
Item 6.1 Responses to Consultation Report on Competences in Spatial Planning

1. The 2016 Spring General Assembly (GA) delegated to the Executive Committee responsibility for preparing a Consultation Paper on the core competences required of professional planners. The results of this consultation will form a basis for the preparation of Guidelines by ECTP-CEU.
2. The Consultation Paper was circulated by ExCo with a deadline for responses by 16th September. At the time of writing this report, responses have been received from 16 member associations (and others are due in the next week). All these responses have been circulated to member associations.
3. This report provides an overview of the feedback that has been received to allow an informed debate at this Autumn General Assembly and to provide guidance on the way forward. Following the debate, it is recommended that the ExCo should produce and circulate draft guidance for the consideration and approval by the Spring 2017 GA.

Responses to the Consultation Paper

4. All comments on the Consultation Paper have been circulated with the General Assembly papers. In addition, it should be noted that some associations have not submitted a formal response where they have no objections to the approach to guidance set out in the paper. Also, it should be noted that ExCo has made contact with AESOP and it is hoped that they will be able to join the GA discussion.
5. There has been general support for the principle of preparing formal Guidelines by the ECTP-CEU to its members on the professional competences that should be acquired through initial professional training. Even those members who are recommending further work and refinement, accept the Guidelines as an intermediate step. The proposal that the ExCo should prepare a Guidelines for approval at the 2017 Spring GA is therefore accepted. The rest of this paper therefore addresses those matters upon which need confirmation or clarification.
6. Although there is general support for the approach set out in the Consultation Paper it is necessary to get agreement on the following inter-related key issues raised in the responses:
 - a) The scope of Competences (i.e. the definition and detail of competences to be identified in Guidance)
 - b) The nature of Guidance (i.e. role of the ECTP-CEU)
 - c) The alternative routes to acquiring planning education
 - d) The alternative definitions of minimum standard
 - e) The need for complementary guidance on Code of Practice and CPD
 - f) The relationship to EU Directives

These six items set out in paragraphs below as the basis of the GA debate.

7. In addition to these six matters, the following comments or suggestions will all be taken into account the final drafting of the Guidelines and therefore they are not discussed further in this report:
 - a) There were many very helpful editorial points made in the responses in terms of wording and clarification, in particular from AssUrb, SFU, FSU, RUR and MUT. These are accepted.
 - b) The proposed Guidelines are more than a mere refreshing of the existing Guidance;

- c) Clarification has been sought in relation to the Annexes. However, since the Annexes will not necessarily feature in the finalised Guidelines they are not discussed in this report;
- d) The Consultation Report contains material which some people have suggested is unnecessary. This is accepted but it should be noted that its inclusion in the Consultation Document was as an explanatory aid in the dialogue process;
- e) It is considered that some of the terminology needs clarifying and will need to be supported by a glossary. This includes a suggestion that the Guidelines uses the term '*essential elements of recognition*' rather than '*competence criteria*'; and
- f) It has been suggested having a paragraph to make clarify that the Guidelines would apply to all Planning activities.

Scope of Competences

8. The Consultation Report highlighted the eight areas of competence identified in the earlier research papers. There are however a range of matters that have been identified which need to be reflected in the interpretation and detailing of these competences including the following:
- a) The need to reflect explicitly that the process of planning is as important as the plans themselves, both in the text and diagram;
 - b) The range of competences required for planning cannot be acquired and maintained by a single professional or profession;
 - c) The scope and need for planning is dynamic and the range of competences required for planning will therefore also change over time.

In addition, a range of specific competences have been highlighted which some members consider are not covered adequately in the current document. These include:

- d) Local Economic Development
 - e) Landscape planning
 - f) Mobility
 - g) Maritime / marine planning
 - h) Geographic knowledge
 - i) European-scale policy and practice
9. It is considered that all these are legitimate matters that can be reflected in the finalised Guidelines. However, there are differing views on the level of specification and detail that is needed. On the one hand, a suggestion has been made that there should be greater definition of the criteria for the 8 core competences, requiring further research that should be funded by the ECTP-CEU (rather than by sponsors). On the other hand, it has been suggested that the themes (e.g. Socio-economic systems, built environment, etc.) are too wide to attempt to define in terms of a minimum content to be taught to planners. As a result, it suggested that there needs to be leeway given to training institutions to define the content of the courses, and that guidance by the ECTP-CEU should be general headings, and any detail presented as explanatory or illustrative in nature.

Nature of the Guidance

10. It is generally accepted the ECTP-CEU is advisory and supportive to member associations. Guidance to its member associations is therefore to be applied locally. As a corollary, in view of the variation in the status of professional education in the European countries and their ways of recognition the professional qualifications, ECTP-CEU Guidelines would only be related to the minimum core standards, it is also clear that the imposition of some form of standard would raise serious issues for some of our member associations.

11. This of course raises issues about how any Guidelines should be used and what the involvement of the ECTP-CEU, including the following questions:
 - a) How should the Guidelines be monitored?
 - b) What level of commitment of member associations should be sought?
 - c) Should there be a form of report back member organisations?

Alternative routes to acquiring planning education

12. The Consultation Report highlighted the fact that competences can be acquired directly or in combination with other qualifications (e.g. architecture) through a range of pathways. These include undergraduate and postgraduate courses, doctoral research, in-work training and supervised experience.
13. However, some concerns have been raised about routes to planning qualifications which are not through university master's degree courses. The fact is that historically and currently our planners have come through a diverse set of routes. However, concern has been raised about the need for caution in accepting degrees which are not wholly planning related (e.g., architecture or estates management) The Guidelines therefore could be clearer by at least stating that the major part of the education programmer has to include planning but can also be linked / oriented to a specific branch of the profession. Therefore, it is important that such routes are subject to strict assessment against the competences in the Guidelines and ExCo should build this into the drafting of the Guidelines.

Alternative definitions of minimum standards

14. It is accepted that the Guidelines produced by the ECTP-CEU will only set out the minimum standards of core professional competences that should be expected and required of any practicing spatial planner. The second research report suggested that this could be achieved by setting a minimum 5% target against each of the eight competencies. This has been a matter of some debate in terms of the principle and practice. As an alternative the Consultation Document was based on setting out in greater detail the scope of the competences and putting the responsibility on individual associations to apply these in the context of their own circumstances. This would not prevent any individual association adopting a target figure if they want.
15. This is however a matter that is being brought back to the General Assembly for resolution since it has been raised by one of our associations as its preferred approach.

Complementary guidance on Code of Practice and CPD

16. The need to maintain and update professional training and education during a professional career is accepted by all. A question has been raised as to whether the Guidelines should also contain some core guidance on the approach to continuous professional development (CPD) and the implications of the Guidelines for the Code of Conduct. It is considered that this would be useful but the views of the GA are sought.

The relationship to EU Directives

17. The Consultation Report was mindful of the fact that within the area of the EU, there is a free movement of planners. This has implications for individual associations to the extent that they are recognised as Regulated Professions, in terms of the Directive 2013/55. Any guidance by the ECTP-CEU is however supportive of the principle of the free movement of labour within the EU. Although ECTP-CEU membership is wider than the EU this is a legitimate matter of concern.

18. In this context it is noted that spatial planning is not included within the direct transposition arrangements for the EU Directive on professional qualifications. Even so, a competency based application membership which is applied regardless of the applicant's country of domicile is consistent with EU policy. It however considered that it would be useful if the ExCo gave greater consideration to the interpretation of the EU Directive in drafting the Guidelines. The views and experience of member associations is sought on this matter.

Recommendation

19. It is recommended that following the General Assembly's debate on the responses on the consultation, the ExCo is asked to produce and circulate a draft guidance for the consideration and approval by the GA at the Spring 2017 meeting.