

## Core requirements for a high quality European Planning Education

### AESOP Working Group on the Curriculum of Planning Education, 1995

This statement was written in 1995 by the working group on Planning Education at the time established by AESOP with the aim of defining a set of common principles suitable for a high quality planning education all over Europe. These “core requirements” have been adopted by the AESOP community.

Since 1995, these guidelines are used to assess the applicants for AESOP full membership. These are the common principles and values shared by our member schools.

#### I. Preamble

Stimulated by the process of the unification of Europe, which recently got even more memorandum due to the tremendous changes in the former countries of middle and eastern Europe, the 1980's saw two important initiatives to bring the various European planning traditions together in European wide organisations working on the international level. 1985 saw the foundation of the European council of Town Planning (ECTP), representing the planning profession. 1987 saw the foundation of the Association European Schools of Planning, representing planning education. Ever since their foundation both organisations have been working on the development and formulation of core requirements for planning education and planning professionals.

Common to both initiatives was a deep concern with planning education and professional standards in a situation in which national borders between the European countries were soon to become really permeable. Common to both was also the awareness European countries to a large extent face the same kinds of planning problems concerning the future of their urbanised and metropolitan areas, their infrastructure, their rural areas, their in general and their economic development, whereas at the same time these European countries are becoming more and more aware that exactly their different in cultural heritage, in their built up areas and in their countryside, are perhaps the most important assets of their continent. Thus the need was felt, not only to combine forces, but also to start discussion on the development of a common paradigm for European planning as such: both at the national levels taking account of specific variations and '*couleur locale*' - and at the international, i.e. European, level.

#### II. The core of planning education

Being an organisation of planning schools, AESOP's main concern is the advancement of planning education throughout Europe.

Planning in Europe has developed in a great variety of institutional settings and involves many disciplinary backgrounds. The ECTP already indicated in appendix A of its charter for

town planners, that the activity of (town) planning is the work of researchers, practitioners, of proposers of policies and programmes for action, of designers of projects and of implementers. But whatever these varieties and whatever the different in purpose, style, content and methods of planning in real life circumstances, planning as a generic activity is concerned with the advancement of optimal physical conditions for the needs of society giving due account to both the long-term socio-economic developments and environmental conditions. Planning's ultimate goal is to ensure sustainable development of society and environment.

Planning education then involves the scientific study of and training in creative conceptual and practical thinking on the relation between society and environment at various territorial levels and in the search, development and advancement of opportunities for purposeful intervention in that relation to ensure sustainable development.

The core of the curriculum of planning education is threefold:

- Theoretical and practical knowledge on the desirability of legitimacy of and conditions for purposeful planning intervention;
- Theoretical and practical knowledge on the preparation and advancement of such interventions and on judging the effects thus generated;
- Technological knowledge and skills to actually engage in planning activities in real life situations.

### III. Core curriculum requirements

As planning education varies so much over Europe, reflecting each country's specifics in planning practice, in dominant disciplinary backgrounds and in their understanding of the essential requirements of the planning profession, any statement on the core curriculum of European planning education must pay due respect to these variances, and can not and should not be elaborated in too much detail. However, there are common requirements to which every planning school should adhere. These concern the main fields to be covered and the length and intensity of the course.

As for the main fields to be covered, any planning education should be organised in such a way, that its students will get the opportunity to:

#### A. Acquire due knowledge for:

- the nature, purpose, theory and method of planning
- the history of planning as an institution and a profession]
- the cultural different in planning on a European and international level
- developments in the natural and man made (economic and social) environment and knowledge of the impact of men's exploitation, i.e. possibilities for sustainable development

- the political, legal and institutional context of planning practice both at the national level and at the (evolving) international i.e. European level
- the instruments and performance of instruments for implementing planning policies
- specialised fields in planning
- relationships across and between these fields

**B. Develop practical competence in:**

- methods for problem definition and collaborative problem-solving in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary settings
- thinking in terms of concepts, instruments and measures and management of knowledge for practical application
- techniques for data collection, for data analyses and synthesising, including modern information technology
- valuing and managing the built and natural environment
- anticipating future needs of society, including the appreciation of new trends and emerging issues in planning
- methods for generating strategic planning proposals and the advancement of implementation
- integrating aesthetic and design dimensions in planning proposals
- devising plans, programmes and measures and guiding the implementation policies
- written, oral and graphic communication

**C. Develop an attitude i.e. a feeling for:**

- planning to be basically oriented towards solving the needs of society within the framework of sustainable development
- the cultural embedding of the man-made environment
- the value dimension of planning
- the ethical implications of planning

Next to these any planning education should offer its students opportunities to specialise in particular fields of planning such as housing, infrastructure and transport, recreation, land development and building, design and international i.e. European affairs.

In order to give due attention to the threefold core of the curriculum as elaborated in the above mentioned fields of knowledge, competence, attitude and specialisation, the education and training of future professional planners implies a rather lengthy and intensive programme.

A full time programme (undergraduate and graduate) will require a duration of at least 4 of education and training. If the programme is at graduate level a 2 year course will be acceptable, provided the undergraduate programme is supportive to a planning education.

In case of a part time education a 3 year course on graduate level will be necessary, with the same provision on the undergraduate programme and provided the students are actually working in planning.

As for the intensity of the programme, the technological part of the core curriculum in particular requires regular exposure to and interaction with planning practice. Project work-, confrontation with real life planning problems, preferably/if possible with the participation of professional planners in the programme, multiple laboratory exercises in developing planning solutions, a period of intensive in- practice-training i.e. apprenticeship or placement and "learning-by-doing" are distinguishing marks of a fully fledged planning education.

#### **IV. Advancement of planning education**

AESOP and especially its individual members will try to ensure that planning education in the European member states follows the cote curriculum, giving due account to local and national different in cultural and institutional setting.

AESOP will develop and maintain a directory of planning schools in member states that adhere to the curriculum and will promote the dissemination of planning thought on the European level.

AESOP will look for any opportunity to advance the requirements of the cote curriculum to become the European standard and will take any step necessary to reach this end. Of special importance in this respect is the future accreditation of planners in the various member states. On this special topic AESOP will seek the collaboration of the ECTP to ensure that future European regulations will take account of their joint proposals.