

EFCA Position Paper on the engineering consultant and the architect, partners in the construction sector

Subject	The engineering consultant and the architect, partners in the construction sector
Category	Partnership and co-operation
Date issued	5 January 2001

Background

Engineering consultants manage, design and supervise a broad range of projects such as industrial projects (energy production, transport and distribution, manufacturing and processing industries), infrastructure (transport systems, hydraulic systems and ports), building construction (office buildings, hospitals, universities and schools, etc), agricultural developments and projects for the conservation of nature. Engineering consultants maintain quality and a sustainable environment in the projects they manage and design, and take into consideration not only technical, economic and environmental elements, but also architectural elements in partnership with the architects. In most projects, engineering consultants and architects co-operate as professional partners. However, the legal protection offered to both partners differs in some EU member countries, resulting in a situation where the partners do not benefit from equal status, which can impair the good practice of their professions. For this reason EFCA believes that the working relation between consulting engineers and architects needs to be clarified. This is the subject of the present position paper.

EFCA's interest

Services rendered by the engineering consultant

The engineering consultant primarily provides technology-based intellectual services for the built environment and the natural environment in the interests of clients and society. His objective is to ensure global and durable quality of the works that he designs and conceives. With projects increasing in size and complexity, engineering consultants have project management skills that are now offered as state-of-the-art services assisted by 3D design and project administration software made available via Internet for all team members.

Both professions ply similar trades and maintain common objectives

The engineering consultant and the architect provide different facets of the same trade. They maintain common principles and interests such as compliance to a code of ethics, a commitment to a quality-based selection of the service provider and the provision of quality assurance systems on the part of the service provider.

The skills of both professions are complementary in the construction process

The engineering consultant and the architect are partners from the initial concept of the works through to the implementation. As a result of their combined and complementary skills, they are able to provide designs of the highest quality having due regard to all the elements involved in the processes such as

the architectural, cultural, technical, economic and environmental considerations which are typical of modern construction requirements. Architectural creation can no longer be dissociated from the technical and socio-economic and environmental objectives, which form an integral part of any construction project.

Integrated multidisciplinary teams are essential

In recent years, the construction sector has experienced major changes as a result of a number of factors such as the use of new building materials, the constantly evolving technology of building services, complex environmental considerations, as well as the safety and security requirements for users, workers and that of building sites. In addition, both the scale and the complexity of the projects have continued to grow. A multidisciplinary approach based on the formation of multidisciplinary teams with shared responsibilities is therefore essential from the outset.

The market requires different forms of practices of both professions

Engineering consultants and architects practice their trades either in a corporate capacity or as a liberal profession. In most countries, the dominant volume is performed by corporate services and in general recent trends show that the corporate option is progressively being favoured. Multidisciplinary practices integrating both professions have developed in response to the needs of the client, society and the environment. These practices are better able to offer a global breadth of services which some customers demand. Multidisciplinary practices should therefore be able to develop without regulatory constraints, as is already the case in some member countries.