

high-quality  
architecture and built  
environment for  
*everyone*

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### high-quality architecture and built environment for *everyone* 1

#### TABLE OF CONTENTS 2

##### *Introduction 4*

- What are we talking about? 4
- Vision 4
- Quality matters—value for everyone 5
- An integrated approach—the value of dialogue 5
- Who is it for? 6
- Key messages in brief 7

##### *There is a momentum 8*

- EU policy framework 8
- First pillar (policy documents) 9
- Second Pillar (EU Mies Award) 10
- Recent developments 10

##### *Context and definitions 13*

- The cultural dimension 13
- Diversity matters 14
- What does it mean: for *everyone*? 14
- Relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 14
- From a human-centric towards a life-centric approach 15
- Recovery from crises 16
- Raising spatial awareness and competences 16
- Driving role of the public sector 17

##### *Concepts and criteria of quality 20*

- Eight criteria for a high-quality architecture and built environment 20
  - 1. Governance 20
  - 2. Functionality 21
  - 3. Environment 22
  - 4. Economy 23
  - 5. Diversity 24
  - 6. Context 25
  - 7. Sense of Place 26
  - 8. Beauty 27

##### *Case studies 29*

- Methodology and acknowledgements 29
- Lessons learnt 29
- Categories and case studies 30
- Awards 30
  - Case studies 31
  - Findings & observations 32
- Laws & policies 32
  - Case studies 34
  - Findings & observations 35
- Education & awareness raising 35
  - Case studies 36
  - Findings & observations 39
- Regeneration, revitalization & adaptive reuse 39
  - Case studies 40
  - Findings & observations 41
- Tools, processes & research 42
  - Case studies 42

Findings & observations	43
Funding/investment	43
Case studies	44
Findings & observations	44
Grassroots initiatives	45
Case studies	45
Findings & observations	46
Technical innovation (re-use materials, new technologies)	46
Case Studies selected in this category of Technical Innovation	46
Findings & observations	47
<i>Get into action. Recommendations</i>	<i>48</i>
Overarching recommendations	49
EU level	51
National and regional level	52
Local level	53
Private sector stakeholders and non-governmental organisations	55
Professionals	56
<i>Implementing the quality criteria</i>	<i>58</i>
Quality assessment checklist	59
Assessment questions by each quality criterion	60
1. Governance	60
2. Functionality	61
3. Environment	61
4. Economy	62
5. Diversity	63
6. Context	63
7. Sense of place	64
8. Beauty	64
<i>How was the content created</i>	<i>66</i>
Drafting the report	67
Publication and dissemination of the report	67
A note on terminology	68



## Introduction

On the basis of the Council Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022, an Expert Group of 39 experts from 23 Member States as well as Switzerland and Norway closely collaborated in 2020 and 2021 to exchange knowledge, analyse case studies and develop recommendations on how high-quality architecture and the built environment for everyone can be supported and further developed in Europe.

### What are we talking about?

Building well for everyone offers the opportunity to provide cohesion and well-being, sustainable places to live and in so doing sustain the planet and combat climate change. This report goes far beyond the question of “good architectural design” or the sole discipline of architecture. Instead, it refers to a holistic approach and understanding of quality with regard to our living space. It is about an approach that encompasses all human activities that alter the built environment, that is broad in scope and relates to the past, present and future building and planning. It begins with the open landscape, encompasses the built, but also the unbuilt, the in-between spaces. It relates to the planning and production processes and concerns the details of craftsmanship as well as the planning of settlements. It cares for cultural heritage and its preservation as well as for the quality of contemporary creation. How we shape our environment as a whole is an expression of our culture, or “Baukultur”

The key challenges and tasks at hand that this report addresses are:

- the need for greater acknowledgement of the **cultural dimension** of our living environment
- the **vision for a long-term integration of all quality aspects** in a holistic way, including aesthetics, sustainability and affordability, when developing the living environment
- the need for **integrated quality-driven planning processes and funding mechanisms** that include all quality criteria (governance, functionality, environment, economy, diversity, sense of place, context, beauty) for the built environment in their measures—in short, a lack of linking holistic quality criteria to funding
- the need for **capacity building** on multiple governance levels and **qualifying the decision-makers**
- the need for **awareness raising** on the qualitative aspects of the living environment across the society, from early on.

### Vision

The European architecture and built environment of tomorrow should be of high quality for everyone. The vital importance of quality is integral to the recovery of Europe, as quality architecture and built environment contribute fundamentally to everyone’s well-being. Leaving no one behind, the European multi-disciplinary and participatory urban governance models and innovative actions need to foster social inclusion, adaptation to climate change as well as the sustainable development of neighbourhoods in cities and rural areas through an integrated and balanced approach. The field of architecture still has a central role in driving quality standards, and the knowhow and competences of professionals and experts in the field must be well integrated into the spatial development processes on all levels. Research and development, grassroot initiatives, (temporary) adaptive reuse, culture-led social innovation and co-creation can make significant contributions towards quality architecture and built environment. We must make sure that citizens, organisations and authorities are well aware of their abilities and responsibilities to improve the quality of the future built environment for everyone. In line with the New European Bauhaus initiative, the living spaces of tomorrow can be made more beautiful and sustainable, together.

### Quality matters—value for everyone

The spatial experience of pandemic lockdown across Europe demonstrated the importance of access to quality housing, outdoor space and natural recreation areas for sustenance. For too long, however, the comprehensive objective of quality in all its key aspects has been neglected as an overarching goal, limited to functional-technical and economic aspects. Yet a quality living space not only meets the functional, technical, ecological and economic requirements, but also fulfils design objectives in regard to the aesthetic, social and psychological aspects and cultural needs, such as the need for belonging. High-quality design and well-considered interventions should sustain the life and authenticity of cultural assets and avoid adverse loss of cultural significance. Beautiful, liveable and lovable towns, villages and landscapes with local identity can only be created if quality standards are pursued throughout the circular process of planning and building, from ideation to completion and reuse.

High-quality built environment is equally about connecting people and strengthening social cohesion, creating space for encounters. In addition to shaping social interactions, high-quality architecture is sustainable because it is also about environmentally friendly action that conserves resources, promotes biodiversity and addresses the local climate in the settlement area. Engaging the population in decision-making processes promotes the community's identification with their built environment and strengthens their shared responsibility for their living space, but also empowers citizens through co-creation and sensitises them to the issues of quality of construction. Specific, non-standardised solutions strengthen structural diversity and thus avoid levelling out regional differences. Building traditions as well as technical innovation are equally the starting points for high-quality contemporary spatial interventions.

The implementation of quality objectives requires a high level of expertise of all partaking disciplines. Specific emphasis is on architects as they often have a central position in the actual production of an architectural solution, effectively leading the process. Architects and designers are well-placed brokers between different fields of expertise, such as engineering, technologies, materials sciences or societal studies, among others. The profession of architecture has a solid track record in interrogating the quality of built environment and is thus well equipped to use this knowledge, experience and capacity in involving people to discuss the quality goals for the built environment. Beyond a clear vision and a leading role of an architect, all stakeholders, especially the public sector but notably also the private sector, have the responsibility in securing that quality goals are met to the best available knowledge. Awareness of quality goals and commitment to them on all levels, as well as transdisciplinary and multisectoral co-creation and decision-making processes are thus the basis for achieving the quality objectives in all aspects of the built environment.

### An integrated approach—the value of dialogue

The OMC group's in-depth analysis and debate in the fields of high-quality architecture and built environment as well as sustainable urban development indicated not only a quickly growing attention to these topics across Europe, but it also revealed that there is a wealth of existing or planned initiatives and programmes to further inform the topic. Against this background, the expert group closely analysed relevant EU policies and initiatives to avoid a duplication of efforts, to ensure synergies and to improve efficiency of human, natural, financial and other resources. The group conducted a substantial mapping and prioritized the initiatives (see annex...), focusing especially on those with the highest relevance both in content and in timing and the availability of resources. For this reason, various exchanges with relevant DGs and initiatives took place to determine where an inclusion of high-quality principles in current and future initiatives is feasible—an advocacy that should be continued beyond the group's term.

Importantly, the current New European Bauhaus initiative, which is described in more detail further below, paves the way in its holistic approach, where the cultural dimension is central.<sup>1</sup> The holistic thinking and cultural approach that underpin the New European Bauhaus initiative can also nurture the Renovation Wave strategy and thus inspire its measures to raise the full potential of the strategy and achieve a 'quality renovation wave', changing mentalities, mindsets and quality of life while achieving Europe's climate neutrality objective. Given the significant momentum the New European Bauhaus has gathered, it promises to become a key for helping to implement the principles and visions laid out in this report.

### Who is it for?

This report addresses different target groups in its inclusive and holistic approach, in particular those in charge of architecture and the built environment, culture and heritage, spatial planning and sustainable development at local, regional, national and European levels—but also clients, professionals and other relevant stakeholders. Key actors (partners, stakeholders, target groups) include:

- EU institutions in charge of education and culture, research, innovation and development (RI&D), territorial and cohesion policies, investment programs and financial instruments
- National governments and public bodies of the EU Member States and associated countries
- State Architect teams (or similar expert groups at the national, regional or federal level)
- City architects and their teams and local governments across the EU
- (Spatial planning, design, construction—Baukultur) professionals and experts both in the public authorities and administrations as well as in the private sector, professional associations and NGOs in the field
- Specialists in related sectors, including investors, developers, owners and operators of parts of the built environment
- Educators of Baukultur experts in the public sector at the national, regional and local levels
- Providers of guidelines on the built environment for the private sector stakeholders as well as local administrations
- Research centres and universities who conduct studies and offer courses on the built environment
- Cultural and creative sectors on the basis that creativity, arts and culture play a vital role in bringing the urgency of climate change challenge to the forefront; in imagining, communicating and building a sustainable future; and in encouraging and facilitating action and change at all levels of society.<sup>2</sup>

The quality principles and related assessment tools described below may also be used by any non-specialised target and user groups. The quality of the built environment concerns all people and is visible, perceptible and experienceable every day in their living environment. Implementing the quality principles can help to raise awareness; it assists people with reflecting on the quality of their surroundings and provides a tool to assess the quality of a place.

---

<sup>1</sup> It goes far beyond aesthetic considerations and is the main driver for quality planning processes and quality projects, as well as a source of inspiration and innovation for the other pillars of sustainability, given that arts are providers of crucial twenty-first century competencies, such as critical thinking and problem solving.

<sup>2</sup> Creative\_Climate\_Action\_Brief\_final.pdf ([creativeireland.gov.ie](https://creativeireland.gov.ie))

### Key messages in brief

Setting the following **goals** supports achieving a high-quality living environment:<sup>3</sup>

- **High-quality procedures and solutions are best practice:** Following the Davos *Baukultur* quality principles and considering holistically all eight quality criteria provided in this report should be **best practice both in the public and private sectors**, improving the built environment for everyone. No governance decision should reduce the quality of a place. We have inherited the built environment we live in, with its spatial context that already exists. Balancing (sometimes conflicting) interests in the decision-making process should always reach for a compromise that improves the built environment **for as many (users) as possible—for everyone, for as long as possible**.
- **Everybody knows about quality:** It is important to raise awareness on the topic **from early on**. **Case studies** across Europe provide good examples on how improved spatial knowledge and skills in formal and informal education equip the upcoming generation with a better understanding of the challenges and qualities of the built environment. There are also **helpful examples** of enhancing awareness **among the general population and the positive impact on the built outcome**.
- **Quality competence is onboard decision-making:** The decision-making processes for the built environment need the competence of all governance levels: high-quality design solutions must be knowledge-based and consider the currently available and most suitable best knowledge as well as develop new knowledge and skills. Spatial decisions have **a long-term impact** on the living environment; thus, the **decision-makers as well as the decision-making processes must be very well informed** about the quality standards and expectations. Such spatial competence includes expertise and accountability when making and implementing decisions that influence spatial development.
- **Co-creation with quality in mind:** All decision-making processes for investing in the built environment (including funding decisions, location selection, design brief, construction drawings etc.), at all governance levels, must **follow the principles of participatory co-creation**. The alternatives of spatial decisions are weighed together with all persons and organisations concerned whose legal rights and field of action might be affected by the decision.
- **Consistent planning for quality:** The *Baukultur* quality principles need to be followed **throughout the strategic planning processes and documents** at all governance levels, and they are thoroughly considered horizontally across spatial decision-making and planning as well as design activities. This concerns high-quality architecture considerations across the entire building lifecycle: uptake of quality principles during the planning, building and transformation or recycling process, as well as rethinking revitalisation and reuse in terms of the quality goals. **Case study references**
- **Regulations, standards and guidelines help to achieve quality:** Legal acts, standards and guidelines must support the implementation of *Baukultur* quality principles—they should be complemented with the quality principles as appropriate. Furthermore, the principles should be considered in designing these standards from the beginning. It is important to ensure that at the national as well as the local level that **public procurement rules and procedures foster a quality-based approach** over a solely cost-based one, that quality is the basis for procuring intellectual services (e.g., engineering, landscape or urban design) and that the best practices for conducting **public architecture and urban planning competitions** are followed. **Case study references**

---

<sup>3</sup> The set objectives and activities are based on the OMC expert group discussions and consultations with relevant EU stakeholders.



### There is a momentum

The EU is supporting an integrated and people-centred approach to a sustainable built environment, where architecture has a major role to play to design buildings, public spaces and urban landscapes that contribute to citizens' quality of life. As mentioned in the EU Council Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022, architecture is clearly a cross-cutting field and should be promoted "as a discipline that encompasses the right balance between cultural, social, economic, environmental and technical aspects for the common good". That is why many EU policies (such as construction, energy-efficiency, climate change, research, cohesion, among others) can contribute to a high-quality built environment.

In global terms, the UN Sustainable Development 2030 Agenda sets a goal on inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities (#11).<sup>4</sup> The world is becoming increasingly urbanized. Since 2007, more than half the world's population has been living in cities, and that share is projected to rise to 60 per cent by 2030.<sup>5</sup> Cities and metropolitan areas are powerhouses of economic growth—contributing about 60 per cent of global GDP. However, they also account for about 70 per cent of global carbon emissions and over 60 per cent of resource use. Hence, this rapid urbanization results in a growing number of challenges that worsen the quality of life for many.

**There is a sense of urgency to shift our thinking from people to the planet, and to act on climate change, but this should not take place at the cost of citizens' quality of life.**

### EU policy framework

In brief, the Council Resolution on architectural quality in urban and rural environments of 12 February 2001 flagged new architecture as 'the heritage of tomorrow'. It encouraged Member States to 'promote architectural quality by means of exemplary public building policies', including through the Structural Funds. In addition, the Council conclusions on architecture: culture's contribution to sustainable development in December 2008, called for the mainstreaming and awareness-raising of architecture's contribution to a "high-quality living environment".

As a result of the Davos process and the policy work carried out at EU level as of 2018, the Council Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022 established the creation of an Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group of Member States' experts focusing on High-quality architecture and Built Environment for Everyone. 39 experts from 23 Member States, plus Switzerland and Norway, participated in this group. The expert group ran from February 2020 to June 2021. The group established synergies with other relevant EU actions such as the Green Deal initiatives related to the built environment (New European Bauhaus, Renovation Wave...), the Urban Agenda Partnership on Culture and Cultural Heritage, Horizon Europe and the Horizon 2020 project Urban Maestro.

The European architectural "policy" was established 20 years ago (2021). This policy has been developed through two pillars. On the one hand, the political documents adopted by the Council, which have invited the Commission and the Member States to promote architectural quality. On the other hand, an action was taken to highlight outstanding works of architecture and best practices in Europe: The European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture-Mies van der Rohe Award.

---

<sup>4</sup> The Royal Danish Academy—Architecture, Design, Conservation, the UIA Sustainable Development Goals Commission and the UIA World Congress of Architects 2023 have partnered to publish AN ARCHITECTURE GUIDE to the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals (volumes 1 and 2)<sup>4</sup>. Through case studies the Guide shows how a high-quality architecture and built environment can contribute to the realisation of each SDG.

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2019/goal-11/>



### First pillar (policy documents)

The first EU policy document related to architecture was adopted twenty years ago. In the **Council Resolution** of 12 February 2001 **on architectural quality in urban and rural environments** (2001/C 73/04), the Council highlighted the architectural quality as a constituent part of both the urban and rural environment and the necessary exemplariness of public buildings. According to the regulation, architecture is an intellectual, cultural, artistic and professional activity. In addition, architectural service was defined as a professional service which is both cultural and economic.

The Resolution also underlines the common characteristics shared by European towns and cities, such as the importance of historical continuity, the quality of public areas, the social mix and the richness of urban diversity. Moreover, the Resolution stressed the fact that good quality architecture, by improving the living context and the relationship between citizens and their environment, whether rural or urban, can contribute effectively towards social cohesion and job creation, the promotion of cultural tourism and regional economic development.

In 2008 the Council adopted **Council conclusions on architecture: culture's contribution to sustainable development**. The Conclusions already emphasized the need to 'go beyond the rules of the technical code' and highlighted the integrating and innovative role of architecture in implementing sustainable urban development (seen as providing opportunities for creation, innovation, renewal of architectural styles and the reappropriation/reinterpretation of traditional practice).

The conclusions called, among others, to

- devise, apart from technical standards, an approach for architecture that involves overall economic, social, cultural and environmental objectives;
- encourage innovation and experimentation in sustainable development in architecture, urban planning and landscaping, particularly within the framework of EU policies or programmes and when commissioning public works;
- improve knowledge of the architectural sector and its contribution to sustainable development, particularly in terms of statistics;
- raise public awareness of the role of architecture and urban planning in the creation of a high-quality living environment and encourage public involvement in sustainable urban development.

The late **European Forum for Architectural Policies (EFAP)** allowed for policy exchange among Member States and published a Survey on Architectural Policies in Europe in 2012.

In 2013, five years after the Council Conclusions, the Irish Presidency took stock of their implementation and summarized the exercise in the Preliminary Report on the implementation of the Council Conclusions on Architecture: Culture's Contribution to Sustainable Development 2008/C 319/05. During the stock-taking exercise, two key issues were pointed out as central for the next developments of architectural policies, as also seen from the EFAP survey:

1. Public awareness and political commitment are vital factors for the successful fostering of a good architectural and spatial quality. There is an urgent need to lift the interest of architecture beyond the sphere of the profession only: it is equally a challenge for NGOs and policy makers to jointly act and create a demand for a well-designed living environment by EU citizens.

2. Research and design should be reinforced and supported via eligible funding. Particular attention and support should be paid to:

- the process and design stage of projects
- a testing stage, prior to the final design and building phase
- a post-completion evaluation and the dissemination of findings.

### Second Pillar (EU Mies Award)

In 2001, the former Mies van der Rohe Award on European Architecture (set up in 1988) became the European Union's official architecture prize. The European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture—Mies van der Rohe Award (EU Mies Award) is granted every two years to acknowledge and reward quality architectural production in Europe. Organized by the Mies van der Rohe Foundation with the support of the European Commission (through its successive Culture and Creative Europe programmes), the EU Mies Award has become the most prestigious of all European architecture prizes.

The award draws attention to the major contribution European professionals make to the development of new ideas and technologies. At the same time, it offers both individuals and public institutions an opportunity to reach a clearer understanding of the cultural role of architecture in the construction of our cities. Furthermore, the award sets out to foster architecture in two significant ways: by stimulating greater circulation of professional architects throughout Europe in response to transnational commissions and by supporting emerging architects as they set off on their careers. To reward the best diploma projects of Europe's architecture students and help them in their transition to the professional world, the Young Talent Architecture Award (YTAA) was launched in 2016 to complement the EU Mies Award to reward the best diploma projects of Europe's architecture students and help them in their transition to the professional world.<sup>6</sup>

Through award ceremonies, exhibitions, publications, debates and an app, the EU Mies Award aims to disseminate quality architecture and to foster exchange on its role to respond to the challenges of contemporary society. After a long series of cultural buildings being awarded the top prize, the 2017 and 2019 winners were both renovation projects of post-war housing blocks that highlight the contribution of transformative architecture to the circular economy, energy efficiency and sustainable development. **See case study of Grand Parc Bordeaux for more details on the 2019 winner.**

### Recent developments

Over the last few years, there has been a growing acknowledgment of and support for the importance of quality built environments for the sustainable development of European societies.

**The recommendations targeting the EU level in this report build on the recent cross-European developments such as the Davos Process, the New Leipzig Charter, the Urban Agenda for the EU, the Green Deal and the New European Bauhaus, to name a few.**

The **Davos Declaration “Towards a High-quality *Baukultur* for Europe”**, adopted by European Ministers of Culture and stakeholders (such as ACE) in January 2018, highlighted the central role of culture in the built environment and called for an integrated and quality approach to the environment shaped by man (i.e., *Baukultur*, which includes architecture, heritage, public space, landscape, infrastructure). This concept has been further discussed at the EU level with 1) the European Directors of Architecture (informal meetings launched in 2017 by the French Ministry of Culture to exchange on policy development), and at 2) European Conferences on Architectural Policies (ECAP) organised by Member States holding the EU Presidency.

The **New Leipzig Charter**—“The transformative power of cities for the common good”—was adopted at the Informal Ministerial Meeting held on 30 November 2020 under the German EU Council Presidency. The Charter provides a key policy framework for sustainable urban development in Europe. The document is strongly aligned with the EU Cohesion Policy and its framework for sustainable urban development and puts the “common good” at its core. Member States agreed to

---

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ytaaward.com>

implement the Charter in their national or regional urban policies, and the Charter allows Member States to develop policies of high quality. The common principles are useful references for programming Cohesion Policy (Integrated territorial development and sustainable urban development). The New Leipzig Charter is accompanied by an Implementing document which provides guidance for the next phase of the Urban Agenda for the EU according to renewed parameters.

The **Urban Agenda for the EU**<sup>7</sup> is an integrated and coordinated approach to deal with the urban dimension of EU and national policies and legislation. By focusing on concrete priority themes within dedicated Partnerships, the Urban Agenda seeks to improve the quality of life in urban areas.

On 30 May 2016, the Pact of Amsterdam was agreed upon by the EU Ministers Responsible for Urban Matters and established the Urban Agenda for the EU. Based on the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, the Urban Agenda focuses on the three pillars of EU policy making and implementation: better regulation, better funding and better knowledge. Fourteen Partnerships have been defined and in operation by 2021.<sup>8</sup> Each Partnership involves, on a voluntary and equal basis, cities, Member States, the European Commission and stakeholders such as NGOs or businesses. Together they work on developing and implementing concrete actions to successfully tackle challenges of cities and to contribute to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Some Partnerships have produced material that is very relevant to this report such as the “Handbook on sustainable and circular reuse of spaces and buildings”<sup>9</sup> jointly prepared by the Partnership on Circular Economy and the Partnership on Land Use and Nature-based Solutions. Further synergies with relevant Partnerships, among them on Culture and Cultural Heritage, have been sought.

With the **New European Bauhaus** initiative, the European Commission complements the economic, social and environmental measures of the European Green Deal with an essential cultural dimension. By also making the New European Bauhaus a cultural project, including all stakeholders and by including architectural quality and design thinking as key principles to steer it, the Commission initiates a fundamental shift. This has been seen by the professional community as a potential gamechanger in the transition to a more sustainable economy and society, bringing the Green Deal closer to citizens for their well-being. It opens the door to a more holistic approach to our built environment, seeking to enhance, at the same time, economic, social, environmental and cultural values. This holistic approach is needed at all spatial scales, whatever the size of the project—from landscape architecture to town planning, neighbourhood development, infrastructure, buildings and interior architecture and design. The ambition of the European Commission is to facilitate exchanges across disciplines, spurring creativity and innovation. It reflects well how the related professions<sup>10</sup> work on a daily basis as brokers between different relevant realms such as engineering, technology, materials sciences, arts, societal studies, among others. The

---

<sup>7</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda/](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/agenda/)

<sup>8</sup> Four Partnerships were launched in 2016 on Inclusion of Migrants and Refugees, Air Quality, Housing and Urban Poverty. Four others started their work in February 2017 on Circular Economy, Digital Transition, Urban Mobility and Jobs and Skills in the Local Economy. Four more have been launched on Energy Transition, Climate Adaptation, Innovative and Responsible Public Procurement and Sustainable Use of Land and Nature-Based Solutions. The latest two focused on Culture/Cultural Heritage and on Security in Public Spaces.

<sup>9</sup>

[https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/sustainable\\_circular\\_reuse\\_of\\_spaces\\_and\\_buildings\\_handbook.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/sustainable_circular_reuse_of_spaces_and_buildings_handbook.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Among them architects, spatial planners, landscape architects, interior architects, engineers, designers, artists, educators, curators, art historians, archeologists, doctors in the public health sector, environmentalists, sociologists, atropologists and researchers of the built environment, etc.

New European Bauhaus is planned as a co-creation space to bring about a culture of building well, including the wave of building renovation that the NextGenerationEU recovery plan can help finance. Thus, it builds on the 2018 Davos Declaration and on the principles included in the New Leipzig Charter and, in its implementation, will help to reach the UN Sustainable Development goals.

The New European Bauhaus aims to bring the concepts of Green Deal into a real life as with the aspiration “form follows planet”. The Bauhaus platform aims to create a design movement integrating three dimensions: sustainability, quality of experience (including aesthetics) and inclusion (i.e., affordability). The European Green Deal set the goal of making Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050 but this will require innovative ways to cut emissions. The objective of the New European Bauhaus is to support, complement and accelerate this innovation ecosystem.<sup>11</sup>



---

<sup>11</sup> According to Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus Sinkevičius.

## Context and definitions

This chapter reflects on cohesion and wellbeing in the context of architecture and built environment, and thereupon offers a definition for quality criteria that are important for an integrated holistic approach in aspiring for high-quality architecture and built environment.

*“The quality of the urban environment derives from various interventions and policy decisions over time and reflects the collective work of multiple stakeholders—public, private and community. While European cities have developed sophisticated laws and regulations (“hard power”) to secure diverse public interest objectives through the governance of urban design, the quality of the resulting urban places can be disappointing. Often outcomes are not aligned with commonly shared objectives such as creating environmental sustainability, human scale, land use mix, conviviality, inclusivity, or supporting cultural meaning.”<sup>12</sup>*

Urban Maestro project

The living environment is a balanced composition of the artificial and natural environments, which include both outdoor and indoor spaces. The planning and creation of a sustainable and integrated living environment (urban or, more broadly, spatial design) include planning and designing activities (incl. spatial planning, architecture, landscape architecture), construction activities and the spatial coordination of other space-related decisions (e.g., traffic and mobility possibilities, services, agriculture etc.), with the goal of improving the living environment for as many people as possible in the long term through spatial decisions. Well-considered spatial development choices or influential governance decisions are a prerequisite for high-quality spatial solutions.

### The cultural dimension

The quality of the built environment profoundly affects the well-being and quality of life of its inhabitants. This quality is a crucial factor in social interaction, cohesion, fostering creativity and nurturing a sense of belonging. The built environment evolves over time, it is multi-layered and is part of an on-going culture of building and creating space for culture. This is why the cultural dimension is central to sustaining and developing the built environment. Architecture is part of our shared culture that facilitates social cohesion, improves the feeling of safeness, as well as health and well-being altogether. The built environment requires a comprehensive, culture-centred approach on how to design the places in which to live, and to ensure that the legacy that society leaves behind is of value. High-quality design solutions develop common values because they not only fulfil functional, technical and economic demands, but also connect people and promote social interaction.

All of the quality aspects are closely linked to aesthetics in the broadest sense. Architectural quality has a dimension that relates to the arts and to craftsmanship,<sup>13</sup> [OBJ] High-quality spatial solutions provide beauty, inspiration, enjoyment and satisfaction for the vast majority of users. Aesthetics are achieved through sensitive design, skilled construction and the continuation of traditional skills. There is a need for a new integrated design practice that boldly embraces and builds on the aesthetical values in placemaking.

---

<sup>12</sup> Urban Maestro, <https://urbanmaestro.org>.

<sup>13</sup> Preamble of the Directive 2005/36/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 September 2005 on the recognition of professional qualifications.



### Diversity matters

The traditional and natural variety of the European continent has a significant impact on our societies, settlements and landscapes. Increased global cultural exchange is raising Europe's potential for innovation and creativity, where diversity stands as one of Europe's core values. Recognising diversity and integrating the various groups improves social and spatial cohesion and contributes to a democratic, peaceful coexistence that meets sustainable development objectives. High-quality spatial design supports lively and mixed-use neighbourhoods, avoids isolation and segregation by creating contemporary places that reference past traditions, but also create new cultural values and support biological diversity. The quality built environment promotes a sense of place, as high-quality design solutions create places which respond to and fit the local context, are retaining and working with distinctive features that define the sense of place.

Spaces are created by social action. At the same time, social action depends on spatial structures. Research provides new insights into the dynamic relationship between the diversity of society and of the built environment, which in return has an impact on society. As places, especially cities and peri urban areas, are becoming increasingly heterogeneous and complex, diversity-oriented urban planning solutions have been introduced to cope with the various needs of the members of modern society. Growing depopulation of rural areas is countered by improving the liveability and competitiveness of rural life, including all types of agriculture, promoting innovative farming practices and sustainable forestry approaches.

### What does it mean: for *everyone*?

The built environment should be universally accessible and usable by all members of society throughout their lives. Good spatial solutions provide access in various ways and to people of all sizes and ages and with varying mobility requirements. Solutions of high quality are suitable for everyone, where the functions and uses of space are clear and understandable. High-quality design solutions support the use of public transportation and environmentally friendly ways of life. Good spatial solutions ensure healthy, safe and secure living environments, as well as promote healthy lifestyles. A good built environment provides sustainable living conditions and strengthens social resilience by creating high-quality, available, affordable and accessible living spaces. The design of user-friendly spaces means considering the comfort and functional needs related to the use of the space and solutions that, for instance, can be linked with various exercise opportunities, connecting roads, recreation areas, etc.

However, the trivialisation of our built environment is becoming more common place, as the construction sector is largely motivated by technological and economical drivers rather than cultural aspirations. While the historical centres, monuments and various cultural heritage sites are often protected, and outstanding examples of contemporary architecture and civil engineering are built all over Europe, little consideration is often given beyond this realm – to the long-term value and cultural quality of infrastructure, residential areas, shopping malls or industrial sites, among others. Such limited attention and vision towards the need for a high quality of the everyday living environment not only affects cities but also rural areas, especially when the appearance of the European landscape is increasingly moulded by unaspiring urban sprawl. This is why actions must be taken to improve the quality of the built environment for everyone and everywhere.

### Relevance to the Sustainable Development Goals 2030

The 17 UN SDG 2030 goals<sup>14</sup> are intrinsically interconnected and the built environment, planning, architecture and design processes interact with every goal through realised buildings, settlements

---

<sup>14</sup> The 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (adopted in 2015) define the challenges (including those related to poverty, inequality, climate, environmental degradation, prosperity, peace and justice) we need to address to achieve a better and

and cities all over the world.<sup>15</sup> Architectural solutions contribute to sustainable communities and a high quality of life, but the built environment is also at the heart of current challenges—as a major consumer of energy and natural resources, facilitator for mobility and artificialization of soil, and producer of waste. Furthermore, how we build can exacerbate inequalities and affect health. Urbanisation, climate change, the housing crisis, societal challenges and changing lifestyles require us to design new forms of habitat and urban space. Quality projects can only emerge from interdisciplinary discourse, innovative funding schemes and with the active participation of informed citizens. Effective novel participatory approaches can help civil society to organise itself to influence the design of the built environment.

High-quality architecture and the aim of a high-quality built environment should not be understood as optional extra tasks, but as part of the response to climate action. Climate goals can be reached more effectively and expediently with high-quality architecture: High-quality architecture improves the social and cultural aspects for people, ensuring, next to the technical and economic measures for climate protection, an overall sustainable development of the built environment. High-quality design solutions address the climate goals and take action to mitigate climate risks, since good spatial solutions are environmentally friendly and view the natural environment as a valuable resource. They support maintaining, developing and amplifying the natural components of the spatial environment, as well as provide solutions for the preservation and promotion of biodiversity.

We increasingly witness the application of circular economy principles<sup>16</sup> in architecture and design, including projects aiming to eliminate waste and pollution while protecting the environment. A circular economy-approach is an economic model that minimises consumption, the waste of finite resources and the destruction of ecosystems, by instead continually reusing materials.<sup>17</sup> Environmental sustainability will focus more and more on the use of resources, cultural assets, materials and spaces. Among other things, wastelands are utilised for the production of renewable energy and are turned into human-friendly landscapes, where there is room for both site-specific nature and people. In the context of a shrinking population or suburban sprawl, settlements are designed to be more compact and consolidated to take advantage of and sharing the burden on shared resources and existing infrastructure.

## From a human-centric towards a life-centric approach

In line with the UN SDG 2030 goals, it is increasingly pressing to find ways for implementing more symbiotic relationships between cities and the natural world, so that the living environment as a whole, including our public spaces, is more compatible with natural systems. Multidisciplinary research shows how the human-centric approach in city planning can be expanded towards life-centric planning philosophy that balances ecological with human values and responds to global challenges like climate change and biodiversity loss. Such life-centric approaches can effectively operationalise bio-digital design concepts and tools to increase the portfolio of sustainable city solutions by approximating different methodologies and generating combined bio-digital platforms through novel concepts.<sup>18</sup>

more sustainable future for all.

<sup>15</sup> AN ARCHITECTURE GUIDE to the UN 17 Sustainable Development Goals. KADK, Copenhagen, 2018. [https://issuu.com/kadk/docs/aechitecture\\_guide\\_un17\\_vol.2\\_web\\_single\\_pages](https://issuu.com/kadk/docs/aechitecture_guide_un17_vol.2_web_single_pages)

<sup>16</sup> See the new Circular Economy Action Plan (CEAP) adopted by the European Commission in **March 2020**. It is one of the main building blocks of the European Green Deal, which will reduce pressure on natural resources and create sustainable growth and jobs.

<sup>17</sup> See the example of ROTOR, who is among others leading an Interreg project entitled [FCRBE - Facilitating the circulation of reclaimed building elements in Northwestern Europe | Interreg NWE \(nweurope.eu\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> Bio-digital platforms can be understood, for example, as the digital twins of the living environment which include data not only about the built environment as an artefact but also about human behaviour (e.g., mobility, perceived qualities of



For the professionals in the field, such as architects, designers, urbanists and others, it shows effectively the potential of designing the built environment from a simultaneously biological and digital perspective that retains the benefits of “smart” solutions while promoting “organic” ones. It helps to develop bio-digital, design-based toolsets for the uptake of circular bioeconomy principles<sup>19</sup> as products, services and experiences. It is vital to advance the interrogation of fundamental design questions about the nature of our living spaces, the kinds of technologies we use, how they are incorporated into spaces and the kinds of interfaces we may use to operate them. The bio-digital transition accelerates the shift from an industrial era of design, typified by obligatory resource consumption, towards an ecological era of life-promotion, as well as shifts our thinking and expectations as architects and designers.

### Recovery from crises

In architecture, the recent pandemic crisis has brought more focus on immediate spatial quality—the quality of the home, the workplace and the public space. For many, the pandemic has revealed the importance of high-quality housing and urban design. Housing has proven to be too cramped, over-occupied, lacking basic amenities, proper openings and access to greenery, unsuitable for teleworking. Restrictive measures have revealed the necessity of proximity to services and utilities, commercial amenities and natural spaces, among others, at the neighbourhood level. The experience of the crisis has led to a profound transformation of our working, consumption and social habits and, consequently, of our interaction at an urban scale. The quality of housing and its surroundings, as well as their governance, at both the building and city levels, has appeared as a sensitive reality which highlights the need for greater attention to be paid in the planning of the living environment. The spatial layout of services and amenities requires attention to ensure a high-quality architecture and built environment that is diverse and accessible for everyone.

Over time, our built environment and our cultural heritage have proven to be resilient and valuable resources to respond to and to recover from various threats and crises, both natural and man-made; Relying on traditional skills and crafts, among others, they have evolved as very adaptive and responsive systems. Recovering from these crises also calls for an imagination to envision and prototype positive alternatives what our public space, homes, workplaces, neighbourhoods might be like in, for instance, 30-40 years. Imagination matters because societies need a wide range of ideas and options to help them adjust, particularly to big challenges like climate change, demographic trends of ageing and others. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated a shift in working habits across the globe, bringing the social, cultural and economic importance of placemaking into focus. The pandemic crisis has prompted communities to increase their resilience, to respond locally to global challenges by transforming and adapting their approach to the built environment. Besides caring for, and preserving, existing values of the built environment, innovation is an important aspect to create new approaches.<sup>20</sup>

### Raising spatial awareness and competences

Our understanding of a cohesive society and culture starts to develop in the very first years of our lives where life and space are closely intertwined. Architecture and spatial planning explore and

---

the environment) as well as the natural components of our living environment.

<sup>19</sup> The circular bioeconomy principles merge from the intersection of bioeconomy and circular economy concepts.

<sup>20</sup> Different new ways of thinking the built environment give input to a broad reflexion on our future living space, e.g. the concepts of rehabilitation and ‘greening’ of buildings, of urbanalisation (Francesc Muñoz), linked to the concept of sense of place; or the ideas of de-urbanisation, linked to the concept of excess land use, the thoughts about rewilding (George Mobiot), linked to the concept of biodiversity as well as the concept of pandemic urbanism (Adrian Parr), including the change of uses that has taken place in domestic space (work and leisure) and in public space.

affect the surrounding landscape, be it urban or non-urban. When we talk about urban life, we undoubtedly have to look at a multi-layered picture, as the city has become the most common human environment. Better knowledge of the urban environment and its cultural layering over time means making better use of its potential and, in turn, living a better life. The built environment is shaped over time jointly by many different people, such as decision-makers, designers and implementers. A very small proportion of these people are architects or planners, but if more people had a foundation in spatial education, the result could be a more enjoyable living environment. Spatial awareness, spatial thinking and understanding of place and cultural heritage give us the opportunity to imagine and shape a better living environment.

We live in a civil society where everyone should have the opportunity and courage to influence the space around them. This is an aspect that highlights the importance of spatial learning: how to raise (pro-)active citizens who know and want to have a word about shaping our living environment? Meaningful discourse needs to build on a common basis of concepts and understandings, which is what spatial education offers. The focus of spatial learning is on developing environmental literacy: noticing, understanding and seeing alternatives to spatial solutions and their implications. Spatial education develops social competence, i.e., cooperation and communication skills, consideration and tolerance of diversity. The focus of spatial learning is on the experience of the living environment, the connections between space and society and social activities.

#### Driving role of the public sector

In the European panorama, the public sector already has a great influence on the design of the built environment, either by planning policy, developing control systems, providing funds for investments in infrastructure and built environment or simply by the role of the public sector as the owner or user of property. This means that it is crucial to better co-ordinate and reconcile design policy across many different areas and priorities and to use the own resources to set positive examples. Furthermore, the design quality of places may be regarded as a 'wicked problem' as it is determined by a considerable number of actors, public and private, and is the result of embedded social norms and cultural values. Considering its social and complex nature, it is necessary to create a favourable climate for good spatial design through a diversified policy agenda that covers a wider spectrum of areas.<sup>21</sup>

As outlined in the New Leipzig Charter, the main role of the public sector in this context is to design and implement spatial development policy for the common good, including the weakest and most vulnerable groups in society e.g., the elderly, migrants, youngsters and young families, particularly those who live in towns and cities in shrinking and remote areas. This should cover health care, social services, education, cultural services, housing, water and energy supply, waste management, public transport, digital networks and information systems. Furthermore, the quality of public spaces including green and blue infrastructure as well as the preservation and revitalisation of the built cultural heritage are important. Therefore, the skills and capacities of all urban stakeholders should be strengthened with strategies and tools for their empowerment. Good urban governance can balance public and private interests with market mechanisms.<sup>22</sup>

The public sector is simultaneously expected to drive public participation in urban development processes that should engage all urban actors, which, in turn, also strengthens local democracy. Wherever possible, citizens should have a say in processes that impact their daily lives. New forms of participation should be tested, encouraged and improved, including co-creation and co-design in cooperation with inhabitants, civil society networks, community organisations and private

---

<sup>21</sup> Bento and Laopoulou, 2019.

<sup>22</sup> The New Leipzig Charter.

enterprises. Experimenting with new forms of participation can help cities manage conflicting interests, share responsibilities and find innovative solutions while also reshaping and maintaining urban spaces and forming new alliances to create integrated city spaces. Public participation is central to the successful delivery of a high-quality built environment.<sup>23</sup>

Poor quality of the built environment often starts with a lack of reflection and awareness about the specific qualities, user values or demands, budget or maintenance costs a building shall incorporate, or the context. For the public sector as owner, developer or user of property it is essential to master relevant skills and knowledge to articulate the desired quality of outcomes of a planning and construction process. This is in particular challenging on the local level, where staff resources are scarce and where the low number of (public) construction projects is sometimes too low to build up and maintain the required level of skills and resources.

**Bearing in mind that the built environment is a reflection of a community and that the responsibility for its overall quality rests largely in the hands of the public sector, public authorities must champion the value of spatial design as a public policy to foster spatial quality and a place-making culture.**

Stemming from a diverse range of initiatives and guiding documents that tackle the quality of the built environment, this report aims at synthesising the prevalent trends and best practices across the contemporary field of spatial design governance in order to provide recommendations at multiple levels for ensuring high-quality architecture and built environment for everyone. The recommendations target different scales, such as the level of EU policies, national frameworks as well as the local level, private sector stakeholders, grassroot initiatives and the professional realm. The recommendations largely draw on the findings and observations from case studies, gathered across Europe and examined by the OMC expert group in 2020-2021.

As emphasised throughout the New Leipzig Charter, specific attention should be given to **multi-level governance**: every governmental level—local, regional, metropolitan, national, European and global—has a specific responsibility for the future of our cities based on the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. Complex challenges should be jointly tackled by all levels of urban and spatial policy. This requires the cooperation of all societal actors, including civil society and the private sector. As recommended by the Pact of Amsterdam and the Urban Agenda for the EU, vertical and horizontal multi-level and multi-stakeholder cooperation, both bottom-up and top-down, is the key to good urban governance. Places should be regarded as reference points for an integrated horizontal and vertical approach.

In this context, several countries and regions have appointed a **State Architect** (or similar, e.g., *bouwmeester* in BE and NL, an architectural council) team within their administration to provide design leadership and strategic advice to governments, to improve the design of public interventions, to promote spatial quality and to foster a placemaking culture. Although State Architect teams have long been established in several countries and states around the world, the State Architect and her/his supporting team is a relatively recent position within public administrations in some European countries.<sup>24</sup> The State Architect teams (or similar advisory expert groups) clearly have an impact on spatial design leadership regarding processes of urban design governance, by promoting a high-quality built environment. State Architects are considered important sources of expertise in design-related matters and policy. The appointment of a State

---

<sup>23</sup> The New Leipzig Charter.

<sup>24</sup> Bento and Laopoulou, 2019.

Architect is a direct way for the government to take a leadership role in design governance, by fostering and promoting a place-making culture.

State Architect teams have been champions in “place leadership”:<sup>25</sup>

- Promoting a place-making culture—convincing politicians, stakeholders and the public to move beyond standardized regulations as a means to achieve place quality.
- Charting a vision for the future—providing specific goals in the service of a wider agenda for better places.
- Influencing and motivating people—explaining the specific value of creating better places for different groups and engaging them in the process.
- Mobilizing resources—facilitating partnerships that might be able to provide the necessary resources for projects.

The specific functions of a State Architect vary from state to state and may include:

- Providing spatial design leadership which may include promoting good practices as owner, developer and user of public buildings; promoting design quality as a cooperative aim across different sectors and levels of public administration.
- Improving the system of design governance, e.g., by starting and developing a process of participation and negotiation between different policy actors, including public and private stakeholders; providing design policy advice, promoting better public buildings and fostering public awareness about the importance of design quality, etc.
- Providing advice on government policy, e.g., on major development projects, preparing policies and supervising their implementation; representing governments in international forums and meetings, bringing knowledge from open EU initiatives and events, etc.
- Promoting inter-departmental dialogue and cooperation, e.g., creating new bridges and communication channels between different state departments and public organizations; cooperation with different state actors to persuade them to adopt a more proactive placemaking culture instead of reactive culture, etc.
- Fostering a placemaking culture, e.g., by initiating a communication process between public actors but also with stakeholders in the building industry, such as private developers, investors, regeneration agencies, transport companies, designers and planners, the community and all the other interest groups; fostering public awareness about the importance of design quality, etc.
- Providing advice and resources and a support system for the local level, where scales are often insufficient to provide and maintain qualified staff to ensure a high quality of the built environment.

Europe has also witnessed the wide-spread use of **national architectural or urban policies** to address the quality of architecture and the built environment. In the last twenty years, there has been a remarkable growth in the number of administrations that have adopted official documents on architectural policy. This number has been increasing since the 1990s and is expected to continue to grow. The policy documents may be classified in three types: 1) legislation (e.g., France and Sweden); 2) comprehensive policy (e.g., Belgium—Flanders; Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands; UK—Scotland, UK—Northern Ireland, Iceland, Norway); 3) sectoral policy (e.g., Cyprus, UK—England and UK—Wales). Regardless of their typology, architectural policies across Member States push the legal framework conditions at all administrative and political levels to be quality-driven and to exemplify how quality principles can be embedded in a multi-level governance system.

---

<sup>25</sup> Bento and Laopoulou, 2019.

## Concepts and criteria of quality

This part of the report offers a closer look into more concrete definitions of high-quality architecture and a high-quality built environment. It provides answers to how it can be defined and what the criteria to assess it can be. The goal is to define criteria that may holistically embrace every human activity that changes the built environment, including the relation to the natural environment and incorporating social, emotional and cultural values also to technical and functional aspects. Such criteria of quality must adhere both to the contemporary creation of new and to existing buildings, infrastructure and public space, including, but not limited to, cultural heritage. The aspired high quality must refer to both detailed construction methods and largescale transformations and developments, embracing traditional and local building skills as well as innovative techniques, including processes and planning.

In line with the Davos Declaration 2018, the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System has been developed to deliver a comprehensive definition of high-quality *Baukultur* and to enable its assessment, reviewing existing systems, research and reflections. The Davos *Baukultur* Quality System offers eight fundamental quality criteria that each describe an aspect of high-quality *Baukultur*: Governance, Functionality, Environment, Economy, Diversity, Context, Sense of Place and Beauty.<sup>26</sup> Each criterion is linked to a quality principle, and a set of key questions allows the assessment of a place.

“Governance” is about creating conditions in which more informed spatial solutions can be made and about planning and management processes to ensure quality outcomes. “Functionality” addresses human needs, such as shelter, security and health. “Environment” embraces aspects like sustainability in land use, density issues, climate change and energy questions as well as biodiversity. “Economy” recognises the need of a place or a property being financially viable in the long run, while prioritising cultural values over short-term economic gain. “Diversity” emphasises the need for interaction between people, allowing a mix of functions and being open to different kinds of uses and users. “Context” refers to the built and non-built surroundings and landscape in terms of scale, typology and materiality. “Sense of place” covers the local character, unique identity and distinctiveness of a place and the attachment of people to it. “Beauty” takes into account the emotional experience and sensory perception of a place and emphasises the need of a positive aesthetic experience and a fulfilling relationship between people and the place.

The Davos *Baukultur* Quality System allows users to comprehend the notion of quality with regard to high-quality architecture and the built environment. This report therefore builds upon the eight criteria of the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System.

## Eight criteria for a high-quality architecture and built environment

### 1. Governance

Governance structures and sustains rules, norms and action, guiding place shaping and management processes. It refers to the processes of interaction and decision-making based on participatory democracy and full respect for human rights. Governance not only concerns the different levels of

---

<sup>26</sup> Davos Baukultur Quality System, May 2021. [www.davosdeclaration2018.ch/quality-system](http://www.davosdeclaration2018.ch/quality-system). The quality system includes an assessment form with a questionnaire for each of the eight criteria. This questionnaire can be adapted to the specific situation of a place or project and expanded if necessary. The completed questionnaire is used to determine the Baukultur quality of a place as well as its strengths and weaknesses from a Baukultur perspective. If a more detailed analysis is needed, the Quality System proposes a comprehensive (but not finite) list of indicators to choose from. These can be used with self-defined benchmark values for analyzing a specific place.

governmental administration but equally governmental agencies, public-private partnerships (PPP), non-governmental organisations (NGO) and the private sector as well has an impact on the communities.

The quality of *Baukultur* is highly influenced by governance decisions made by the multiple stakeholders of a place over time. Good governance forms an environment in which better decisions for high-quality *Baukultur* can be made, ensuring proper place management. The Urban Maestro project described above examined successful governance tools for high-quality urban environments.<sup>27</sup> According to the Urban Maestro classification, the tools of governance can be distinguished in formal and informal.<sup>28</sup> Formal tools are “hard power” in nature and tied to regulatory responsibilities. They encompass legislation and resulting procedures, standards, coding and frameworks for guidance as well as control processes. Informal tools are non-regulatory or “soft power”, for example design competitions, peer review mechanisms and design advisory boards, architectural centres and financial incentives for the protection, maintenance and creation of places applying high-quality *Baukultur*.<sup>29</sup> The exclusive use of formal tools, such as building and conservation norms or regulation and zoning plans, often does not, by itself, lead to high-quality *Baukultur*.<sup>30</sup>

A well-balanced interplay of formal and informal tools helps to overcome communication gaps between the multiple disciplines in *Baukultur*, e.g., heritage conservation, architecture, planning, engineering and craft. Furthermore, a well-established dialogue between all the *Baukultur* professionals and local stakeholders is important. Informal tools like the establishment of participatory processes, professional training or general education enable the refinement of the manifold processes involving *Baukultur* and strengthen its importance as a common good. For participatory processes to be implemented successfully, there must be an awareness of the topic in general and a sensitivity for the space, its qualities and the possibilities for shaping it. Education and capacity building play a central role in establishing these skills and in sensitisation and are therefore a central informal tool in *Baukultur*.

Governance is all-encompassing and plays into all professional areas and social groups. It is therefore strongly related to all of the following seven criteria.

## 2. Functionality

A place must fit its purpose for people, and places need to meet different objectives that can change over an extended time period and therefore must be flexible and adaptable. Existing places are functional if they can be converted or switched to a different use from the original one(s).

Technical state-of-the-art construction, continuous innovation and quality craftsmanship are self-evident requirements for the correct, careful and long-living execution of every place by being structurally stable and safe. Places respond to the human need for shelter, safety, health and comfort, be it for living, working, leisure or the use of infrastructure or public areas, including easy access. They must protect humans from unfavourable weather conditions, natural and other hazards and provide security against violent acts. Functionality further implies that places must be conducive

---

<sup>27</sup> Urban Maestro was launched in 2019 and completed in 2021 by three partners: the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Brussels Bouwmeester Maître Architecte (BMA) and the University College London (UCL). It is funded by the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. [www.urbanmaestro.org](http://www.urbanmaestro.org).

<sup>28</sup> Carmona, M. (2017); Löw, M. (2018).

<sup>29</sup> Urban Maestro (2019).

<sup>30</sup> Urban Maestro, New Governance Strategies for Urban Design, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), Brussels Bouwmeester Maître Architecte (BMA), University College London (UCL), 2021.

to people's physical and mental well-being to ensure healthy living and lifestyles with sufficient general comfort.

Functionality as a criterion of *Baukultur* has higher demands than mere compliance with current building standards that guarantee state of the art. It takes into account issues related to sufficiency, durability, adaptability, health compatibility, innovation in both the use of materials and urban, architectural and landscape design, and comfort in use to ensure well-being. Places must be functional, accessible and adaptable to the mixed uses of a range of people over a long-term perspective. This allows for many different functions and users in the long run as well as a sustainable longevity of use. The basis for a high-quality design solution is the conformity of the space to the needs of the users and the recognition of various use cases. Good spatial solutions are based on the interaction of various uses and the needs of various space users.

The solution needs to be well-suited for the intended purposes. In the case of interior space, usability equals a comfortable, appropriate division of space, placement of furniture, lighting conditions, and control of the indoor climate. The rooms and areas are of a suitable size and ergonomically related to each other. For instance, a residence is well-suited for living; a theatre is well-suited for preparing and giving performances; streets are suitable for both automotive and human traffic and to provide an opportunity to spend time there. High-quality craftsmanship and healthy materials ensure the longevity of buildings, infrastructure and public spaces, and should be open for innovation and development. Comprehensive shelter is achieved when there is protection from adverse events resulting from natural hazards or human action.

The quality of the built environment is closely linked to its adaptability and future proofing, since altering spatial solutions is expensive. Thus, high-quality spatial solutions can be adapted based on the specific needs of the client, as well as the social or economic situation. In other words, a good solution is one that can be used for a new function after only minor changes. Since the client, architect or local government cannot foretell the future, sustainability can be increased by diversifying the possibilities for use. The purpose of a building or urban space may change over time, and therefore, both flexibility and practicality are important.

The aforementioned other criteria deal with local and traditional techniques of craftsmanship (→Sense of Place), minimising the upkeep of new and existing places by adequate maintenance costs through smart and low-tech interventions (→Economy) and thus significantly increased sustainability through such interventions (→Environment), social safety guaranteed by socio-political instruments as social mixing and mix of uses, together with the attractive and vibrant atmospheres people desire today, especially in urban areas (→Governance, Diversity, Economy).

### 3. *Environment*

Environment is understood as “natural environment” that includes mankind’s interaction with living species, climate, weather and natural resources. The complex environmental system of interrelationships between flora and fauna with a diverse variety of living organisms, the air, the water, and the soil with its resources. Humans and other living organisms base their existence on the environment and extract renewable and non-renewable raw materials from it. Climate change, loss of biodiversity and depletion of natural resources are now the biggest challenges for humankind. Building and planning has a major impact on these ecological threats—and high-quality architecture and built environment today also mean contributing to mitigate these threats.

The environment throughout Europe and beyond is in a close relationship with humans who have a spatial impact on it, having created and creating landscapes of diverse types and qualities. Half of



the Earth's population now lives in cities, while 98% of the Earth's surface is not occupied by cities.<sup>31</sup> The planning and construction sector has a major impact on the environment,<sup>32</sup> shaping it in tandem with agriculture and other human activities. Climate and weather are influenced by the non-renewable fossil energy sources consumed through the main domains of building and mobility. Reciprocally, building activities and design are conditioned by climate and weather impact. High quantities of sealed soil surfaces and elevated temperatures produce changed conditions for the ecosystems, reducing biodiversity and increasing natural dangers. Air, water and soil are affected by waste and polluting anthropogenic emissions through products and materials used for building activities.

Environment as a criterion of *Baukultur* considers the use of natural resources, biodiversity and emissions in the field of planning and building activities, including the handling of the limited resources of land and materials. Diversity of flora and fauna from private gardens to public spaces, green space and landscapes on a larger scale are taken into account in this criterion including embodied energy as well as energy consumption by, and energy sources used in, the building industry and emissions into the environment as they have a major impact on the climate. Mobility, too, has a strong influence on the environment and is dealt with here with regard to its sustainability.

The integration of buildings and infrastructures into the landscape as well as the preservation of protected areas and objects, where environment is understood as a spatial concept (→Context), place quality including the big scale of landscape with its significance for people's identification and place attachment (→Sense of Place), economic sustainability (→Economy) and social aspects (→Diversity) of environment are dealt with in the aforementioned other criteria.

#### 4. *Economy*

Economy describes the production, distribution, trade and consumption of goods and services by individuals, businesses, organisations or governments. It encompasses business administrations as well as welfare economics and covers fields that include accounting, finance, project management and marketing.

Economy addresses such questions as how human activity can be justified economically and which activity brings the greatest possible benefit to an individual or a community. Economy is one of the three pillars of sustainability next to society and environment.<sup>33</sup> It promotes inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. Economic activities are unevenly distributed in space, as there is a concentration of economic activities in cities and, going further, in dense areas of cities.<sup>34</sup>

High-quality architecture and *Baukultur* generates long-term economic added value by improving the conditions for positive commercial and social development. Societal effects, such as a general improvement in well-being, lead to stability and promote social cohesion and integration, which in turn may improve economic productivity. Taking the whole life cycle of places into account is of great importance when assessing costs and economic efficiency. The accurate and comprehensive planning of all lifecycle processes must be conducted prior to construction in order to achieve the

---

<sup>31</sup> The Guardian, 11 February 2020: <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2020/feb/11/rem-koolhaas-rural-countryside-the-future-guggenheim>.

<sup>32</sup> For instance, the construction sector is responsible for 40% of CO2 emissions.

<sup>33</sup> UN Environment programme: <https://www.unenvironment.org/>.

<sup>34</sup> Ahlfeld, G. (2012).

best spatial quality under economically reasonable conditions. Collaborative methods that support quality and efficiency should be considered in the early stages of the space creation process.

The costs of *Baukultur* should be considered from planning and construction through operation and maintenance to deconstruction and recycling. In terms of the economical use of financial resources, the aim for the construction and operation of a property is to minimise the total life cycle costs in relation to its location and costs. Companies and businesses aim for the most efficient use of their resources; this can be any kind of resource: financial, material or labour force. In construction, efficient use concerns materials, other resources and the amount of work involved, which is kept as valuable as possible. Real estate economics reflects the development, production, management and marketing of real estate.

Market prices have to be considered for the assessment of the economy of a place. This concerns the level of the real estate as well as how a building or property fits into the market of its surroundings. The market price is influenced by various aspects, e. g. the attractiveness of the location, the closeness to facilities, available public services, heritage values, the accessibility of the place and the quality of construction and design. Important aspects for the assessment of a realistic demand for real estate are the population and job development as well as a lack of supply in certain residential, office or industrial segments. The target groups for which supply is created are therefore decisive.

Ownership structures also influence the economy of a place. In order to ensure sustainability, the focus should be on easily tradable solutions, while deviations from sole ownership can restrict marketability and financial viability. Diverse ownership structures and investment models, however, offer the potential for innovation and inclusion of various income groups and may therefore be the best solution for the economy of certain places and a more comprehensive (or social) sustainability. The place has to add value to the regional economy. Thus, the economic benefit for the wider environment of any maintenance, planning or construction activity should be taken into account.

Altogether, high-quality design solutions should use economic resources wisely and minimise the lifecycle costs of the structure, without making concessions in the overall quality. The costs of spatial solutions include expenditures related to planning, design, construction, utilisation, maintenance, and demolition; as well as indirect costs that are necessary to ensure mobility, energy and food production, education, health care and defence, and many other related costs. Good spatial solutions add economic value by creating more durable development projects of better quality, as well as favourable conditions for economic development. The savings become evident when taking a cumulative view of as many cost groups as possible.

The management of places (→Governance), the sustainable use of space (→Environment), the realisation of mixed-function spaces and aspects of accessibility (→Functionality) are dealt with in the aforementioned other criteria.

## 5. *Diversity*

Diversity is a concept used in sociology and social psychology for the distinction and recognition of group and individual characteristics. In our increasingly globalised, individualised urban societies with people of various origins, ethnicities, age, gender, sexual orientation, people with disabilities, various religious practices, cultural and socialisation-related identities, diversity is to be regarded as the norm. A strong diversification of the population in socio-economic, social and ethnic terms, but also with respect to lifestyles, attitudes and activities is the reality.

Still, the recognition and equal treatment of different groups with their manifold tasks in private and social life, the perception of the positive effects of this diversity for society and its well-being are equally a major challenge and a long-term goal of democratic countries. While it seems that Europe is experiencing an unprecedented phase of social openness, expressed by institutional aims, such as inclusiveness and a respect for minorities, different values and social fluidity, issues of inequality, migration, growing populism and even rising new fascist voices reveal the vulnerability of our societies and values.

The criterion of diversity in *Baukultur* is of great significance in terms of its social function for the built environment. *Baukultur* concerning diversity reflects and promotes inclusive societies and strengthens social cohesion by being attuned to the users' specific needs. It encourages the connection of people, thus facilitating interaction and shared responsibility by creating adapted spaces, supporting integration into society and preventing segregation, gentrification, alienation and abandonment. It fosters places where people of different social and ethnic origins, various age groups, abilities and disabilities can live, work and interact. Vibrant, mixed-use and socially diverse neighbourhoods are inclusive, contribute to democratic societies based on human rights and leave no one behind – an imperative condition for public policy. In rural areas, diversity in *Baukultur* is to be understood as social diversity of people in small centres offering a mix of functions reflected in vernacular spatial settings (landscapes, settlement patterns and buildings).

In terms of *Baukultur*, diversity is a transversal criterion tangent to inclusiveness of all relevant actors and heterogeneous societal groups in the process (→Governance); openness (flexibility and adaptability) of structures and planning contexts allow for a diverse mix of functions of places, which adapt to changing, mixed uses and users with easy access for all people (→Functionality); diverse ownership structures and investment models offer an openness for innovation and various income groups (→Economy); fostering natural values, and particularly biodiversity, leads to natural and landscape diversity (→Environment); reacting in a sensitive way to context and improving or creating beauty (→ Context, Beauty) increases diversity in the form and shape of the built and non-built space. These aspects of the diversity criterion are dealt with in the aforementioned other criteria.

## 6. Context

Context is understood in spatial terms and means the nature and quality of the relationship of a place with its surroundings. Context considers all the characteristics, connections and phenomena of a geographically defined area in which a place—a single building or a larger unit such as an industrial estate or a village—is embedded, or, in other words, how a place relates to its surroundings at any scale.

In Europe and in large parts of the world, there are hardly any untouched natural surroundings left, and even building on virgin land by definition equates to shaping an already anthropogenic space where people find themselves in a cultural environment shaped by human beings. All space-related activities in a place, such as planning, new construction, retrofitting the existing stock and the conservation of cultural heritage, have an impact on the spatial context and modify the pre-existing situation. The relationship between a place and its built and non-built environment is determined by its surrounding cultural landscape and morphological indicators, such as urban grain, coherence, scale, materials, colours, etc., which characterise and define the spatial quality of a place.

Integrating new objects into a given context can increase, maintain or diminish the spatial coherence and the quality of the place with regard to its cultural landscape, heritage, existing fabrics, infrastructure as well as public and green spaces. The context criterion gives evidence of these spatial relationships and connections and assesses them in terms of spatial coherence: depending on their concrete realisation, planning and building measures influence the scale of the surroundings,

use of existing landscape, infrastructure, open space, settlement structures, density patterns, building typologies, volumes, materials and colours of the spatial context - or they oppose them, whereby in concrete cases both approaches can be of high quality.

Cultural heritage is valued by positive relationships with new buildings, and hence often better preserved and protected. Most European cities are already fully built and developed—hence, it is the main task of architects and planners to reuse, convert and eventually extend, repair or renovate the existing building stock, rather than to build anew. The pedestrian scale should be maintained, while the motorised perspective should be as minimal as possible. High-quality public and open spaces should be available and integrated into the urban patterns.

Altogether, high-quality spatial design creates places which fit into the local context, and which have distinctive features that create a sense of place and identity. In that way, high-quality architectural and urban design solutions consider the historical contexts, the nuances of the material and spiritual culture and utilise these as important resources and tools. High-quality architectural design supports finding new uses for objects of heritage value.

The aspects of social context (→Diversity), economic context (→Economy), natural environment (→Environment) as well as historic and individual context (→Sense of place) are dealt with in the aforementioned other criteria.

## 7. *Sense of Place*

The Sense of Place relates to the authenticity of the built and non-built environment, characterised not only by its natural and physical identity but fundamentally also by its social fabric and associated interaction. In addition, it may be related to function and to remembrance in this regard. This forms the basis of the cultural identity of a place and give meaning to life in that location. The following ideas are commonly discussed in literature and encompass a sense of place in relation to *Baukultur*.<sup>35</sup>

The current trends of globalisation, digitalisation and accelerated mobility have increased the yearning for distinct places with a strong and specific identity. Sense of place is a multidimensional, complex construct which characterises the relationship between people and spatial built and non-built settings. It is often used in relation to those characteristics that make a place special or unique, as well as to those that foster a sense of authentic human attachment and belonging.<sup>36</sup> These characteristics are either intrinsic to the place or the meaning people give to it, but more often a mixture of both. Places with a strong sense of place have a strong identity that is deeply felt by inhabitants and visitors. Specific local topographic, morphological and socio-economic structures determine and shape the character of a place, its atmosphere, but also its capacities for action and problem solving, thus structuring and advancing the lives of people.<sup>37</sup>

Sense of place in relation to *Baukultur* is hereby understood as the general concept which describes the relationship between people and their (local) spatial settings, subsuming concepts such as place attachment, place identity and place dependence.<sup>38</sup> Place attachment is defined as a positive emotional bond that develops between groups or individuals and their environment, at any scale, and thus includes landscape and nature. Place identity represents those aspects of self-identity,

---

<sup>35</sup> Low, S. M., Altman, I. (1992), Proshansky, H., M., Fabian, A., K., Kaminoff, R. (1983), Stokols, D., Shumaker S. A. (1981), Kyle J. B. (2007), CEM (2010), Wolf K. L. (2010), Gokce, D., Chen, F. (2018).

<sup>36</sup> ICOMOS International (2008) Québec Declaration on the Preservation of the Spirit of the Place

<sup>37</sup> Löw, M. (2010), p. 64.

<sup>38</sup> Hunziker, M., Buchecker, M., Hartig, T. (2007); Jorgensen, B. S., Stedman, R. C. (2001).

which involve and are reflected by the environment and its social and personal meanings. Place dependence refers to how well a setting serves goal achievement, given an existing range of alternatives. Sense of place is influenced and conditioned by a place's spatial but also societal identity and vice versa: the character of these relations is reciprocal and dynamic.

Altogether, high-quality spatial solutions take care of the needs of individuals, communities, spaces and places, of values and resources. It is grounded in architecture that contributes to culture, social life, community involvement, health, integration and the rule of law, everywhere and across all social scales. High-quality built environment is a common good that shapes the territory for those who live there.

Aspects of the criterion sense of place, such as the aesthetic perception of the beauty of a place (→Beauty), social diversity and cohesion (→Diversity), the different topographic and physical-constructive and planning layers and characteristics of the surroundings (→Context) and civic participation (→Governance) are dealt with in the aforementioned other criteria.

## 8. *Beauty*

Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, beauty was treated as an objective quality in philosophical accounts<sup>39</sup> [OBJ]. Vitruvian *venustas* implying a visual quality in architecture that would arouse the emotions of love and delight has evolved over time. Beauty is not a physical value and measurable like height or width; there is no intrinsic variable of “beauty” or “non-beauty” within a place, but a judging ascription of characteristics and values to an entity that provides a perceptual experience of pleasure or satisfaction, leading to feelings of attraction and emotional well-being.

Beauty as a criterion of *Baukultur* results from a highly positive aesthetic, spatial and atmospheric impact on the beholder who experiences the place emotionally. The beholder, whether a person or society in general, has a sensory perception of the place, expresses an opinion and judges its beauty.<sup>40</sup> In the context of *Baukultur* “perceived beauty” in relation to a specific place always includes its surroundings or—depending on its scale— its surrounding landscape. The emotional experience<sup>41</sup> of beauty has to be followed by a rationally founded attribution of specific aesthetic value.<sup>42</sup> There are places that are universally known as being of incomparable beauty, which are aesthetically, socially and economically stimulating for their communities; their beauty makes them a destination for visitors of different social classes and levels of educations. There are landscapes of outstanding beauty and some of them are listed.<sup>43</sup>

There are no universally valid beauty standards or canons any more, and the values ascribed and the meanings allocated to a place vary among individuals and in time. However, beauty must be an explicitly declared objective of any place-making, of any planning or building activity. To reach this objective, professionals and experts must engage in an ongoing, broad debate on what is or can be perceived and judged as “beautiful” based on explicated experience, now and in the future. A lively

---

<sup>39</sup> After 1750 the traditional value of proportion and ornament became highly controversial and with the introduction of the term “aesthetics” by Baumgarten the visual merits of all artefacts tended to be assessed more subjectively as judgement of reason – despite Kant's definition of beauty with its claim to “subjektiver Allgemeinheit” (subjective universality) – and lost its value after 1800, when beauty was “altogether in the eye of the beholder”.

<sup>40</sup> Herold, S. (2018), p. 394.

<sup>41</sup> Pallasmaa (2014), p. 237.

<sup>42</sup> Scruton, R. (2011), p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> The World Heritage enlisting criteria do not include explicitly any beauty standards regarding the built environment. However, the fact that the majority of the World Heritage Sites are perceived as outstandingly beautiful in our days, even if they were not enlisted by objective aesthetically building criteria, demonstrates once again that the concept of beauty is changing but remains universally relevant. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/criteria>



discussion and debate must take place on different levels, as beauty in *Baukultur* is relevant to everyone and has to be conceived not as an exclusively expert issue and additional cost factor, but as an essential cultural value and shared perception.

Place quality referred to the relationship of people in terms of place attachment, place identity (→Sense of Place), specific geographic spatial contexts (→Context) as well as social (→Diversity) and economic (→ Economy) values of beauty are dealt with in the aforementioned other criteria.



## Case studies

### Methodology and acknowledgements

The selection of case studies was informed by parallel mapping of relevant EU actions and emerging funding programmes. The chosen case studies illustrate diverse ways to use quality design criteria for offering high-quality outcomes, as well as to raise awareness on high-quality architecture and built environment. The selected examples evidence efficient use of human, natural, economic and financial resources while excelling in quality in architecture and the built environment.<sup>44</sup> During the OMC work, the impact of Covid-19 shifted the public focus on how the built environment reflects the values of a community. The responsibility and leadership in developing and delivering overall quality in the built environment rests largely in the hands of the public sector. Public authorities have a driving role in place-making regarding the emphasis that they place on spatial planning and design and their expertise and knowledge to articulate the desired quality of outcomes of a planning and construction process.

This report highlights case studies that embody all or some of the eight quality criteria according to the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System mentioned above. The following selection of case studies exemplify best practice at all governance levels (in both public and private sectors) and represent transferable models for other countries. The categories are broad, and the case studies captured by the OMC work are by no means a comprehensive overview or a full representation of the myriad of both formal and informal approaches that are used. The case studies suggested and compiled by the OMC group may be considered as a set of inspiring examples worthy of further consideration.

### Lessons learnt

- A wealth of knowledge, creativity and understanding of architectural practice and design thinking is evident.
- Due to the high level of expertise and motivation, Europe is well-placed to make a significant contribution to developing the concept of *Baukultur* and to drive climate action.
- Political commitment is key to the implementation of high-quality *Baukultur*.
- Understanding what high-quality *Baukultur* means, and what its potential is, is directly linked to the communication and awareness raising efforts.
- New tools and approaches that are emerging include soft governance approaches, including assessment of reaching quality goals, community engagement and support.
- Almost all selected case studies are transferable between member states, with some modifications.
- Architectural policies are important tools to promote and encourage innovation and best practice.
- Sustainable development is well supported by high-quality design and engagement with communities.
- Quality goals can be achieved by appropriate use of opportunities given by technical innovation in spatial design and co-creation in the design process.

---

<sup>44</sup> In order to develop this report a methodology for coordinating, researching, collaborating and responding to the mandate was devised and a structure based on several sub working groups reporting back on key areas of interest was established. Significant amount of feedback from the Expert Group was received through these consultations and was used to identify best practices in each participating country and a collection of case studies that would inform and illustrate the key recommendations of the report on the value of a high-quality architecture and built environment for everyone and the tools necessary to achieve it.



### Categories and case studies

Case studies from the respective participating countries were requested using a template to gather key information related to the work of the other subgroups. Responding to emerging EU themes, actions and the impact of the pandemic, the following eight categories were identified:

- Awards
- Laws & Policies
- Education & Awareness Raising
- Regeneration & Revitalization
- Tools, Processes & Research
- Funding & Investment
- Grassroots Initiatives
- Technical Innovation (re-use materials, new technologies)

Regarding methodology, 76 case studies were collected from the OMC members and presented in a matrix, demonstrating a broad range of existing best practice across European countries. 27 case studies stood out as most distinctive and representative within the eight categories that were defined by the working group, and are presented at a greater level of detail. Further information about the selected case studies can be found in **an annex**.<sup>45</sup>

### Awards

The category of awards yielded the most submissions reflecting the importance the international community and the participating countries place on the outcome of good practices in (contracting) architecture and spatial planning. Many prizes exist in Europe, on all levels of governance, targeting the quality of architecture, as well as promotion of the value of architects' work as a contribution to culture. The internationally acclaimed awards—the Pritzker Prize, the EU Prize for Contemporary Architecture—Mies van der Rohe Award, the RIBA Gold Medal and the Alvar Aalto Medal—all inspire, communicate and promote high-quality architecture and bestow great prestige on the award recipients. Awards are a key means of communication and raising awareness of the EU's ambition or objectives in terms of delivering high quality and building well for all.

At the member state level, there is a wide variety of award schemes, with the quality of architecture and spatial planning as a shared characteristic or theme. Awards are often aimed at design-led area plans, with the designers at the centre, supported by national organisations of architects. Many governmental prizes exist, which aim to promote awareness on the national level for quality in design, spatial planning and architecture. Examples presented for this study range from an Award for best works of architecture and urban design in Lithuania (case study #6); Foment of Arts and Design (FAD) (17), originating from 1958, promoting a permanent and continuous recognition of good architecture and design in Spain; the Golden Cubes award, the Polish edition of the international competition of Architects Union (22) which will also be listed under 'education'; the Czech Architect for the Municipality Award (CZ) (2) and the 'Public contracting Authority Award' from Belgium (46). The latter two will be discussed/analysed as case studies further down.

---

<sup>45</sup> A methodology to collect information was based on a template into which each national representative was requested to fill out information about the case studies from their respective countries. Questions included what category they were responding under, the governance levels, key outcomes of the project, funding approach, etc. In addition, the question 'How multidimensional is the concept of architectural quality?' was posed and the representatives used the assessment table in the worksheet 'Annex A – Davos criteria', drawn up by subgroup working on 'Quality' criteria.

The scope of awards is shifting to a more holistic approach, i.e., the objectives of the EU Mies Award are to promote an understanding of the significance of quality in architecture as well as to reflect the complexity of architecture in terms of technological, constructional, social, economic, cultural and aesthetic achievements. Architectural significance, linked to the construction market, has a social impact and transmits a cultural message. Quality therefore refers to universal values of generic buildings, independent from their programmes: the essence of things rather than their formal values.

To meet new challenges, new award schemes have emerged, i.e., the Dezeen Awards (2018),<sup>46</sup> which were introduced to highlight sustainability. About 80 % of the environmental impact of a building, its interior and the products used are determined at the design stage. For this reason, the architecture and design industries have a vital role to play in bringing about a more sustainable and circular economy.

Awards might be sponsored by the government and might consider aspects such as the judging arrangements, communication of nominations and results. In ideal circumstances, awards increase access to knowledge and experience in inspirational commissioning and help those responsible for the development of the physical development to define their precise role. Inspiring examples help demonstrate that excellent commissioning which draws upon the strength of design leads to excellent results. Award schemes and the communication around the prizes increase general interest in the strength of spatial design. It should not only promote the (professional) debate about architecture, design and land use, but also foster appreciation for effective commissioning, engaging public, holistic views, integrating sustainability, quality and good design among those working in the field and a much wider public.

### *Case studies*

#### **(2) Architect for the Municipality Award (CZ)**

The Architect for the Municipality Award acknowledges the cooperation between a municipality (local government) and an architect or an architectural studio in the Czech Republic. The result is not a single winner – the award is always given to an architect in tandem with a municipality and as a result prompts long-term cooperation between the two stakeholders. The results are widely accepted and preferred by the general public. This example of awarding a combination of an architect or architectural studio and government helps to promote good co-operation between parties engaged in the interplay between (public) commissioner and designer.

#### **(46) The Public Contracting Authority Award (BE)**

The Belgian Public Contracting Authority Award aims to recognize the quality of a building or a place but, most of all, the quality of the process that led to the success of the project. It focuses on practices, collaborations and difficulties that are part of the story of the project seeking for the best or at least more relevant ones. This practice has more or less the same approach as in the Dutch Gouden Piramide (Golden Pyramid) award,<sup>47</sup> a state prize awarded biennially for excellence in commissioning work in architecture, urban design, landscape architecture, infrastructure and physical planning. Every building client in the Netherlands is eligible for the award. The prize is open to municipalities, private individuals, companies, organisations, specialised building clients and so on.

---

<sup>46</sup> <https://www.dezeen.com/2021/02/04/dezeen-awards-2021-sustainability-categories>

<sup>47</sup> <https://www.goudenpiramide.nl/english-summary/gouden-piramide>

### *Findings & observations*

- Awards are an important factor in raising awareness of the importance of quality in architecture and spatial planning.
- Award schemes should focus on the needs of society, promote holistic views and serve actual societal challenges in spatial planning.
- Awards and prizes may promote good commissioning approaches that attract other building clients.
- Awards and prizes may be integrated in a larger national programme to promote awareness about spatial quality and the contribution of architecture to the general public by education, publicity, about the role of local authorities and construction companies.
- Awards and prizes should take sustainability, re-use or recyclability of materials and the concept of carbon footprint on board.

### *Laws & policies*

The case studies selected on laws and policies offer an insight in the variety of legislative frameworks that exist and are important in policy making. This category considers that national and/ or local policies and/ or laws on architecture and spatial quality are the basis for delivering high-quality built environment outcomes. Case studies provide examples of attractive approaches in the design and shaping of law or in developing policy to influence good planning, architecture and spatial quality in the field.

Since the last decades of the 20th century, many central and local governments in Europe created national policies and laws to promote quality in architecture and spatial design based on the understanding that a legislative basis was essential to the responsible structuring and management of the physical environment and the maintenance of cultural heritage. The development of these laws and policies by early adopters inspired other countries to pursue similar approaches, so it is evident that by 2021, policies in the field of spatial quality and architecture have become a common practice in Europe.

A Horizon 2020 research project, 'Urban Maestro', looked at this area of practice and demonstrated the uptake of national policies on architecture and provided an overview of European policy and law and a context for the identification and examination of case studies. A survey map produced by the Urban Maestro team reveals the current landscape of policies and spatial design governance practices across Europe. An integral part of the Urban Maestro research focused on the soft governance tools or other less formal approaches that had evolved in practice from national policies. The Urban Maestro project revealed that spatial policies were important to the promotion of artistic quality, talent development, experimentation, renewal and internationalisation. The exploration of the complex relationship between design and cultural heritage as an integral part of sustainable development and the renewal of urban centres demonstrated how a range of activities in the field, from formal policies to safeguard the physical environment to soft law and guidance in experimentation and civil participation, is sometimes required to unlock the potential of vacant or under-utilised sites.

An overview of the European context suggests that legislation governing the physical environment is also changing, from new development and urban expansion to the regeneration and revitalization of existing buildings and areas. While most commissioning clients are still from the public, semi-public or private sectors, new groups and coalitions of companies, organizations and individuals are emerging, many of whom have a societal interest in finding better, more appropriate solutions for spatial questions and societal needs. As part of the response, support is given by national authorities; for example, the German case study (34) **TITLE** describes how a detailed status report on the presence

of *Baukultur* in projects at the federal level has been developed. It examines the social value of public spaces from the perspective of citizens and the creators of the built environment alike, and includes recommendations for policymakers, planners and other stakeholders.

The Austrian case study (53) **TITLE** demonstrates how formal policy is used to a good effect based on Federal Guidelines for *Baukultur*, which focus on a holistic approach of *Baukultur* to provide sustainable solutions. The Federal Guidelines specify general principles of building culture, which are further elaborated upon by 20 guidelines for a holistic approach based on six areas of action: development of towns, cities and the landscape; construction, restoration and operation; processes and procedures; promoting awareness and public participation; research and transfer of knowledge and expertise; and finally, guidance, co-ordination and co-operation.

In contrast, the Belgian (Flanders) case study (55) “BWMSTR Label” promotes spatial research without a client, engaging at the earliest moment of the process with a start-up budget to allow research, networking, brief/concept development in order to provide a first spatial image. The Vlaams Bouwmeester and his team is committed to placing the projects on the political agenda and focusing attention on areas requiring action. The Lithuanian Law on Architecture case study (63) indicates how a law established in 2017 sets out principles for architects’ activity and provides definitions of public interest in architects’ activity performance as the instruments to support a high-quality architecture and built environment.

Commissioning building projects in the public sector is becoming a more complex task. Local and regional authorities must deal with the major changes to the arena in which they operate, for instance relating to the UN Sustainable Development Goals or EU-legislation in the field of sustainability. They also face a large number of social and spatial challenges, which must be addressed alongside transition issues such as the just energy transition or improving the existing building stock’s resilience towards climate change. Effective spatial design can help to navigate the many multi-layered issues to be addressed with specific design knowledge and relevant expertise. Public and private sector commissioning clients must be able to fulfil their role effectively. However, a somewhat limited understanding of what good design and spatial quality actually are and how their absence may impact how a community lives suggests that important opportunities are missed where spatial design and architecture are seen as separate services or areas of expertise and not as a part of the multidisciplinary response to social and policy demands. This revelation is applicable not only in the field of architecture, but also in landscape architecture and urban planning.

Changing circumstances and new partnerships demand a different working method on the part of both the (public) commissioning client and the designer. The awareness of new commissioning practices needs to be raised, and guiding principles and criteria embedded within those practices are required to ensure opportunities for effective methods for delivering high-quality spatial outcomes are utilized. In the expanding field of spatial planning, (public) commissioning clients are responsible for inviting and engaging with a greater number of actors. Their participation in the process includes understanding new ideas and perspectives, whilst looking at the overall design. The design sector is adapting to the new relationships, and increasingly designers are invited to develop new specializations and to take up different roles within the design process as a whole. Many designers are better equipped to use their expertise and resources to support the societal agendas and the interactive planning processes by inviting the participation of new players, to explore a variety of perspectives, or to create new networks or methods of communication with communities. These kinds of interventions serve to enhance the quality within projects, and exemplars of design-led approaches are important to disseminate.

### Case studies

#### National/regional level

**(9) Catalonia's 2017 Law on Architecture (ES)** represents the first such legislation in Spain and the second in Europe (after France) and establishes Architecture as an activity of general interest and the basis for wellbeing and social cohesion. Accordingly, the Government and public administrations of Catalonia shall establish actions to foster and encourage architectural and town planning quality and measures to promote the proper framework for action in public procurement and also the benchmark for activities in the private sector. The law aims:

- a) To promote the dissemination of and encourage the values of architecture and urbanism.
- b) To vindicate the existing built heritage and to enhance the public's knowledge thereof.
- c) To promote innovation, creativity and quality in architecture, particularly through the use of technological tools applied to the construction process that offer models of integrated information on buildings.
- d) To promote education in architecture, built heritage and their impact on the conditions and quality of life, as well as the importance of maintaining them while they are being used.
- e) To promote the role of synthesis and architectural innovation in building processes and their execution, and of their potential to encourage sustainable development, energy efficiency and the reduction of greenhouse gases.
- f) To contribute to the development of architecture's potential for economic growth and employment.
- g) To establish mechanisms in the administrative procurement of the organizations, bodies and entities that make up the public sector of Catalonia subject to public sector procurement legislation.
- h) To encourage the simultaneous and coordinated participation of all the professional disciplines involved in the architectural process, to ensure that architectural quality is the common objective and responsibility of them all.
- i) To vindicate architecture as an element intrinsically associated with the historical shaping of the landscape, both on account of its heritage and identity values and its environmentally respectful constructive characteristics.

**(24) The ISOS (CH)** is the Swiss Federal Inventory of Heritage Sites of national importance and goes far beyond the classical list of protected heritage objects developed and compiled from the 1970's onwards. Through a recently revised methodology, the ISOS delivers an analysis of all Swiss built sites (cities, little towns, villages) and their entire territory. It divides the built areas in different zones, describing their qualities and what should be maintained (or what is disturbing) and gives advice how and where development might be considered. The inventory must be legally considered in the planning process, and thus makes an essential contribution to high quality *Baukultur*.

**(39) The architecture policy of Denmark (DK) 'Putting People First'** offers a broad spectrum of activities and regulation directed at architecture and sustainability, with an environmental, social, and cultural focus. A number of strategies are primarily laid out under the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of City, Housing and Rural Districts. Projects are designed for the development of social and cultural sustainability including remote or outlying areas. Inspirational outcomes of this policy approach include an open competition for 'Sustainable social housing of the future', an inspirational catalogue for recycling and transformation of the cultural heritage in the municipalities and a plan-led approach for shrinking villages. An important part of the Danish policy is the obligation to guide municipalities in developing their own architectural policy based on spatial plans to which the local architectural policy and green transition catalogue have to relate. The Danish policy is also very engaged with teaching initiatives targeting children, youths and adults with training packages on architecture, sustainable cities and design for children. Young adults are encouraged to take part in summer schools with new digital platforms used for the dissemination of activities and to sustain a

continued dialogue and a pragmatic and horizontal approach to the implementation of the architectural policy.

#### Local level

**(60) The Kuldīga Design Code (LV)** from Latvia is an example where a small town has introduced its own quality criteria to protect its unique historical image and skills. The code includes design guidelines for buildings and public space as well as competence centres and restoration workshops for citizens. The funding palette on offer reaches areas as small as street-fronted mini-gardens in pots.

**(75) Guidelines for architectural policies and strategic work in municipalities (SE)** from Sweden. The National Board of Housing, Building and Planning has produced a guide for municipalities that provides advice to the municipality on how an overall architectural strategy for the urban fabric can be developed. A municipality can work with many different tools to stimulate the knowledge of building and discussions on the creation of carefully designed living environments. Strategic architectural approaches include developing an architectural strategy; the promotion of the value of architecture and the designed living environment; engaging citizens in conversations about architecture and designed living environments, work with rural construction and drawing on art and artistic processes to enable and to arouse commitment. Other innovations are used to explore situations i.e., land allocations, temporary architecture, test beds, architectural competitions, municipal architecture awards, urban planning awards, education on aesthetics and architecture. The guidelines were launched in 2020 and already now there are many communities in Sweden that successfully developed or are currently developing policies for architecture for their entire municipalities.

#### *Findings & observations*

- Integrated policy framework 'Danish / Catalanian / Swedish style' aiming at responding to the needs of society (well-being, participatory processes...) and of the planet (sustainability...)

#### **Need further expansion**

#### *Education& awareness raising*

Education and awareness raising is a category that covers a wide area- and operates at many levels as a central pillar of many architectural policies. It is of great importance for fostering knowledge and understanding of architecture as a culture of building well and the importance of quality in the built environment and its benefit to people's lives. Education provides the basis for seeking investment in quality in the built environment, for building social cohesion, well-being and the appreciation of communities to the importance of their surroundings, the condition of the urban landscape or city district and providing access to past achievements captured in specific categories like monuments or industrial heritage innovation. For these reasons case studies selected in this category were diverse, formal and informal, wide ranging and innovative in their contribution to this objective.

In any form (formal and informal) education will help to develop design craftsmanship, professional skills and social awareness in mutual coherence and in varying degrees of complexity. Themes may derive from current events. This concerns, for example, current topics such as restructuring, densification and sustainability. Education may emphasize the architectural and urban design disciplines. Or may explicitly address the boundary between interior architecture and architecture, between architecture and urban design and between urban design and landscape architecture. Education will also help to learn a wide range of skills, techniques and practical knowledge in the field of researching, communicating and reflecting.



For these reasons case studies selected in this category were diverse, formal and informal, wide ranging and innovative in their contribution to those objectives. Many initiatives in the field of education are presented with a variety of approaches and from differing perspectives i.e., Lithuania and Poland offer more integrated approaches in promoting informal learning and awareness raising. In Lithuania, **(8) the Architecture Fund (LT)** is a non-profit organisation that functions as an open and voluntary-based platform, engaged in architecture, culture and education. It provides a framework and assistance for a number of initiatives developed on a voluntary basis. Organisations core programme consists of lecture series and public discussions, thematic tours and excursions, educational programme, Travelling Architecture Workshops, festival, Open House Vilnius, curatorial projects and exhibitions. In its profile and activities, it is similar to **(32) Estonian Centre for Architecture (EE)**, as well as other architecture centres or institutes across Europe.

The program 'Architecture lessons for a remote school' from 2020 **(66) Architektūros pamokos nuotolinei mokyklai) (LT)** creates video lessons for schoolchildren on architecture. During the lessons, architectural researchers and architects introduce children to the history of architecture, theory, implemented and prepared projects, as well as explain the practical task. The aim of the lessons is to educate an active citizen who is not indifferent to the quality of the environment by integrating architecture teaching into education; to provide students with information about architecture and the profession of an architect in an attractive, accessible manner, as well as to present an insight into practice of Lithuanian architects. The video lessons are hosted on a YouTube channel and are available to everyone for free.

Design education is an integral part of developing an awareness and appreciation of high-quality architecture and built environment and the cases studies selected reflect formal and informal approaches to the delivery of architectural education. The formal architectural education (training), consisting of theoretical and practical courses at a university or school of architecture, are complemented and enhanced by informal learning and participation of citizens in discussions, trainings, exhibitions, co- designing, participation in maintenance or management as a volunteer for other events e.g., lessons for children and youngsters in primary and secondary schools, including extracurricular activities around the classroom. In design education, informal learning helps to understand design as a discipline, to raise awareness about the values of the spatial environment and to learn which decisions influence the shape the world.

Developing design thinking skills is achieved through hands-on learning, the promotion of innovative thinking and the pursuit of intuitive knowledge and creativity. The positive outcomes evidenced by informal learning importantly suggest a road map for lifelong learning and aspiration supported by most participating countries to enhance architectural practice and design-led solutions.

Many policies and laws on architecture in the European countries encapsulate in one way or another individual and collective learning styles, design thinking techniques and practices. Where once the focus was on the development of expertise of the respective professionals, the benefits of multi-disciplinary approaches are more commonplace, the participation of the creative sector and communities themselves in the problem-solving/design process is apparent and suggests that education has a far greater role in developing new engagement skills for local authorities, harnessing and communicating the benefit of new technologies and digital opportunities as well as providing innovative engagement with all sectors of the industry as well as all ages of society.

#### *Case studies*

**(19) Cross-disciplinary postgraduate course 'ARCHIKULTURA — EDUKATOR ARCHITEKTONICZNY' / ARCHI-CULTURE — ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATOR (PL)**

This case study is considered a standout project as it focused on setting up a postgraduate programme for the education of qualified architectural educators. The question of who educates the educators is an emerging theme for specialist conservators and craftsmen who recognise the historical benefits of apprenticeships and entry to Guilds to maintain high standards. The concept of postgraduate studies is based on establishing a cross-disciplinary dialogue between pedagogical and architectural faculties, who in a conscious and comprehensive way would organise individual activities, events or implement Baukultur education in primary and high schools either as extra-curricular classes or as cross-curricular topics. This is considered a good example of a postgraduate programme for the education of qualified architectural educators and consideration of its transferability especially where no similar case studies were submitted is highlighted for the action 'awareness raising and education'.

**(20) ADE - Architektura dla edukacji — Architecture for education (PL)**

Arising from the pandemic the move to digital meetings, networking and access to virtual conferences and courses advanced exponentially. This case study demonstrates the opportunities of the digital age and the development of an on-line platform and the creation of a virtual space to exchange experience and gain competence for various groups of stakeholders. The crucial aims of the platform are: e-learning (postgraduate studies, courses, films, 'archipedia', educational materials etc.), networking (consolidation of the architectural educators, creation of a database of those formally and informally committed to the programme of architectural education), the sharing of knowledge (the collection of professionally developed database of both specialist and non-specialist character) and the popularisation (short films, exercises and educational games for children and educators).

**(21) Laboratorium Regionów (PL)**

This case study is an example of the creation of the Laboratory of Regions aims to raise awareness and knowledge of the regional heritage and the potential of places informed by urban and architectural identity. This project is regarded as a model for the consideration of other countries to address regional planning issues of abandonment and de-population of rural or previous industrial areas. The project is based on extensive research activities which led to the publishing of a manual consisting of tools for the practice of good architectural and urban design. The Laboratory of Regions aims at improving the quality of built environment on the level of architecture and urban planning through the increase of the awareness of the local pattern of development and the distinctive architectural language or character of local communities.

**(22) Golden Cubes Awards (PL)**

The Polish edition of the international competition of Architects Union. The Golden Cubes are awarded to the most interesting projects in the field of built environment education. They recognize individuals and organizations that popularize architectural culture and work with children and adolescents to help them understand how their immediate surroundings are shaped. It is not only an opportunity to nominate Polish projects for this international award and to promote the achievements of national built environment education, but also a chance to appreciate active educators, who raise awareness of architecture's importance among young people.

**(28) Arhitektuurikool (EE)**

The School of Architecture (Arhitektuurikool) is a hobby school where kids between the ages of 7 and 19 explore and create the spatial world. There is no other initiative like it in Estonia and only a handful in Northern Europe and the Baltics. In addition to the weekly lessons, the School of Architecture also organizes inspiring architecture-related events throughout Estonia, publishes study materials for the promotion of creative thought and provides built environment education.

**(32) Estonian Centre for Architecture (EE)**

The Estonian Centre for Architecture (ECA) activities focus on developing architectural culture in Estonia and promoting contemporary Estonian architecture abroad. Its mission is to promote Estonian

contemporary architecture, raise awareness about how good quality architecture and urban space benefits us and to promote Estonian architects and architecture offices to expand internationally. By crossing borders and taking down barriers to reach new audiences, ECA aims to integrate the knowledge and competence of the architecture sector with other sectors in society and in so doing contribute to the advancement and innovation of both.

**(49) Oris House of Architecture (HR)**

Oris House of Architecture is engaged in activities that encourage creativity in the fields of architecture, urbanism, design and other arts, and organizing and conducting activities that contribute to the quality of life and spiritual wealth of citizens in general. It is the headquarters of the editorial office of Oris, the leading regional architectural magazine. With over 600 m<sup>2</sup> of spaces in the urban core of the capital city of Croatia, including a multimedia hall, readers' corner, offices and club restaurant, it is a place of meetings, socialising, and creativity; place for the promotion of architecture, design, art and culture. Its program involves lectures of eminent domestic and foreign architects, seminars, conferences, presentations of products and services, exhibitions, cultural manifestations and workshops held on a regular basis.

**(50) Federal Baukultur Foundation (Bundesstiftung Baukultur) (DE)**

The *Bundesstiftung Baukultur*, launched in 2007, it is an independent institution that advocates the issues of Baukultur and aspires to make the built environment a topic of public interest. It is an instrument that makes Baukultur accessible to a broad public with limited financial resources. The primary goal is to make citizens more aware of the importance of Baukultur for their everyday environment and to convey a better understanding of planning processes and building projects. In addition, the foundation initiates a broad debate among building professionals on the quality of Baukultur. It is the only institution of this kind in Europe and, next to the federal foundation, regional *Baukultur* initiatives have been established as well. The foundation has become an independent voice for Baukultur and uses various means of communication and education including on-line tools, reports and site visits.

**(52) Landluft (AT)** is a non-profit association based in Austria that promotes building culture as 'Baukultur' in rural areas within German-speaking Europe focused on small and mid-sized towns as well as on villages and communities in rural areas. The basis of the approach is an understanding of building culture as catalyst and dynamo for positive and future-compliant community development. 'LandLuft Baukulturgemeinde-Preis' is a prize that is announced every four years at local government level and awarded to exemplary communities in Austria and southern Germany for exceptional 'Baukultur' at municipality level. Within the term 'Baukultur' high-quality building projects are included, and also public participation and communication, strategic development and process design at community level and the project supporters/instigators. An exhibition is designed to share the exemplary communities' experiences and approaches, combined with study trips, workshops and lectures.

**(56) The Salvos project (FI)**

The Finnish Salvos project developed architectural and environmental education in the visual arts, studying the pedagogics of architectural and environmental education, educational content and working methods as part of teaching in youth art schools. The project examined the interfaces of architectural and environmental education by using the methods of visual arts. Examination was carried out from the starting points of the new target areas of the national core curriculum for the visual arts in the basic education of the arts.<sup>48</sup> These starting points included visual literacy, a

---

<sup>48</sup> "Basic Education in the Arts" is art education provided primarily for children and young people on an extracurricular basis. Basic education in the arts is organized across Finland in nine art forms: architecture, visual arts, crafts, media arts, music, literary art, circus art, dance, and theatre. It is an official part of the

relationship with the arts, and inclusion and influencing. The purpose of the project was to enhance environmental awareness and to increase knowledge of the history and the present-day situation of architecture, and of a sustainable future. The project utilised the immediate surroundings as a learning environment and supported children and young people to take a stand on environmental planning and to create works of art in public spaces. The Salvos project developed experiential and communal teaching methods that will strengthen visual observation of the environment and the formation of a personal relationship with built environment and the natural systems. It is a case study that also reflects the importance of natural heritage/biodiversity as an integral part of the built environment and of societal well-being which needs to be taken in greater consideration in building processes.

### *Findings & observations*

- A good design of informal and formal learning environments about spatial design and architecture in primary and secondary education will help to increase awareness about the living environment. The Polish example 'ADE—Architektura dla edukacji—Architecture for education' is a good example of this approach.
- Topics that can be included in educational frameworks are broad, from local to (inter)national. This can be about the value of a historic site, reuse, ecological or circular values, use of spatial design, various scale levels, design craftsmanship, connecting to international developments like the UN's sustainable development goals, professional skills and social awareness. It is important to link societal challenges to design thinking.
- 'Getting them young': in formal education, it is important to renew attention for spatial design and architecture during the curriculum from time to time so pupils will meet the topic several times during the school period.
- Manuals and tools for informal use by citizens who want to work on their spatial environment and quality of the living environment will help to foster awareness and social participation. This may be promoted on the national level.

### *Regeneration, revitalization & adaptive reuse*

Re-use, regeneration, retrofitting and revitalization of the existing (historical) building stock and landscapes is one of the great challenges of the future. Although new construction will play an important role, most of these changes will involve the adaptation and improvement of existing buildings and structures: and working at different scales of neighbourhoods, villages, cities, infrastructure and landscapes. The recent re-publication/adoption of the new Leipzig Charter recognises the challenges and opportunities as well as the different historical, economic, social and environmental backgrounds of European cities and proposes common principles and strategies for sustainable urban development policies at national, regional and local authority levels. A multi-disciplinary approach based on integrated urban development and related governance are recommended to implement this approach, build resilience and to achieve balanced regional growth.

*"Climate scientists have taught us that limiting global warming to 1.5°C will require not just change but 'rapid and far-reaching' system transitions on a nearly unprecedented scale. Achieving this will require all of Europe working together, which means the project must capture the hearts and minds of Europeans. Leveraging the potential of craft, creative*

---

Finnish educational system, with its own legislation and National Core Curriculums. It is goal-oriented education that progresses from one level to the next. Basic education in the arts comprises two syllabuses: the general (500 hours) and the advanced (1300 hours) syllabus. The schools' financing comes from ministries, municipalities, and participation fees.

*industries and cultural heritage can support just outcomes and help deliver both a green transition and strengthened social inclusion, as highlighted by the ambition of the New European Bauhaus. That is why Europe's cultural heritage needs the European Green Deal to succeed. This is why cultural heritage is essential to the success of the European Green Deal. Enhancing the place of culture and cultural heritage in the European Green Deal is also in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which acknowledge that natural and cultural heritage can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, resilience, adaptation, and sustainable development."*

*Extract for European Cultural Heritage Green –Paper exec. Summary*

Through smart renovation and transformation, heritage sites can find new, mixed or extended uses. As a result, their social, environmental and economic value is increased, while their cultural significance is enhanced. As part of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 an EU initiative was launched on "Heritage in Transition: re-imagining industrial, religious and military spaces for the regeneration of urban and rural areas". The resulting Leeuwarden Declaration "Preserving and enhancing the values of our built heritage for future generations"<sup>49</sup> highlights the benefits of re-using built heritage and lists a number of basic principles to ensure quality in adaptive re-use operations/processes.<sup>50</sup>

Working at a different scale towns and villages are the vital infrastructure of regions and present the greatest opportunity to guiding behavioural change needed to achieve quality and to understand the challenge of environmental sustainability. Urban centres represent the concentration and clustering of key cultural assets and the possibility of maximising and using finite resources wisely and efficiently, building community awareness and capabilities. To deliver 'a better quality of life for all', to deliver 'a Green New Deal', which supports the journey towards net zero emission in 2050, signals fundamental changes will be required to improve the wellbeing of communities and acknowledges the immediate challenge to recover and rebuild in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the havoc that it has brought to the lives of people and to the social and economic security of families.

Community organisations are opportunities to activate people towards the greater good and bring good wins into the systems by interaction and co-creation between public sector and private. Soft skills are as important as hard skills to the process and the skills and the services that lie behind the public interface need to be in place for high quality built environment to be delivered for the benefit of all. The case studies selected for this category demonstrate a strategic approach to town centre regeneration through the repair and upgrading of existing buildings and downgraded public spaces and infrastructure to support residential occupancy and to enhance the quality of life in rural towns and villages.

### *Case studies*

**(5) Restoration Works Scheme for Local Councils (MT)** aims at supporting 54 Municipalities in Malta to restore buildings and monuments of historic/artistic value located within their respective areas. The Restoration Works Scheme for Local Councils seeks to assist the 54 local Municipalities on the mainland of Malta in the restoration of landmark buildings and other immovable monuments of

---

<sup>49</sup> Leeuwarden Declaration "Preserving and enhancing the values of our built heritage for future generations", [https://www.ace-cae.eu/fileadmin/New\\_Upload/\\_15\\_EU\\_Project/Creative\\_Europe/Conference\\_Built\\_Heritage/LEEWARDEN\\_STATEMENT\\_FINAL\\_EN-NEW.pdf](https://www.ace-cae.eu/fileadmin/New_Upload/_15_EU_Project/Creative_Europe/Conference_Built_Heritage/LEEWARDEN_STATEMENT_FINAL_EN-NEW.pdf).

<sup>50</sup> The document was supported by the following networks: Architects' Council of Europe, Europa Nostra, Future for Religious Heritage (FRH), the European Federation of Fortified Sites (EFFORTS) and the European Initiative for Industrial Heritage (ERIH).

historic and/or artistic value located within their delineated boundaries. The local communities are often particularly interested in the historic connections of these buildings (as the context) to their daily lives and as a result engage strongly with the works. The Scheme is for this reason regarded as a way of increasing public awareness in heritage buildings and sites as well as in the methods and skills adopted to restore them.

**(14) REVIVE Program (PT)** consists of the reuse for tourism or cultural purposes of a collection of 49 properties in the ownership of the Portuguese State (the extension of this number being foreseen), namely military, hospital and monasteries, which are not in use, with architectural, heritage, historical and cultural significance, and situated throughout Portuguese territory. The Program model is based on the reuse of buildings, following strict intervention criteria from the patrimonial point of view, using private investment, in accordance with rules defined by the State, in order to make possible the realization of a sustainable economic activity, the rehabilitation of the architecture of the buildings and surrounding landscapes, for the benefit of their communities and the development of the local economy.

**(38) Clonakilty 400 (EI):** the Urban Design/Public Realm Masterplan was implemented by the Local Authority with a strong engagement process with the citizens. The main objective of the masterplan was the socio-economic regeneration of the town centre of Clonakilty to mark the 400th anniversary of the town borough. This case study demonstrates the important role of the town architect, a unique role in Cork County Council since the 60's with the introduction of planning law where architects would act also as urban planners of the towns in making local area plans. This design-led approach empowers the town architect to coordinate public and private urban developments including influencing local policy to preserve the architectural heritage and to include the participation of local communities. The challenge was to bring people back to live the main street and re-establish sense of place and community. Clonakilty was eroded by several flooding events with the worse devastating flood episode in 2012. The project although with limited funding was designed to be a vision shared by the community and nearing completion it has already restored a sense of pride and community in the town.

#### *Findings & observations*

- The Maltese case study demonstrates how cultural heritage is an integral part to the delivery of the Green Deal and part of sustainable development, how targeted funding secures key cultural assets at the heart of historic urban centres, whilst maintaining conservation skills and expertise so that these buildings are enjoyed and enrich the lives of local communities.
- The REVIVE Program is another interesting example of a rehabilitation programme, which similarly addresses vulnerable cultural assets of a significant scale to safeguard their integrity and to support local economies and communities to remain resilient in a sustainable way. A movement of similar projects (see case study 41 'Valorepaese') is taking place in Italy.
- The case study from Clonakilty showcases the importance of local authority skills to implementing a design-led approach to the re-shaping of existing town spaces into high-quality public realm, engagement with a local community on re-imagining their town and harnessing key infrastructural funding to implement high quality environmental improvements and place making.
- General observation is to co-create in re-use, think along and move along with the stakeholders involved. In this way existing buildings and structures will be preserved, they play an important role in spatial developments and contribute to a sustainable living environment.



### Tools, processes & research

This category showcases case studies that might among other things strengthen or quicken the design process, or make it more accessible.

The governance tools can be formal or informal. Since the exclusive use of formal tools does not always ensure achieving high-quality *Baukultur*, an overview of inspiring informal tools is provided. Informal tools, such as the establishment of participatory processes, enable the refinement of the manifold process involving *Baukultur* and strengthen its importance as a common good. For participatory processes to be implemented successfully, there must be awareness of the topic in general and a sensitivity for the space, its qualities and the possibilities for shaping it. An inspiring example of citizen participation are the 'Immersive residencies programs'.

In some countries experimental design is supported by architecture funds. For instance, the Architecture Grant Scheme by the Creative Industries Fund in the Netherlands supports projects that contribute to the quality, development or understanding of the field of architecture.<sup>51</sup>

Another example is the Open Call system from Belgium, which is the most important tool used by the FGA to support public clients in raising the quality of public developments.<sup>52</sup>

Panorama Netherlands is a way of storytelling. The Urban Maestro workshops demonstrated how storytelling plays an important role in urban design governance, although transfer of the ideas contained therein is not always easy.<sup>53</sup>

### Case studies

The following submitted case studies have been selected as best practices as they illustrate their high added value best:

#### (1) Panorama Netherlands (NL)

Panorama Netherlands is a spatial representation of how the Netherlands can change over the next few decades, against the background of major societal challenges. The Panorama is developed by the Dutch Board of Government Advisors to inspire the makers of the Dutch National Strategy on Spatial Planning and the Environment. It is intended as a first step towards a shared, recognisable and positive vision of the future with a horizon in 2050. In addition, it proposes a number of points of departure for the development of a judicious and broadly supported strategy for the country's further organisation. Panorama Netherlands is a publication, but also a physical panorama: a 360-degree imagination at eye level in which visitors can take a look at the future for themselves.

#### (11) Design Reviews (EI)

RIAI Design Reviews are an innovative tool for a local authority or client body to explore the potential of a project or site and develop wide-ranging ideas through expert architectural advice. The RIAI, the Royal Institute of Architects Ireland, assembles a panel of 5-6 architects with relevant expertise. Architects are trained problem-solvers and their unique ability to analyse complex issues and develop design solutions is of great benefit to communities. The architects receive a detailed briefing before developing high-level ideas, including research of relevant international exemplars. The ideas are shared through reports, films and public engagement and the public feedback is incorporated into a final report. The Design Review Report then informs the next development stage, such as a master plan or spatial framework. The objective is to stimulate thinking and discussion amongst the public and stakeholders on the possible ways in which an area might be developed or redeveloped. Design Reviews focus high-level thinking on a particular neighbourhood

---

<sup>51</sup> [www.stimuleringsfonds.nl/en](http://www.stimuleringsfonds.nl/en)

<sup>52</sup> Kroese et al., 2009

<sup>53</sup> Urban Maestro workshop 2 'Design environment'

or urban quarter with a view to kick starting the imagination with creative ways for these areas to be redeveloped. The process is independent and non-directional and the resultant development ambitions are open and far reaching. Communities across Ireland can benefit from architectural expertise early on in an urban regeneration process. Design reviews can also be requested from the RIAI by? local authorities and semi-state bodies tasked with regeneration or developing brownfield sites for creating new sustainable neighbourhoods.

#### **(26) Immersive residencies programs (FR)**

The 'Immersive residencies programs' aim at reinventing planning methods outside the classical commissioning framework, in order to revitalize disadvantaged territories through culture and architecture. The objective is to foster the experimentation of bottom-up and participative approaches, by setting up multi-disciplinary teams of young professionals, whose mission is to open dialogue between local authorities and inhabitants, create levers for an alternative economy in rural and urban areas, highlight the collective memory of a territory and accompany local actors in the definition and the designing of their project. The teams are allowed to experiment and derogate from certain construction regulations.

#### **(40) Open Call (BE)**

The Open Call is one of the main tools of the Vlaams Bouwmeester (Government Architect) to promote the quality of the built environment in Flanders (Belgium). It is a unique and innovative method of selecting designers for public commissions by Flemish regional and local authorities based on a two-phase design competition principle that complies with public procurement law and European competition rules. The Open Call enhances the quality of public buildings and of the public space, and thus of the living environment.

Imagination/visualisation enables reactions and adjustments from stakeholders and contributes to the formation of a building culture. Within the process of an Open Call, the Vlaams Bouwmeester challenges several design teams to visualise the project description which in turn challenges the public principal in a positive way and helps to make a considered choice of the design it prefers.

#### *Findings & observations*

- Working with users and local actors to elaborate projects allows them to improve their feeling of belonging. A good example of citizen participation is the 'Immersive residencies programs'. Within these programs, architectural interventions are promoted and developed as close as possible to users.
- An optimistic tone of voice and an attractive shared view of the future form a good engine for change. Within Panorama Netherlands, the Dutch Board of Government Advisors show how the complex issues of today can lead to welcome changes in the future.
- Need for experimentation (*permis de faire*), design by research, design thinking.
- An architecture fund with grants for experimental approaches presented by the Dutch 'Panorama' model, among others, will help initiatives to visualise and research the spatial future.

#### *Funding/investment*

The connection between funding and high quality is of strategic importance. In this regard, the research of Urban Maestro provided great insight into the incentivising good approaches from the outset of the planning and design process as well as into funding and procurement approaches. The inclusion of quality criteria embedded into project briefs and in funding streams were recommended as essential to achieving the best outcomes.

The selected case studies demonstrate innovative and alternative ways of linking funding to the delivery to high quality outcomes for cultural heritage, major refurbishments and new build scenarios. Lessons learnt from this category indicate the importance of embedding high-quality

criteria in the design of funding programmes to ensure the best built environment outcome, the wise application of limited resources to deliver favourable results for all. The delivery of the Green Renovation Wave as part of Europe's recovery and transition strategy, may be viewed as the game changer or opportunity to take a holistic approach to delivering a sustainable built environment, whilst moving significantly towards the climate action target for 2050.

### *Case studies*

The following case studies reflect what the OMC group looked for in this category best:

**(12) Transformation of Cité du Grand Parc Bordeaux (FR)** shows how three social housing blocks, built in the 1960's and prominent to the skyline of Bordeaux, were saved from demolition by the new "social landlord" and a major renovation was undertaken in place with the community needs integral to the design process. The transformation of the dwellings fully occupied started from the interior to give them new qualities: more space, more light, more view, and upgrade the facilities as well as improve significantly energy efficiency without raising the rents– the recipient of the EU Mies Award in 2019 (and the Pritzker Prize for Lacaton Vassal in 2021) signals the high quality and success of the project/model, which could be replicated throughout Europe.

**(15) Cultural 1,5% (ES)** is an effective measure introduced by the Historical Heritage Legislations of Spain (central government as well as regions), which establishes the obligation to allocate in public works contracts at least 1,5% of the budget for the conservation or renovation of buildings declared to be of cultural interest. The central government has co-financed, with the owner, more than 1500 actions in 600 municipalities to make sure that built heritage is properly funded.

**(43) The Contrat de Quartier durable (BE)** is an action plan of a certain scale and duration implemented between the regional government and the local authorities, including the inhabitants of a specific neighbourhood on Brussels territory. Every four years municipalities can apply for a regional subsidy regarding a well-defined area. After one year studying this location a basic roadmap ("dossier de base") sets an agenda for different kinds of public investments (renovation, new public equipment, social activities), which must be implemented by the local authority within the specified time span of 4 years.

**(51) Federal Urban Development Programme (Städtebauförderung) (DE)** is one of Germany's most important instruments for promoting sustainable urban development, both in cities and smaller towns. The programme's central goal is to strengthen inner cities and town centres in their urban planning function, whilst taking into account the protection of heritage and monuments as well as public and open spaces. The national government, the states and the municipalities usually share the costs each by one third each. The prerequisite for claiming funding is a local, integrated urban development concept in which aspects of *Baukultur* must be taken into account. The programme aims to enable participation and exchange in social life for everyone, and thus to strengthen social cohesion. In addition, it aims to make a significant contribution to the implementation of the Leipzig Charter and the Davos Declaration and thus contributes to the sustainable redevelopment of the urban core and a reduction in land consumption – promoting an urban development oriented towards the existing building stock and high-quality *Baukultur*.

### *Findings & observations*

- The importance of the design of funding incentives to achieve desired high-quality outcomes is demonstrated, for instance, by the **Cultural 1,5%**, which ensures that cultural heritage is supported through the construction process.
- The French case study **Transformation of Cité du Grand Parc Bordeaux** may be regarded as a landmark project for informing future practice for the long term and holistic vision it took on the renovations of existing building stock/social housing and in delivering the concept of just and fair

transition to energy efficiency and affordable quality housing for everyone. The project recognises the importance of empowering communities and signals the change required to enable bottom-up, whole of society, more than whole of government policymaking, required to bridge gap between policymakers and citizens to ensure that suboptimal outcomes are prevented.

- Further evidence of the need for quality-driven investments can be found in research under Horizon 2020 undertaken by Urban Maestro, and the case studies they present. They reveal the different levels of possible financial interventions and the success that can be achieved. Examples include land capture tools operated in Copenhagen and Freiburg, innovative financing models for public-private-partnership in real estate development, as well as civic initiatives underpinned by an investment model represented by Citymaker Fund, (NL) to support and to sustain start-ups and social enterprises of great value to communities, giving rise to a network of place makers across Europe.

### Grassroots initiatives

Citizens' involvement in their living environment is often high and the architectural and spatial awareness can also flourish thanks to this public interest. Residents feel related to the environment in which they live and often show a visible involvement. Local initiatives such as joint greeneries, neighbourhood vegetable gardens, community entrepreneurship and transformation or temporary use of empty buildings show that people feel involved in their environment. Even so strongly that they want to help to shape their living environment as a collective. The public debate has a role on raising awareness on the value of spatial quality. Increase in quality is good for the liveability for residents and visitors. The citizens' initiatives can often be modest, but they usually have a major effect on the living environment because they involve a lot of effort and attention of the community and are strongly rooted in the local culture.

### Case studies

**(61) Citizen activism in Riga (LV)** is an example of citizens making themselves heard and reaching the ears of politicians and decision/policy makers. This action arose from the frustration over the decline of public space quality, and activists representing professionals, amateurs and neighbourhood activists started to post design solutions for better streets on social media catching the attention of wider audiences and politicians. Thousands of people locally and internationally praised inspirational visualisations and drawings by Oto Ozols, who considered many of the major urban landscape problems of Riga.<sup>54</sup> This approach created a critical mass that got reflected in the local municipality elections in 2020 where all the parties committed to the improvement of the quality of architecture and public space in Riga in their campaigns.

**(71) Kaapelitehdas creative hub (FI)** is situated in a former Cable Factory, which is the largest cultural centre in Finland. This case study is a good example of a movement that is taking place across Europe, where communities come together to recreate a hub of innovation and social interaction and it demonstrates the importance of a financial structure or model to underpin worthwhile civic initiatives that can run out of steam and be lost due to the lack of financial support from the more formal bank sector. In this instance a large redundant industrial site was left to decline and was a blight to the local community. The gradual process of reclaiming, re-imagining, trialling temporary use and the subsequent adaptation of its accommodation led to the overall vision, one with considerable diversity of use and vibrancy.

---

<sup>54</sup> "The Evolution of the Intersection" on Vimeo, <https://vimeo.com/547644784>.

It houses three museums, ten galleries, dance theatres, art schools, artists, bands and companies. Unique spaces are also available for rent on a short-term basis to stage concerts, exhibitions, festivals and fairs. Around 900 people work at the Cable Factory on a daily basis, and each year nearly 340,000 people attend special events. The Cable Factory is administered by the property management company Kiinteistö Oy Kaapelitalo, which is owned by the City of Helsinki. The company is responsible for renovating and renting the former industrial buildings for the needs of the arts, culture and handicrafts. Kiinteistö Oy Kaapelitalo has over 300 long-term tenants and numerous subtenants at Cable Factory. The aim is to find tenants who could support not only the development of the cultural centers in general but also each other's activities. The income is comprised almost entirely of rents without any public subsidies.

#### *Findings & observations*

- Community generated economic and environmental development may serve as an experiment to learn from for future policies or strategies. Grassroot initiatives will foster soft infrastructure, the invisible or reinforcing element of society and create enablers.
- Volunteering is essential to grassroot initiatives, adding social capital and workforce to projects.
- Grassroot initiatives are not only about (housing, infrastructure) development but also address concrete social issues such as quality of living environment, care, energy, space for entrepreneurship or education.
- Involving students in grassroot pilots and integrating related assignments in the learning program creates new dynamics.
- Grassroot initiatives operate as playfields between citizens, entrepreneurs and the government and help to explore new relationships between those parties.
- Knowledge sharing is the key, both in terms of using existing knowledge as well as generating and communicating new knowledge.
- It is important for the local, regional or national government to think of ways to promote grassroot initiatives. E.g., with a grant scheme (see example of Dutch creative industries fund) or other financial or organisational instruments.
- The grassroots initiatives and citizens' movements are great at highlighting the cultural, historical and architectural value of (disused) places (including through temporary occupation, or reuse leading to more long-term quality results).

#### *Technical innovation (re-use materials, new technologies)*

We live in a time in which many innovations are introduced at a fast pace, which provide opportunities for new design approaches arising from technical and material advancements. Opportunity for research and space for experimentation and prototyping form an integral part of technical innovation and inform new practices and the way we develop construction methods and materials. The selected case studies address solving environmental challenges by promote the circular economy, taking up climate adaptation measures or building sustainably with renewable resources and advanced digital technologies.

#### *Case Studies selected in this category of Technical Innovation*

**(67) SolarKultur (CH)** proposes alternative energy approach based on a methodology for a comprehensive solar planning for a whole municipality, addressing two objectives: producing a maximum of solar energy while ensuring high-quality Baukultur. This means considering and defining the qualities of the settlement, combined with solar and energy parameters, to define where solar installations may be energy-wise efficient and adequate from a Baukultur perspective, and where, at the other end of the range, solar panel installation is rejected and offset against alternative investment possibilities for property owners, i.e., collective installations. An example of this innovation has been



delivered in a Swiss municipality close to Geneva, which has been developed in cooperation with university and public authorities, with a view to transferring the methodology to other municipalities.

**(69) Augmented Reality (EE)** showcased the use of augmented reality and the future of construction through the use of digital technology by creating an extremely complex form comprising of twisting and bending timber strips without any physical drawings to work from. This digital innovation demonstrates how a designer may work in the future combining precise digital models with adaptable human craftsmanship to produce exciting and complex forms, allowing practice to evolve in a way yet to be imagined.



**(73) Sara Kulturhus (Sara Cultural Centre) (SE)** is both a cultural centre housing the regional theatre, two art museums and the city library as well as a hotel and conference centre. The vision for the cultural centre is that it becomes a place for concerts, performances, meetings, exhibitions and events as well as a venue with capacity for large conferences. Sara's Kulturhus is built for perpetual transformation with large, open spaces that encourage meetings between people in a welcoming environment. An open living room in the city - all housed in one of the worlds' largest and tallest wooden buildings. The 20-storey building is mainly constructed in locally sourced wood in the form of glue-lam beams and CLT-slabs creating both an architectural landmark as well as an example of advanced timber engineering. The project has been covered in international media as a part of a new wave of tall wooden buildings. The importance of local participation through the course of this project with ambitious and technically advanced architecture has made this project a success.

#### *Findings & observations*

- Engagement with new technologies to design better, enhance practice but also to communicate more widely and to disseminate research and innovation to the benefit of all
- New opportunities to move architecture to centre stage and to raise awareness of the role of architecture by utilising digital capabilities to communicate the vision of a high-quality living environment.
- Future opportunities to visualise and to guide high quality development and interventions through the use of AV
- The development of sustainable materials



## Get into action. Recommendations

*“The design quality of our buildings and places has a direct effect on people’s quality of life. The conservation, maintenance and reuse of historic buildings have similar benefits transmitting cultural identity and pride as well as contributing to climate change action. Although the importance of architectural quality in achieving a more sustainable urban development has been recognized in several international declarations, places with good spatial quality continue to be the exception rather than the standard. Acknowledging that this situation is socially and ecologically unsustainable, one of the main challenges ahead is to change the current system and its embodied values, so as to produce more sustainable, economical and socially equitable built outcomes.”<sup>55</sup>*

Bento and Laopoulou, 2019

This report provides a holistic approach to raising the quality of architecture and the built environment for everyone. This approach is largely based on the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System (DBQS) that explains key quality aspects of the built environment. The DBQS helps to homogenise our understanding of the core quality criteria of the built environment and related processes. Through a collection of case studies, this report introduces some ideas on how to operationalise those quality criteria and how to put them into action at multiple governance levels.

**To implement the quality principles, it is vital to integrate them with all design governance processes at multiple levels, especially at the national, regional and local levels. Specific attention has been paid to the transferability of implementation tools across EU Member States.**

It would be important to monitor the success of implementation of the quality principles in the Member States at the governmental level over time, together with professional associations, education and research institutions and organisations, cities and municipalities, different local and regional bodies, and other partners. It is recommended that Member States design specific implementation plans to improve the quality of the built environment at the national, regional and local levels.

At the **national level**, the **recipe to success**, in short, consists of the following:

- ☐ Make sure that there is a **strategic plan with goals for a quality environment**—it can be a public policy on architecture, urban development, construction, or similar
- ☐ Make sure there is a **team to implement the plan**— such as a State Architect team, City Architect offices at local level, design review panels, or similar
- ☐ Make sure that quality goals are **followed across the multilevel governance structure**
- ☐ **All key actors**—see in “Who is this for?”—must be **on board** in the pursuit for quality
- ☐ **Investment plans** must be **linked to the goals for a quality** built environment
- ☐ The policy document with quality objectives should be a **central tool, always on the table, connected to everyone and the budget**

The recommendations in the following chapter target various levels:

- ☐ Overarching recommendations
- ☐ EU-level
- ☐ National and regional level
- ☐ Local level
- ☐ Private sector stakeholders and non-governmental organisations
- ☐ Professionals

---

<sup>55</sup> Spatial design leadership: the role, instruments and impact of state architect (or similar) teams in fostering spatial quality and a place-making culture across five European states. João Ferreira Bento and Terpsi Laopoulou. Tallinn, Estonia, 2019.

For each of these levels, the findings orient themselves on the three categories of the Pact of Amsterdam which shape the recommendations laid out in the Urban Agenda for the EU: **better knowledge, better funding and better regulation**.

#### Overarching recommendations

Regarding the impact **across all—EU, national, regional, local—governance levels**, it is important to address:

##### Re knowledge:

- a) **Fostering awareness raising**—especially from early on—on achieving high-quality architecture and built environment for everyone through an integrated and holistic approach with the cultural dimension at the centre. Developing a comprehensive set of tools to sensitise the wider public on the topic and to support the culture of quality. Providing more **cooperation, capacity-building and peer-learning opportunities** to foster and disseminate the success stories in achieving a quality living environment. Taking into account **all areas across the territory, not only the larger urban areas** that are better equipped in terms of human, economical and other resources. Launch, support and promotion of **award programmes**. A promising example at the European scale is the New European Bauhaus campaign “beautiful, sustainable, together” as a process, approach and methodology for raising awareness on the unused quality potential of our living environment. **Successful examples** can be found across the EU also at the national, regional and local levels.
- b) **Strengthening the capacity** in public and private sectors to consider and implement quality principles in an integrated and sustainable way. Engaging **the best design expertise and adequate governance competences** in developing spatial interventions and investment projects to advance the quality of the built environment through an integrated and holistic approach. **Qualifying decision makers and involving competent professionals in decision-making processes**— the decisions must be weighed **together with competent Baukultur experts** who help to assess the potential spatial impact of each decision. Capacity building should occur at the national, regional and local level—ensuring the hiring and training of competent and multi-disciplinary staff, especially in remote and rural areas where human resources and financial means are not sufficient to mobilize *Baukultur* expertise to implement the quality criteria for the built environment in a holistic way, while keeping up with future challenges as well as wider technological and societal trends. The quality principles relate to different aspects of the built environment, whereby each quality criterion is attributed with appropriate weight depending on the nature and level of the spatial intervention. **All quality criteria must be applied to all spatial interventions**. However, each criterion is taken into account differently, for instance, at the landscape, building or interior scale. Thus, spatial design and architecture should not be seen as separate services or areas of expertise but **as a part of the multidisciplinary response** to social and policy demands.
- c) **Improving design competences** among professionals in the field, also in regard to preparing the graduates of architecture schools to **work in public administration**. There is a lack of (highly) qualified *Baukultur* professionals working within the national, regional and local authorities. Adding an educational programme for professionals to work within the public administration would help to integrate their competences in decision-making processes. Equally, it is crucial that spatial planners and designers are up-to-date on their methods.
- d) **Supporting research, innovation and experimentation** to encourage improvements in the quality of the built environment. Fostering creative practice, research and development of diverse design research models in architecture and urban planning. Increasing knowledge, understanding and **quality of research in creative disciplines and its methods**. Building a

new generation of **creative practice researchers and research-led practitioners** able to meet the complex and often competing demands of contemporary Europe.

- e) Promotion and moderation of complex, **participatory and bottom-up processes** should be informed by the complex quality goals. Each spatial intervention has an impact on the users and the environment; thus, each spatial decision needs to take into account the place-specific cultural, social, economic and environmental context. **Examples**

#### Re funding:

- a) **Integrating the quality assessment system with funding and investment programs** as well as incentives, **strategic development documents, legal acts** and other **regulations or guidelines**. This is also tied to establishing **quality-driven and value-based public procurement procedures** to achieve goals for a quality living environment. Investments need to take into account how (at what cost) the spatial solutions can be adapted in the future. Relevant EU funding programmes (ERDF, Cohesion Fund, Rural Development Fund, Horizon Europe and its relevant Missions, Creative Europe, Erasmus+, among others), as well as national, regional and local funding and investment mechanisms need to foster quality principles of the built environment. This is why it is important to mainstream the **integration of quality principles across funding areas** that concern spatial development and construction, especially in public procurement procedures—connecting quality standards to the direct and indirect **funding and procurement** of infrastructure and construction. The implementation of the key principles of good urban/ spatial governance<sup>56</sup> across all relevant funding and investment mechanisms is based on:
  - a. **a place-based approach**—on the sound analysis of the specific local situation, identity and heritage and especially potential benefits and risks, stakeholders and restrictions, while following place-based development.
  - b. acting in the interest of **public welfare**, providing services and infrastructure for the common good—inclusive, affordable, safe and accessible for all;<sup>57</sup>
  - c. **participation and co-creation**—involvement of the general public as well as social, economic, cultural and other stakeholders in order to consider their concerns and knowledge;<sup>58</sup>
- b) As public authorities taking up the responsibility **to test and set good examples as owners, developers and users** of property.
- c) **Uptake of a quality assessment system** of the built environment in national, regional and local funding programmes and the EU co-financing mechanisms or instruments when addressing significant urban challenges, to ensure reaching integrated quality goals in sustainable urban development programmes and projects. **Updating the existing assessment frameworks** (e.g., Level(s)<sup>o</sup>) with the holistic quality criteria that take into account all viable aspects of the living environment.

#### Re regulation:

- a) **Following and improving best practices** for reaching the quality goals on **all governance levels**: for instance, making sure that *Baukultur* competence is onboard all decision-making processes—putting **State Architect teams** (BE, IE, SE, NL case studies) and **City Architect offices** in place, organising **design review panels** (IE example), etc.
- b) Embedding the quality principles **across all regulations, public policies and strategies**. **Implementing the integrated quality goals holistically** in all planning and building processes, as well as in state property management; for instance, making sure at the national as well as

---

<sup>56</sup> As pointed out in the New Leipzig Charter.

<sup>57</sup> The New Leipzig Charter.

<sup>58</sup> The New Leipzig Charter.

the local level that **public procurement rules and procedures** foster a **quality-based approach** over a solely cost-based one, that quality is the basis for procuring intellectual services (e.g., engineering, landscape or urban design) and that the best practices for conducting **public architecture and urban planning competitions** are followed.

- c) **Providing guidance** for implementing the quality assessment system in all activities that shape the living environment.
- d) **Continuation and establishment** of EU-level, national, regional and local **urban/ or spatial policies** that foster high-quality architecture and built environment for everyone.
- e) **Addressing the digital transformation** to enable the development of high-quality architecture and built environment—improving digital public services to target the quality goals.<sup>59</sup> Implementing comprehensive, powerful and resilient public data infrastructure and governance that drives the quality of the built environment.
- f) Emphasising the quality principles for the built environment during the next revision of the EU directive on **public procurement and its transposition by Member States**, operationalising the quality criteria.
- g) Giving the **professional bodies** (e.g., the national architects associations, Chambers of Architects, etc.) or State architect teams **full capacity to make sure the procedures of allocating public funding** to the development of the built environment are in line with quality objectives.
- h) **Enhancing participatory co-creation** in spatial design processes **(Riga grassroots example?)**  
The success of participatory co-creation is also linked to overall awareness of the society. In that regard, **fostering spatial education** helps the future society—future clients, professionals, decisionmakers, builders—to better plan high-quality spatial solutions together. For instance, awareness of cultural significance and best practices among all partaking actors ensures appropriateness of re-imagining, conservation and reuse of heritage. **Appropriate procedures** must be in place to ensure effectiveness of participatory co-creation processes.
- i) **Measure improvements in achieving quality**: develop monitoring procedures to see how well the goals for high-quality architecture and the built environment have been implemented and perceived by the users. **Good examples** include different liveability indexes such as the OECD better life index and at national levels, studies at regional and local levels about the citizens' satisfaction with the living environment, among others.

#### EU level

In addition to the overarching recommendations, it is important to address—

#### **Re knowledge:**

- a) **Fostering research and innovation** on achieving a high-quality architecture and built environment for everyone through key research and innovation framework programmes such as Horizon Europe, including topics on the New European Bauhaus; the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT); the Erasmus+ and Creative Europe programmes; the European Urban Initiative; JPI Driving Urban Transitions; City Science Initiative, among others. **Providing relevant research and development opportunities for innovation and experimentation**, e.g., through the frameworks of Horizon Europe (in particular clusters 2 and 5 as well as the missions on climate neutral and smart cities and on adaptation to climate change including societal transmission), the Joint Research Centre, the EIT (KICs on Climate, Energy and CCSI), etc.

<sup>59</sup> In line with the New Leipzig Charter, emphasising that data should be used for the common good, with ethical and socially responsible access, use, sharing and management. At the same time, this data usage should be carefully weighed against privacy issues. Cities should have access to data relevant to public tasks.

- b) **Uptake** of the comprehensive quality criteria in the **different sustainability assessment frameworks**, such as the Level(s) system developed by the EC, etc.
- c) Providing more **cooperation, knowledge-exchange, capacity-building and peer-learning** opportunities to foster and disseminate quality architecture (principles) among MS in relevant EU programmes such as Creative Europe (in particular through the sectoral and cross-sectoral approach) and Erasmus+, among others.

#### Re funding:

- a) Mainstreaming the **integration of quality principles across EU funding areas** that concern spatial development and construction, especially in public procurement regulations.
- b) **Including the quality assessment system for the built environment in the implementation of key funding policies and programmes**, such as the Territorial Cooperation (e.g., URBACT, Urban Innovative Actions) programmes or Cohesion Policy investment streams, the New European Bauhaus, the Renovation Wave, the Circular Economy Action Plan, the LIFE programme and other relevant components under the umbrella of the European Green Deal. **Connecting the holistic quality principles with direct and indirect funding of infrastructure and construction projects** in the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes of Cohesion Funds, adding quality aspects to the award criteria.
- c) Encouraging EU institutions to take up the responsibility to test and set good examples (lead by the example) as **owners, developers and users of property**.

#### Re regulation:

- a) Emphasising the quality principles for the built environment during the **next revision** (and transposition) **of the EU directive on public procurement**. Quality needs to be the basis for procuring intellectual services (e.g., engineering, landscape or urban design). Allocation of public funds must be transparent, ensuring equal access to them.
- b) Paving the way for the **integration/mainstreaming of high-quality architecture and built environment in EU regulations, policies and strategies**, in particular those related to the Cohesion Policy, the European Green Deal, the European Climate Law, to name a few.
- c) **Fostering the cross-border mobility of architects and other *Baukultur* professionals** and improving their working opportunities. For instance, the Qualification Directive can help to harmonise the qualifications system across the EU, in addition to promoting mutual recognition agreements with third countries in terms of professional education and qualification requirements.

#### National and regional level

Depending on the administrative structure, the regional level may be equivalent to the national level in some countries (Belgium, Länder (states) in DE and AT, autonomous regions in Spain, among others).

In addition to the overarching recommendations, it is important to ensure:

#### Re knowledge:

A) Implementation of **State Architect teams** (or similar advisory expert groups). As well as **design review panels** and similar quality-driven mechanisms to embrace the professional competence across all governance levels to ensure high-quality outcomes.

B) Facilitation of the exchange of knowledge and best practice with other countries/regions so as to inform and guide the (local) decision-making process towards more quality in the built environment.

#### Re funding:

- a) Providing **incentives for a holistic assessment of the quality of places** facing current and future challenges in sustainable urban development.

b) Integrate **the holistic quality approach and principles for infrastructure and construction projects** in the Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes of Cohesion Funds, including **in the procurement guidelines and award criteria of tenders**.

#### Re regulation:

- a) Continuation, update or establishment of national or regional urban policies that foster high-quality architecture and built environment for everyone. **The quality of the urban environment derives from various interventions and policy decisions. National laws and policies offer a relevant and useful tool to coordinate the variety of actors directly or indirectly involved in spatial design.**
- b) ensure the **coordination** of all relevant ministries, agencies and services to integrate a quality-based and holistic approach in all policies and activities that have an impact on the built environment.

Regarding the strength of the national level in ensuring the quality of the built environment, it is widely accepted that the state and regional<sup>60</sup> levels continue to play an important role in society, namely in market regulation and in steering societal goals, place-making being no exception. In those terms, the role of the state has acquired a new dimension: besides defining the regulatory framework, it also takes an active leadership role, disseminating a message of quality and promoting the general public's appreciation of architectural, (peri-, non-) urban and landscape culture of both our cities as well as more remote, rural places. National laws and policies are essential to set out the ambition as well as key principles and actions a government intends to take to encourage improvements in the quality of the built environment.

#### Local level

In addition to the overarching recommendations, it is important to address—

#### Re knowledge:

- a) Appointing **City Architects with an interdisciplinary team** who champion in urban design leadership and promote a liveable and inclusive urban space.
- b) Setting up **advisory committees or similar expert platforms** at local or regional levels to lead the reflection on urban issues. They **provide advice** in the areas of architecture, city planning, urban development, as well as **technical know-how and assistance** for the conception of new projects or the renovation of existing buildings and their integration in the urban environment. In some countries there are already **local architectural advisory bodies** dedicated to promoting design quality at the local level.<sup>61</sup> **Local design review panels** can help support local authorities to improve the quality of the built environment by helping to address design issues early on, during the pre-application stage of planning. Composed of a group of experts and persons, they provide design advice about projects with a strong impact on **the public realm** and about new urban development plans.
- c) Promoting **skills development and lifelong learning tools to empower citizens and public administrations** to foster the quality of places.
- d) Ensuring **permanent involvement of cultural services and cultural professionals** in spatial development processes due to their crucial role in achieving a quality built environment and meeting the societal needs.
- e) Encouraging **grassroots initiatives and activists** to embrace quality architecture principles, so that they see the quality goals as part of the solution and integrate them in their projects' implementation. Grassroot initiatives can also be, for instance, neighbourhood groups

---

<sup>60</sup> In federal countries the appropriate state level in the field of architecture may be at the regional level. An example is how state architects sometimes work at regional (e.g., Brussels region) or city (e.g., in CZ) level.

<sup>61</sup> Some of these bodies give free technical advice to clients and local authorities, as others charge a small commission for their expert service, such as helping to set up architectural competitions (Bento, 2012).



promoting housing development. Or citizens' associations transforming abandoned buildings or sites for temporary occupations that reveal the potential of the places and lead to quality and long-term refurbishments. Local and regional authorities are encouraged to acknowledge and support the potential of such initiatives.

#### Re funding:

- a) Investment capacities of municipalities and local governments are generated through their own income, allocations from national and regional levels, as well as specific EU, national and regional funding programmes. **All financial incentives and (co)financing should be used as tools to apply and increase quality standards in planning, design and building processes.**
- b) Making the best use of value-based public procurement procedures, e.g., through conducting **public architectural design, landscape architecture, urban design and urban planning competitions** where needed. The best practice in such public competitions offers a quality-based selection procedure, which enables a contracting authority to acquire a project plan or design selected by a jury. Providing they are properly remunerated, the competitions are a source for innovative, economic and sustainable solutions and make it possible to benefit from the extensive know-how available in the market.<sup>62</sup>

#### Re regulation:

- a) Leaving no one behind, attention must be given to both **urban and non-urban places**, facilitating access to knowledge at the local level and making sure that **smaller cities and towns as well as the periphery are included** in (para-)urban / spatial design development.
- b) Driving the **digital shift** to enable the development of high-quality architecture and built environment—developing and implementing **integrated and inclusive smart city strategies for the common good, including quality and impact assessments with awareness of long-term effects**. Digital solutions can—particularly in times of crises—safeguard and boost the capacity of local authorities to foster the quality of the built environment.

In today's Europe, about 76% of the population lives in urban areas. Cities have become the frontiers to face current challenges like migration, demographic and climate change, new concepts of mobility, growing tourism and digital innovation. Added to this, the 2020-2021 challenge of the pandemic considerably affects the cultural life of cities. Preserving culture and the quality of the landscape and the built environment is not only an objective in itself, but it is rather a powerful tool aimed at achieving social, ecological and economic goals. Cities and municipalities hold a key position in shaping local infrastructure, public services, affordable housing and public welfare. This includes services for health, social care, education, culture, water and energy supply, waste management, public transport, digital networks, information systems and public spaces as well as green and blue infrastructure.

Thus, on one hand, cities need to establish integrated and sustainable urban development strategies and assure their implementation for the city as a whole, from its functional areas to its neighbourhoods. All areas of urban policy have to be coordinated in a spatial, sectoral and temporal manner. The integrated approach relies on a simultaneous and fair consideration of all concerns and interests relevant to urban development. Therefore, it should pool and balance different, partly conflicting, interests as well as the mutual effects of different interventions.<sup>63</sup> A good example is the provision of safe, healthy, affordable, well-designed and adequate housing that is essential for all well-considered urban policies.

---

<sup>62</sup> See the ACE recommendations for the organisation of Architectural Design Contests, [https://www.ace-cae.eu/fileadmin/New\\_Upload/5.\\_Policies/UPDATED\\_Policy\\_2017/GA2-17/EN/6.1.1\\_GA2\\_17\\_Compet-Rules.pdf](https://www.ace-cae.eu/fileadmin/New_Upload/5._Policies/UPDATED_Policy_2017/GA2-17/EN/6.1.1_GA2_17_Compet-Rules.pdf).

<sup>63</sup> The New Leipzig Charter.

On the other hand, far from limiting themselves to be simple regulators or even direct investors, many European cities and places have developed alternative approaches in order to enhance their ability to intervene as enablers or brokers in urban development. Through these means, they have initiated strategies to promote a high-quality built environment, often combining different formal and more innovative informal tools to guide, encourage and enable better design. For instance, a city may decide to promote quality by supplementing its zoning-based planning system with non-mandatory guidance, by holding architectural competitions, by setting up a process of peer review for design proposals, by instigating temporary urban interventions to demonstrate the potential of particular spaces, or by creating financial incentives linked to achieving certain design or other social objectives.

As an example from Germany, International Building Exhibitions (IBAs) seek to provide a vision for urban development future. They represent opportunities to explore models for new urban approaches with ‘workshops’ spanning over several years, promoting integrated approaches to urban development and focusing on social, economic and cultural matters. Each IBA exhibition contains several significant and forward-looking concepts, aiming to inspire others and demonstrate innovation. One of the main advantages of IBAs is their ability to overcome institutional barriers and establish practical cooperation on specific projects with a wide range of different players.

Last but not least, the digitalisation of processes and their management in cities, which include massive, rapidly growing data flows, are key to integrated urban development. Digitalisation is never an end in itself. Local authorities, as part of the public sector, should drive solution-driven technology based on the public’s cultural, economic and societal needs. To ensure no one is left behind, digital transformation and the collaboration needed to implement this should be based on common human values—such as inclusiveness, human-centeredness and transparency as well as in accordance with international law, including human rights law.

Above all, it should not be forgotten that cultural services and cultural professionals highly contribute to inclusion, education and well-being. To ensure that design quality is a core aim, many cities and municipalities have created an architectural advisory body to promote design quality within the public sector. The configuration and competence of these bodies change considerably from country to country depending on administrative structures and preferences of domestic actors. Nevertheless, all have the general principle that the public sector should lead by example, being a role model for society as a building promoter, client and property owner.

#### Private sector stakeholders and non-governmental organisations

In addition to the overarching recommendations, it is important to address:

**Re knowledge:** Engaging the best design expertise and adequate governance competences to **find a good balance between the private and public interests** when developing spatial interventions and investment projects. All investments should advance the quality of the built environment through an integrated and holistic approach.

**Re funding:** Ensuring that the **participants in invited (architecture, planning, design) competitions are adequately compensated**, to support and enable excellence in design and spatial planning.

**Re regulation:** Under market-driven conditions, making the best out of **public-private-partnerships (PPP) and possible incentives** to create and support a planning, designing and building culture that stands for long-term quality and sustainable investment rather than short-term profit. Preserve and

enhance the quality of the built environment by implementing planning and architecture policies focused on design quality.

In several countries, cultural organisations have emerged outside the public sector who are directly engaged with the promotion and awareness-raising of architectural culture (e.g., EE, LT case studies, to name a few). In line with the main aims of the architectural policies to create a favourable climate for the generation of design quality, these NGOs and professional associations as well as citizen initiatives aim to raise awareness of the general public. This, in turn, will have an impact on the quality of the built environment by raising consumers' (clients, buyers, communities) expectations about the quality of design. The recognition of the importance of communicating the value of architecture to the general public has led several governments to financially support those new cultural organizations, mainly through the ministries of culture, education and environment, obtaining the remaining funding from private sponsorship and donations, in addition to public funding opportunities.

Third sector cultural organisations have been developing programmes targeting different audiences, such as young generations (via school workshops, teaching materials etc.), professional designers (lectures, debates, etc.) and the wider public (exhibitions, open houses, TV programmes, etc.). Although the scale and concept vary between the different bodies, their main objective is to present and provide information about architecture and urban matters, creating spaces for debate about the future of the built environment.

### Professionals

In addition to the overarching recommendations, it is important to address—

#### Re knowledge:

- a) Fostering the wide-spread appropriation of the integrated quality-assessment **system in education and continuous professional development**, as well as in the research agendas of schools, universities and institutes.
- b) A greater **recognition of quality architectural solutions over technological ones** is needed: unless whole life cost and impacts are fully addressed, priority should be given to simple, passive, low-tech, locally tested solutions that do not consume energy and are less prone to human error.
- c) Supporting capacity-building, peer-learning and lifelong learning programmes for **professionals to acquire and update the relevant skills** (including digital skills as well as soft skills to manage co-creation and participatory processes).
- d) Promoting, supporting and conducting research projects providing substantial opportunities for real-world training and testing of **design-led practice-based research**, and introduce **creative practice research methodologies** to a new generation across architecture schools and universities all over Europe. Contribution to a wider research effort to increase the knowledge, understanding and quality of research in creative disciplines, its potential and its methods.

#### Re funding:

- a) Greater acknowledgement that **taking part in public architecture, planning and design competitions is an investment in architectural quality**. Architects invest impressive resources in competition entries—**AT example from ACE**.

#### Re regulation:

- a) Providing access for **young offices** to (both public and invited) architecture, planning and design competitions.
- b) It is in the hands of the profession itself to **develop appropriate tools to improve the quality of procedures**, e.g., in terms of public procurement, conducting public competitions, etc.

An obvious way of increasing the design quality of built projects is by expecting a higher level or a more varied set of competences and skills from designers, through a more demanding system of access to the profession. In this context, there has been a European tendency to enforce the registration of the title as a requirement to practice.<sup>64</sup> In terms of core competences and skills, professionals are expected to excel in cultural, functional, technical and material approaches.<sup>65</sup>

The **cultural aspects** relate to preserving resources by high-quality design. Preservation and improvement of the existing built environment is the best strategy for to avoid wasting resources. Buildings that are socially and culturally appreciated have longer lifespans and inspire generations of owners and users to preserve the resources invested in them. What we build or retrofit today should aspire to become cultural heritage for the future. Through smart renovation and adaptive re-use, old or disused buildings can find new, mixed or extended uses matching the social, cultural, environmental and economic needs of our time. Such an approach makes it possible to save the embodied energy and reduce the consumption of construction materials, limit urban sprawl and help preserve local identity and heritage.

The **functional approach** aims at designing for adaptability—accommodating changing needs. Most changes in a building are the result of the occupant's desire to improve her/his living environment or to adapt it to new needs, and not because of technical problems or the premature aging of materials. In most cases, buildings are demolished because their adaptation to new needs is seen as an unviable economic option, not because they are structurally dangerous. In order to ensure that buildings are used for the longest possible time, architects should design adaptable spaces and fabrics, making future changes as easy as possible, so the place can be adapted to new needs.

The **technical approach** targets on the one hand the digital shift at large, but also designing for easy replacement and direct reuse. While the fabric of buildings may be able to last for centuries, certain building components have far shorter lifespans, due to their own technical limitations, or because the occupants' needs change before their theoretical end of life is reached. To anticipate this shorter lifespan, it is important to enable an easy access to and removal of these components, so they can be cost-effectively replaced or repaired, while at the same time minimising disruption to other components around them.

The **material approach** is about sensory and sensitive design prescribing the right materials: offering delight and a healthy environment to users while making reuse and recycling possible. Architects can prescribe components and materials that can be beautiful, cost-effectively re-used or recycled, that are durable and robust, easy to handle, repairable, and bio-degradable—i.e., materials that can be kept within the economy for as long as possible. Architectural solutions are expected to promote circularity, thus should consist of a value-oriented hierarchy of actions aiming to preserve and enhance the value of resources.

---

<sup>64</sup> Bento and Laopoulou, 2019.

<sup>65</sup> ACE statement „Designing for a Circular Economy“, [https://www.ace-cae.eu/uploads/tx\\_jidocumentsview/ACE\\_EWCF\\_Statement\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.ace-cae.eu/uploads/tx_jidocumentsview/ACE_EWCF_Statement_FINAL.pdf).

## Implementing the quality criteria



The ladder of architectural culture presumes that there is a link between a quality living environment and placing a greater emphasis on design quality in the early stages of development and giving architecture a more strategic position in the placemaking culture and urban governance.

The ladder of architectural culture consists of five steps:

### **Step 1:** architecture as an add-on

Built environment and placemaking projects are often implemented without architectural input and consideration of quality criteria in a holistic and integrated way. Architecture is not an integral part of the development of the built environment, and the team does not involve trained architects. The solution is driven by the involved participants' ideas about good function, economic efficiency and sustainability. The context, sense of place, comprehensive consideration of aesthetics and users' perspective plays little or no role in the process.

### **Step 2:** architecture in the built environment

Built environment and placemaking projects use architectural and design input, and its value is recognised by commissioners, developers, clients and the public. Design is viewed exclusively as the final form-giving stage, whether in relation to buildings or (urban) landscape. Many decision-makers use the term 'styling' to describe this process. The task may be carried out by professional architects and designers but is typically handled by people with other professional backgrounds.

### **Step 3:** architecture as an integrated method

Architecture and design are integrated at all stages of built environment developments and placemaking projects, e.g., planning, commissioning, public consultation, delivery and post-occupancy evaluation. Architecture and design are not a result but an approach that is integrated at an early stage in the development process. The solution is driven by research into the problem, as

well as by the users, and requires the involvement of a wide variety of skills and capacities, for example, engineers, technologists, sociologists, other consultants and public administration.

**Step 4:** structural approach to architecture

Architecture and design are integrated more deeply into public sector teams, including national, regional and local government. Deeper architectural competences are sought to inform policies related to built environment, e.g., housing, planning and climate adaptation. Highly qualified architects work within the public administration to rethink the development of the living environment. Here, the key focus is directed on the design process in relation to the political visions and its desired intervention areas and on the future shape of the built environment.

**Step 5:** strategic approach to architecture

Architecture and design are an integral part of planning and policy development. Architecture and design are used to inform forecasting and strategic planning. Architecture and design are integrated into built environment procurement in terms of quality systems and design panels. Architecture and design are celebrated by the public, both public and private sectors.

High-quality architecture and *Baukultur* generate a long-term economic added value by improving the conditions for positive commercial and social development. Societal effects, such as a general improvement in well-being, lead to stability and promote social cohesion and integration, which in turn may improve economic productivity.

Quality assessment checklist

Best practices can be enhanced by using a quality assessment tool to weigh alternative spatial decisions. The public sector can demonstrate leadership by implementing a quality assessment system in investments in planning processes—in weighing investment and location alternatives, in property development and management, public procurement procedures, evaluation of funding proposals, preparing (e.g., spatial planning, design) briefs, etc. Answering the quality assessment questions can improve the sensibility and recognition of places with a high-quality *Baukultur* among all societal and functional groups (specialists and non-specialists) and build up knowledge and general awareness about quality issues of the built environment.

The possible fields of application of the described quality system are wide-ranging. For example, it can be used as a quality criteria catalogue in the evaluation of building and planning projects, in competitions, design advisory boards or as a guideline for citizens' workshops and in various consultation and discourse formats. It can also be used to self-critically evaluate one's own realised projects or to document the success of planning processes in places. In all of these cases, the potential of the quality assessment system lies in taking into account and making transparent the complete and balanced consideration of central qualitative issues of the built environment.

This evaluation tool consists of key questions that assessors, such as decision makers, should ask themselves to evaluate the quality of proposed interventions (projects) with a potential impact on the built environment, and to determine whether such projects are worthy of public funding. There are different types of projects: small and large, public and private, expensive and low-cost, with direct and indirect impacts on the quality of a place. The quality principles of the evaluation tool are both design-based and process-related, and they should be assessed by decision makers responsible for the development of the built environment and those responsible for the overall design governance process and the finances. The tool may also be useful for civil society as well as local and stakeholder communities.



The assessment methods depend on the available data. Quantitative and qualitative aspects are assessed by different means and methods. Quantitative assessment methods consist of quantitative content analysis (data, structures, sources), standardised interviews, surveys, standardised observation, monitoring, mapping, observations, statistics, counts, estimates, etc. Qualitative assessment methods may include qualitative content analysis, interpretation, value judgements, individual interviews (focus groups), polls, monitoring, mapping, design competitions, data to be collected and concrete specific figures. Survey and interview results in various forms can support the assessment.

The following checklist complies with the *Davos Baukultur Quality System* (DBQS) as well as the “European Quality Principles for EU-funded Interventions with potential impact upon Cultural Heritage”<sup>66</sup>. Professionals and experts who wish to execute a more thorough evidence-based assessment of the *Baukultur*-related quality of places may use the more detailed DBQS with additional indicators to answer the assessment questions more thoroughly.

The proposed assessment questions present a non-exhaustive list, as they are linked to the quality criteria described in earlier chapters. Further questions and indicators may be added. Those indicators have no defined minimum or intermediate or maximum benchmark values. If a concrete, specific place of a certain scale, typology, urban grain, etc. is to be assessed, these values need to be determined specifically and in a differentiated manner by the assessor (for example, by asking whether it is a mountainous rural or metropolitan area, what are the density values, diversity factors, public transport facilities, etc.). For instance, (38) Clonakilty 400 case study shows that by moving beyond just functionality and using design-led thinking, new public spaces that invigorated the historic town were created for the enjoyment of the community. Benchmark values may differ from one place to another, depending on the circumstances.

### *Assessment questions by each quality criterion*

#### *1. Governance*

- Are the intervention and design brief based on best available knowledge, including using best practice guides for *high-quality Baukultur* and relevant case studies? Have appropriate research and surveys informed the formulation of a design brief?
- Are all motivations and specific interests for the project clearly acknowledged?
- Is the design knowledge-based and developing new knowledge and skills?
- Is there a clear understanding of which *Baukultur* experts and local, regional and/or national authorities have to be included at each step of the process?
- Are the decisions weighed along the process with the help of competent (certified) experts and well-trained specialists in *Baukultur*? Do all professional actors and stakeholders involved have the necessary experience, skills and expertise for their tasks? Is there guidance for *Baukultur* and its quality through legal regulation, standards, norms and policies, by financial or procedural incentives?
- Is the process led by interdisciplinary teams? Does the project call upon knowledge from all relevant disciplines? Is it the result of a collective and transdisciplinary reflection?
- Is it necessary to conduct a design competition?
- Are the procurement procedures value-based (rather than solely cost-based)?
- Does the process use design advisory board(s)? For instance, is there an expert design review in place?

---

<sup>66</sup> International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) European Quality Principles, 2020.

<https://www.icomos.org/en/about-icomos/committees/regional-activities-europe/90984-quality-principles-new-version-available>

- Is the process driven by design research?
- Is the decision-making process about the place participatory, accessible to all people concerned and transparent at all stages?
- Are community participation and co-creation inherent parts of project's conception and implementation assessment? Is there a broad debate on the quality of the place?
- Is the project part of an integrated sustainable development strategy?
- Are risk assessment and mitigation, with the participation of *Baukultur* specialists, integral parts of the project?
- Will a monitoring system be in place during and after project implementation, to measure achieving quality goals?

## 2. Functionality

- Is the project fit for purpose and tailor-made for this particular use or re-use?
- Does the intervention (or place) support the needs, aspirations and activities of all users?
- Does the design comply with planning, architectural and engineering rules and norms?
- Does the project reflect national, regional and local traditions, standards and specificities?
- Is the design solution functional over a long-term period, flexible for multiple uses and adaptable to changing conditions and needs, while at the same time preserving its core qualities and values? Can the solutions be adapted in the future, with positive impacts on the built environment?
- Is there an appropriate availability of healthy urban open spaces, green spaces and landscapes of easy access? Does the design encourage multifunctionality and adaptability to diverse uses of landscapes, urban open spaces and green spaces?
- Have alternative uses or adaptive reuse opportunities been thoroughly considered to support the sustainability of the intervention (or place)?
- Does the intervention (or place) support and promote well-being and healthy lifestyles? For instance, is the intervention (or place) healthy, safe and comfortable for its users in terms of design, materials, light, air, noise and other aspects? Does the intervention (or place) support a low traffic level, and is it walkable and bikeable?
- Does the solution provide universal access in various ways to people of all sizes and ages and with varying mobility requirements? Is the solution easily accessible and usable for everyone? Does the project respond to people's needs in terms of cognitive and physical accessibility?
- Does the project improve security, including resilience to natural hazards (incl. climate change), offering night lightening (bridges, underpasses, lifts etc.), orientation and visual permeability to decrease the number of security incidents and enhance public security?
- Is there appropriate use of (local) materials and craftsmanship? Does the project call upon local skills in the fields of planning, design, construction, engineering, etc.? Are small- and medium-size design offices encouraged and eligible to carry out the project?
- Are the proposed technical interventions well-tested? Can these interventions be described as state of the art? Are technical approaches with high risks or uncertainties avoided, without excluding experimental approaches?

## 3. Environment

- How will the project impact the environment? Has climate change been taken into consideration? Is the solution environmentally friendly, and does it view the natural environment as a valuable resource? Has an independent environmental impact assessment been carried out? Were the conclusions taken into account regarding energy efficiency, carbon footprint and sufficiency for the least-possible impact on the environment?

- Have local inhabitants and stakeholder communities been consulted and involved in the project and its development? (How) were their considerations taken into account?
- Does the project take future maintenance into account? Is there a strategy for maintenance (post-project)? Are local places maintained and sustainably developed by integrating and preserving the built heritage?
- Is there a long-term sustainability strategy for the built solution, if its functionality changes in accordance to changing user needs?
- Does the intervention (or place) show responsible land use and high occupancy?
- Does the intervention support maintaining, developing and amplifying the natural components of the existing environment?
- Does the intervention (or place) provide solutions for the preservation and promotion of biodiversity (genetic, species and ecosystem diversity)?
- Does the intervention (or place) support sustainable mobility?
- Does the intervention use simple and thus durable construction methods, long-living equipment and adequate maintenance needs that consider the 5 Rs: refuse, reduce, repair, reuse, recycle?
- Does the intervention rely on recyclable and/or recycled materials and structures without pollutants, and does it avoid the use of chemical products and other pollution (e.g., light), harmful to the environment and people's health?
- Are the used materials produced locally or nearby or are they transported over a long distance, harming the extended environment through transportation?

#### 4. Economy

- Is the intervention (or place) economically viable over a long-term perspective? Does the intervention enhance the long-term attractiveness of a place as a space for living, working, leisure and/or tourism? Does it make the best use of resources over a long-term perspective, versus short-term gain?
- Does the intervention (or place) demonstrate a high quality of construction with adequate maintenance costs, aiming at a long lifecycle, thus increasing the value of the place?
- Have lifecycle costs been minimised without making concessions in spatial quality? Has an accurate and comprehensive planning of all lifecycle processes been conducted prior to construction in order to achieve the best spatial quality under economically reasonable conditions?
- Does the project control 'overspending'?
- Has cost management for construction, operation and renovation been appropriately considered? Has a renovation cycle, in terms of the frequency of improving a broken, damaged, or outdated structure, been appropriately considered?
- Has a cumulative view of as many cost groups as possible been considered? Have all expenditures related to planning, designing, construction, utilisation, maintenance, and demolition, as well as indirect costs that are necessary to ensure mobility, energy and food production, education, health care and defence, and many other related costs been adequately taken into account?
- Have all relevant collaborative methods that support quality and efficiency been considered in the early stages of the space-creation process?
- Does the solution enhance proximity to diverse (health, recreational, etc.) facilities, commodities, amenities and public services? Does the intervention take advantage of, and improve access to green and open spaces?
- How does it contribute to property values (e.g., indicated by willingness to pay—WTP)?
- Does the economy of design, construction and operation add to the affordability of the place?

## 5. Diversity

- Does the intervention (or place) prevent segregation, gentrification and ghettoization of specific groups in certain areas?
- Do ownership and/or investment models of the place contribute to vibrant and mixed-use neighbourhoods, and help to prevent segregation? Does the intervention, in that sense, encourage diverse ownership structures?
- Does the intervention (or place) promote a mix of uses and users (e.g., by gender, age, ability, origin, etc.) and diverse communities in relation to its functions? Does the intervention (or place) contribute to vibrant and mixed-use neighbourhoods (e.g., housing, working, leisure, etc.) by its characteristics?
- Are post-occupancy studies planned, to measure and monitor user satisfaction and interaction with the place, including interaction rates and quality of stay in private and public spaces?
- Does it create user-friendly spaces, considering the comfort and functional needs related to the use of the space, and solutions that, for instance, can be linked with diverse exercise opportunities, interconnected cycle and pedestrian paths, recreation areas, etc.? Are green and public spaces for diverse uses sufficiently available?
- Does the intervention (or place) promote and provide diverse attractive and comfortable private and public spaces to connect people? Does the intervention (or place) show shared responsibility for private, but more importantly also for public spaces (e.g., through participatory processes, neighbourhood associations, etc.)?
- Does the intervention (or place) promote sustainable living conditions and strengthen social resilience, by creating high-quality, available, affordable and accessible living spaces?
- Is the intervention based on universal design—accessibility for all—principles? Does it make appropriate use of barrier-free design opportunities?

## 6. Context

- Has the context of the place been studied and thoroughly analysed before the intervention? Have local and regional specificities, including cultural heritage, been identified? Are natural and built heritage as well as regional specificities (e.g., unity of built heritage, existing and contemporary creation and landscape qualities) well recognised and preserved, adopted and integrated throughout the intervention? Does the project explicitly recognise cultural heritage as a common good and responsibility?
- Is the project in full conformity with the relevant heritage legislation and regulations? Or does its approval require exemptions? Does the project uphold national and international cultural heritage standards and principles?
- Is it necessary to preserve the historic environment and its cultural heritage for future generations? Will future generations continue to have access to the full richness of the historic environment and its cultural heritage after the intervention, or will some features be lost? If so, is this loss justified by the public benefit, and how will it be perceived or judged by future generations?
- Are local and regional values and the history of communities and individuals respected by the materiality, design, construction and management of the place and transmitted to future generations?
- Is the intervention reversible, if it takes into account only the temporary needs, which may alter over time and thus may make the intervention redundant or unnecessary?
- Is the authenticity and integrity of the cultural heritage/landscape maintained?
- How does the intervention take into account the existing density, building typology, infrastructure, topography and urban grain? Does the intervention correlate at all scales

(from urban and landscape to architectural and detailed design) with the surrounding urban grain, open landscape, colour and materiality?

- Is continued use/adaptive reuse and good maintenance of the existing building stock and built heritage preferred over new construction?
- Does the solution support continued active use of, or find new uses for, objects of heritage value? Considering the historical context, have the nuances of the material and spiritual culture been utilised as important resources and tools?
- Will the intended use respect the characteristics, architectural composition and relevant elements of the existing values of the built environment, including cultural heritage? In other words, is the project respectful of the historic environment and its cultural heritage, in its setting sizes, proportions, spaces, features and materials, as well as (former) uses?
- Are new buildings well integrated into the historic fabric of the adjacent settlement? Does contemporary design (including new constructions, infrastructure, etc.) engage in a respectful dialogue with the surroundings, preserving or enhancing the quality of the place? Is there a balance, harmony and/or controlled dialogue between the cultural heritage and the new elements?

### *7. Sense of place*

- Does the intervention foster place identity, place attachment and thus contribute to a sense of belonging? Does it carry and emphasise local character, distinctiveness and specific identity, which is authentic?
- Is the use compatible with the capacity of the place, maintaining or improving the quality of space as well as the integrity of human life and biodiversity within it?
- Does the intervention (or place) contribute to spatial and social cohesion by creating or enhancing opportunities for social interaction, reinforcing a shared vision of its identities and civic pride?
- Does the intervention create and support aspects of self-identity which involve and are reflected in the environment and its social and personal meanings, comprising of memories, ideas, feelings, attitudes, values, preferences, meanings, and conceptions of and for a place?
- Does the intervention (or place) emphasise the natural and planned or cultural landscape qualities, enhancing place attachment through bonding with nature and the landscape? Do the immediate surroundings of the place contain green spaces that are easily accessible and of high quality?
- Is the project focused on repair and conservation rather than heavy transformation (i.e., involving replacement of authentic materials)?
- Is the authenticity preserved, in particular when the project includes contemporary new design to accommodate (new) uses?

### *8. Beauty*

- Does the design solution have an artistic dimension, in which spatial conformity, the perception of a suitable scale and the sensitive use of materials have a direct positive impact on users' quality of life? Does the solution's (or place's) beauty contribute to people's well-being and life satisfaction? Does the solution (or place) carry specific aesthetic values, with a balance between its formal qualities and the integration in its complex surroundings?
- Does the intervention (or place) have an aesthetic, spatial and atmospheric impact on the user (beholder)? Do the design solutions provide beauty, inspiration, enjoyment and satisfaction for the users?
- Does the project demonstrate the designers' understanding of high-quality built environment, their creativity to find balanced solutions, their knowledge of materials and the attention to detail in their design?

- Does the intervention (or place) show a sensitive design and skilled construction?
- Have the aesthetics of public space been carefully considered?
- Does the design enhance the relationship between place, surroundings and people (users)?
- Does the intervention (or place) make people feel at ease?
- Has the sensory perception of the place been well taken into account, including the visual, acoustic, tactile and olfactory experiences? Have the aesthetic values been well considered, including balance, proportion, symmetry/asymmetry, simplicity/complexity, unity/variety, composition, rhythm, movement, emphasis/contrast, articulation, expression, alignment, materials, scale, transparency/opacity, openness/closedness and authenticity?
- Is there a monitoring process in place to study whether people perceive the solution (place) as beautiful?





## How was the content created

Under the priority “Cohesion and well-being” the Council Work Plan for Culture 2019-2022 established the creation of an Open Method of Coordination (OMC) group of Member States’ experts focusing on High-quality architecture and Built Environment for Everyone. Considering the holistic nature of the topic and to ensure close synergies between architecture experts and experts dealing more broadly with the built environment, spatial planning or regional/sustainable development, Member States were given the possibility to appoint two complementary experts (coming from two different ministries/agencies). In the end, 39 experts were nominated by 23 Member States, plus Switzerland and Norway.<sup>67</sup> The first meeting of the group was held on 18-19 February 2020 in Brussels. The following meetings were held online on 27-28 May 2020, 16 September 2020, 19-20 November 2020, 1-2 March 2021 and 27 May 2021. The group was coordinated by Hughes Becquart (DG EAC) on the side of the European Commission.

At the first meeting Veronika Valk-Siska, adviser for architecture and design at the Estonian Ministry of Culture, was elected Chair of the experts’ group. At the first meeting it was also decided to create sub-groups to focus on the following issues:

1. Architecture quality criteria: led by Oliver Martin (CH)
2. Case studies: led by Milou Joosten (NL), Freek Ingen Housz (NL) and Nicola Matthews (IE)
3. Synergies with relevant EU initiatives: led by Jan Schultheiß (DE)

To create synergies with relevant EU actions, the following initiatives were presented by European Commission officers:

- EU Strategy for a Sustainable Built Environment — Ilektra Papadaki, DG GROW
- Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Partnership on People-centric Sustainable Built Environment – Christof Marx, Senior Project Advisor, Executive Agency for SMEs (EASME)
- Urban Agenda for the EU: Partnership on Culture and Cultural Heritage – Laura Hagemann Arellano, DG REGIO
- EU Horizon Europe Mission for Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities – Giulia Facelli, Policy Officer (DG RTD – Innovating Cities)
- EU Horizon Europe Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change, including Societal Transformation – Philip Kessler, Policy Officer (DG RTD – Climate and Planetary Boundaries)
- Buildings policy of the European Commission - Christiane Gerlach-Scheerer, Master Architect of the European Commission
- EU Renovation Wave initiative – Paula Rey Garcia (DG ENER)
- The New European Bauhaus – Xavier Troussard, Head of EU Policy Lab, Joint Research Centre (JRC)
- Contribution of grassroots initiatives, culture-led social innovation and co-creation towards a quality built environment – Barbara Stacher (DG EAC)

The following external stakeholders were also invited to contribute to the work of the experts’ group:

- Georg Pendl, President of the Architects’ Council of Europe (ACE)
- Anna Ramos, Director of Mies van der Rohe Foundation (organiser of EU Mies Award)
- João Bento, from partner University College London, and Frédéric Saliez, UN-Habitat coordinator of Horizon 2020 project Urban Maestro on urban design governance.
- Bolette Lehn Petersen, Chief Senior Advisor, Agency for Culture and Palaces (to present the Danish architectural policy)

---

<sup>67</sup> UK did not appoint any expert, so the UK is not covered in the report, but relevant UK policies and good practice are referred to where useful.

To follow up on the synergy-mapping made by the subgroup “synergies” and to establish dialogues with the most relevant EU frameworks and policies, the following meetings were held:

- Horizon Europe: Meeting with RTD.D.3 deputy head of unit Maria Kayamanidou and her colleagues, EAC colleague Mariachiara Esposito to discuss the New European Bauhaus/architecture topic to be added to the 2022 work programme of Cluster 2.
- DG REGIO: Meeting with Iulia-Mirela Serban (assistant to the DG), Laura Hagemann Arellano and Aleksandra Jankovska to discuss architectural quality criteria and how to reflect/mainstream them in Cohesion funds documents and guidelines. The draft Davos Quality System Tool was then shared with them.
- New European Bauhaus: meeting with Xavier Troussard and his team to discuss
  - o the Davos Baukultur Quality System Tool (presented by Oliver Martin)
  - o the role of State architects/bouwmeesters in presence of the Irish (Ciaran O’Connor) and Swedish (Helena Bjarnegård) State Architects, the Dutch (Floris Alkemade), Flemish (Eric Wieërs) and Brussels (Kristiaan Borret) bouwmeesters, a representative of the city of Vienna (Bettina Nezval), the Master Architect of the European Commission (Christiane Gerlach-Scheerer) and the OMC Chair.

#### Drafting the report

The core drafting team was made up of the Chair, the subgroup leaders and Evane Brou. Regular editorial meetings were held in presence of the Commission from March 2021 onwards. Substantial contributions to the report were also made by Estanislau Vidal-Foch de Balanz ...to be continued

The drafting team could count on the support of an expert from the European Experts Network on Culture (EENC), Martin Steinmetz, who helped to ensure clear and consistent language while facilitating the online publication and communication strategy.

#### Publication and dissemination of the report

The OMC group opted for an online publication to ensure an attractive, ecological and flexible dissemination of the report findings. An html-based website was therefore set up by the Publications Office of the European Union. A pdf version of the report and of the executive summaries (in English, French and German) also exist.

The OMC Closing Conference entitled “**Building** Europe, towards a Culture of High-Quality Architecture and Built Environment for Everyone” was organised by the Austrian Ministry of Arts, Culture, Civil Service and Sport in Graz on 6 October 2021. It was held back-to-back with the European Conference on Architectural Policies organised by the Slovenian Association of Architects in Maribor on 8 October 2021.

To reach out to local and regional decision-makers across Europe, the OMC report and relevant case studies were presented at a workshop during the European Week of Regions and Cities in October 2021, jointly with the Architects’ Council of Europe and the Spanish region of Navarra.

In terms of policy, the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the EU in the 2d half of 2021 built on the OMC process and report to propose Council Conclusions on high-quality architecture and built environment as one of the main pillars of the New European Bauhaus (to be adopted in November 2021). This should ensure a lasting legacy to the work of the OMC group and help Member States to take ownership of the results and follow up on the recommendations.

#### A note on terminology

Different terms are used, in linguistic diversity, for the same holistic concept. The Davos Declaration 2018 introduced the German term *Baukultur*. This report is using, according to the mandate of the OMC group, “high-quality architecture and built environment”. Others have translated *Baukultur* as “building culture”. Furthermore, a variety of terms is used all over Europe, namely in national policies, often linked to architecture or urban planning (or development), to express this same concern of a comprehensive, quality-driven way of shaping our built environment. Additionally, a Glossary is provided in an Annex.

