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Dear Diana,

Following the IFLA Europe General Assembly in Brussels on the 15th-16th of October 2016 and the proposition made by the delegate of the Romanian Landscape Architects Association (AsoP Romania) within the International Federation of Landscape Architecture – European Region (IFLA Europe), concerning the amendments towards the Specific standards and regarding the external evaluation of academic quality for undergraduate and master programs (C9: Forestry, agricultural and veterinary sciences), we kindly ask you to take into consideration the next points made by the IFLA Europe Executive Committee.

The Standards currently being developed by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education will most likely cause severe dysfunctions in the training process of landscape architects, contradicting the European Landscape Convention which is ratified by Romania since 2002 (Art. 6 B of Law 451/2002).

Article 6B of the European Landscape Convention

Training and education

Each Party undertakes to promote:

- a training for specialists in landscape appraisal and operations;*
- b multidisciplinary training programmes in landscape policy, protection, management and planning, for professionals in the private and public sectors and for associations concerned;*
- c school and university courses which, in the relevant subject areas, address the values attaching to landscapes and the issues raised by their protection, management and planning.*



We consider that granting only 25 percent towards expert disciplines seriously contravenes the provisions within the IFLA suite of documents which aim to regulate and inform the education of landscape architects.

These documents¹ include;

- Charter for landscape architectural education (with IFLA Europe addenda)
- IFLA Guidance Document for Recognition or Accreditation (with IFLA Europe addenda)
- IFLA- UNESCO Charter for Landscape Architectural Education
- ECLAS Guidance on Education,

all of which serve the purpose of delivering job market-ready experts and professional expert training in the Landscape Architecture sector. The suggested percentage of studio based learning which is overseen by professional landscape architects is 50 %.

It is important to understand that landscape architectural education, and design disciplines in general are based on studio centred learning and involve the student in researching and producing projects, project design to include drawings, models and visual output in order to both develop their design skills but also to enable the student (and professional) to communicate their designs to the public and to clients. This studio centred learning is thus fundamental throughout the student training and professional activity.

We believe that, through the adoption of the specific standards proposed by Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, a considerable gap will be generated between the university training and the actual professional field requirements. As stipulated by the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO), the landscape architect profession² is part of a broad spectrum of occupations dealing with humans' surrounding environment (Major group 2 Professionals / Sub-major Group 21 Science and Engineering Professionals / Minor Group 216 Architects, Planners, Surveyors and Designers / Unit Group 2162 Landscape Architect, for which ISCO is specifying as related occupations 2161 Building Architect and 2164 Urban Planner).

It should be also mentioned that, at the European level, there are a wide range of administrative forms embedding study programs in landscape architecture accredited by IFLA Europe - that are preparing landscape architectural professionals - within universities with different profiles such as: Agronomical Studies, Ecology, Life & Earth Sciences, Technical and Civil Engineering Studies, Architecture or Designs. What is important to emphasize and understand is that, regardless of the administrative and academic structure of the landscape architecture study programs and the actual title acquired at the end of university studies (Landscape Architect, Landscape Engineer, Landscape Planner, Landscape Designer, etc.), the educational standard should ensure the appropriate professional training, consistent with the needs of the labour market and, thus, being able to provide graduates with real employment opportunities along with ensuring employers receive graduates who are competent and able to tackle complex projects as will be no doubt required of them albeit with appropriate guidance and mentoring for the early part of their career.

¹ Documents available at <http://iflaeurope.eu/education/>

² http://www.ilo.org/global/publications/ilo-bookstore/order-online/books/WCMS_172572/lang--en/index.htm



This is not to say that that we desire that all European university study programmes have a similar focus or approach, on the contrary, we consider that different training programmes may ensure a more balanced supply of capable graduates, professionally speaking, within this structurally- interdisciplinary and complex sector. Nevertheless, we believe that designing should be at the core of studying, it being not a discipline in itself, but a way of exercising the mind and developing future professional capabilities. In addition, a good intellectual training in the fields of architecture, urbanism, and arts, involves design, and these are also essential for landscape architecture. Knowledge from areas such as ecology, botany, and forestry are also one of the many facets that are essential to this profession, in the same way as it is necessary to have an appreciation of technical or civil construction and engineering principles.

Furthermore, gaining professional experience, based on internships in firms and design bureaus, is at the foundation of genuine training for future experts. We recognise that 2 to 4 weeks' internship periods are insufficient for understanding the work mode of a landscape architectural bureau and longer periods are more appropriate to ensure we eliminate obstacles to employment and professional interaction.

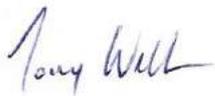
Accordingly, given the application of the Bologna Convention provisions, we consider that the appropriate training of experts entails structuring a study program of 4 to 5 years, with an integrated masters programme. Such programmes must allow for internships of more than 1 month and perhaps as long as three months if not longer. This type of programme structure is common for professions that use design training at the core of their teaching methods, and, although requiring longer periods in order to assimilate knowledge and skills, they provide a better programme structure with an integrated Master is specific for professions that have as core-activity the project studio as practical and intuitive learning method. These methods need a longer period of development and assimilation but ensure in the same time a better practical and applied integration and correlation of different knowledge areas.

We understand that the standards proposed by the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education may be considered a deviation from European standard. As IFLA Europe are associate members of ENQA (<http://www.enqa.eu>), we would ask that you ensure that the standards are adhered to or are, at the very least, approved by ENQA and thus may be assured of their quality. We strongly believe that these new standards must be urgently revised and adapted to the necessities of the international job market for landscape architectural positions and thus follow best practice within Europe and internationally. Furthermore, we consider renaming the program *Arhitectura Peisajului* to be in compliance with IFLA Europe standards although the title awarded is engineer specialized in landscape architecture (“*arhitectura peisajera*”).



In conclusion, we recommend a strong collaboration between the representatives of the Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and the Romanian Ministry of Education together with the representatives of AsoP Romania, IFLA Europe. We are available to assist if appropriate and be assured of our attention to this matter and our willingness to assist in achieving a positive outcome both the for the profession of landscape architecture and particularly in relation to the education and training of landscape architects.

With best wishes



Tony WILLIAMS,
President

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