



## INTERNATIONAL DESIGN COMPETITION NICOLAE BĂLCESCU HIGHSCHOOL

### JURY REPORT

**DATE:** 05.11.2021 - 07.11.2021

**PLACE:** CLUJ ARENA, CLUJ

#### 1. JURY

- **Full members:**

arch. Horia Marinescu – Austria  
arch. Ștefan Tuchilă – France  
arch. Mihaela Criticos – Romania  
arch. Johannes Bertleff – Romania  
arch. Daniel Pop – Contracting Authority Representative  
arch. Mariana Michiu – OAR Transylvania Branch Representative  
arch. Șerban Patrulius – România

- **Deputy members**

arch. Maria Duda – Romania  
arch. Daniela Calciu – Romania

#### 2. ORGANIZATION OF THE JURY

All members of the Jury were present for the Jury sessions, according to the composition announced by the Competition Rules. Arch. Horia Marinescu was unanimously elected president of the Jury.

The following persons were present next to the jury, as:

- Competition Coordinator/ President of the Technical Committee: arch. Mirona Crăciun
- Professional advisors: arch. Elena Stoian,
- Jury Secretary: arch. Ilinca Pop

There were **26** projects submitted in the competition. All projects complied with the provisions of the Competition Rules in what concerns the works of the Reception Secretariat. Therefore, in the Technical Committee procedure entered **26** projects.

The president of the Technical Committee presented the Technical Committee Report to the Jury, drafted following the formal verification of the Competition Brief and Rules' requirements. Project no. 103 did not present the Financial Proposal (in breach of the Competition Rules, pt. 2.3.4 și pt. 3.6.2), and project no. 121 broke the anonymity provisions, by stamping the Financial Proposal (in

breach of the Competition Rules, art 3.7). Thus, the Technical Committee has proposed the disqualification of projects 103 and 121 to the Jury. The Jury unanimously decided to disqualify projects 103 and 121.

**24 projects** have been admitted in the Jury proceedings.

### **3. AWARD CRITERIA**

In assessing the projects, scores will be given on each criterion between 0 and the maximum value, indicated for each criterion. The maximum total score is 100 points. The weight of the criteria is explained as follows:

#### **A. MEETING THE FUNCTIONAL AND ARCHITECTURAL & URBAN PLANNING REQUIREMENTS**

##### **60% of the final evaluation (maximum 60 points)**

The compliance with the minimum requirements set by the competition brief is evaluated on a scale of 1 to 60. It is calculated by summing up the points awarded by the jury for the following aspects:

##### **A1. Quality of the urban intervention - maximum 20 points**

The following will be scored:

- integration of new interventions in the protected built area, compliance with the regulations and conditions imposed by the protection of the area, consideration of the relationship with neighbours, etc. - maximum 12 points
- proposed urban landscape (solving the urban arrangements, the road / pedestrian area, the parking areas, the transitions between public spaces and the whole high school, the way of relating to the existing built and vegetal fund, etc.) - maximum 8 points

##### **A2. Architectural quality of the proposed project – maximum 20 points**

The following will be scored:

- compliance with the program, compliance with standards and norms regarding school buildings, sports halls, etc. - maximum 5 points
- architectural value, qualities of the architectural concept - maximum 5 points
- functioning of the overall proposal and optimization of the relationship between functions - balance between the areas occupied by classrooms and the rest of the spaces (laboratories, offices, common areas, etc.), versatility and flexibility of (common and not only) space usage - maximum 5 points
- spatial, environmental and natural lighting qualities in the school - maximum 5 points

##### **A3. Technical value: energy concept and means of achievement - maximum 10 points**

- feasibility of the structural / constructive intervention - maximum 2 points



- energy concept in relation to current regulations on energy saving (and nZEB) - maximum 2 points
- the materials used and the approach of some principles of sustainable development - maximum 2 points
- the economy and rationality of the means to carry out the project in order to limit the building and operating costs - maximum 2 points
- the possibility of staging the interventions so that school activities can be organized during the execution of the works - maximum 2 points

#### **A4. Financial criterion – maximum 10 points**

The following will be scored:

- compliance with the design cost estimated indicated in the competition documentation - 5 points. **Failure to do so will lead to the disqualification of the project.**
- The rationality and sustainability of the functional & spatial solution in relation to the maximum cost estimate for the investment - maximum 5 points.

### **B. ARCHITECTURAL & URBAN PLANNING ADDED VALUE OF THE PROPOSAL 40% of the final evaluation (maximum 40 points)**

The urban planning and architectural value of the proposed solution is evaluated on a scale from 1 to 40. It is calculated by the sum of the points awarded by the jury for the following aspects:

#### **B1. The plastic expressiveness of the proposed intervention in itself and in relation to the protected area - maximum 20 points**

- new constructions - maximum 10 points
- the relationship between the new interventions and the protected area - maximum 5 points
- urban arrangements - maximum 5 points

#### **B2. The characteristic nature, quality and atmosphere of the proposed spaces – maximum 10 points**

- indoor environment - maximum 5 points
- outdoor environment – maximum 5 points

#### **B3. The quality and clarity of the representation of the ideas so as to illustrate the competitor's ability to implement the proposed project - maximum 10 points.**

The calculation algorithm for the final evaluation of the projects is the following:

**Final score (maximum 100 points) = score for criterion A + score for criterion B**

**Score for criterion A** (maximum 60 points) = A1+A2+A3+A4

**Score for criterion B** (maximum 40 points) = B1+ B2+B3

#### **4. JURY SESSION – WORKING METHODOLOGY**

The working sessions of the Jury were preceded by a visit to the competition site. Then, arch. Elena Stoian – Professional Advisor - presented the Competition Brief, with detailed explanations regarding the particularities of the intervention area and the requirements addressed to the participants.

It was agreed that the selection of projects should be done through several rounds of analysis.

The Jury agreed upon the following working method:

##### **Round I**

In a first round, the Jury analyzed the 24 projects individually, based on the Award criteria, and on the set of requirements expressed by the Competition Brief.

A collective discussion followed the individual analysis, after which the Jury selected the projects that offer a favorable response, as a whole, to the specific requirements of the Brief and the evaluation criteria, discussing matters related to urban design, to the intervention inside the protected area and those related to the architecture program targeted by the Brief. Four projects were eliminated in this round.

The remaining twenty projects after the first round were: **100, 101, 102, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 110, 112, 114, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120, 123, 124, 125.**

## Round II

The Jury sessions continued with the analysis of each of the twenty projects that successfully passed the first round. The projects were further evaluated according to the Award criteria and the requirements of the Competition Brief. The members of the Jury first analyzed each of the projects individually, and then discussed in detail, collectively, the specific approaches of each project in relation to all the aspects described by the Criteria and the Brief, regarding the protected area, the type of attention engaged within the response given to the adjacent urban public space and intervention strategies, general functionality of the proposed spatial designs and understanding of the program and the users' needs.

Following this round of debate, six projects were eliminated.

The projects selected to go further in the third round were: **100, 101, 102, 104, 106, 107, 109, 110, 114, 116, 118, 119, 123, 125.**

## Round III

The Jury continued the analysis of the projects remaining under scrutiny, seeking to identify those projects that demonstrate a thorough understanding of the particularities of the studied area and that meet all requirements in an optimal way, using the Award Criteria and referring to the requirements of the Competition Brief.

Five projects were eliminated in this round.

The projects that were selected following this round were the projects with competition numbers **100, 101, 102, 104, 106, 107, 114, 116, 118.**

## Round IV

The nine remaining projects in the competition were further evaluated by the Jury, with a particular focus on solving the fixed requirements submitted to the competitors and following each of the award criteria described in the Competition Brief.

Four projects were eliminated in this round.

The five projects that were selected following this round were the projects with competition numbers **100, 102, 104, 107, 118.**

## Round V

The Jury continued the analysis of the five remaining projects, in order to establish the best answers given by the competitors both at an overall level and at a detailed level, in accordance with the requirements and the Award criteria expressed by the Brief.

The three projects selected following this round were: **100, 104, 118.**

### **Round VI – Prize awarding**

The jury decided:

The **I<sup>st</sup> prize**, consisting in the design contract with an estimated value of 2.499.780 LEI, without VAT, was awarded to **project number 100.**

The **II<sup>nd</sup> prize**, in the amount of 83.000 RON including VAT, was awarded to **project number 118.**

The **III<sup>rd</sup> prize**, in the amount of 41.500 RON including VAT, was awarded to **project number 104.**

## **5. STATEMENT OF THE JURY**

**The International Design Competition for the Nicolae Bălcescu Theoretical Highschool, Cluj-Napoca, 2021**

### **A Romanian Absolute Premiere**

We have in front of us the results of an absolute Romanian premiere: the first public competition for the realization of a school, that the Romanian Order of Architects organized after 1989. Cluj deserves our compliments for this important initiative, because, as we all see in this tragic period of the pandemic, education is an essential point in a society.

In the Romanian cultural space there has also been a lack of specialized studies on contemporary school architecture or on the relationship between current pedagogy and the built environment in which it takes place.

All of the above have put us, as a jury, in a pioneering position and implicitly one of great responsibility, not only for the immediate result of this competition, but also for the example we are to set with the choices made for one or another of the projects.

As if this premiere was not enough, the theme brought to the table even more issues:



- 1) the complex architecture typology responding to a contemporary school;
- 2) the insertion of the new school in a protected site and in a city with a history that obliges;
- 3) the additional challenge of integrating the historic school building, which in itself has a certain strength and presence.

Solving these demands in a perfect unity was not easy for the competitors, but they all have the jury's congratulations for their important, pioneering effort.

Likewise, the jury had to weigh up between solutions with different emphases, between their pluses and minuses. And, as in any competition, especially one with such complex requirements, the jury could not find a perfect project, but they could identify a few projects considered to have presented optimal solutions, and in which interesting concepts prevail, without major flaws and with possible perfectible details.

### **Excellence is not extravagance, but appropriateness**

The jury believes that, at this pioneering moment, a search for balanced solutions is needed, rather than the exceptional gestures - the ones the architectural public usually expects. We believe that the Transylvanian attitude, that of a modest, consistent and restrained rationality, is more appropriate to the moment and the theme. We have implicitly sought, following a certain *spiritus loci*, a solution that excels in appropriateness, not extravagance. It is, not least, the duty of our society to serve future generations, for that is what pedagogy is all about. And if it is a duty, we believe that a framework built to serve the child and the adolescent is more appropriate, than making glorifying claims of any kind. Construction respects; it does not model. Glory does not belong to architecture, but to the man who inhabits it, in the broadest sense.

### **Regarding the common features of the winning projects**

#### **Context**

It is interesting to note how the existing old school building, dating from 1894, manages to maintain a good relationship with the surrounding houses, even though it is obviously larger than them. Its simple volume, modulated by classical ornamentation of a human scale, combined with the garden strip surrounding it, contributes admirably, and with natural sobriety, to the surrounding urban space. The simplicity of the classical building design has set the bar high for the new solutions, that need to establish a dialogue crossing 127 years.

The remodeling of the Morii Canal and the public space is also part of the same return to the roots of these places, but on a new, contemporary level. For the symbolic or material ballast of the 20th century, produced by the crowded spaces of the automobile and the concreting of a once picturesque waterway is

now, through this competition, thrown overboard and replaced by an opening that is oriented "backwards, towards man and backwards towards nature!".

### **Solution**

The jury gradually converged to the choice of solutions which, as mentioned above, tended towards an unspectacular appropriateness to context and function, and which unified with elegant simplicity, the new with the historic. Through the given configuration of the complex theme, this confluence towards a certain clarity and simplicity resulted naturally and rationally.

From the jury's point of view, the first place proposals achieve this through two broad types of solution:

- 1) a central free space as the core of the newly constructed composition;
- 2) a dialogue between two central bodies - one old, the other new - of classical but as far as possible undated (timeless) clarity.

In the end, after long debates, the solution that won was the one that was supple, flexible, with a certain natural modesty in relation to the context and that promises a simple implementation.



## 6. FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### PROJECT NO. 100 – FIRST PRIZE

The winning project stands out for the simplicity and clarity of the intervention concept, which succeeds in responding to the complex issues of the theme and of the difficult location, characterised by the heterogeneity of urban forms and architectural typologies. The main quality of the proposal lies in reconciling apparently divergent requirements: enhancement of existing architectural-urbanistic values and modernisation of the area; reverence for the past and affirmation of the new; prestigious image and contemporary expression; openness to the public space and introversion of the educational space.

The proposed intervention creates, 127 years later, a contemporary replica of the old "Nicolae Bălcescu" high school, a presence that imposes itself through its human scale, natural elegance and the noble simplicity of classicism. The project succeeds in re-interpreting these qualities of the old architecture of Cluj without making any concessions to modernity and without pastiching the historical model.

**A1.** The proposed solution represents an intervention well integrated in the context of the area, in full agreement with the scale of the representative buildings (high school building, CAS Hospital, Lutheran Church) and highlighting by its size and treatment the status of the educational function in relation to the residential buildings in the area. The newly proposed buildings take the directions imposed by the alignments of Argeş and Nicolae Bălcescu streets, as well as by the boundaries of the plot, through simple volumes that do not exceed the height of the neighbouring buildings and are subordinated to the dominance represented by the historic high school building.

The concern for the urban landscape is translated by a careful detailing of the areas of interest represented by the intersections and the accesses towards the high school precincts (marked by largos), but above all by the unified arrangement of the promenade along the Morii Canal, in parallel with the encouragement of pedestrian and bicycle circulation along the Argeş Street route.

**A2.** The project revives the tradition of educational buildings organised around an inner courtyard designed as the core of the complex - a unique space that counterbalances the multiple built volumes. The main functions are clearly and distinctly distributed in the buildings that define the enclosure: secondary school in the old building of the high school, primary school in the new building facing Nicolae Bălcescu street and secondary school in the new building facing Argeş street, while the fourth side of the plot is occupied by sports halls. The library and a multi-purpose room (which can be converted into a dining room) occupy the central area of the old building, opening onto both the two inner courtyards and the new premises.

The three school cycles, although separated into three separate buildings, are at the same time connected, thus maintaining a certain degree of flexibility and the possibility

of reorganising classes according to the yearly fluctuation in pupil numbers. The centrality of the composition also allows a free and flexible use of the premises, not defining a priori and necessarily separate areas, leaving room for varied uses and perpetual spatial reinterpretations.

The clarity of the functional concept, which ensures an efficient use of the spaces, is matched by a correct appreciation of the weight of each function and the fluid communication between the building bodies thanks to the corridors and access ramps. The site includes an indoor garden which becomes the centre of the complex, a football pitch adjacent to the sports halls, and a basketball court on their terrace.

The cloister pattern is supported by a unifying portico linking the historic building to the new educational buildings, complemented on the west side by terraces facing the sports field.

The proposed new educational spaces are shielded on the ground floor by porches towards the inner courtyard, and towards the street by rows of trees and buffer spaces created by projecting concrete frames that are perceived as porches without being accessible.

**A3.**For the new buildings, the project proposes a reinforced concrete structure supporting the regularity of the spaces intended for teaching and sports activities. The overall energy concept makes use of innovative solutions (green roofs, photovoltaic panels), but also of traditional solutions based on architectural elements such as porticoes and canopies providing solar protection.

**B1.**The proposed intervention stands out through the sensitivity of the integration of the new in the context of the area and in particular for its relation to the historical building of the "Nicolae Bălcescu" high school. The architecture of the new buildings along the street reinterprets in a modern language the sober neo-renaissance stylistic expression of the old high school. The new fronts take up the horizontal partitioning typical of classical architecture and respect both the registers of the historic facades and, on the ground floor, the rhythm of the structural spans, which they double on the upper floor. By setting back the upper register and through the overall proportions, the new buildings respond with ease and respectful restraint to the scale of the historic urban context and are in line with the general attitude of the project, characterised by modesty and elegant restraint.

The balance of proportions and the elegant simplicity of the architectural design give the ensemble the necessary poise and gravity of an educational institution, while expressing, through the dialogue between the old and the new, the continuity of a prestigious tradition.

**B2.**The composition is based on the complementarity between the built volumes and the large central space that brings together the whole ensemble.

The sobriety of the inner courtyard suggests the seclusion and tranquillity necessary for learning and access to knowledge, recalling the monastic cloister model, followed by schools from the origins of the programme, but also the classical agora enclosed around the perimeter. However, the unifying gesture of the cover that joins the old and the new buildings avoids monumentality, and the space of the enclosure remains airy and permeable thanks to the portico, the large glazed surfaces and the bleachers that form an open-air amphitheatre.

**B3.** In order to illustrate the principles of intervention as relevant as possible, the project includes a series of diagrams of the overall concept and axonometric details of the urban layouts.

### **Recommendations**

A detailed verification of the load-bearing structure is needed, as well as the lighting of the hallway in the circular courtyard area, keeping the spatial intentions and coherence of the design.

The landscape treatment of the vegetation around the Morii Canal, in terms of the biotope and the relationship between the street space and the water could be further explored.

### **PROJECT NO. 118 – SECOND PRIZE**

The project proposes an extension in the form of a single building, located in the vicinity of the existing volume. The extension is linked to the historic high school by a walkway as well as the access yard, which distributes both bodies of the project. In addition, the project team proposes a reconfiguration of the central wing of the old building, designed to optimize the main access and distribution to the floors.

The sports fields, located at the northeast end of the site, are coherently integrated into the architecture of the whole ensemble through two porticos. The two structures, generated on the ground floor by the new building, act as a natural extension of its facade and cover the entire length of the site. The proposal also includes the possibility of the use of sports fields by the public, in this case the porticos are used as a flexible filter between private and public space.

The jury therefore appreciated this project, for the adequate response to the site requirements and the functional constraints generated by the program, as well as for the high level of quality of the proposed architecture, in relation to the function of the future building.

**A1.** The jury appreciated the quality and coherence of the proposed interventions along the Morii Canal, but especially the configuration of the public space near the entrance created on Argeş Street. The project envisages a widening of the sidewalk, both near the access to the new building but also for the sports area, which can be opened to the public, in addition to its use in the high school activity. Another interesting point of this proposal is the concern shown for how this future public space



will integrate and articulate with the rest of the city, in addition to the proposed future use of the canal.

On the opposite side of the site, the new building is set back from the alignment of Nicolae Bălcescu Street, leaving room for a public space arrangement as well as an outdoor parking area.

The volume of the new building, which occupies the entire center of the site, is skillfully articulated with the existing building, managing to harmoniously integrate its four stories. A series of movements of the new facade, as well as its composition results in an alignment with the design of the existing facade.

**A2.** The plan distinguishes two main access areas: the front area, the main facade of the existing high school which becomes an administrative access area, and the main access area occupying the center of the land, between the old building and the extension proposal. This second space distributes student flows to various parts of the project. Access to the new building is to be found near the Argeş Street entrance, while the existing building can be accessed through its old semi-basement, connected to the street by the topography of the central courtyard.

The building that replaces the central body of the existing volume allows this programmatic articulation, drawing a large access area, served by the two stairs / elevators that will lead students to the upper levels.

The project proposes a clear and simple organization at the functional level: the pupils are separated according to age in the two buildings. If the middle school and high school cycle occupy the floors of the new building, the primary school classes are in the historic high school building. The two gyms (one of which can be reserved for the public, with an access from Nicolae Bălcescu Street) are located at basement level, thus also occupying the full height of the ground floor. Both spaces seek light in the main courtyard of the high school, thus creating some interesting visual connections between the outside and the inside.

The connection on the first floor allows a flexibility of the boundary between the educational cycles. The jury also appreciated the possibilities offered by the central space of the new volume, which can articulate a series of different functions, depending on the wishes of the teaching staff or students.

**A3.** The new building is proposed in the form of a compact volume that brings the advantage of a reduced energy consumption, by limiting the distances required for installations and facilitating the proximity of various services.

The use of large, glazed surfaces, several courtyards of light, as well as zenithal lighting will allow a better distribution of natural light, which in turn implies significant savings in electricity consumption.

The jury appreciated the proposition regarding the implementation phases.

**A4.** The jury appreciated several propositions designed in the logic of obtaining a coherent project economy: the use of a compact volume that will limit the facade and roof surfaces, the creation of a surface parking and minimal (but effective) interventions in the landscape.

Attention is drawn to some possible optimizations in the technical choices, especially regarding the use of steel frames.

**B1.** The jury appreciated the presence of the portico, a permeable but also reconfigurable limit. This allows temporary extensions of public space in the northern part of the plot, by opening sports fields for any users of the city. The project can become more than a public amenity, thus proposing spaces and functions that expand and complete the public domain.

In addition to a carefully articulated volume with the existing building and the urban space, the project proposes a great diversity of outdoor spaces, with configurations that allow a varying level of privacy (but which remain easily controllable), an important element for an institution that will include age categories with varied needs.

**B2.** The composition of the facade transposes in a clear way the structure of the plan. Each classroom in the new building is served by two generously sized frames, which fully meet the needs of natural lighting and create a welcoming relationship with the urban landscape.

The jury positively appreciated the occupation and the role given to the semi-basement, which thus becomes integrated and connected to the rest of the project. In the case of the new building, the transparency, flexibility, and scale of the interior central space were also appreciated.

**B3.** The quality of the images as well as the level of information and explanations were appreciated, especially regarding the urban insertion or the functional articulations. The information is clearly structured and organized, allowing an easy interpretation of the project's design logic.

### **Recommendations**

Although the jury appreciated the team's proposal to replace the central body of the existing building with a new one, it also considers that the proposal for upper floors can still be improved, to provide more coherence in terms of functionally linking the two entities.

Another element appreciated by the jury was the configuration of the new building. However, in order to improve the user experience, authors should consider the possibility of partially reconfiguring the central workspace and common areas to provide more natural light and possibly more circulation space.

### **PROJECT NO. 104 – THIRD PRIZE**

The project proposes a solution that stands out for its simplicity of means combined with great flexibility. This simplicity succeeds in resolving both the relationship with the urban, with the old building and the internal functional solution. The architecture is marked by the same restraint and avoidance of plastic gestures in favor of a rationalism that allows things to be built from strictly necessary elements and spaces resulting from configurations of "negative space" rather than sculpturally.

The choice of wood as an apparent structural element is noteworthy, inscribed in the same concept, but difficult in the context of Romanian technical norms.

**A1. a)** The volume of the proposed extension preserves the height of the cornice and the alignment of the old school building along the streets. It is set back from Balcescu Street (on the NW side), and thereby retains a respectful distance to the opposite street front, with its small-scale houses.

The volume of the new building continues and complements the volume of the old school of 1894, creating a clear and contoured ensemble, which corresponds to the classicism of the old building, as well as to the simple but balanced relationship with the city, namely the presence of a simple volume, with a transition towards the street and the neighbouring buildings that is mediated by a garden strip and a row of trees.

Towards the rest of the urban block (to the NE, E) the transition is made with the same "respectful distance", avoiding blind walls and hiatuses. Thus, on Argeş Street, the new construction of the fencing hall is coupled with the neighbouring house and closes its blind wall. It makes a natural transition between the new complex and the existing, neighbouring fabric.

**A1. b)** The Morii Canal water course is proposed to be opened totally, with minimal bridges crossing it, giving priority to the water surface. On Strada Argeş, this new open canal is accompanied by traffic calming (in the area towards the city centre) and, in front of the new school, by a completely pedestrian segment (shared space only with the school bus). A public square is created in front of the school, marking the entrance to the school complex, and connected to the school bus stop. The street space descends to water level, with steps, at three points: in front of the entrance to the new school and in the area towards the city centre, where there are cafes and shops.

Between the narrowed carriageway of Argeş Street and the canal, a strip of vegetation, landscaped and planted with trees, is proposed to accentuate the botanical element along the water. The double strip, of water and vegetation, creates a natural axis connecting the school to the city centre.

**A2.** The functional concept of the new complex focuses on a compact solving of the new building and a connection to the old building, creating a whole with high functional flexibility (which is welcomed, considering the possible fluctuations of the number of pupils for each age group).

A singular new building is placed as a mirror response to the old building. A clear central courtyard is created between the two buildings. The connection between the buildings is resolved with two delicately and transparently treated passages, so that the old building visually preserves its outline and individuality.

The solution of building the new "monoblock" in two phases would be ideal, but its feasibility raised questions among the jury.

The "monoblock" interestingly combines perimeter classrooms with a core containing wide spaces, allowing for generous, multi-purpose spaces, as currently proposed in European school construction.



The compact grouping around the nucleus allows ideal flexibility in the use of space and easy redistribution of the number of classrooms for the various educational cycles as required. It also means accepting a mix between age groups, e.g. following the contemporary Viennese pedagogical model of multi-age classes and "school campuses".

The compact but detached form of the new building allows for good lighting of the classrooms along the outer contour. It also succeeds in solving all functional necessities on only three levels (GF+2UF), avoiding a rise in height, with advantages in terms of functioning and a more restrained urban presence, but with the disadvantage of a basement that occupies the whole footprint, therefore large and costly (especially in terms of underground parking).

The old building: its spaces flexibly contain classrooms and laboratories alike. The assembly hall is restored to its original position, in the elegant 1894 space, and its present location is given to the new teacher's room, in a symbolically central position.

**A3.** The structural timber construction is a sustainable and environmentally friendly solution to be appreciated but creates a major feasibility problem. The proposed construction needs adaptation to the specific Romanian fire requirements.

**B1.** The "one-piece" solution is radical and at the same time decent in its neutrality. The reduced height and the strictly functional facades maintain a subordinate relationship to the old building and the urban fabric through their unemphasized scale. The urban space in the entrance area of the new building is part of the same neo-functional concept of retaining any formalist gesture.

**B2.** The interior ambience results from the play of cutouts between the floors of the three levels that create double-height spaces. The method is simple but the results are complex. The large "interior forum" of the first floor is connected by a large amphitheatre with the ground floor entrance hall (aula), and by skylights with the interior gardens on the second floor. The basement gyms are visually connected to the ground floor aula.

The ambience of the outdoor spaces results from the clearly outlined but unemotional position of the new body. The relationship between Balcescu Street and the green space with the basketball court raised some questions.

**B3.** The representation of the solution follows the principle of functionalism, with reduced graphic means, in black and white. Elevations and sections highlight the moderate scale of the building, perspectives choose representative viewing angles, which help understand the relationship with the public spaces.

## Recommendations

**1)** It is recommended, for the load-bearing structure made of apparent wood, to look for a solution that can adapt it to the current (difficult) context of the Romanian fire protection regulations. From the same point of view, the location of the library in the attic of the old building should also be considered and analysed.



2) The relationship between Balcescu Street and the adjacent sports area of the school needs to be studied further.

3) The configuration of the access to the underground car park / the corridor linking the ground floor between the central courtyard and the sports ground should be analysed.

## 7. FINAL RANKING

COMP. NO.	PT.	COMMENTS
100	94	1ST PRIZE
118	87	2ND PRIZE
104	83	3RD PRIZE
107	79	<p>The project excels in the way it distributes the built masses on the site and the relationship created between them. The hierarchy of outdoor spaces offers to the users a complex and rich palette of space typologies and the large main space connects the functional and architectural composition. The relationship of the ensemble with the city is well enhanced, and the configuration of the public space along the Morii Canal shows a sensible design approach.</p> <p>The jury appreciates the relationship of the ensemble with the adjacent streets, carefully studied in the proposed project and substantially improved in the following points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The main access to the school yard is located on Argeş Street, enlarging the pedestrian area to the detriment of car traffic. We appreciate the transformation of Argeş Street into a shared space for cars and pedestrian traffic.</li><li>• By replacing the existing building (no. 2) with a fragmentary shaped body and by creating alveoli along the sidewalk the project improves the relationship of the built volume with the urban space of N. Bălcescu Street. The succession of niches along the sidewalk skillfully configures the access area on the northwest side of the</li></ul>



		<p>ensemble.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The arrangement of the urban space along the MoriiCanal shows sensitivity by creating a pedestrian route at an intermediate level, lowered near to the water surface, improving the visual relationship with the river and offering to the pedestrians an alternative, quiet and secluded walking area.</li> <li>• The existing buildings, excepting the historic edifice, are proposed for demolition and replaced with a new ensemble, a decision which enables a better organization of the site and an optimized ratio of the buildings. The proposed new building on the north-east side of the land is volumetrically fragmented and thus manages to integrate into the surrounding urban area.</li> </ul> <p>The functional scheme proposed in the project offers an interesting and valid alternative to the classic school organization typologies. The fragmentation of the plan enriches the variety of common and circulation spaces, and allows natural light to enter in a way that is clearly superior to other typologies. However, the solution does not achieve a mature spatial balance, as most of the classrooms are naturally lit on the short side of the space, a configuration that is disadvantageous for the furnishing of the space and for flexibility of use. The pergola system provides a good connection of the new buildings with the historic building, with the positive effect of increased flexibility in future reorganisation of school cycles in the different school blocks. The architectural language is well mastered but shows, however, some inconsistencies such as the contradiction of the fragmented character of the volume by decorative elements that interrupt the compositional horizontality of the facades.</p> <p>The proposed spatial structure does not require recourse to excessively complex structural systems, without jeopardising the spectacularity of the interior and exterior spaces. In terms of the energy concept, the project succeeds in integrating beneficial passive measures for shading the south-facing glazed spaces, and the landscape of the terraced roofs provides a good opportunity to integrate solar energy harvesting technologies. The jury appreciated the balanced use of exposed materials and the use of wood as a structural material (within the sports halls).</p>
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102	76	<p><b>SPECIAL MENTION OF THE JURY</b></p> <p>The project is impressive through the depth of the conceptual approach and the picturesqueness of the interior, exterior and interstitial spaces, respectively, in contrast with the crudeness and asceticism of the expression of the volumes. The jury appreciated that the project team proposed the recovery of all existing buildings on the site, and their ennoblement through subtle extensions and modifications. The relation to the city is guided by a strong idea consisting of the coagulation of a central empty space with a symbolic geometry, a space offered for use to all categories of public after the end of the school program. This space becomes the heart of the built fragments and peripheral interstitial spaces. Unfortunately, this central space does not get the fulfilment it deserves due to the insertion of the sports field with a built perimeter boundary that fragments the space of the square.</p> <p>The additional classrooms required to satisfy the competition brief, limited by the built density resulting from the choice to keep all the buildings, result in insufficient lighting in the classrooms, often overshadowed by nearby neighboring buildings. The proposed architecture does not help this shortcoming, as it proposes a rhythm of small windows.</p> <p><b>For its obvious urban and architectural qualities, the jury proposes this project for an honorable mention.</b></p>
106	74	<p>The intervention is articulated around a space that occupies the entire central part of the site. This courtyard organizes and distributes the entrances to the main building, to the second building and its extension, as well as those to the building created on Argeş Street, which houses the primary school classrooms and sports halls. The jury appreciated the clarity of the solution and the articulation of the facades between the new and existing buildings. The composition succeeds in generating a well-defined space that responds to the functional constraints of the theme, while preserving some of the existing built fabric. Playgrounds, planted areas, a basketball court and various elements of street furniture divide, organize and prioritize this central volume, a true "schoolyard", which allows the gathering of a large number of students. While the jury appreciated the effectiveness of the courtyard design, the lack</p>



		of strong ideas expressed in the urban design, and in particular in the link with the Morii Canal, raised several questions.
<b>101</b>	<b>73</b>	<p>The project proposes permeable spaces, with mineral and vegetal surfaces that contribute to the creation of an interesting and friendly urban landscape towards the Morii Canal, which also extends to Balcescu Street by proposing trees along the alignment and the transformation of both streets into shared spaces. The arrangement of the built volumes creates courtyards with different characters towards the two streets - courtyard of honour towards Argeş Street and playground towards Balcescu Street. The jury appreciates the fragmentation of the fronts and the appropriate dimensioning of the volumes, which respect the existing height and the progressive decrease of the masses towards the area of houses. At first glance it seems that the project generates a good hierarchy, although it builds a lot and proposes few outdoor spaces. However, the centre of the ensemble does not actually participate to the ground floor, but - by being sunk into the basement - is reduced to a simple compositional element, diminishing its potential to become a representative central pivot on the ground floor and fragmenting the only outdoor space that could have played the role of a "schoolyard" that would allow a large number of students to gather. There are many interesting interior spaces that open up visual connections between levels and can be used in a variety of ways and scenarios, but the relationships between the bodies might separate rather than connect them.</p>
<b>116</b>	<b>72</b>	<p>The jury appreciates the partial preservation of the existing buildings and their integration into the new ensemble, as well as the concern for the landscaping of the canal and the public spaces around the high school. The apparent compositional clarity of the volumes is not sufficiently supported by the resolution of the functions and connections between them. In addition to the inconsistent sizing and layout of some of the new classrooms, the vertical connections are unclear and the common classroom spaces are uncontrolled and undersized in relation to the number of students. Also, the 5-storey building is problematic in relation to the school typology. The technical drawings insufficiently describe the project, which appears more clearly in the 3D simulations, particularly appreciated for the sobriety of the proposed exterior ambience, in line with the possibility of the courtyard also being used as a public space</p>

		open to the city outside school hours. At the same time, the quality of the spaces could have been increased by formally clarifying the courtyard and differentiating the major space from the minor ones, as well as by further studying the relationship with the old building.
<b>114</b>	<b>70</b>	The insertion proposes the creation of a central space that articulates the old building and the new buildings, but the way these buildings rotate around the circular courtyard is ambiguous and does not enhance either functional or volumetric-spatial clarity. Although in itself the idea of a geometrically clear inner courtyard, acting as a pivot for the whole complex, is interesting and could govern the relationships between the interior and exterior spaces, the layout and dimensions of the courtyards and built volumes are not sufficiently controlled and even ignore the core to which they should be subordinated. The jury appreciates the elegant and balanced architectural language, but notes that the suggested layouts do not in fact allow for the flexibility of the schemes. The circular courtyard cannot accommodate school functions or other large gatherings; the courtyard between the new volumes is far too small in relation to the remaining space towards Balcescu Street, although it would be much more important for the life of the school. Inside, the orderly layout of the classrooms is counteracted by a lack of clarity in terms of access and movement between spaces.
<b>119</b>	<b>65</b>	The proposal for the development of Balcescu Street provides a rational solution to the traffic generated by primary school pupils. The proposed Argeş Street and Morii Canal improvement includes suspended platforms that activate urban life. The authors opted for a major intervention on the eastern side of the historic building. Even if from a functional point of view it is well managed and brings value to the intervention, its scale remains questionable in terms of the dialogue with the historic body and the spaces it generates. The organisation of functions, both on site and inside the buildings, is rational and very clear. The educational spaces for the primary school and sports activities are separated from the secondary and high school. The spaces are well sized and impeccably grouped from a functional point of view. On the other hand, the variety of language types used for the facades of the newly proposed buildings detracts from the quality of the intervention and the outdoor spaces. The project has a high degree of sustainability



		through the use of the lamellar wood construction system.
<b>125</b>	<b>62</b>	<p>The project convinces by means of the clear gesture that combines all the functions necessary to complete the program in a rigorously organized volume. The placement of this massive volume in direct contact with the historic building suggests an intention to generate a manifesto-like discourse. However this gesture is unfulfilled by some conceptual decisions such as the concern for the aestheticization of the facades of the new volume, considering the negation of the validity of these principles by the proposed joining. The project neglects the shaping and prioritization of the exterior spaces, their form and destination being rather random, resulting after the insertion of the new building body. The massive volume also denotes a lack of concern for integration into the urban fabric of the area. The design concept of Argeş Street is focused on the improvement of the pedestrian areas but ignores the development of the MoriiCanal, the visual perception or the approach to the water surface being inhibited by a green space flanking the vertical banks of the river.</p>
<b>123</b>	<b>58</b>	<p>The jury appreciates the intention of the project to create a clear hierarchical structuring of the outdoor spaces. However, the translational repetition of a U-shaped body inhibits the functional and visual communication of the resulting ensemble. By setting back the building body adjacent to N. Balcescu Street, the proposal succeeds in improving the impact of the built volume onto the public space of the street, but, on the whole, the spatial-volumetric configuration does not show a concern for its integration into the adjacent urban fabric. Although the project proposes a simple functional structure, organised in single or double tracts in the classroom area, it fails to master the appropriate sizing of the hallways in relation to the adjacent spaces, as the hallways in the double tracts are undersized.</p> <p>The concern for diversified landscaping of the MoriiCanal which becomes partially accessible to pedestrians is commendable as is the landscaping which proposes green banks and permeable soil. The organisation of access from N. Balcescu Street is less inspired, overlapping the access ramp to the underground car park with important pedestrian accesses.</p>



110	54	Competitors opt for a compact, fortress-like approach, mirroring the simplicity of the existing building. Connections to the edge of the site are made by segmented wings, which thus interpret the modular parallelism to the perimeter streets. The typological enclosure is counterbalanced by the material translucency of the new volume: glass panels with varying degrees of transparency are chosen as finishing. However, what negates the coherence of the initial conceptual decision is the choice to fill the central void of the new volume with semi-buried gyms as well as to interpose a pillar supported wing that actually separates the new complex from the existing one. The jury appreciates the sensitivity of the interior spaces and the potential of the new building as an urban Chinese lantern, but considers that both the public space and the communication between the two volumes, existing and proposed, are insufficiently enhanced.
109	50	The competitors offer a detailed treatment for the exterior urban space and propose a complete arrangement of the pedestrian, car and watercourse spaces. However, contrary to the indications in the competition theme, the competitors extend the mineral spaces for car and pedestrian traffic by reducing both the front yard of the educational ensemble towards Constanța Street and the green spaces of Argeș Street. Closing the riverbed in concrete is also invasive. The competitors proposed the demolition of all existing buildings and the construction of a massive U-shaped volume organized around a volume that houses the gyms. The entire architectural solution favors mineral spaces - the high school yard being almost entirely mineral, planted spaces being accessible only from the terraces of buildings. At the urban level, the attempt to fence the enclosure has the resulting perception of an extremely massive volume that derives from the large footprint of the new construction: this is due to the underground parking that offers 60 places next to the gyms. Thus, the resulting solution is not a modern interpretation of the program, while the organization of indoor spaces does not fit the needs of its users.
120	48	The proposed solutions for the adjacent streets are feasible, requiring simple means. The architectural relationship between the new bodies and the historic one is managed, once more, through minimalist and efficient means. The volume inscribes

		easily in the urban scale of the area. The courtyards are properly sized, the outdoor spaces on the site are functionally and efficiently solved. The phases of the construction are also plausible. However, certain interior spaces have questionable dimensions, for example the corridors are oversized to the detriment of too small classes.
<b>105</b>	<b>42</b>	The concept of landscaping focuses on the placement of street furniture (benches, tables, etc.), without proposing significant improvements for either the space or the cohabitation of flows. The newly proposed volumes are organized around small courtyards and strongly fragment the free space of the school yard. On the one hand, this fragmentation brings the newly proposed constructions closer to the neighboring urban scale, and on the other hand, it limits the organization of physical education and sport fields according to the requirements of the theme. The proposed new volume does not dialogue with the preserved volumes or the urban space: there is a contradiction between the intention to link the volumes and that of separating them, which overlaps with the lack of hierarchy in the external spaces. The facades have a very large variation of textures that are not justified either by the program or by the construction system, and thus fail to establish a correct dialogue with the historical building. The interior circulation spaces are non-compliant to the norms, both from the point of view of the dimensions and of the materials used.
<b>108</b>	<b>38</b>	The architectural concept proposes to mirror the typology of the old school and thus leads towards a clear operation scheme, hosted in a compact form, which keeps to the level height of the cornice of the old school. The new volumes are transparent on the ground floor, slightly accentuating the entrance. The classrooms are oriented inversely to the requirements of the standards / best practice recommendations and are provided with small windows, insufficient from a lighting point of view, making them impossible to use. Although the proposed ensemble is coherent, the functional shortcomings go beyond the urban qualities. The project bears no concern for Constanța and Nicolae Bălcescu streets.
<b>124</b>	<b>34</b>	The details of the urban development proposed for Bălcescu and Argeș streets are carefully solved. The architectural concept provides for the realization of an artificial topography in





		the form of a sloping green land. Although it is an interesting idea, there are questions about its usefulness in relation to the arrangement of functions and buildings. Volumetrically, the new proposal does not offer a convincing solution in relationship with the historical body. However, the most problematic aspect of the proposal is the non-compliance with the norms regarding the natural lighting of the classrooms on the ground floor of the new buildings, that are conflicting with the artificial slopes proposed to the inner courtyard and Bălcescu Street.
<b>112</b>	<b>32</b>	The functional division is correct; and the proposed space of the connecting gallery between the historic and the new construction is interesting. The main problem identified by the jury is the decision to partially bury the building, as there is no justification either in the context of the site or in the program. Moreover, this choice may cause problems in both the construction and operation phases. The graphic representation lacks clarity in explaining how the volumes relate to each other and to the street. There are no proposals for improving Constanța and Bălcescu streets. The proposal for the revitalization of the Morii Canal is interesting, as it generates a platform on an intermediate level between Argeș Street and the water surface.
<b>117</b>	<b>32</b>	The architectural solution proposes a central body, linking the historical volume and the proposed new wings, bordering Bălcescu and Argeș streets; although it seeks to subordinate itself to the old high school building, the proposed design solution generates a questionable relationship with the existing building, annulling any benefits the functional connections between the new and the old might bring. The functional organization of the spaces, their details and interior quality also raise questions. The project is concerned with improving the quality of the neighbouring streets, but the way it does so completely ignores the character of the protected historical area and thus produces a rupture of its urban image; more so, it underestimates the importance of the Morii Canal.
<b>113</b>	<b>30</b>	Placing the main entrance to the high school on Balcescu Street makes for an interesting activation, while the effort to preserve the old gym "Sonia Iovan" and integrate it as a whole through a canopy that includes a proposed new auditorium, is





		also valid. However, the cover, which should be a unifying element, actually becomes a dividing element, resulting in a composition of the newly proposed volumes that misses the integration of the old school. The project has a number of qualities related to the placement of functions in relation to the urban space, but solving the functionality of the whole is not adequately completed. The proposals for improving the street space are missing.
111	23	The architectural proposal appeals to the classical typology of the enclosure. The urban insertion contradicts the scale of the area, generating massive fronts and creating ruptures in the urban fabric. The new volumes are inserted without taking into account the old high school building. The planimetric proposal covers the entire surface of the site, thus generating long circulations and creating a building with a high energy consumption. The urban proposal mainly deals with the area adjacent to the high school. The arrangement of the public space does not take into account the relationship with the boundaries of the building. The use of solid parapets on Morii Canal creates a visual barrier for the pedestrians, thus nullifying the qualities of the site.
122	22	The organization of the proposed spaces in a single body is a clear concept, resulting in a generous space that separates the new from the old. The orientation of the new body with the short side towards the city has a beneficial effect on the insertion. There is a lack of hierarchy of interior and exterior spaces, as well as a lack of hierarchy of entrances. The project does not create stimulating spaces for children and young people, nor does it propose a center of interest. Horizontal circulations are insufficiently sized and illuminated. Regarding the public space brief requirements, the project is unconvincing. The schemes presented do not explain in any way the value brought by the project to the public space.
115	21	The volume is composed in a playful way, but without paying attention to the relationship with the historical fabric or to the old high school building, thus creating a visual disorder throughout the site. Functional flows are lacking in clarity and are poorly organized, and some spaces are dimly lit. The jury notes issues related to the operational safety of the building, as well as inconsistencies between the drawings. The project

		does not solve Constanta and Bălcescu Streets section profiles.
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