AVERAGE	14	16	48	54	62	70	38	30

P = participants in The Experiment; C= architects in the comparative group

merit in gaining experience according to a structure. The former group were convinced of the added value it brings, while the latter thought that being part of a structural process could have given them more experience than being in regular practice. The members of the comparative group, however, were nonetheless satisfied about their own period in regular practice. With regard to the question about whether they now considered themselves to have enough experience to start their own agency, the comparative group scored markedly higher than the participants in The Experiment. A possible explanation for this could be that the group of participants, by being involved in The Experiment and therefore focusing more attention than otherwise would have been the case on all the different fields of the architectural profession and analysing whether they had a sufficient grasp of them, had a more critical view of themselves than the average young architect.

4. Conclusion

The answer to the question of whether there should be regulations that deal with the legal position of architects on a European level is ‘yes’. The work of architects affects the daily life of many Europeans, a fact that is appreciated by the European Council (Council of the EU, 2001). As we have seen, however, the current directive does not require a uniform standard of education and quality for architects. It has flaws with respect to ensuring the quality of architects as well as for the free movement of these professionals. These flaws will become far more important when the new directive on the internal market comes into effect. The aim is to require that an architect working in a country other than his own should comply with the regulations of his country of origin. But the current patchwork of national regulations will make this very difficult, not only for architects, but also for the (quality of) the built environment and for consumers. The recent expansion of the EU will undoubtedly contribute to a more complex (or even unworkable) situation. Therefore, it is important to regulate this professional group with a certain consistency across the continent. The current EU regulatory framework fails to realise this consistency. The directive should focus more on the essential demands on the quality of architects. The educational institutions and their respective degrees that are recognised in the EU member states should be reconsidered. Although the member states have various educational systems, in general the title of architect can be obtained in one of two ways: either through a university course of study or attending a school of (higher) vocational education. University education contains only a relatively small component of practical experience, while schools of vocational education place a relatively strong emphasis on practical components. The directive should acknowledge this situation (as it now does), but should also look at the details of the curriculum in the various educational institutions. It is highly unlikely that a vocational education alone (four years following secondary education) can provide all the training required to develop highly skilled architects. The same is true of a five-year university education that includes only limited practical experience. The directive should sketch more clearly the paths that can lead to the title of architect. On average it will take seven to eight years to become a skilled architect. Not only the educational demands but also the demands on practical experience should be established in the Architects Directive. Only architects who fulfil these educational and practical; experience qualifications are accepted in the architects register. In order to protect the consumer and the quality of the built environment the directive should

ensure also that the knowledge, skills, and experience of a registered architect maintain a certain standard. To guarantee these qualities additional requirements can be made in the directive concerning continued education, a professional code of conduct and indemnity insurance. The member states should recognise this new and updated directive and include it in their legal system. States may set additional requirements, but these requirements must not go counter to the directive's ‘spirit’ or substance. Only registered architects should be permitted to use the title and freely practice architecture in all member states.

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