

Shaping the future, studying landscape architecture

The Association of German Landscape Architects, bdla, calls for an increase in study capacities for more specialists.

As in many other industries, the shortage of skilled workers is also being felt in architecture and planning offices in Germany. This is reason enough for the bdla to step up its efforts to attract the next generation of professionals. On the one hand, it is important to reach schoolchildren and high school graduates in order to inform them about the diverse opportunities and design possibilities that the profession of landscape architect offers.

Like hardly any other profession, landscape architects are involved in solving current social challenges. Above all, it is important to strengthen the resilience of cities and rural areas in the sense of adapting to climate change, upgrading and developing open spaces in dense urban structures, helping to shape the change in traffic patterns with more space for pedestrians and cyclists, and preserving and strengthening biodiversity.

On the other hand, the Association of German Landscape Architects advocates for the strengthening of universities and the establishment of additional study capacities in landscape architecture in order to sustainably counter the serious shortage of skilled workers. In the years 2013 to 2018, an average of only around 600 graduates had completed a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture.

bdla Vice President Stephan Lenzen puts the efforts in a nutshell, because "more students and graduates is the indispensable basic prerequisite for landscape architects* to be able to meet the challenges of the future for the benefit of people and nature." Especially in metropolises and metropolitan regions, there is a need for additional training capacities, as young people are increasingly drawn to study in the big cities, where the majority of the tasks are to be solved at the same time.

Call to politicians, universities and the professional public

With a call for common action the occupation federation turns to politics, universities and specialized public:

- Politics and society must have an original interest in a holistic education of landscape architects*innen in times of climate change. Without more qualified Landschaftsarchitekt*innen the political goals, e.g. of the German white paper Stadtgrün, cannot be converted.
- The existing training centers for landscape architecture must be secured, strengthened and further developed. Close links with related disciplines, including architecture and urban planning, are essential in order to be prepared for the current challenges.

In metropolitan regions, more courses of study in landscape architecture are needed to counter the serious regional shortage of skilled workers. In addition, young people

are drawn to the big cities. There is therefore an opportunity to generate more students.

- Politicians must create the appropriate structural framework in the organizational structures of ministries and administrations. This requires a bundling of the core competencies of landscape architects* and making them visible in the administration. "Don't hide landscape architecture in city cleaning, civil engineering or traffic planning!"
- It needs an anchoring of the profession in all educational processes of sustainable development from early childhood environmental education to geography and art in high school.
- Politicians, together with the professional players, are called upon to work together more intensively on securing young talent. Landscape architecture must be presented clearly and simply to the outside world in order to be attractive to potential new students.

Vacancies in offices unoccupied

The call is based on analyses and theses of the training working group of the Association of German Landscape Architects. The working group had initially conducted a survey in 2019 at all German universities with study programs in landscape architecture. The survey asked about the number of first-year students and graduates in the period 2013 to 2018. The central result is that the number of first-year students and graduates is largely constant with slight annual fluctuations, without a clear upward or downward trend. In bachelor's degree programs in landscape architecture, the average number of first-year students was 930 and the average number of graduates was 600.

In order to determine not only the supply side (how many graduates are entering the labor market?) but also the demand on the part of planning offices, an online survey was conducted in September/October 2020 on vacancies and the shortage of skilled workers among freelance landscape architects and planning offices. Although the results of the survey are not representative, they provide a rough but nevertheless impressive impression of how serious the situation is. According to the survey, almost nine out of ten planning offices in Germany have had difficulties filling vacancies in the last 12 months or have not been able to fill them at all. It also shows that it is significantly easier for those offices to recruit specialists if there is a university offering landscape architecture courses within a radius of 100 km.

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Created on, 01. 02. 2021