



Architectural Design Competitions: A Key Policy Tool to Ensure Quality in the Built Environment

Conference on International Design Competitions organised by the *International Union of Architects* (UIA) and the *Architects' Council of Europe* (ACE), 25 October 2019, UNESCO Headquarters, Paris

DECLARATION

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.

The International Union of Architects (UIA) and the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE) urge policymakers and government bodies to include architectural design competitions as a recommended procedure in public procurement laws, in order to promote enduring, excellent and responsible solutions for buildings and communities.

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Architectural design competitions place focus on quality-based, project-oriented procedures. Competitions in architecture, town planning and landscape design offer an excellent way to evaluate multiple design proposals in a formal, professionally driven procedure, in order to find the best project for the defined need. In accordance with evaluation criteria set forth in a competition brief, professional, independent jurors assess designs submitted by competitors. Competitions are quality-based because juries make decisions solely on basis of the quality of the proposals. They are project-oriented because their objective is to provide optimal solutions, tailored to the needs of the clients and the site.

Architectural design competitions have produced many culturally significant buildings across the globe, including the Sydney Opera House, the *Centre Pompidou*, the *Bibliothèque Nationale de France*, the Tokyo International Forum and the Egyptian National Library in Alexandria.

We urge government bodies, public authorities and private clients to pursue quality and design excellence through competitions.

Competitions offer multiple benefits to clients, competitors and society

- Quality: They result in architecture and urban developments of high quality.
- Innovation: They are a source of innovative, economic and sustainable solutions.
- Transparency: They are transparent and non-discriminatory, building credibility and public trust while promoting fairness and non-corruption via anonymous entries.

- Flexibility: They are suitable for small and large entities, and for experienced clients as well as those with little experience.
- Guaranteed quality: Highly qualified, independent professional jurors, along with client representatives, assess proposals against well-defined criteria.
- Cost-efficiency and visibility: Costs for competitions are on the level of one percent of the overall construction budget, while compensating competitors adequately.
- Public participation: They offer the opportunity to involve citizens in shaping the built environment, stimulating public debate on needs and design approaches.
- Equal opportunity: All competitors have equal chances. Competitions can provide young and relatively unknown designers with the opportunity to complete major works; they are especially helpful in providing young professionals with a very good chance to enter the market.
- Creativity: They create opportunities to test new ideas, inviting various approaches to formal expression.

The Architects' Council of Europe and the International Union of Architects have developed detailed guidelines for organising fair and affordable competitions¹, covering these issues:

- Principles of anonymity, transparency, equal treatment and non-discrimination,
- Independence and composition of the jury,
- Nature and scope of the competition brief,
- Prize monies and remuneration,
- Copyrights,
- Dispute resolution.

There are many possible competition forms and procedures. We have experience with all of them. Regardless of the chosen form and procedures, the combination of a *good design brief*, *good procedures* and a *good jury* guarantees a *good result*.

¹ ACE Recommendations for the organisation of ADCs: https://www.ace-cae.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/9_Rules__Recommendations_for__Architectural_Design_Contests__ADC_.pdf

UIA Competitions Guide for Design Competitions in Architecture and Related Fields: <https://www.uia-architectes.org/webApi/uploads/ressourcefile/32/uiacompetitionguide.pdf>