

Ethical Standards for Architects 2020

SAFA

Finnish Association of Architects

Importance of professional ethics

Professional ethics means a fundamental commitment made by a body of professionals to itself and to society. Professional ethics differ from general ethics in that, instead of focusing on universal rights or obligations, it addresses the specific requirements of a particular professional activity and the social role it entails. Through their work, architects have a major impact on the quality and standard of the living environment. Hence, they are expected to assume responsibility for this. A professional code of ethics is a set of principles to which professionals, both as individuals and as a community, commit themselves, and which seeks to articulate the principles specific to the profession. While the professional code of ethics regulates the relations between professionals, it is also intended for those outside the architectural community in order to guarantee the social legitimacy, justification or authorisation of the activities. Architecture students are part of this community of professionals.

Article 1. Responsibility and sustainability

Architects are committed to implementing and maintaining sustainable, functional and beautiful living environments.

Architects respect architecture, the layered complexity of the built environment as well as the values inherent in the cultural environment. Architects promote ecologically, socially, culturally and economically sustainable living environments. Architects seek to improve the quality of construction and the environment.

Articles 2. Transparency

Architects have integrity and interact with others in the course of their work, listening to and respecting the views of other people.

Architects communicate the underlying ideas and implications of their designs in a clear and precise language. Architects are open to new ideas and feedback. Architects make clear their professional views.

Article 3. Equality

Architects promote equality in society and working life.

Architects comply with the principle of equal treatment, promote social justice and discourage discrimination on the grounds of gender, sexual identity, disability, ethnic origin, religion or age. Architects also pay attention to groups of people who lack a voice of their own.

Article 4. Collegiality

Architects cooperate with and respect their colleagues.

Architects respect intellectual property rights, build their professional reputation on their own merits as well as routinely acknowledge and recognise the contribution of others to the designs. Architects strive for collegial transparency, equality and supportive interaction. Architects' public reviews of the works of colleagues are fair and fact-based. The reviews may not be affected by economic conflicts of interest or personal motives.

Article 5. Confidentiality

Architects hold in confidence the information that come to their attention in the course of work.

However, information which is closely related to the content or impact of the work and which is likely to influence the decisions of the authorities should not be withheld from such authorities.

Article 6. Impartiality

Architects do not accept any benefits beyond regular salary or remuneration or unrelated to their professional work, nor abuse their position.

Architects respect the principle of impartiality in competitions.

Architects do not accept or give gifts, payments or other benefits that may influence the recipient's decision-making. Architects use discretion when assessing the information and hospitality offered by commercial entities. Architects comply with SAFA's competition rules and only participate in architectural competitions as designers or jury members, if there is no conflict of interest present. When serving as members of competition juries, architects may not participate in the competition as designers while the competition is ongoing or afterwards.

Article 7. Healthy competition and remuneration

Architects engage in fair competition when bidding for projects in the competitive tendering process and seek to ensure fair remuneration.

Architects price their work realistically and bid for projects fairly, instead of trying to secure orders from the clients of other architects. When accepting an assignment, architects should inform any previous architects working on the same project of this and ensure that they have no unfinished assignments related to the project and that there are no ambiguities or copyright issues resulting from the client's actions. Architects may only run a professional commercial activity beside the discharge of their official duties if there is not conflict of interest present. When projects are put out to open tender, architects underline the importance of quality considerations and architectural competitions.

Article 8. Communication of the professional ethical standards

Architects inform the relevant parties of their professional ethical standards when signing contracts on assignments and duties.

Architects declare that they are bound by the principles set out in the Professional Code of Ethics including its potential implications for the client and/or other parties, for example with regard to fees and benefits. Employers are advised to inform their employees of the binding nature of the Professional Code of Ethics, for instance in the form of an annex to the employment contract. This Professional Code of Ethics is available on the website of the Finnish Association of Architects or otherwise readily accessible to members and stakeholders.

Annex – Applicability and implications of the Professional Code of Ethics for Architects

The text has been edited by the Ethics Committee based on the Architects' Professional Code of Ethics of 2003:

This Professional Code of Ethics for Architects is intended to be applied by members of the Association, where appropriate. Should any ambiguities arise in the interpretation of these principles of professional ethics governing relations between architects or between architects and their clients, or if there are concerns as to the appropriateness of the conduct of an architect in a professional context or in architectural competitions, the architect involved is obliged to seek a preliminary ruling from the Association.

A member who fails to follow the Association Rules or the decisions made by the bodies of the Association or acts against the purpose of the Association may be expelled from the Association by the decision of the Executive Board on the motion of the Ethics Committee, or the member rights of such a member described in Section 12 may be suspended by the Ethics Committee for a pre-defined period of time up to two years (Section 8).

When working as architects, the members are obliged to comply with the Association Rules and the decisions made by the Association bodies. The Ethics Committee may issue a caution or a warning to a member who fails to follow the Association Rules or the Professional Code of Ethics (Section 11).

A member of the Association of Finnish Architects may be issued a caution or warning or be expelled from the Association or deemed to have rescinded their membership rights for a pre-defined period of time subject to the aforementioned rules and the Professional Code of Ethics of the Association, if

- 1 they have manifestly and knowingly acted in breach of this Professional Code of Ethics without a valid excuse, or
- 2 if they have acted in a manner that undermines public confidence or the credibility of the profession as to their ability to comply with the principles set out here.

For advice on ethical issues related to architectural practice, please contact the SAFA Ethics Committee at: eeva@safa.fi

Duties of the Ethics Committee

Rules of the Association 2018:

Section 27. The Ethics Committee is responsible for supervising the activities of the Association's bodies and, if necessary, making proposals to the appointing body, making proposals to the Executive Board regarding the expulsion of members, dealing with questions of collegiality, issuing opinions on related matters, deciding on disciplinary action against a member who violates the Association Rules or code of ethics, and giving statements to the Delegates Council and the Executive Board upon request.

Rules of Procedure of the Ethics Committee 2018:

Aside from the duties set out in the Association Rules, the Ethics Committee processes any appeals filed by members challenging the decisions made by the Executive Board or Committees provided that such appeals are allowed under the Rules of Procedures adopted by Delegates Council. The matters of collegiality mentioned in the Association Rules refer to compliance with the professional rules laid down by the Delegates Council and to the relations between Association members and their conduct towards the Association or its member groups. Matters related mainly to client-architect relations (contracts) and fees are addressed by a select committee or commission appointed by the Delegates Council or the Executive Board.