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High-quality Architecture and Built Environment:
A Political Goal

Architects' Council of Europe /
International Union of Architects Region I

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Founded in 1990, the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) is the representative organisation for the architectural profession at European level. Its membership consists of 51 Member Organisations, which are the regulatory and professional representative bodies in all Member States of the European Union, Norway, Switzerland, UK, Serbia, Turkey, Ukraine, Montenegr, and the Republic of North Macedonia. Through them, the ACE represents the interests of 620.000 architects from 35 countries in Europe.

About the International Union of Architects (UIA)
Founded in 1948, the International Union of Architects (UIA) is a federation of national professional organisations working to unify architects, influence public policies and advance architecture in service to the needs of society. The professional structure protecting the interests of the majority of architects in a country or territory can become a Member Section of the UIA. Through its Member Sections, the UIA is represented in over 120 countries and territories grouped in 5 Regions. In Region I- Western Europe are represented following countries: Andorra, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

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All the photographs that illustrate this publication come from:

- EU Mies Award:
The European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture – Mies van der Rohe Award is a biennial architecture award that recognises and celebrates the best contemporary buildings in Europe. Established in 1987 by the European Parliament and the European Commission, with the support of the Fundació Mies van der Rohe, the EU Mies Awards are one of the most prestigious architecture awards in Europe.

Learn more: www.eumiesawards.com

- UIA 2030 Award:
The UIA 2030 Award is organised by the International Union of Architects (UIA) in partnership with UN-Habitat. The biennial award, synchronised with the World Urban Forum, recognises built projects which demonstrate design quality and have made significant contributions towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Learn more:
www.uia-architectes.org/en/competitions-and-prizes/uia-2030-award

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High-quality Architecture and Built Environment:
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International Union of Architects Region I

ARCHITECTURAL POLICIES
European Timeline Since 2018

Salez Agricultural Centre, Salez, Switzerland
Architectural office: Andy Senn Architekt BSA SIA

UIA 2030 Award, Finalist, category 1 “Open Category”

Photo: Seraina Wirz

International

Baukultur:

The term refers to a holistic, interdisciplinary and culture-centered understanding of the built environment. It promotes high-quality as a driver of well-being and inclusiveness for a sustainable development.

National

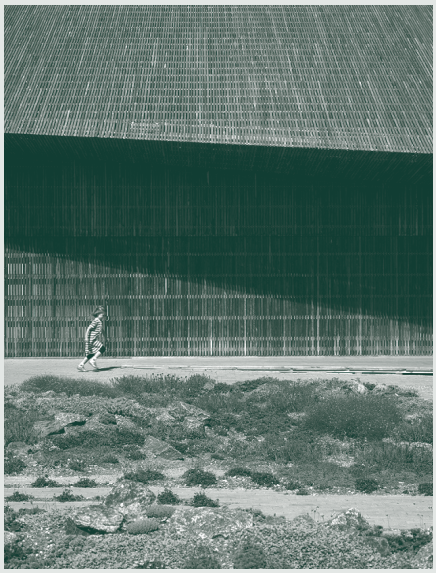
Governance
Functionality
Environment
Economy
Diversity

Recurring Initiatives

Context
Sense of place
Beauty

EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture - Mies van der Rohe Award

European Conferences on Architectural Policies (ECAP)



Wadden Sea Centre, Vester Vedsted, Denmark
Architectural office: Dorte Mandrup A/S

UIA 2030 Award, Finalist, category 6 “Utilising local materials: SDG11 (Specifically)”

Photo: Adam Mørk

In recent years, there has been a growing awareness within the European political realm of the positive contribution a high-quality built environment can make to the common good. Several recent policy initiatives have put a strong focus on the need to adopt an holistic, culture-centred approach to the built environment and have elevated an understanding of architecture's key role to a higher political level.

These initiatives contribute to raise awareness of the fact that a high-quality built environment is a driver of economic growth, social cohesion, climate resilience and cultural vibrancy. They build momentum for changing the mindset of political and economic stake-holders, provide powerful incentives to market players and ultimately contribute to providing the necessary framework for achieving greater quality in our built environment.

INTRODUCTION

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The 2018 Davos Declaration and the New European Bauhaus have put the spotlight on the concept of *Baukultur*. High-quality *Baukultur*, as stipulated by the Davos Declaration, is about society's responsible handling of its built environment and its architecture. *Baukultur* requires and implies an increased participation of society in care for, and development of, the built environment, but also a foundation of quality-based processes throughout the life-cycle of projects.

Baukultur has been mainly associated with heritage or understood as craftmanship. Today's essence of the notion is much more expansive. *Baukultur* is also understood as a social task. It is not simply concerning architecture or the built environment, but the way society deals with its built environments and architecture, as well as their impacts on human life and nature. *Baukultur* is a holistic approach, which cares for and seeks to achieve a sustainable society, with quality of life and collective well-being for all.

This comprehensive approach needs to be embraced by politicians and embedded in public policies, funding programmes and relevant laws. In order for architects and other professionals of the built environment to contribute with their professional specificity it is necessary that relevant national legislations, in particular public procurement authorities, support a long term vision of quality and sustainability and ensure appropriate conditions which in turn enable the profession to pursue these goals and assume its responsibility.

This booklet, a joint initiative of the Architects' Council of Europe and the International Union of Architects Region I (UIA, Region I), documents selected policy initiatives and institutional documents aiming to promote high-quality in architecture and the built environment and provides an overview of relevant ACE and UIA statements and publications.

We hope it will be useful to professional institutions and architects and contribute to inspire architects and politicians from all over the world, to instill high-quality architecture principles in public policies.

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ARCHITECTURAL POLICIES
European Overview

João Bento,
Research Fellow at Lisbon School
of Architecture, University of Lisbon

Architectural Policies at EU Level

The architectural policy of the EU consists of policy documents formally adopted by the European Union (EU), on the one hand and initiatives led by the EU Commission (EC) on the other hand.

The first EU policy document with a global approach to architecture was the *Council's Resolution on Architecture Quality* of 2001[1], which recognised the value of architecture for improving the quality of life of European citizens and encouraged the Member States to intensify their efforts to improve the knowledge and promotion of architecture quality, namely by means of exemplary public buildings policies.

Following the adoption of the *Leipzig Charter of Sustainable European Cities (2007)*, which stipulates that the "*quality of public spaces, urban man-made landscapes and architecture play an important role in the living conditions of urban populations*", the Council of the EU adopted a second policy in 2008, the *Conclusions on Architecture*[2], which maintained the same holistic approach but placed a new emphasis on the contribution of culture to sustainable development. Thereafter, the *Urban Agenda for the EU* (2016)[3] and the *New Leipzig Charter* (2020)[4], reinforced the importance of high-quality design and public spaces for the common good.

In 2018, the European Ministers of Culture and other stakeholders adopted the Davos Declaration *Towards a High-quality Baukultur for Europe*[5], which underlines the central role of culture in the built environment and calls for a high-quality building culture (baukultur) to be considered as a primary political goal. In 2021, the Swiss Government launched the *Davos Baukultur Quality System* (DBQS), a tool enabling the assessment of places through a set of eight quality criteria (more information on pages 24-25).

Also in 2001, the Council of the EU adopted new conclusions on high-quality architecture, which reinforced the momentum and the European commitment to promoting high-quality living environments (more information on page 27).

In parallel, the EU Commission has been promoting high-quality architecture[6] through various initiatives. In 2001, it launched the *European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture – Mies van der Rohe Award*, which biennially acknowledges best practices and rewards design quality in Europe[7].

In the framework of the Council Work Plan for Culture 2019 – 2022, the EC facilitated the work of a group of Member States' Experts focusing on *High-quality architecture and Built Environment for Everyone*, which resulted in the publication of the report '*Towards a shared culture of architecture*'[8] (more information on page 27).

In 2021, the President of the EC announced the launch of the New European Bauhaus (NEB)[9], a transdisciplinary cultural project, which proclaims architectural quality and design thinking among its guiding principles. The NEB is currently in its "Delivery" (2021-23) and "Dissemination" (2023-24) phase (- more information on page 28).

Architectural Policies at National and Regional Level

In the last 30 years, there has been a growing recognition of the value of architecture and design quality for citizens' well-being, both at European and national levels. In this context, many European countries and regions have been developing public policies supporting high-quality architecture and promoting design excellence.

Currently, 26 administrations in the EU have an official architectural policy at national/regional level, plus Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. This number has been increasing since the beginning of the 1990s and it is expected to continue to grow in the following years, which means that soon, Europe will be largely covered by national / regional architecture policies.

Most of these take a 'strategic comprehensive policy' approach, in which the design of the built environment is seen as a transversal concern able to generate multiple benefits and values across various fields and define a set of initiatives and actions, namely promoting public awareness about the importance of a high-quality built environment.

A few European countries have adopted a national law on architecture, which formalises the principle of the public interest of architecture. Some of them include norms to regulate the architect's profession, obligations for building projects to be signed off by architects, the introduction of design quality principles, requirements making design competitions mandatory for public buildings, the creation of advisory design boards, the establishment of design awards, etc.

Institutional actors and tools

As part of their architectural policies, several European countries have implemented new approaches to the governance of design. Some have established dedicated services within public administrations to monitor policy implementation and enable the delivery of initiatives/actions promoting design quality. Others have appointed a State or City Architect team to pursue the architectural policy goals and action plans. In addition, there has been a growing number of dedicated architectural cultural institutions across Europe.

The European Urban Maestro project[10] (2021) revealed that an increasing number of administrations are developing an increasingly diverse and sophisticated set of approaches to offer clear leadership in this domain. The project revealed also that informal urban design governance tools are being actively and extensively used across Europe, to develop a positive culture within which decision-making on design can occur, and also to assist in the delivery of better-quality projects and places.

Some tools have been widely used and adopted across almost all administrations in Europe (e.g. design awards), whilst others are far more sporadic (e.g. design quality indicators). These are mostly *soft power* tools that aim to shape the preferences of stakeholders, influencing their choices and decisions using persuasion rather than coercion. Nonetheless, informal tools should be seen as important means of complementing the formal side of the design governance landscape and greatly extending the means available to state actors to influence how the built environment is shaped.

Impacts of architectural policies

Although design governance contexts across the continent are very diverse, the European policies on architecture and design seem to be having a positive impact on encouraging Member States to promote design quality as a political goal, namely the NEB's wide range of initiatives being delivered in conjunction with a high number of partners to inspire the transformation of European cities. The extent to which such initiatives will impact on the different practices at national, regional and local level is yet to be seen. Nevertheless, ongoing initiatives reveal an increasingly committed move to place design excellence at the heart of European urban governance[11].

Looking at the progress in the implementation of policies at State/regional level, and despite the differences between them, architectural polices are having substantial impacts on design governance processes, namely improving policy coordination, facilitating cross-sectoral collaboration across and beyond public administrations, and enabling a diversity of initiatives promoting best practices and fostering a placemaking culture. The intensity of impact varies according to the amount of resources available and the diversity of initiatives on the ground in each specific case.

One of the main benefits of architecture policies has been the development of a new range of informal tools of urban design governance that did not exist beforehand in some countries, such as new awareness-raising and educational initiatives, as well as the greater use of awards schemes, design review panels, architecture competitions etc. Some administrations have established dedicated departments or organisations that are responsible for delivering initiatives/ actions promoting design quality. However, architectural policies can only have a positive impact if they are effectively implemented and properly funded, or they will remain simply well-meaning aspirations and will not be able to play a role in design governance in the absence of steady coordination and implementation resources[12].

1. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2001:073:0006:0007:EN:PDF
2. http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:C:2008:319:0013:0014:EN:PDF
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9. https://europa.eu/new-european-bauhaus/index_en
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11. Carmona, Matthew; Bento, João; Gabrieli, Tommaso (2023), *Urban Design Governance: Soft powers and the European experience*. UCL Press: London, UK.
12. Bento, João. (2022). *State and city architects. The role of design leadership in fostering spatial quality and place-making culture.* Ministry of Regional Development of the Czech Republic: Praha, Czech Republic.

National

February 2020, Switzerland, Interdepartmental Strategy Baukultur
2021, Netherlands, Spatial Design Action Programme 2021-2024
Design Connects

Kiln Tower in Rammed Earth, Cham, Switzerland
Architectural office: Boltshauser Architekten

UIA 2030 Award, Finalist, category 6 “Utilising local materials: SDG11 (Specifically)”

Photo: Kuster Frey

International

October 2020, Renovation Wave Strategy of the EU Commission
November 2020, The New Leipzig Charter

2020

15

International Union of Architects Region I

ARCHITECTURAL POLICIES

Good Practices at a National Level

The 2018 Davos Declaration *"Towards a High-Quality Baukultur for Europe"* has inspired developments in terms of architectural policies at national level in many European countries. Since 2018, several countries in Europe have introduced new policies and regulations aiming to improve the quality of the built environment, preserve cultural heritage, adapt the built environment to the effects of climate change, and raise public awareness of the importance of architecture and design. This section presents four examples of recent policy developments that can be regarded as good practices.

SPAIN: Law on Architecture

In June 2022, a new Law on Architectural Quality entered into force in Spain. This new regulation, developed in close cooperation with the Higher Council of the Orders of Architects of Spain (CSCAE), emphasises the cultural dimension of architecture and recalls that a high-quality architecture and built environment are in the public interest.

The law stipulates that *"Architecture is an asset of public interest because of its contribution to the creation of cultural identity, quality of life, well-being, social cohesion and inclusion, health, its link to the protection of the safety and health of workers, consumers and users, its relevance for mitigating the effects of climate change and adapting to it, as well as its economic importance".*

Meaning and scope

The law sets a clear mandate to the Spanish public authorities: Architecture being a matter of public interest implies that all public authorities, within the scope of their competences, are required to promote its protection, development and dissemination.

The fact that Architecture is linked to other matters of public interest, such as health and public safety, quality of life and climate change mitigation, significantly strengthens the regulation of architectural services and architects' professional practice.

Objectives

The main objectives of the law are to:

- **protect architectural heritage, both historic and contemporary;**
- **foster research, education and training in architecture;**
- **contribute to the achievement of national and international targets on decarbonisation, climate neutrality, circular economy, energy efficiency, use of renewable energy and the fight against energy poverty;**

- promote the application of the principle of quality in public procurement;
- promote the social utility of architecture to guarantee people's well-being and respond to the main challenges of the 21st century.

Implementing architectural quality principles

All phases of the architectural design process are considered in the law. It stipulates that *"policies developed by public authorities in relation to the design, planning, projection, project management, project execution management, construction, rehabilitation, transformation and conservation of architecture shall be inspired by the principle of quality"*. To defend the general interest of the discipline and promote the application of the principle of quality in public procurement, the law provides the creation of two new public bodies: the *Council for Quality in Architecture and the House of Architecture*.

Council for Quality in Architecture

The C*ouncil for Quality in Architecture* will act as an advisory and consultative body of the General State Administration. While its reports will not be binding, it will be a platform for the exchange of knowledge, as well as for consultation and advice on matters related to the law.

The Council will aim to protect, promote and disseminate the quality of architecture, including by: promoting the drafting or revision of existing legislation on the subject; collecting statistical data for a better understanding of the situation; facilitating the digitalisation of the construction process and driving forward innovative pilot projects, as well as promoting good practices. In matters of public procurement, the Council will: promote the adoption of new standards or modification of current ones to improve the quality of architecture; advise contracting bodies for the estimation of fees for the determination of the tender budgets; and help contracting bodies to develop quality evaluation criteria, as well as solvency criteria.

House of Architecture

The law sets out the creation of the *House of Architecture*, conceived as a museum attached to the Ministry responsible for architecture. The House of Architecture is meant as a tool for cultural diplomacy and has the vocation to become a national and international reference point for the promotion of architecture. Among other things, it will seek to disseminate architectural culture; improve the appreciation of architecture; support the participation of citizens; serve as a forum for debate on the role of architecture; collaborate with the educational sector; take inventories, exhibitions, publications, cataloging of works of interest; support the organisation and dissemination of architectural awards.

Learn more: Access the Spanish Law on the Quality of Architecture[1]

FRANCE: Law on Climate and Resilience

The main objective of the French Law on Climate and Resilience of 22 August 2021 is to accelerate the ecological transition of French society. It contains numerous measures relating to the living environment. These concern housing and the fight against soil artificialisation through the gradual eradication of the worst performing buildings, the introduction of financial aid for renovation work and the halving of the rate of concrete development by 2030.

By 2026, a key measure in the text will put an end to the use of price as the sole criterion of choice by the purchaser for the award of a public contract. To determine the most economically advantageous tender, public purchasers will henceforth have to base their decisions:

- **either on the single criterion of cost determined according to an overall approach which may be based on life-cycle costs and which takes into account the environmental characteristics of the offer;**
- **or on a number of criteria including price or cost, or at least one of them taking into account the environmental characteristics of the offer, which may also include qualitative or social aspects.**

The price of the service can therefore no longer be used as the sole criterion. Whatever the nature of the public contract, including architectural services, the decision to award a contract will have to be based on a set of economic, technical and, above all, environmental criteria. This innovative legislative measure will allow public clients who so wish to give priority to quality criteria over price. This law also provides for environmental measures to reduce the carbon footprint of the building sector, including :

- **the obligation to install photovoltaic panels or green roofs during the construction, extension or major renovation of all commercial, industrial or craft buildings over 500 m2;**
- **a ban on renting out energy slums (F and G energy performance certificates) by 2028 (from 2025 for G labels) and then on E-rated housing by 2034;**
- **a ban on landlords increasing the rent of housing considered to be energy slums, i.e. class F and G housing, from 2023.**

Learn more: Access the French Law on Climate and Resilience[2]

SWEDEN: Policy for Designed Living Environment

In 2018, Sweden adopted a national policy for architecture, called *Policy for Designed Living Environment*, which underlines that Architecture and design can "*help to create a sustainable, equitable and less segregated society, with carefully designed living environments, in which everyone is well placed to influence the development of their shared environment*". It also recalls that quality in architecture and design means creating value, not just for the client and the user but also for the wider community and future generations.

To this end, the Policy aims to ensure that:

- **sustainability and quality are not made subservient to short-term financial considerations;**
- **knowledge in the fields of architecture and design is developed and disseminated;**
- **the public sector acts as a role model;**
- **aesthetic, artistic and cultural assets are preserved and developed;**
- **environments are designed to be accessible for all; and**
- **cooperation and collaboration are developed both nationally and internationally.**

Key measures

The Policy provides the creation of a new position – the one of Sweden's national architect. Working at the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the national architect has a coordinating role for the whole Policy and its implementation.

The Policy seeks to foster concerted actions and synergies among relevant public authorities – including the National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design, the Swedish National Heritage Board and the Public Art Agency Sweden – in order to stimulate the development of sustainable designed living environments by developing new methodologies and disseminating good practices.

The Policy underlines that the central government must lead by example – not least as a developer and property manager. Municipalities and county councils should also act as role models when commissioning public environments, in construction projects and when managing property to ensure the design and management of high-quality living environments.

The Policy recalls therefore that a purposeful procurement process within the public sector is fundamental to ensuring quality and sustainability in the built environment. Exemplary procurement processes can support innovation and the contribute to the emergence of new solutions. In order to achieve the best possible value when procuring goods or services, contracting authorities should therefore address quality issues in a professional manner.

Because of this, and within the context of their enhanced collaboration, the aforementioned public authorities are invited to work towards greater exploitation of the quality dimensions of architecture and design in public procurement processes. This work will be undertaken by the National Agency for Public Procurement.

The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning will produce guidance for municipalities, county councils and private actors on how to achieve a high level of architectural quality in the planning, building, furnishing, operation and management of health care environments. It will also produce guidelines for the design of schools and preschools. The Swedish National Heritage Board will work on how cultural assets can be integrated and preserved in planning and building processes.

Impacts

The Policy has contributed to a greater understanding of the value of architecture both at national and local levels. About half of the Swedish municipalities have now their own architecture policies. We have gone from talking about what architecture and design is, to how architecture, form, design, art and built inheritance can contribute to a sustainable and inclusive society. National guidances for the design of schools, hospitals and other care facilities were produced, as well as guidance on how to procure architectural services and building works.

Learn more: Read the Policy for Designed Living Environment[3]

IRELAND: Places for People – Ireland's National Policy on Architecture (2022)

Places for People is Ireland's new national policy on architecture. It outlines ways to promote and embed quality in architecture and the built and natural environment over the coming years in Ireland. It is the outcome of an extensive consultation process with public and stakeholders, including the Royal Institute of the Architects of Ireland. The RIAI was represented on the steering committee for the policy development.

Places for People aims to boost public engagement with architecture and empower the architectural profession to deliver a quality, sustainable and inclusive environment for the benefit of all in society. It also aims to support the public sector, raise design quality and improve data and research on our built environment.

The policy will promote and support quality in architecture and the built environment in Ireland, for increased environmental, economic and social sustainability and resilience. The policy vision emphasises the power of architecture and design to support a more sustainable and resilient society based on knowledge and creativity and driven by leadership and inclusive participation. This vision reflects the priorities distilled through analysis of the consultation submissions.

Policy Objectives

Places for People is based on four objectives:

- **Sustainability: Respect our past, shape our future – prioritise environmentally sensitive buildings and places to achieve sustainable development goals.**
- **Quality: Design and deliver quality buildings and spaces for all.**
- **Leadership: Advocate for leadership to prioritise quality architectural outcomes.**
- **Culture: Foster a culture that values architecture as both art and science, serving people, place and planet.**

Policy Actions

The policy has a framework of practical actions to help Ireland get full value from the art and craft of architecture, to deliver buildings and public spaces that work for all. These actions will help to create, sustain and regenerate local areas as vibrant, welcoming and sustainable places in which communities can flourish, and are organised under three categories:

- **Value and Empower: Value architecture, empower people: foster culture change for sustainability.**
- **Set a Quality Agenda: Set a quality agenda to achieve sustainability.**
- **Generate Knowledge: Enhance the evidence-base through research, education and knowledge exchange.**

The policy is integrated into other Irish government policy and plans such as the Irish Government's National Development Plan, *Project Ireland 2040; the Climate Action Plan 2021; Housing for All*; and *Town Centre First*. In the culture policy area, the NPA aligns with C*ulture 2025 Eire Ildánach*, the Creative Ireland programme, the Arts Council's new architectural policy *Championing Architecture*, and *Heritage Ireland 2030*.

The new *National Policy on Architecture* connects us to important sustainability, renovation and creative initiatives now underway in Europe as part of the Green Deal, in particular the New European Bauhaus, which brings together people to design future ways of living, using collaborations between art, culture, science and technology. Ireland's new *National Policy on Architecture* featured prominently in the inaugural New European Bauhaus festival in Brussels in June 2022, including our film *Places for People*, featuring interviews on the importance of a policy of architecture and the concept of *Baukultur* to delivering high quality living environment for everyone, with Ireland's Cultural Ambassadors, Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara of Grafton Architects. *Places for People* is now in its implementation phase.

Learn more: Access Places for People – Ireland's National Policy on Architecture[4]

1. **https://www.boe.es/buscar/act.php?id=BOE-A-2022-9837**
2. **https://www.ecologie.gouv.fr/loi-climat-resilience**
3. **https://www.government.se/contentassets/c008469d86b848f3918a1efcd7d7fb2f/policy-for-designed-living-environment.pdf**
4. **https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/f9879-places-for-people-national-policy-on-architecture/**

International

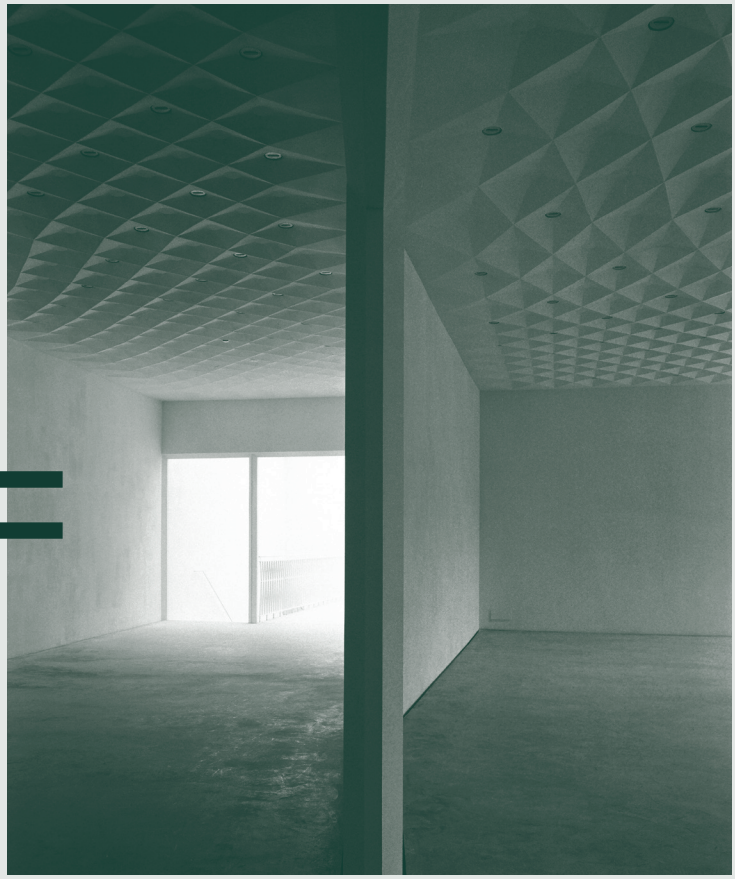
May 2021, Davos Baukultur Quality System
October 2021, OMC Group report Towards a shared culture of architecture
November 2021, Council conclusions on culture, high-quality architecture and built environment as key elements of the NEB

2021

Enghavepark Climate Park, Copenhagen, Denmark
Architectural office: TREDJE NATUR

UIA 2030 Award, Winner, category 1 “Open Category”

Photo: Flemming Rafn



733 House for Contemporary Art, Design and Architecture, Hasselt, Belgium
Architectural office: Francesca Torzo

EU Mies Award, Finalist 2022

Photo: Gion Von Albertini

In recent years, several policies and initiatives developed at European level reflect the growing recognition of the importance of a high-quality architecture and built environment in achieving sustainable and inclusive societies. They demonstrate the commitment of the European Union and stakeholders from various disciplines to support high-quality architecture, urban design and cultural heritage as essential components of sustainable and inclusive development. This section highlights the most significant European policies and initiatives introduced since the adoption of the Davos Declaration in 2018, which has inspired most of these developments.

ARCHITECTURAL POLICIES
Latest Developments at European Level

2018 Davos Declaration – Towards a European vision of high-quality Baukultur

In January 2018, the European Ministers of Culture adopted the Davos Declaration *Towards a high-quality Baukultur for Europe*. The Declaration highlights pathways for politically and strategically promoting high-quality Baukultur, a concept which embraces *"every human activity that changes the built environment"*.

The Declaration recalls that building is culture and creates space for culture. It underlines *"the crucial contribution that a high-quality built environment makes to achieving a sustainable society, characterised by a high quality of life, cultural diversity, individual and collective well-being, social justice and cohesion, and economic efficiency"*.

The Declaration has been a significant policy landmark in the field of architecture and urban planning in Europe. It has played a crucial role in shaping the agenda for improving the quality of the built environment and fostering sustainable, resilient and inclusive cities and regions. It has inspired various initiatives and programmes at national and regional levels, aimed at promoting high-quality *Baukultur* in different contexts.

Learn more: Read the 2018 Davos Declaration 2018[1]
Visit the Davos Declaration website[2]

Davos Baukultur Quality System – Eight criteria for high-quality Baukultur

Developed by the Swiss Federal Office of Culture in cooperation with international partners, the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System (DBQS) is a contribution to the ongoing Davos Process that began in 2018 with the adoption of the Davos Declaration. It is meant as an instrument enabling the assessment of *Baukultur* qualities in places, through a set of eight criteria: Governance, Functionality, Environment, Economy, Diversity, Context, Sense of Place and Beauty. The DBQS incorporates and weighs social, emotional and cultural values equally to technical and functional aspects.

It includes an assessment form with a questionnaire for each of the eight criteria, that can be adapted to the specific situation of a place or project and expanded if necessary. The questionnaire can help to determine the *Baukultur* quality of a place as well as its strengths and weaknesses from a *Baukultur* perspective.

Learn more: Access the Davos Baukultur Quality System – Eight criteria for a high-quality Baukultur[3]

The Davos Baukultur Alliance

In January 2023, Ministers of Culture from 31 European countries along with civil society organisations and major companies from the building and real estate industry came together to launch the *Davos Baukultur Alliance*, a network for dialogue among all parties at international level.

The Alliance proposes to meet the global challenges of planning and construction through high-quality *Baukultur*. Its aim is the sustainable, quality-oriented management of buildings, infrastructure, public spaces and landscapes for the benefit of all, in compliance with the goals set out in the 2018 Davos Declaration, and the criteria laid down in the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System.

The Alliance advocates high-quality *Baukultur* and supports its members in implementing its principles for the transformation of our living environment. It organises focus groups for its members to analyse and discuss key challenges and propose new solutions.

Learn More: The Davos *Baukultur* Alliance[4]

Communication from the EU Commission – A Renovation Wave for Europe

In October 2020, the EU Commission published the "The Renovation Wave for Europe" strategy. It is a key initiative of the European Green Deal, the EU Commission's roadmap for making the EU's economy sustainable and climate-neutral by 2050. The Renovation Wave Strategy recognises that buildings are responsible for about 40% of energy consumption and 36% of greenhouse gas emissions in the EU, and that improving their energy efficiency is a key way to reduce the EU's carbon footprint.

The Strategy sets out a series of targets, measures and principles to accelerate the renovation of buildings in the EU, with the aim of making them more energy-efficient, climate-resilient, and comfortable for their occupants. In line with the Davos Declaration, the strategy underlines the importance of aesthetics and architectural quality when undertaking a building renovation. It recalls that "quality architecture" is not only defined by aesthetics and functionality but also by its contribution to people's quality of life and to the sustainable development of cities and rural areas.

Learn more: Read the Communication *A Renovation Wave for Europe*[5]

The New Leipzig Charter – The transformative power of cities for the common good

The *New Leipzig Charter*, adopted in November 2020 by the Ministers responsible for urban matters of the EU Member States, sets out a new vision and framework for sustainable urban development in Europe.

The New Leipzig Charter builds on the principles and recommendations of the original Leipzig Charter, adopted in 2007, and aims to respond to the new challenges and opportunities facing European cities and regions in the 21st century. It emphasises the need for integrated, participatory and place-based approaches to urban development, which take into account the social, economic, environmental and cultural dimensions of sustainability.

The Charter has been endorsed by a wide range of stakeholders, including national, regional and local governments, civil society organisations and the private sector. It provides a common framework for action and cooperation among different actors in the field of urban development, and it is expected to guide policy and practice at all levels of governance in the coming years.

Learn More: Read the New Leipzig Charter[6]

Council Conclusions on Culture, High-quality Architecture and Built Environment as key elements of the New European Bauhaus initiative

On 30 November 2021, EU ministers responsible for culture adopted Conclusions on *Culture, High-quality Architecture and Built Environment as key elements of the New European Bauhaus initiative*, in which they underline the important role of architecture and the built environment, seen as *"embodiments of past and present culture, ways of living and values"*.

The Council recalls that architects *"play a central role in all phases of the development of high- quality architecture and living environment and, can therefore contribute in a significant manner to the public interest"*.

The Council calls on the EU Member States and the Commission to *"work towards a holistic, inclusive, transdisciplinary, high-quality-led and long-term vision for architecture and the built environment"* and to *"embed a quality-based and holistic approach in all policies and activities that have an impact on the built and living environment"*.

Learn more: Read the Council conclusions on High-quality architecture[7]

OMC group report Towards a shared culture of architecture – Investing in a high-quality living environment for everyone

Born out of the 2019-2022 EU Work Plan for Culture, this report compiles prevalent trends and best practices in the governance of contemporary spatial design, to provide recommendations at multiple levels ensuring high-quality in architecture.

The report provides concrete definitions of high-quality architecture and built environment, detailing also key criteria for their assessment. Through a collection of case studies, the publication suggests ways to operationalise those quality criteria.

The report also includes policy recommendations targeting different scales, such as EU policies, national frameworks and the local level, in addition to private-sector stakeholders and the professional realm.

Learn More: Read the report *Towards a shared culture of architecture*[8]

New European Bauhaus

The New European Bauhaus (NEB) is an initiative started in 2021 by the European Commission, meant as an evolving creative and transdisciplinary movement. It is about bridging the world of science and technology, art and culture; leveraging green and digital challenges; and addressing complex societal problems through co-creation.

By creating bridges between different backgrounds, cutting across disciplines and building on participation at all levels, the NEB aims to inspire a movement to facilitate and steer the transformation of our societies along three inseparable values: sustainability (from climate goals to circularity, zero pollution, and biodiversity); aesthetics (quality of experience and style beyond functionality); inclusion (from valuing diversity to securing accessibility and affordability).

The NEB aims to bring citizens, experts, businesses, and institutions together to reimagine sustainable living in Europe and beyond. In addition to creating a platform for experimentation and connection, the initiative provides access to EU funding for beautiful, sustainable, and inclusive projects.

Learn more: Visit of the portal of the NEB initiative[9]

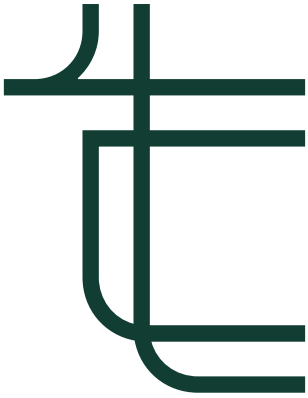
The EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture - Mies van der Rohe Award

The European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture - Mies van der Rohe Award is a biennial architecture award that recognises and celebrates the best contemporary buildings in Europe. Established in 1987 by the European Parliament and the European Commission, with the support of the Fundació Mies van der Rohe, it is one of the most prestigious architecture awards in Europe.

The award is open to architects and buildings that have been completed within the last two years in the EU Member States, as well as in Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. The selection process involves a rigorous evaluation by a jury of experts, who assess the quality of the architecture, the innovation and originality of the design, and the contribution of the building to the social, cultural, and environmental context.

The Award has played a significant role in promoting high-quality architecture and raising public awareness of the importance of design excellence and innovation in the built environment.

Learn More: Visit the website of the EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture - Mies van der Rohe Award[10]



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Architectural office: BDR bureau

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Photo: Simone Bossi

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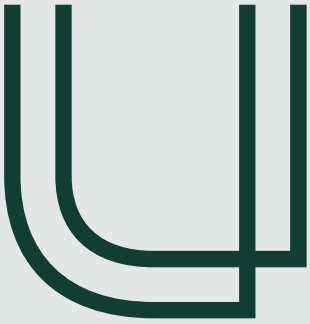

The Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) and the International Union of Architects (UIA) promote the principles and practices of high-quality architecture through advocacy, expertise and collaboration with other stakeholders at national, European and international levels. They play an important role in shaping the policies and practices that govern the architectural profession, and in promoting the value of architecture as a key driver of sustainable and inclusive development. This section highlights key documents developed in recent years by both organisations.

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

ace + uia

Leeuwarden Declaration of November 2018 – *Adaptive re-use of the built heritage: preserving and enhancing the values of our built heritage for future generations*

Europe has a rich and multi-faceted built environment, incorporating strong spiritual, cultural, social and economic values. Due to evolutions in our economies and societies, many heritage sites, whether listed or not, are nowadays disused or have lost the functions for which they were originally built.

However, heritage buildings that have lost their original function still embody cultural, historic, spatial and economic values. Adaptive re-use offers itself as a strategy aimed at preserving elements that contain these values, while at the same time adapting the place for new uses. New functions are thus brought together with heritage values in an active and meaningful dialogue. The Declaration, developed as part of the 2018 European Year of Cultural Heritage, highlights the benefits of adaptive reuse and lists a number of quality principles to reconcile heritage values with contemporary architecture.

Learn more: Read the Leeuwarden Declaration[1]

ACE Statement of June 2019 – *Designing for a Circular Economy*

Like many others, the construction sector operates largely within a linear economy model of "take, make and waste", assuming that resources are abundant and that we can dispose of them without consequences. Yet, there is growing awareness of the finite nature of natural resources and the fragility of our environment, and consequently the urgent need to develop more sustainable and regenerative economic models, which allow resources to flow in a circular way within the economy for as long as possible and avoid the production of waste.

This ACE Statement highlights architectural strategies towards greater circularity in the construction sector. The architectural project makes things tangible and concrete and constitutes the right moment for bringing together all project stakeholders to discuss circular economy challenges and agree on the best strategies to create the greatest possible value out of minimum resources.

Learn more: Read the ACE Statement *Designing for a Circular Economy*[2]

ACE Statement of May 2019 – *Achieving quality in the built environment*

While there is a broad consensus on the fact that a high-quality built environment impacts positively on people's everyday lives, it can prove difficult for public authorities, project developers and built environment professionals to assess and guarantee the quality of the buildings and urban spaces they commission and design. This ACE Statement proposes reflections on the concept of quality in the built environment and shed light on good practices for its assessment.

Learn more: Read the ACE Statement[3]

ACE-UIA Statement of October 2019 – *Architectural Design Competitions: A Key Policy Tool to Ensure Quality in the Built Environment*

Architectural Design Competitions (ADCs) are among the most effective ways to achieve excellence in building and community design. They yield optimal concepts and plans for a given building programme, planning or landscape design task. Because they are based solely on the quality of proposed solutions, focused on the specific needs of a carefully defined project, competitions result in high-value solutions of great benefit to end-users, adding to the overall quality of life and design excellence in the built environment.

In this Statement, adopted on the occasion of a conference organised at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, the Architects' Council of Europe and the International Union of Architects urge policymakers and government bodies to include ADCs as a recommended procedure in public procurement laws, in order to promote enduring, excellent and responsible solutions for buildings and communities.

Learn more: Read the ACE-UIA Statement on Architectural Design Competitions

UIA Competition Guide of January 2020 – *Guidelines for Design Competitions in Architecture and related fields*

The UIA Competition Guide was developed by the UIA International Competitions Commission (ICC) in 2016 and amended in 2020. It includes best practice recommendations for the implementation of the UNESCO Standard Regulations for International Competitions in Architecture and Town Planning (adopted in 1956, revised in 1978), a global reference for design competitions that has retained its relevance.

The Guide includes a comprehensive set of guidelines and best practices for organising and conducting architectural design competitions. It provides guidance on various aspects of the organisation and management of competitions, including defining their objectives and scope, selecting the competition type and format, establishing the competition rules and procedures.

Learn more: Read the UIA Competition Guide[4]

Statement of the New European Bauhaus Collective (NEBC) of September 2021 on Public Procurement

A common dominator of planning and design services is the fact that the result of such services cannot be described beforehand. One can define needs, set economic, local, functional and other conditions defining the framework of a project, but the actual solution shall be found through the work itself.

In this respect intellectual services differ fundamentally from the purchase of goods, where the quality of the final product can be described in detail and in advance. A cultural project cannot be procured like the purchase of bricks. This Statement calls for a better recognition of the specificity of intellectual services in the Public Procurement Directive; for the development of quality-orientated procurement procedures; and for improved access to procurement for SME's.

Learn more: Read the NEBC Statement

ACE Statement of October 2021 – *A sustainable, fair and beautiful built environment to address the climate and biodiversity crisis*

The way we inhabit our planet is undoubtedly a driver of the unfolding climate and biodiversity crisis. The living environment we have created, and the way we manage it, consumes vast quantities of land, raw materials and fossil fuel energies and generates significant amounts of greenhouse gas emissions and waste. And the trend is worrying: due to urbanisation and demographic growth, it is estimated that over the next 40 years, 230 billion square metres will be built worldwide, adding the equivalent of the area of Paris to the planet every single week. It appears very clear that we must urgently change the way our built environment is designed, built, maintained, renovated, managed and regulated.

This ACE Statement highlights some pathways to support the transition to a fair, sustainable and beautiful built environment that is able to meet our individual and collective needs, without aggravating climate change and jeopardising life on Earth.

Learn more: Read the ACE Statement[5]

ACE Statement of May 2022 – *For Affordable and Quality Housing*

Currently, many European countries are experiencing a housing crisis, characterised by a shortage of affordable housing, a loss in quality of new constructions as well as a poor quality of a significant number of existing dwellings. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought into sharper focus the importance of the place we live. The current housing crisis, combined with challenges raised by climate change, the pandemic and migration of refugees, call for affordable and high-quality housing for all to be considered as a matter of general interest and become a priority of public authorities.

This ACE Statement includes a series of recommendations to reimagine our living spaces in order to make them more sustainable, inclusive and beautiful. Addressing the housing crisis requires us to put an end to the search for short-term economic gains and the downward spiral of standardisation. We urgently need to adopt an attitude that favours common good and quality of life and puts people and nature at the core of housing and urban developments.

Learn more: Read the ACE Statement *For Affordable and Quality Housing*[6]

UIA publication – *An Architecture Guide to the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals*

The intention of these books is to provide an architecture guide to the Sustainable Development Goals. The 17 chapters present how each Goal is defined by the United Nations, outlines how it interacts with the built environment and gives examples of realised projects that illustrate architectural contributions.

Many of the projects featured in these guides address more than one goal, but the aim here is not to explore sustainable projects in their full complexity, but to understand the Goals as they relate to architecture. All cases are realised architectural projects, planning initiatives and structures.

Learn more: An Architecture Guide to the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals, Volume 1
An Architecture Guide to the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals, Volume 2

ACE policy position of April 2022 on the New European Bauhaus

This policy paper constitutes the ACE position on the 2021 EU Commission's Communication, which sets out the framework, core principles and key actions that will drive the New European Bauhaus forward, as it moves from co-design to delivery.

The ACE enthusiastically welcomes the NEB, considering that, with this initiative, the EU Commission brings an essential cultural dimension to the Green Deal. By making the Green Deal a cultural project, and by including architectural quality and design quality as key principles to steer the Renovation Wave strategy, the EU Commission has initiated a fundamental shift that can be a game-changer for the transition to a more beautiful, sustainable and inclusive built environment.

Learn more: Read the ACE policy position on the NEB[7]

ACE-EAAE Statement of April 2023 – *Upskilling to deliver high-quality architecture for a beautiful, sustainable and inclusive environment*

In the context of the 2023 European Year of Skills, and while the digital and green transitions are reshaping the economy and labour markets, this Statement recalls the commitments of the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) and the European Association for Architectural Education (EAAE) to promote the highest standards in architectural education; continuing professional development; research and the dissemination of the architectural culture.

Learn more: Read the ACE-EAAE Statement on Upskilling[8]

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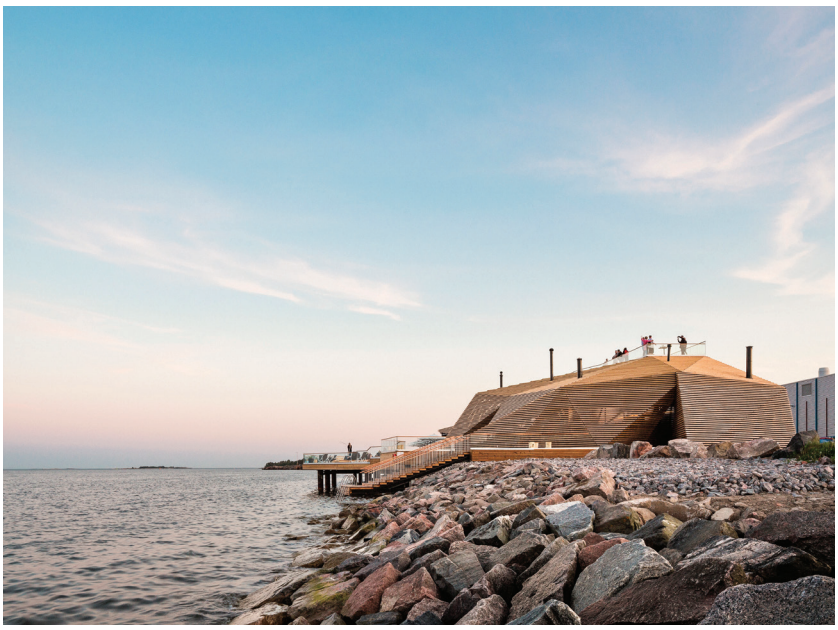

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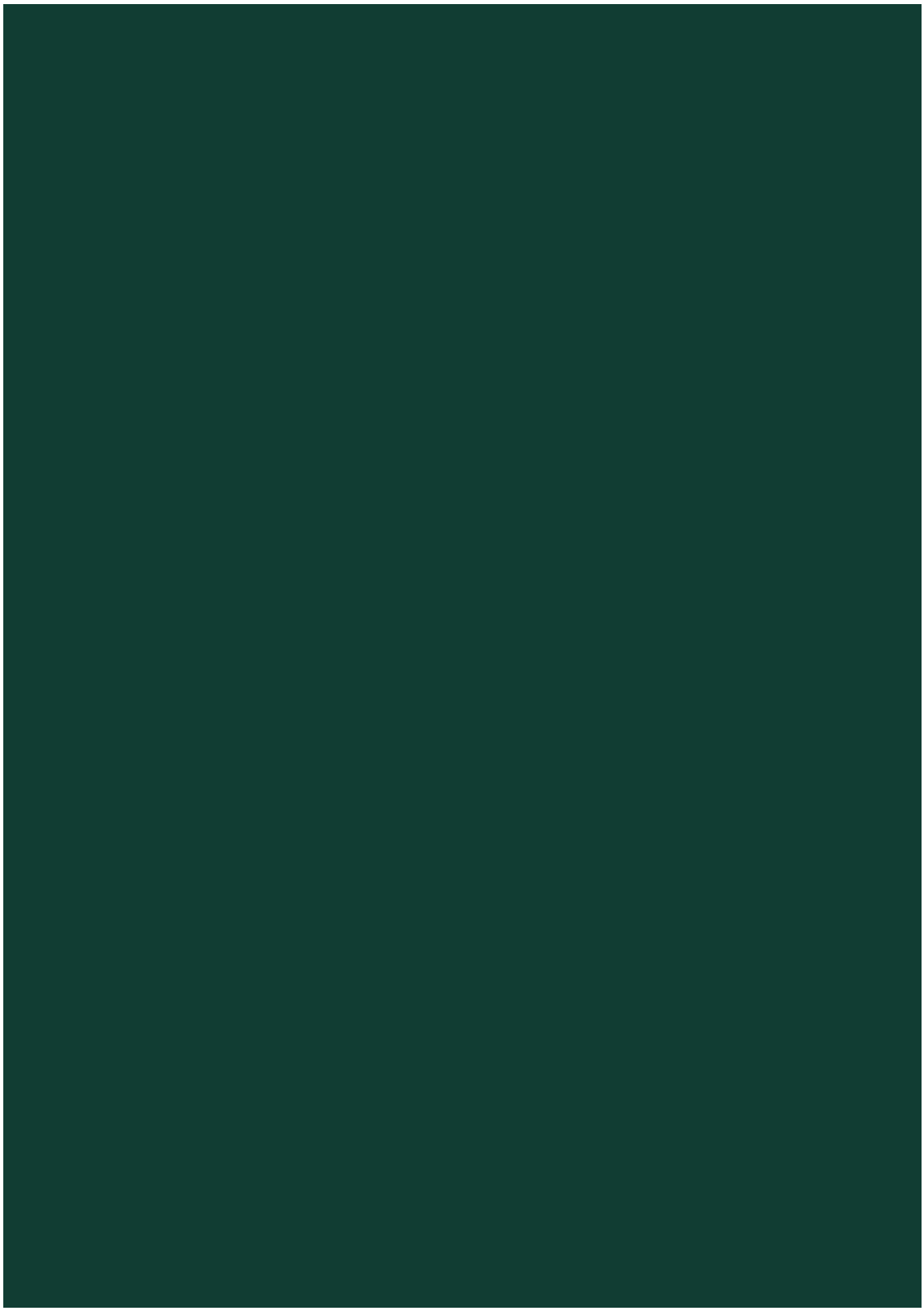
Award/ Prix: Winner of the 2022 EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture - Mies van der Rohe Award, category Architecture /
Lauréat du Prix de l'UE pour l'architecture contemporaine 2022 - Prix Mies van der Rohe, catégorie Architecture

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