Adapting living spaces to the effect of climate change through architectural and planning solutions

Manifesto for the
EU institutions

Time to Act:
for high-quality
architecture and living
environment for all

ACE key policy priorities
for the EU institutions

Promoting high-quality architecture
and living environment for all
- Recognising the value of architecture as a key lever for high-quality living spaces
- Embedding the values of the New European Bauhaus in EU legislation
- Developing a proposal for a Planning Services Directive

Advancing the highest standards in education
and ensuring the upskilling of professionals
- Aligning with the International Standard of Training (5+2)
- Resolving the problem of mixed qualifications
- Ensuring the up-skilling of professionals

Establishing a SME-friendly regulatory framework
- Ensuring strict reciprocal application of the Government Procurement Agreement and International Procurement Instrument
- Revising the Public Procurement Directive

Favouring architectural and planning solutions
in the built environment
- Tackling whole-life impact of the built environment and apply circular economy principles in the construction sector
- Promoting renovation, transformation and re-use of existing buildings over demolition and new builds
- **Adapting living spaces to the effect of climate change through architectural and planning solutions**

Challenge: How to adapt our living spaces to the new climatic conditions and restore biodiversity?

Solution: Favour architectural and planning solutions.

Background

In the coming decades, Europe will be much more frequently exposed to extreme weather events as a result of climate change – floods caused by heavy rains and heatwaves being certainly the two biggest risks that threaten us. Some 350 million Europeans could be exposed to harmful climate extremes every year.

ACE Policy Position

Not only cutting down GHG is at stake. A profound and radical renewal of our built environment is needed to achieve healthier, more inclusive and pleasing spaces that are resilient to climate change, are affordable, and can be operated and maintained with less energy and natural resources. In so doing, renovation can generate far-reaching social, environmental and economic benefits. While demolition can be the best option in specific cases, building conservation/retrofit should always be envisaged as the preferred option. The ACE calls for:

- Limiting urbanisation in risk-prone areas: Our built environment needs to be planned and designed from the outset with climate adaptation in mind. Wisdom and common sense require limiting urbanisation in risk-prone areas. Urban Master Plans are a key tool for planning the best strategies to improve the resilience of our living spaces in the long term.
- Encouraging nature-based solutions (NbS): NbS can help cities to reduce urban heat island effects and cooling needs in buildings (eg. through trees/vegetation in public spaces; cool pavement, green roofs/walls), improve air quality (eg. green spaces), better manage water (eg. permeable pavements), increase biodiversity (birdhouses, insect hotels, etc.). They should be encouraged by public authorities through financial incentives (grants or tax breaks).
- Limiting urban sprawl and reducing soil sealing: In so doing, cities can help mitigate the impacts of extreme weather events (floods, heat waves), improve water management, preserve biodiversity and enhance the quality of life for urban residents.
- Promoting passive design principles: Passive design principles help maintaining comfortable indoor temperatures inside buildings without mechanical or electrical devices. They often involve design strategies that maximise natural ventilation, shading, insulation, and thermal mass to minimise the need for conventional heating and air-conditioning systems. Such passive design principles should be prioritised in new constructions and renovations through building codes and regulations.
- Supporting vernacular architecture: levering traditional ecological knowledge: Vernacular architecture refers to traditional building methods and designs that are specific to a particular region or culture. These designs reflect local climatic conditions, available materials, and cultural practices. They are low-tech solutions with minimum energy consumption.
- Planning for disasters: Disaster preparedness is crucial for minimising the impacts of extreme weather events and other climate-related hazards. As climate change increases the frequency and severity of disasters such as floods, heatwaves, storms, droughts, and wildfires, effective preparedness strategies become essential for protecting lives, our living spaces, and ecosystems.

Links

- ACE Statement A sustainable, fair and beautiful built environment to address the climate and biodiversity crisis
- 20 Architectural Projects Against Climate Change

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"Europe is warming twice as fast as other continents, with extreme weather causing excess deaths and economic disruption."

Source: World Meteorological Organisation (WMO).