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Results of the study "Architects. Situation, opportunities and prospects" [1]



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On 7 November, the Architects' Association of Catalonia presented, as part of the Architecture Congress 2016, the results of the study **'Architects. Situation, opportunities and prospects'** [2], a reflection on working in the profession based on the collaboration of 1,700 architects. The presentation was given by the dean, Lluís Comerón, who highlighted that changes over recent years have led every architect to rethink what might be their best professional options and opportunities. They are changes which, according to Comerón, 'represent new opportunities for the future of the profession'.

In response to this context, the COAC carried out this survey so that the results can provide a useful and rigorous instrument for analysing the current situation and assist

architects in making decisions about the future and improve their competitiveness and market position. At the same time, the study is a tool for the Association to enable them to formulate a long-term strategy and achieve an improvement in the professional situation of architects and how they are perceived by society.

The figures

The majority of architects who took part in the survey and who have a confidence level of 95% are men (62%). In terms of age distribution, there is a predomination of architects in the age group of 31 to 40 years old. Of all those surveyed, 1,261 were Association members (78%) and 354 (22%) were not.

66% of those surveyed had studied at ETSAB and 22% at ETSAV. Recent graduates were in the majority, with 62% having graduated from the year 2000 onwards. Almost half had continued with higher education, especially master's degree and postgraduate courses (44%), and a lesser percentage (3%) with a doctorate. 26% studied part of their course abroad and 16% had done work placements.

57% of the architects were self-employed over the last year, well above salaried employees, who accounted for 24%. Furthermore, 15% fell into both categories and 5% did not have a contract. Amongst the salaried employees, we note a certain amount of job stability (50% have permanent contracts).

Last year, the vast majority of architects worked in the private sector (74% only private plus 14% in both private and public) and, more specifically, in a practice (77% of those who work in just the private or in both sectors). Only 12% of those surveyed said they worked in the public sector, the majority of them in town and city councils.

With regard to income, architects fall into an annual salary range of €20,001 to €30,000. 46% are paid less than €20,001 and a fifth of them less than €10,001. Only 30% earn an annual salary of more than €30,000. There are large salary differences according to gender and age. There are more men than women in the higher salary brackets.

It can also be seen that those who have a higher level of education also earn more. 40% of those who have completed a doctorate were paid more than €40,000 a year. This percentage drops to 20% for those who have a master's or postgraduate degree and to 16% for Architecture graduates.
Making a comparison over time, it can be seen that architects' salaries have declined over the last decade. 70% confirm that their income has declined compared with the situation 10 years ago (before the property bubble burst), and half say there has been a big reduction. Only 21% indicate their income has risen. With regard to gender, the progress of women's income was slightly less negative than that of men.

15% of those surveyed have lived and worked abroad for some time over the last two years. If we look at the age range of the youngest architects (younger than 30), they number 34%. When asked if they have thought about going or returning to work abroad, 40% answered yes. Meanwhile, the 34% who currently do not have international customers plan to look for projects abroad. Regarding the countries considered for working abroad, the league table is led by the United Kingdom (19%), Germany (11%), Switzerland (10%) and the USA (10%). Conversely, when speaking about countries in

which to look for projects, it is France that is mentioned most (24%).

The current profile of an architect
Right now, architects are a rejuvenated group: over 50% are below 50 years old and 34% are under 40. Most architects are men (62%), although the new generations are beginning to feature more women. Where the female contingent is more numerous is at the training stage. 'And that means that women will have a greater say in the future', explained the dean. Whether men or women, 70% of architects work for themselves. They are self-employed and perform their activity in a private practice with one or two others. Only a few work in administration or for companies: industry, university, promoters, constructors and consultants account for fewer than 10% of active architects. For Comerón, this situation determines the main subsectors in which 'the main opportunities for professional advancement can be found'.

Future prospects
New construction is no longer their main job. To compensate for this decline, rehabilitating buildings has become the activity with most volume. This is followed by new construction, project management, then legal and bureaucratic matters and interior design. Over the coming five years, rehabilitation is forecast to continue in first place ahead of activities related to energy efficiency and BIM (the new comprehensive planning model that is set to become the standard). It is expected that new construction will lose much of its importance. This transformation is reflected in the continuous training received by architects. According to the survey, architects have spent recent years broadening their education in order to specifically redirect their careers towards these areas. Comerón stressed that, 'We are in a full state of transition, a new era that not only affects us but the whole of society, forcing us to change our professional role'. In this process, globalisation is very much present in the profession. Many architects have left to work abroad. 'For many, this process has been dramatic, but is has also helped us to internationalise', said Comerón. There are between 10% and 12% of architects working abroad and a similar percentage of foreigners working here; figures, according to the Dean, 'to be expected in an ever more globalised world'.

VIEW THE SURVEY RESULTS HERE [2]

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[1] https://arquitectes.cat/ca/node/25853
[2] https://www.arquitectes.cat/en/survey-architects-situation-opportunities-and-prospects