

# the Voice of efca



European Federation of Engineering Consultancy Associations

Representing FIDIC in Europe



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## Don't just listen to those who shout the loudest – listen to those who can listen

↳ 'The challenges dominating the COP21 headlines and exercising the minds of policy makers and politicians are the same to which engineering consultancy firms develop innovative, tailored and efficient solutions'

'Governments and political leaders meeting in Paris in December 2015 must recognise the value of holistic planning and infrastructure design that support the sustainable development of our cities in moving to a low carbon economy and more sustainable future', says EFCA President Flemming Pedersen.



'There is a critical role for the engineering consultancy industry. Our industry has the knowledge, expertise and technology to integrate sustainable solutions across a variety of needs in an inclusive way and thus to ensure growth, development and quality of life to individuals. Our professionals are crucial for the transition to a sustainable economy and the creation of synergies between well-functioning urban societies'.

Together with FIDIC, the International Federation of Consulting Engineers – The Global Voice of Consulting Engineers, EFCA is calling for proper investment in, and integrated strategic planning for better urban environments to ensure greater productivity, increased resilience, reduced impact on the environment and quality of life.



Carolien Gehrels

**Consulting engineers are small in number but crucial for progress. As they increasingly take on an expanded role of knowledgeable coordinator and lead from their pivotal position in multi-disciplinary projects, it is time to listen more deeply to their contribution to the global debate on sustainability.**

There are no more powerful politicians in the world than those meeting in Paris in December 2015 at the Climate Change Summit (COP21). And beside them will be the mass of organisations and individuals discussing and promoting sustainable development as the main force for changing the way we live to bring the planet back into balance. Making changes in our cities is now a priority because although they cover less than 2% of the earth's surface, they consume 78% of the world's energy and produce more than 60% of all carbon dioxide.

Cities are home to half of the world's population and there are now more than 450 of them with over one million inhabitants. They are the major source of our human-induced planetary problems.

### Every place is different

ARCADIS is an international company of consulting engineers, a market leader with a global presence and staff of 28,000. It recognises the uniqueness of cities as a starting point for helping to make the changes needed. Carolien Gehrels, European Director Big Urban Clients, explains that the company's local offices are constantly engaged in building local relationships, identifying local solutions, and understanding the inter-relationships of all sectors from construction and water, to health, leisure, transport, education and ICTs. "It is important to talk to everyone," she says, "because every place is different and needs a different approach". However, she also points out that the issues urban areas are facing are critical and some cities are struggling to respond.

**It is important to talk to everyone**

Politicians tell us that we are still not on track to reach our target of having reduced the global temperature by 2°C by 2020. In Paris, they are pushing for progress by updating targets and anticipating new, binding agreements.



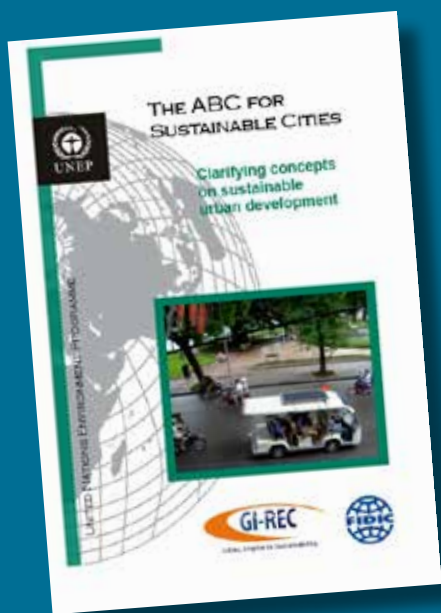
➤ **In helping the move towards sustainable cities, FIDIC agreed to work together with UNEP, the United Nations Environment Programme, on a glossary of terms for urban development. The glossary can be a powerful tool to foster better dialogue and less misunderstandings.**

The ABC for Sustainable Cities is a glossary of key terms related to sustainable cities.

The publication aims to:

- provide clarity on the terms and the concepts related to the issues of sustainable cities, by collecting short definitions from internationally recognised sources,
- support dialogue and cooperation among stakeholders working in sustainable cities, by providing a reference, easily accessible by a technical and non-technical audience.

The publication will be launched at COP21 and disseminated in the preparation for the HABITAT III conference to take place in Quito, Ecuador, from 17 – 20 October, 2016.



[www.efcanet.org](http://www.efcanet.org)

Ironically, Ms Gehrels sees the most difficult part of introducing innovative approaches or significant change in cities lies not in the technical solutions but in political will and ambition. That is one reason why companies like ARCADIS are recruiting those who can already speak the language of their future partners and communicate well with those to be directly affected by the urban project.

Consulting engineers like ARCADIS believe tangible progress lies in finding ways within our towns and cities to balance the demands of generating a strong local economy, being an attractive place for people to live and work in, and limiting any damage to the environment – the three pillars of sustainable development. We have cleaner technologies, energy-efficient buildings, new transport systems, and ICT grids to integrate them all. We even have sources of investment and public and private agencies joining up for mutual benefit and greater impact. But the needs of the people, say the company, are still not being met.

### **More visible in the global debate**

ARCADIS is talking loudly these days from the position it shares with the other consulting engineers who recognise that their creative, multi-disciplinary and independent inputs can hasten sustainable urban development. The company is sponsoring the World Urban Campaign that leads up to the international HABITAT III conference in 2016. It is disseminating a sustainable cities index to be used at the conference which looks at how viable 50 of the world's most prominent cities are as places to live, at their environmental impact, their financial stability, and how these elements complement each another. ARCADIS is more visible in the global debate than it was 10 years ago. "We need good access to global as well as local leaders," says Ms Gehrels.

### **Holistic answers for complex problems**

Consulting engineers have long been trading as sub-contractors to large construction or engineering companies, or under the political directions of large public authorities, but now need to be recognised as the multi-skilled co-ordinators that they are, investing intensely in staff to meet the urgent needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century cities for holistic answers to their complex problems.

ARCADIS has been expanding and broadening its staff base in line with its goal of providing all the planning advice and design services a city might need. As a former deputy mayor of Amsterdam, Ms Gehrels knows only too well how local decision-makers think and what constraints they repeatedly face. Alongside its 400 local offices, it is skills and knowledge such as hers that enable the company to talk in terms the community leaders can understand, and bring potential solutions to their door.

**We understand the global issues**

Ms Gehrels underlines the importance of seeing the process behind a developing city. "That's where it has to start," she says, "seeing how a situation was addressed in another city is also a great way of learning and we support a lot of this city-to-city sharing."

"We understand the global issues," says Ms Gehrels, "and we implement locally. This is the only way to change. But we have to start looking at built assets differently. Cities should be asking themselves, what can we do with our strengths?"

With the easy-shopping internet, shopping malls are disappearing. "But retail is still part of this bigger picture," explains Ms Gehrels. "People want the experience of real shopping but it is just that they now have different needs, they seek quality and perhaps relaxation and entertainment when they go out. A mall becomes a place where people meet. The point of built assets must change. Urban clients are asking for things like that."

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**EFCA has member associations in 25 countries, and is the sole European federation lobbying on behalf of engineering consultancy and related services, a sector that employs around one million staff in Europe. EFCA contributes with a strong and cohesive input to legislative actions of its national associations on issues affecting market conditions. Furthermore, the organisation works as a Europe-wide platform for national associations and their member firms to gather relevant facts and discuss issues with their counterparts.**