

Romanian URBACT National Dissemination Point

Bi-Annual Report



1. Romanian urban planning legislation - the need for reform
2. Real estate transactions in Romania will soon require energy performance certificates
3. Collective housing, approaches to a real rehabilitation
4. The city of Timisoara – an example of participative democracy
5. "Arhetipuri", the first national competition dedicated to the public space
6. "Romanian Cities fighting Climate Change: before and after Copenhagen 2009"

1. ROMANIAN URBAN PLANNING LEGISLATION - THE NEED FOR REFORM

In the European context, the importance of urban development increased gradually after the adoption of the Leipzig Charter on the Sustainable European Cities and the financing of urban development operations through operational programmes.

Although of national competence, urban planning is a field strongly influenced by Community policies. In Romania, the dynamics of the territorial development that boosted after the nineties was not supported by suitable methodological instruments and the efforts made in coping with the changes meant upgrading the existent legislation, instead of reevaluating its entire content. The weaknesses of the legislative system in the field of urban planning are visible through the effects on the physical environment of the cities. There are also problems related to a poor or inexistent correlation between laws, unclear stipulations, a lack of methodologies for applying the laws or inappropriate administrative capacity in applying the laws. Several studies conducted by renowned Romanian and French specialists assessed the need for a deep reform of the legislation.

With this background of profound concerns and active debates the seminar "European construction and the evolution of urban planning law" – a comparative study Romania

– France welcomed its participants on 25 and 26 of March, in Bucharest. Entered in the French-Romanian strategic partnership, the seminar represented an important step in the process of updating the Romanian legislation on spatial and urban planning, by adapting it according to the practices and regulations of the other EU Member States and to the European directives. Romanian and French jurists participated in the event with the intention of finding solutions for reforming the Romanian urban planning and constructions building legislation.



The Minister of Regional Development and Tourism, Mrs. Elena Gabriela Udrea, opened the session declaring there is a need to change the urban regulations as well as to establish a coherent legislative framework in this domain and to have specialists supervising the implementation of adopted legislative measures. The Minister stated that a new code of urban planning would be elaborated by an interministerial working

group. Simultaneously, professionals from the field, representatives of the civil society and universities will be consulted and will assist in establishing a new legislation in the urban planning domain.

His Excellency the Ambassador of France, Mr. Henri Paul highlighted the fact that the partnership between France and Romania is a strategic one, built “to tackle urban planning issues”, also considering the background of fifteen years of cooperation between the two countries. The main challenge observed in the Romanian urban planning is keeping the balance between the necessities for development and preserving the historic heritage of the cities. Mr. Henri Paul stressed the importance of preventing abuses by promoting a good knowledge over the legislation and an equal and coherent application of the legislation.

From his perspective, Professor Yves Jegouzo, PhD at the Pantheon-Sorbonne University of Paris assessed that urban planning law must receive an important connotation for both judges and architects, in order for the rules in the field to be known and respected. He stressed as well the importance of publicity of the urbanism law.

The current legislation hinders a unitary and efficient vision in addressing different situations of the territory, stated Professor Alexandru Sandu, PhD at “Ion Mincu” University of Architecture and Urban Planning from Bucharest, president of Romanian Register of Urban Planners. He emphasizes the necessity of a reform of the urban planning in Romania together with an interdisciplinary integration of the legislation of this field with the jurisprudence.

Chief Architect of Bucharest Municipality, Mr. Gheorghe Patrascu declared that the Romanian legislation was rewritten after the nineties, having as a result an internal transformation of the localities, leading to a large number of urban problems. Mr. Patrascu believes that urban planning legislation must provide to the public administration other instruments besides public procurement and expropriation for major, coherent operations.

As a conclusion of the debates, the reform of urban planning legislation and practices in this field is a necessity for fulfilling the objectives of sustainable urban development, in order to improve the life quality of the

inhabitants and to achieve an integrated regeneration of Romania’s localities. Measures leading to a concrete reform of the urban planning field must be sustained by a powerful political will and assisted by professionals.



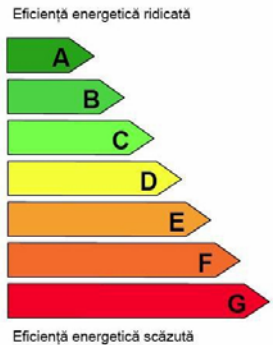
The event was organised by the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism in collaboration with the [University of Bucharest - Faculty of Law](#) - Centre of the general theory of law and new rights, the French-Romanian Juridical College of European Studies and the French-Romanian Association of Jurists. Several other institutions and organizations also supported the two days seminar: the French Ministry of Ecology, Energy, Sustainable Development and the Sea, the Research Group for the Institutions and the Law of Spatial and Urban Planning and Habitat, the [Romanian Register of Urban Planners](#) and the Francophone University Agency.

Source: [Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism](#)

2. REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS IN ROMANIA WILL SOON REQUIRE ENERGY PERFORMANCE CERTIFICATES

Romania must comply with the [Energy Performance for Buildings Directive \(EPBD\)](#), requiring energy audits for constructions. According to the national legislation on the energy performance of buildings, in the following months energy performance certificates will be mandatory and made available to potential buyers or tenants by the building's owners, for all real estate transactions. These certificates will be valid for ten years and will be drawn up by energy auditors.

The certificate informs the potential buyer or tenant about the apartment's energy efficiency, expressed, generally, through the total yearly energy consumption, in kW per hour per square meter, integrating it into an energy class (from the A - high-efficiency class to the G- low efficiency class).

Performanța energetică a clădirii	Notare energetică: 59,2	
<small>Sistemul de certificare: Metodologia de calcul al Performanței Energetice a Clădirilor elaborată în aplicarea Legii 372/2005</small>	Clădirea certificată	Clădirea de referință
	E	B

In Romania, the percentage of poor energy performance housing stock built during the communist regime is extremely high, meaning that few are the cases of buildings that can obtain a high-class efficiency certificate. According to a study developed by the [European Institute of Romania](#), around 30% of the primary resources consumption is, in fact, losses, half of them coming from the residential sector.

Although it is clear that enforcing the energy certificate and complying with the EU directive is the road to follow, a number of

debates and concerns were raised around this topic. The real estate agents feared a blockage on the market due to an insufficient number of energy auditors and an unequal distribution of them in the country's cities. [The Romanian National Union of Public Notaries](#) requested a delay in applying the law, as it would increase the prices of old houses by 5-10% and freeze transactions. Also the investors are worried about the price of the certificate and the future extra paper work in view of a real estate transaction.

The real estate investors should know that it is the building owner's obligation to obtain an energy audit and that they are taking a risk if they do not have the proper paperwork and do not understand the basic performance of the building. There is also a very close correlation between building quality and energy performance, which is further assurance for the investor. [The Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism](#) considers that the price of building energy certification does not affect the sales price too considerably, because it accounts for an insignificant percentage compared to the rest of the legal expenses related to the transaction.

Currently, a number of around 200 of future auditors are being formed in different technical universities across the country, which will be added to the existing auditors. Although delays in transactions or different procedural issues still may occur, the process must start and will be adjusted accordingly to respond to specific situations. The owners must understand that the final purpose of this new legislation is the thermal rehabilitation of their properties and not complicating the process of selling or renting the property.

All considered, the law is one of the main legislative instruments already "in force" for monitoring the energy efficiency level of the Romanian homes and encourages the development of highly efficient buildings.

Read more:

- [Official list of the energy auditors tested until February 2010](#)
- [Legislation](#)
- [Interview with Mr. Ioan Andreica, State Secretary within the Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism \(CAPITAL.ro\)](#)

3. COLLECTIVE HOUSING, APPROACHES TO A REAL REHABILITATION

The cityscape of Bucharest is dominated by huge, standardized public housing estates built during the socialist era, mainly in the 1970s and 1980s – in which circa 70 per cent of the city's population still live. These 'concrete curtains' flank established major traffic axes, blocking the view of the parts of Bucharest that lie behind them. In Romania, rehabilitation interventions in collective housing neighborhoods / districts (multistory high rise block of flats built during 1950-1990) are too often reduced to individual façade thermal proofing, fencing the green areas in between buildings, installing pots or garbage cans on the sidewalks, frequently turning those sidewalks into parking lots.

Initiatives and projects making the exercise to find new approaches to the changes needed in terms of living quality and even more, forming the future professionals in the field is highly important.

Zeppelin, "a project on education and communication", is a platform of dialogue and debates between architects, urban planners and civil society, actively mitigating for good design and architecture and the quality of urban space.



In September-October 2009, in Berlin and Bucharest, Zeppelin organisation together with its partners An Archis Interventions and Point 4 initiative, launched in cooperation with ATU, Space Syntax, Hackenbroich Architekten and Platforma 9,81 the exhibition »MAGIC BLOCKS« Scenarios for socialist collective housing estates in Bucharest,

accompanied by a Romanian-English publication, also available electronically.



The events were followed by a conference in Bucharest, which enjoyed the presence of renowned international specialists. The events highlighted the emergency of action, but also the potential of these areas. The possible strategies for action were highlighted and model solutions proposed, in order to verify and express the ideas and also to promote the strategies.

Developing students' capabilities in forming a deepest understanding about cities challenges is a top priority. During 27th February – 5th March 2010, the University of Architecture and Urbanism "Ion Mincu", Bucharest, Romania, in cooperation with ATU - Association for Urban Transition, with the support of France Embassy in Romania and other European partners organised an international workshop dealing with „Eco-Rehabilitation of a post-war collective housing neighborhood from Bucharest”.



The workshop aimed at finding ways for improving the life quality in the “large ensembles” of collective housing and in the same time fulfilling the requirements of sustainable development. The end mission for the participants was to sketch rehabilitation actions/ interventions both economically and technically feasible that

address the built environment's particular problems (overuse, high consumption of conventional energy, interior discomfort, etc) as well as issues in the broader context of the city: lack of urban equipments, constantly diminished green areas, transportation issues, pollution, poor management of natural resources, improper waste management, etc. Students coming from different countries and universities (Romania, France, Italy and Spain) worked together in mixed-international teams, developed ideas for future strategies in the renewal on mass housing estates from Romania, concretely displayed in a rehabilitation project of each team.

Read more:

- [Zeppelin](#)
- [Download the Magic Blocks book](#)
- ["Ion Mincu" University of Architecture and Urbanism, Bucharest](#)

4. THE CITY OF TIMISOARA – AN EXAMPLE OF PARTICIPATIVE DEMOCRACY

The reflection on participative democracy has raised the importance of civil dialogue between the different relevant actors within the decisional processes. An efficient civil dialogue is seen as an indicator on the quality of democratic societies.

For the Romanian cities, the last decade meant an active period of urban development. For many municipalities, following the recommendations of the Leipzig Charter - making greater use of integrated urban development policies, cooperative urban development management and good governance - constituted the solution in developing successful experiences in the field of social and democratic participation.

The city of Timisoara was among the first towns in the country where participative democracy became effective in different forms. The third largest city of Romania, a city where massive investments and the development of technological industries contributed strongly to the economy, Timisoara is an engine of growth for the western region of the country. With a population of 311,481 inhabitants (2008), Timisoara has a tradition of ethnic communities, which enriches the life, and culture of the city.

In the past years, a series of citizens' organisations were created in Timisoara, in the attempt of bringing the inhabitants closer to the local administration of the city. The City Hall intends to improve the cooperation with these structures, in order to build its decisions on accurate information and feedback from the relevant groups of population.

The Consultative District Councils

The Consultative District Councils were created in 2003, following a decision of the Local Council, at the initiative of the city mayor. The models followed in creating these districts committees were similar to the structure functioning in the French city of Mulhouse, a twin city of Timisoara. The Consultative Councils are functioning in the frame of a regulation elaborated with the support of the citizens and adopted through a Local Council decision. The Councils members, who are volunteers, have the right to initiate proposals for the City Hall and Local Council and are consulted by the municipality when taking decisions with direct implications on their interests. Currently, over 350 citizens of Timisoara joined a number of 15 District Councils, and their number is growing. Their activity consists in sending proposals to the City Halls and to the Local Council concerning the improvement of the city infrastructure, traffic, public transportation and other urban issues.

The Seniors Council

The Seniors Council is a consultative structure created in 2004, representing a segment of Timisoara's population aged more than 53 years. The Council's members are selected by vote from volunteers, mainly pensioners. The organization works mainly in commissions. The vice mayor in charge of the problems of the elderly forwards the conclusions of the commission meetings to the Mayor, vice mayors, the Local Council, municipal departments, public departments or other institutions.

The Seniors Council is founded on the experience, knowledge, spiritual richness and memory of its members, and it contributes to the social cohesion of the city.

The Local Youth Council

The Local Youth Council of Timisoara was set up in 2003, aiming at representing young people in the community, their direct participation in the local public life, to establish relations with the local public institutions, as well as the implementation of

their own projects. Through this initiative, a new type of society is proposed to the entire community, based more on youth's needs, their initiatives and on finding solutions to some problems that concern them directly. The project is run by the Intercultural Institute of Timisoara, Timisoara City Hall, the School Inspectorate of the Timis County and the Students' Cultural Centre within the national project PALTIN, promoted by the MASTER Forum association.



Timisoara City Hall has developed a practice in organising public debates and consultative meetings for assessing the citizen's views in different projects or city's initiatives. Besides these methods of asking for the general public's opinion, the permanent relationship of the City Hall with the set up consultative structures has also contributed to improving the partnership between the City Hall and the citizens and their associations. Their representatives are always invited to all public debates so that they should be informed on the intentions of the municipality and able to voice out their own opinions.

Read more:

- [The Consultative District Council of Timisoara](#)
- [The Seniors Council of Timisoara](#)
- [The Local Youth Council of Timisoara](#)
- [City of Timisoara website](#)

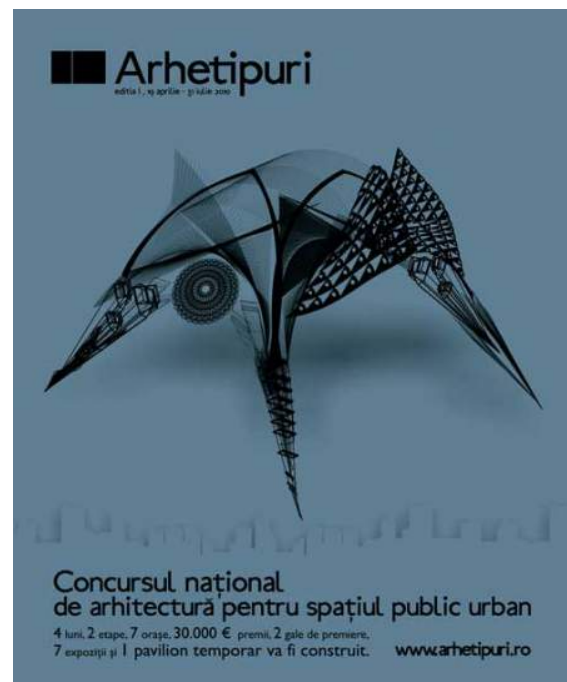
5. "ARHETIPURI" THE FIRST NATIONAL COMPETITION DEDICATED TO THE PUBLIC SPACE

The quality of public spaces, urban man-made landscapes and architecture and urban development play an important role in the living conditions of urban populations. Public

spaces are important for the cities' economy. Therefore, the interaction of architecture, infrastructure planning and urban planning must be increased in order to create attractive, user-oriented public spaces and achieve a high standard in terms of the living environment, a "Baukultur".

The first national competition of architecture focusing on the public space aims at selecting good quality architecture, with value of signal and archetype, by exploring the potential and the impact of an intervention in the public space. The competition is in line with the nowadays preoccupations for developing public spaces of good quality, in the service of the communities and the cities.

The competition launched on 19th of April 2010 by the Romanian Order of Architects in partnership with AD(D)VERITAS has two phases, which will unroll in the period 19th of April - 31st of July 2010.



The competition is open to an international participation (students and professionals from design, architecture, urban planning, etc), and has a [prestigious jury](#) formed from Romanian and European specialists in the field.

The competitors are asked to design a temporary pavilion of small dimensions (app 100-150 sq m) with a strong value of cohesion and social interaction in a space, which has its own powerful identity within the city. In order to provide real locations for this

exercise, nine Romanian cities (Bucharest, Timișoara, Brăila, Brașov, Constanța, Galați, Ploiești, Cluj-Napoca and Vaslui) are participating with nineteen selected areas. The pavilion must prove the potential of good architecture to integrate within the urban context, to interact and catalyze the existent space adding value.

The prizes total approximately 30000 euros. The winning project will be constructed in the first half of 2011.

Read more:

- [The competition's website](#)
- [The Romanian Order of Architects website](#)

6. "ROMANIAN CITIES FIGHTING CLIMATE CHANGE: BEFORE AND AFTER COPENHAGEN 2009"

Cities cover less than 1% of the Earth's surface but are responsible for generating more than 80% of the greenhouse gas emissions. The necessity of acting locally for reducing pollution and tackling climate change became from a hot topic on the agenda a commitment at European and National level.

In this line of reasoning, two Romanian organisations, "TERRA Mileniul III" foundation in partnership with the Association of Romanian Cities developed an initiative having as main objective to increase the level of awareness and information of the local authorities regarding the necessity of acting locally in order to mitigate the effect of the climate change.

The project "Romanian Cities fighting Climate Change: before and after Copenhagen 2009" that unrolled between March 2009 and April 2010 was financed by the Governments of Island, Liechtenstein and Norway through the financial mechanism of the European Economic Space. The project brought together several local authorities, which shared the same interest of actively getting involved in actions of tackling the climate change and contributed to drafting and adopting a Commitment. By signing this Commitment, cities acknowledge the opportunity of developing local initiatives for CO₂ reduction, supporting citizens, local entrepreneurs and other organizations for

reducing energy costs, traffic jams, and using fossil fuel.

Currently, there are 11 municipalities that signed the document and others will soon join the project.



Among the outcomes of the project is a set of tools dedicated to the local authorities, useful in approaching the climate change issue: a template for a greenhouse gas inventory and a template for a strategy for reducing these emissions. The project included eight regional meetings where representatives of municipalities and different organizations and citizens debated local challenges and the elaboration and dissemination of several informative materials, successful practices and guides-strategy for reducing gas emissions.

This initiative is closely related to the European efforts developed within the Covenant of Mayors, a commitment signed so far by fourteen Romanian towns and cities to go beyond the objectives of EU energy policy in terms of reduction in CO₂ emissions through enhanced energy efficiency and cleaner energy production and use.

Read more:

- [Guide template for a strategy of reducing greenhouse gas emissions](#)
- [Association of Romanian Cities](#)
- [TERRA Mileniul III foundation](#)

URBACT II

URBACT is a European exchange and learning programme promoting sustainable urban development. It enables cities to work together to develop solutions to major urban challenges, reaffirming the key role they play in facing increasingly complex societal challenges. It helps them to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable, and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions. It enables cities to share good practices and lessons learned with all professionals involved in urban policy throughout Europe. URBACT is 181 cities, 29 countries, and 5,000 active participants

www.urbact.eu