



The Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland

THE ROYAL INSTITUTE OF THE ARCHITECTS OF IRELAND

THE DUTCH REGISTRATION SYSTEM

INTRODUCTION

This paper on the Dutch Registration system results from a meeting between the General Secretary and Dr. Hans Groenevald, Director of the Stichting Bureau Architectenregister, (SBA) in the Hague on 1 October 1993. 1 October 1993 is a significant date because on that day the protection of the title "architect" came into force in the Netherlands.

ARCHITECTS IN THE NETHERLANDS

Registration of architects had been an issue since 1945. The Bond van Nederlandse Architecten (BNA) had sought protection of the profession, i.e. function rather than registration, but it had proved impossible to define the particular and unique functions of the architect so the issue gradually changed to that of registration of title.

In what is such a highly regulated society a substantial number of persons were in practice, prior to registration, without any formal qualifications.

REGISTRATION SYSTEM

The law giving effect to the Dutch Registration system was introduced on 1-10-1988 with provision for a five year transition period until 1-10-1993. After this date the only mechanisms for inclusion in the system are a qualification of EC Directive standard or by examination. (See below).

The registration law deals with four groups:		No. registered
1.	Architects	5,834
2.	Landscape architects	405
3.	Interior architects	400
4.	Planners	1,200

Separate assessment systems are maintained for each discipline, but each system operates in the same manner. This paper deals only with architects.

In considering this system and the EC Architects' Directive, it is important to understand that registration was envisaged in the Netherlands when the Directive was being negotiated so that both systems could relate. Specific provision was made in the Architects Directive for the systems now being operated by the Netherlands Government

REGISTRATION

The title "architect" is protected together with all cognate terms such as "architectural designer", "architectural consultant" etc. The question as to whether the term "architectenbureau" i.e. "architect's office" is registered is due to be tested in the courts but the SBA believes that this does come within the Registration Act.

Registration is limited to "title": there is no control of function and no such control is envisaged. However, as the Registration Act exercises wide control over the title "architect" and other related terms, it is envisaged that the Registration Act will effectively control the practice of architecture and limit that to persons entitled to use the title "architect". It is for this reason that an examination system is maintained by the Registration Authority.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

There are now four routes to becoming registered as an architect under the registration law:

1. Completing degree level courses as listed in the EC Architects' Directive.
2. By having a minimum of 10 years practical experience prior to 1988 which was assessed by a Review Body. The section in the Directive dealing with those persons who have 5 years practical experience prior to 1985 and who have reached the age of 40 is seen as a sub-section of this particular method of registration and is assessed in the same way.
3. By having completed, prior to the entry into force of the Directive a degree examination of "Kandidaat in de Boukunde" plus 5 years practical experience prior to 1988.
4. A special examination conducted by the Registratie Body.

THE REVIEW BODY

The Review Body is defined in the registration legislation as consisting of 6 architects and the chairman. The BNA was asked to nominate a number of appropriate architects and 4 persons from the BNA were nominated by the Minister to the Body. Two other bodies representing other groups of architects, not all of whom had recognised qualifications, were asked to nominate 2 other architects. The number from each organisation was based on the number of members represented. The Chairman was a lawyer with considerable experience in the construction industry; 2 administrators also sat on the Review Body, but did not have any voting rights.

The Director of the SBA laid particular emphasis on the fact that all the 6 architects on the Review Body were persons of acknowledged standing and experience at the highest level available in the Netherlands. He emphasised that the quality of the Review Body was the most important element in the system.

The General Secretary was shown the files on a number of applicants both successful and unsuccessful. In the case of the unsuccessful applicants most had carried out work at a domestic level and in some cases had produced houses of a reasonable modest standard. Most of the dossiers submitted by unsuccessful applicants conveyed a lack of understanding of the basics of architecture, particularly once the candidates moved outside small domestic scale work. Many of the successful applicants had carried out a wide range of work over many years to a reasonably acceptable standard.

STANDARDS

The Dutch Government and the SBA in considering the Certificates given to persons meeting the criteria of the Review Body had particular regard to Articles 3 and 4 (b) of the EC Architects' Directive in that the Certificates provided must be equivalent to the successful completion of an examination to degree standard.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Advertisements were placed in all national media inviting applications from persons meeting the first three criteria listed above. In the case of persons seeking application through the 10 years and 5 years practical experience as listed in the EC Architects' Directive, 1,200 persons applied. Each applicant was asked to submit a minimum of 4 photographs of work which they had designed. In the case of persons working in architectural practices, this had to be supported by verification from their employers. In addition they were required to submit a detailed C.V. The basis of the selection was that technical competence was accepted if the person could prove 10 years practice. The assessors concentrated on establishing whether the person had conceptual ability to design buildings to an appropriate standard. Approximately 500 of those who had applied were accepted on the basis of the initial submission. The remaining 700 were asked to submit further information, including detailed drawings etc. Each person was then interviewed by the Review Body on average for an hour. The persons being assessed were allowed to have legal representation and the interviews were recorded. Of the 700 interviewed, 300 were rejected.

APPEAL MECHANISMS

One third of those rejected have appealed to a Court, which does not appear to have a parallel in Ireland in that it is an Appeal Court dealing with business, trade and industry. The first of these appeals was held recently and the Court concentrated only on examining procedural matters and accepted the opinion of the Review Body with regard to architectural ability etc.

APPLICATION FEES

Obviously the SBA did not anticipate the level of applications or the complexity of the process. A fee of £200 was charged for each application but this did not meet the costs involved.

REGISTRATION

All persons successful in this process are entered on the Register held by the SBA. These persons can avail of rights under the EC Architects' Directive.

EXTENSION OF NOTIFICATION PERIOD

A three month period was allowed for applications following the public advertisements placed, but it became obvious that many people had not seen the advertisement or had not responded. A check by the SBA of commercial directories showed at least a further 500 /600 people using the title architect who had not been registered. These persons were contacted and were given until the 1 October 1993, the end of the transitional period, to apply. Many of these persons waited until the last week to submit their applications which are now being processed.

REGISTRATION BY SPECIAL EXAMINATION

The Registration legislation makes provision for entry by a special examination which is held each year. The legislation does not place any time limit on the examination and it seems likely that this will always be a feature of the Dutch Registration system. The thinking appears to be that as the Registration system effectively prevents persons from practicing using the title "architect", some provision should be made for other entry to the Register other than by the direct education route.

The system sets out to comply with Articles 3 and 4 of the Directive, particularly Article 1(b) which states "certification and training shall be concluded by successful completion of an examination of degree standard" The examination consists of three elements:

- (1) Practical experience requirement.
- (2) Design test.
- (3) Essay.

PRACTICAL EXPERIENCE

Applicants must have a minimum of 7 years practical experience working at the level of an architect. In most cases the persons presently applying are working as Principals in private practice. This is expected to be a declining group because of limitations placed effectively on practice by the Registration Act. Persons who are working as employees must have all their experience working at the level of an architect verified by their employer. Each application is required to submit 3 buildings that they have designed and these are assessed in the same way as the process outlined above. A £700 fee is charged for the first stage assessment.

DESIGN TEST

The applicants who meet the practical experience requirements and who are accepted by the Review Board are then asked to pass a design test. The first examination was held last year and the subject chosen was a centre for persons suffering from severe stress, such as police and army personnel dealing with hi-jackers etc. The candidates were given 8 days to complete the project in the offices of the SBA and under supervision.

The General Secretary was shown a number of the designs. The subject was large and complex and could certainly be regarded as 5th year thesis level.

ESSAY

Candidates must also successfully complete an essay assignment which is set by a distinguished architectural historian, described as one of the leading experts in the Netherlands. This subject set for first examination was the position of the architect in today's society. A period of 6 months is given for the preparation of the essay and the candidates are interviewed in detail by the person setting the essays. The object of the essay is to assess the candidate's knowledge of architectural history, architectural culture, urbanism etc. It is also intended as a general test of literacy and education.

GENERAL

A fee of approximately £2,000 is charged for participation in the design and the essay and candidates must pass each stage. Candidates are also interviewed in detail in relation to their design project.

As with the practical experience review, the objective of the examination is to establish the conceptual and design ability of the candidate, together with their knowledge of architecture. The 10 years practical experience is intended to demonstrate competence in technical practice and regulatory matters.

Forty persons applied for the first examination of whom 16 were selected for the examination process and 13 passed. In general most candidates had more than 10 years experience.

Twenty-five persons have applied for the 1993 examination.

The Director of the SBA considers that the first examination might possibly have been too "global". The examiners said that in general the 13 successful candidates did reach the standard of what could be considered "lowest pass" in a school of architecture.

THE DUTCH SYSTEM AND THE DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT PROPOSAL

There are significant differences between the Dutch system and the DOE proposal:

1. The Dutch system was developed in the context of registration legislation, and not only in the context of the EC Architects' Directive.
2. Provision was made in the Architects Directive for the system introduced in the Netherlands.
3. The assessment system, the composition of the Review Board and the appeal mechanisms are defined in the registration legislation.
4. The Review Board is comprised of acknowledged expert architects and all work is carried out in an entirely transparent manner.
5. The Dutch system concentrates much more on the architectural design and conceptual abilities of practical experience candidates, rather than questions of technical competence which is regarded as being covered by the assessed 10 years practical experience.
6. The SBA is conscious of the fact that the Certificate Awarded should be in accordance with Articles 3 and 4 (b) of the Directive.
7. The problem of what happens to persons after the introduction of registration is covered by a special entry examination.
8. The Dutch have tackled in a comprehensive manner the entire question of the registration of architects and other allied professionals and has provided administrative support and funding to properly carry out this process.