

# ECTP-CEU as *the* European spatial planning reference organisation in 2020

## Introduction

01. In a rapidly changing European society, spatial planners need to provide solid mid and long term visions to sustain and improve the quality of life in neighbourhoods, cities and territories. As we revised the Charter of Athens in 2003 and in 2013, we need to keep pace with the changing social, economic and political contexts and revise the ECTP-CEU's organisation.
02. Challenges such as migration, climate change and environmental degradation ask for coherent solutions, based on bringing together a diverse pallet of expertise. The spatial organisation of the environment we live in, remains our core focus. With our 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary within sight, we as ECTP-CEU need to be prepared to adequately adapt ourselves to a changing society and have the ambition to become *the* reference organisation in Europe when it comes to spatial planning practice. This consultation paper therefore sets out, as a basis for discussion, some key principles that allow the ECTP-CEU to become widely recognized as such.

## Historical basis and situation today

03. The organization has its roots back in 1978 when a group of planning professionals started a '*Liaison Committee for Town Planners in the EEC*' to advocate professional recognition of planners at European level with the aim of furthering the free movement and the right of establishment of the profession in all Member States. When the European Commission decided not to draft a Directive on regulating the town planning profession, the *Liaison Committee* decided to establish common professional rules. On 8 November 1985, the national associations of town planners which had been members of the *Liaison Committee*, signed an International Agreement and Declaration in Amsterdam, which was the founding charter of ECTP-CEU.
04. Today, ECTP-CEU is engaged in a wide variety of activities, all centred around planning practice in Europe. These activities are mainly to be situated within three pillars:

1. **Common European Planning Principles:** our basic principles which should guide planning throughout Europe have been developed in a set of published basic documents - *The Charter of European planning* (Vision (A), Commitments (B) and Role for Planners (C)) and *The European Charter on Participatory Democracy in Spatial Planning Processes* being the most important ones. Linking these principles with the planning profession is done through the *Qualification Recognition Working Group*.
2. **Planning Practice:** the sharing of experience on planning practice and topically important issues. Several working groups have been promoted in various ways, the *Young Planners Workshop* being the most important and active one. The two-yearly European planning awards and the Biennial of Towns and town planners are excellent fora to present good European planning practices.
3. **Planning Representation:** representation on a range of different organisations has been an increasing area of activity by senior ECTP-CEU volunteers.

05. The first pillar is quite solid and is regularly fueled by results of activities deployed in the second or third pillar.

The second pillar , which constitutes the heart of our activities, has mixed successes. Some working groups really manage to bring forward interesting results, others fail to do so. Recently, efforts have been made to bring the planning practice as a main item to the GA, facilitating a debate centered around a specific item. ECTP-CEU members should be able to take full advantage of the planning practice exchange when meeting each other (twice a year during GA) or through digital meetings.

Activities within the third pillar, important to position spatial planning practice in different policy settings at different levels, have a difficulty in reaching the core of the organisation: members are not always aware or interested in ongoing decision making processes.

06. As an organisation with a large variety of activities during the year, with more than 35 members, representing about 40.000 planners in Europe and an annual budget of ca. 70 KEUR, our professional basis is limited to 0,5 FTE (secretary). This means the vast majority of ECTP-CEU's activities are undertaken on a voluntary basis. The institutional structure with a General Assembly meeting twice a year and an Executive Committee of 7 persons, meeting 4 times yearly is working fine so far, but asks for a large percentage of the budget (ca. 90 %) and of the available time and energy of the volunteers. Very little money is invested directly in planning practice related activities. Although working with volunteers has a lot of advantages, the ECTP-CEU can still make a lot of progress, in terms of institutional robustness, professionalism and efficiency.

07. Today, ECTP-CEU's budget is fueled by membership fees. More member organisations face more difficulties in paying their annual fee. The global budget is declining for some consecutive budget years. Our organisation also has reserves which have been reducing over recent years to fund key projects. Therefore, it becomes more difficult for ECTP-CEU to finance new activities, especially the ones related with the planning practice, at the heart of our organisation. Since the last changes in the statutes, the organisation has cautiously opened up from one national planning organization per country (except two countries which

have two) to other categories like *partner membership*, *corresponding membership* and *observers*. About ten institutions have become partner or corresponding members with mixed presence and participation at our events. There are no observers. It is therefore desirable to review the resource base of the ECTP-CEU to ensure that it remains sustainable over the medium and longer term

## Five principles as a basis to build a future reference organisation

### 08. Principle 1: Strengthen ECTP-CEU's primary role as a Learning and Reference Network

Exchange of information and best practices in the European context is a main objective of our organisation. Therefore we try to establish a broad network of spatial planners, urban designers, policy makers and all professionals interested in establishing spatially qualitative environments. ECTP-CEU aims at being *the* meeting point and platform for urban designers and planners in Europe when it comes to planning practice. Both, when we physically meet twice a year at the occasion of the GA and by digital means. With the recent GA's taking a larger part on debate and exchange, the former has been set in motion but needs to be strengthened. The latter needs to be deepened. In addition the work on implementing the Charter of European Planning has been preparing best practice advice notes (*called Common Perspectives*).

### 09. Principle 2: A more inclusive organisation

We establish a membership organisation, welcoming all individuals, organizations and public bodies who subscribe the Charter of European Planning (Barcelona, 2013, based on the New Charter of Athens, 2003) in an equal way. By signing this Charter as part of the membership process, members contribute to a broad network, striving for quality and durability in the field of spatial planning and urban design in Europe.

As a result, the planning community includes not only formally certified planners and urban designers, but also organisations of planners, private companies, public institutions and professionals active in related sectors (law, politics, real estate, mobility, architecture, landscape architecture, heritage, environment, economy, tourism, forestry, fisheries and agriculture). This means a second step is taken towards a more inclusive organisation, opening up ECTP-CEU's membership for all supporters of planning and who practice planning in its many forms. At the same time, a special effort needs to be taken to include young planning professionals in a fair and equal way, so they can become fully engaged in our organisation.

### 10. Principle 3: Focus on core activities as a Learning and reference Network

The ECTP-CEU's energy, time and budget investments should broadly be dedicated to activities within three important fields (ranked in terms of their importance):

- Topical Planning Themes, relevant for the actual planning practice throughout Europe and useful and applicable in our cities, regions and territories;
- Role and position of the spatial planner (profession);
- European territory and global territorial issues.

It is considered that this could be made more systematic: existing and new activities are evaluated and attributed to one (or more) of this fields; every new policy period of 4 years, the new Exco will propose a specific work programme to be approved by the GA, indicating for the specific period, which activities within this three fields are developed; only a limited time investment (e.g. 10 %) is devoted at ECTP-CEU meetings (GA's and others) for administrative issues.

#### 11. Principle 4: A Digital approach

In order to fulfil its potential as a more inclusive and learning network, the ECTP-CEU will need a digital leap forward in the way it conducts its business. This requires not only a state-of-the-art website, but a series of digital products and services to be developed (like f.i. digital access to General Assembly meetings for those who cannot attend in person, virtual working groups, a wikiplan facility of planning practice), giving the planning practitioner in Europe an interesting tool and network access. Planners should be permanently aware of current exhibitions, recently published books and documents, interesting plans, lectures and so on and have to opportunity to share and comment planning practices and tendencies.

#### 12. Principle 5: Obtaining financial robustness and considering corporate partners

Over the past few years, the Executive Committee has sought to widen the financial base of ECTP-CEU e.g. through grants, joint working and an expert panel. These have only made a marginal contribution to the funds of the ECTP-CEU. At the same time, the income has been very dependent on a fee structure which has not been reviewed recently. Some associations are having difficulties with paying their membership fees. The financial basis therefore needs to be reassessed. A better balance between yearly budgets and activities and a strategy on the organisation's reserve are envisaged.

The principle of membership fees as the first financial pillar is to be maintained. The financial basis will be enlarged by establishing at least a second structural financial pillar, considering corporate partners and a third more flexible project-driven pillar. As a result, new activities can be organized and a more financially robust organization is created. The following three principles are applied:

- Increase in the number of members (see 09.);
- Taking corporate partners on board, which, under specific conditions, finance ECTP-CEU on a structural basis;
- Seek a consequential revision of membership fees where possible and appropriate.

## GA Decision

Exco proposes:

- to start a temporary (*task & finish*) working group *ECTP-CEU 2020*, taking this draft discussion paper as a starting point, reflecting on the principles as a basis to build a future reference organisation;

- to invite delegates, well differentiated, to take part of the working group, chaired by the President;
- to prepare a document, containing the next steps towards a shared vision on *ECTP-CEU 2020*, including concrete proposals, to be approved at Spring GA 2017.