

# Earthquakes in Turkey

## Statement by the Architect's Council of Europe 5 April 2023

The Architects' Council of Europe offers its sincere commiserations regarding the horrific earthquakes that have claimed so many lives in Turkey.

While this is no time for recriminations, it is invariably instructive to seek a better understanding – not of the cause of the catastrophe – which was natural, of course – but of the reaction to it – or in this case, the way in which buildings react – and to draw conclusions as to what, if anything, could have been done differently and what might be avoided in the future.

We have read that two of the areas worst affected by the earthquake were already classified as being at high risk. That being the case, one would have expected that pre-emptive and protective measures would have already been put in place, with the expert involvement of relevant professionals.

An obvious starting point would be to facilitate the involvement of built environment professionals – rather than to exclude them. In most countries, responsibility for building inspection is not devolved to the private sector.

On the contrary, the State has a responsibility to ensure this is properly carried out on behalf of the public and either does so directly or using the services of accredited professionals.

It is patently unfair to blame professionals for the consequences of Zoning Amnesties that have resulted in legalising buildings that were previously classified as “illegal” – regardless of the health and safety risks to society. It is all too easy to blame professionals for deficiencies in institutional policies of relevant administrations and unsupervised zoning practices.

It is vital that citizens are able to access the services of qualified professionals – whose competence – as members of a profession – is controlled by the professional organisations of which they are members.

The right to live in a safe and healthy environment and the right to housing are fundamental, universal rights which are difficult to uphold when specialist professionals and professional organisations are routinely ignored.

**We urge the authorities to consult the relevant professional bodies in Turkey, in addition to setting up a group of special technical experts, to assess the current situation in order to take measures to ensure that unsafe buildings in high-risk areas are adequately protected against future seismic incidents, as well as the orderly arrival of all kinds of aid.**

*About us:*

*The Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) is the representative organisation for the architectural profession at European level. Its membership consists of 49 Member Organisations, which are the regulatory and professional representative bodies in all EU Member States, UK, Switzerland and Norway.*

*Through them, the ACE represents the interests of 620 000 architects from 33 countries in Europe. Our members are the architectural organisations in:*

- the EU Member States (Members) ;*
- the countries with special status by virtue of certain agreements (Norway, Switzerland, UK) - (Members with Special Status) ;*
- the countries that are candidates for EU membership (e.g. Serbia, Ukraine, Turkey) - (Observer Members).*