

WHAT IS ARCH-E?

Architectural Design Competitions (ADCs) have long been a cornerstone of high-quality, innovative, and sustainable design. They offer a fair, transparent, and competitive process to deliver exceptional architectural solutions for both public and private projects. However, national frameworks and limited information-sharing have often hindered broader participation, especially across borders. This results in missed opportunities for architects—particularly emerging talent from Small or Mid-sized enterprises (SMEs), female architects and young professionals.



Among the highly qualified professions architectural offices tend to operate in relatively small organisational forms compared to other branches. 92% of architects work in offices with a maximum of 5 staff members, with a clear majority of 68% of practices that are one-person-offices. (ACE Sector Study, 2024) These SMEs predominantly work regionally, with in-depth background knowledge of their clients' architectural requirements and regional construction methods with sustainable effects. This represents significant potential both economically and intellectually.

The Creative Europe Project ARCH-E is designed to foster an accessible and quality-oriented ADC culture by supporting architects to participate in (ADCs) abroad, by facilitating knowledge transfer among architects chambers and by raising awareness for the importance of an open ADC landscape on a political level. ARCH-E was initiated and is realised by consortium of 10 partners and many cooperation partners and projects. The architects' chambers and other professional organisations working together in ARCH-E, reach 560.000 architects across Europe. The project's research is led by the Technische Universiteit Eindhoven and the Universitat Politècnica de València and accompanied by the valuable contributions of partners and cooperation partners. The project is co-funded by the European Union.

ARCH-E seeks to empower architects from all over Europe to engage in ADCs more frequently. The project aims to provide key insights, resources, and digital tools that will contribute to fair competitive conditions and ensure that the process of architectural procurement is not only more transparent but also more quality-oriented and sustainable. Among the key activities of the project is research about country-specific differences between ADC systems and about obstacles hindering architects to participate in ADCs. A comprehensive, Europe-wide survey conducted by one of ARCH-E's partners, the Universitat Politècnica de València gathered valuable data for further developing support for architects.

The exchange of ideas and expertise across borders can fuel innovative solutions, inspire creative thinking, and bring new perspectives to architectural projects, ultimately enriching the built environment for everyone. By connecting experts in the field of ADCs, be it architects, jury members, ADC organisers and clients the ARCH-E network hopes to contribute to a quality-oriented ADC culture.

The idea of spreading knowledge is deeply interconnected to the purpose of accessibility of ARCH-E. Smaller architecture firms as well as emerging architects face challenges when it comes to participating in competitions (such as turnover thresholds). ARCH-E's efforts for more accessible ADC procedures, have consequently positive effects on economic aspects as well as Baukultur and public procurement.

Additionally, the project is deeply committed to sustainability—not just in the buildings architects create, but in the way new concepts and ideas for the built environment are formulated and selected for realisation. By fostering more transparent and accessible competition procedures, ARCH-E is helping to create a greener, more resilient future for European architecture, integrating the values of the New European Bauhaus and in line with the principles of the New Green Deal.

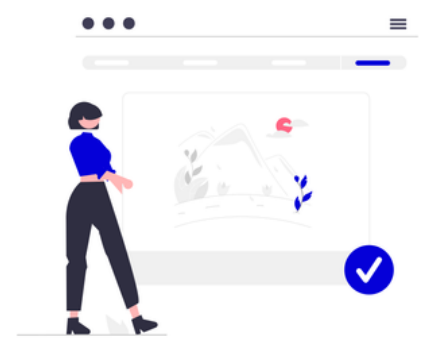
ARCH-E INNOVATIVE TOOLS

ARCH-E's Website serves as a platform providing helpful information and tools for architects on the European landscape of architectural design competitions (ADCs).

The **interactive ADC map** offers a guide to country-specific ADC regulations, links to the relevant institutions, information on professional qualification criteria and other sources in each partner country.

The **ARCH-E Glossary** provides essential definitions and insights into the country-specific ADC systems, and an **evaluation tool** facilitates evaluating the potentials and possible risks of participating in a specific ADC.

The **ARCH-E Network** brings together architectural professionals from across Europe and beyond, creating a dynamic platform to offer and find expertise for cross-border ADCs, as professionals, ADC organiser, jury member, ADC consultant. By engaging in discussions, analysing Architectural Design Competitions (ADCs), the future of ADCs could be shaped navigating together existing challenges. As an expert, you can also join ARCH-E's stakeholder pool, contributing to raising awareness about the significance of architectural design competitions in today's built environment.



The **ARCH-E Map on ADCs** offers a comprehensive overview of Architectural Design Competition systems across Europe. Country profiles—featuring Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Slovenia, South Tyrol, Spain, Switzerland, and the Netherlands—provide valuable statistical data, insights into regulatory frameworks, and current trends shaping the national ADC landscapes.

In addition, the map presents expert insights and recommendations alongside a comparative analysis of the ADC systems studied.

A curated collection of good practices showcases exemplary approaches to themes such as accessibility, sustainable design, quality-oriented decision processes, and fairness in competition culture.

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Co-authors | Country specific information and expertise contributed by the consortium members of ARCH-E

The **ARCH-E Map on ADCs** is available in seven languages.

The **ARCH-E Architects' Needs Report**: In order to examine the barriers architects face when participating in international ADCs, ARCH-E has conducted a survey designed to uncover challenges and identify solutions for a more accessible ADC landscape.

All data collected will be made available on the ARCH-E website, contributing to an ongoing dialogue and a more inclusive future for architectural competitions.

Based on the collected data from 1290 replies, Eva M. Álvarez Isidro and Carlos J. Gómez Alfonso, UPV - Universitat Politècnica de València, and their team analysed the potentials, risks and hurdles architects in Europe are encountering when participating in cross-border architectural design competitions (ADCs). The resulting Architects' Needs Report further deepens ARCH-E's research efforts. The report assesses experiences, challenges, and opportunities related to ADCs. A special focus of the report is on Small and Mid-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and/or female architects. As these hurdles are closely linked to country-specific ADC systems, the report analyses the data both on a European level as well as on a national level when disaggregated data is available.

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Contributors | Country specific information, expertise and support in implementing the survey was contributed by all consortium members of ARCH-E.

Read the **ARCH-E Architects' Needs Report here**.

The **ARCH-E Glossary** offers an in-depth guide to the unique language of architectural competition procedures across Europe. With 190 terms drawn from 11 different countries, the glossary provides insights into regional characteristics and practices in the specific competition landscape.

The terms are not simple translations but individual descriptions of local competition practices, allowing users to compare different approaches. With around 1,000 definitions and continuous updates, this growing resource is a collaborative effort involving all ARCH-E partners and will be continuously updated and currently extended to other languages and ADC systems in Europe.

We recommend trying out the **ARCH-E Glossary's functions online**.

The **ARCH-E ADC Evaluation Tool** offers a simple yet effective way to analyse an architectural design competition from the perspective of architects or clients. By answering a few questions, the potentials and weaknesses of an ADC procedure can be assessed — helping architects to avoid investing time and expertise in problematic ADCs and supporting procurers to improve their procedures. The evaluation system takes into account the Architects' Council of Europe's 9 rules for ADCs as well as principles the ARCH-E consortium has defined essential for fair and transparent ADC procedures.

For further understanding of this tool, **we recommend trying it here** .

The ARCH-E consortium used previous research activities and intensive knowledge transfer on country-specific competition systems and cross-border architectural competitions, in which problems as well as potentials of the current European competition culture were identified, as the basis for formulating the **ARCH-E White Paper**. It contains recommendations for improving the competition culture at European and national levels of the respective project partners and a data analysis that highlights the economic potential of architectural competitions.

The recommendations focus on the one hand, on removing hurdles and barriers for small and medium-sized enterprises. 68% of all architectural firms in Europe are one-person businesses, 13% have only two employees, and a further 11% are no larger than five people. These SMEs provide the basis of regional socio-economic ecosystems of the planning and construction sector and represent significant potential both economically and intellectually. Opening competition procedures to this innovative potential would at the same time help to reduce the still prevailing gender pay gap, as significantly more female architects work in small offices rather than large ones.

On the other hand, the ARCH-E White Paper analyses considerable economic potential that competitions offer compared to negotiated procedures and other procedures in public procurement. ADCs can help find architectural design solutions based on qualitative criteria that can be up to 18% more economically advantageous compared with other forms of procurement.

We recommend reading the **ARCH-E White Paper here**.

Project Partners:

- Bundeskammer der Ziviltechniker:innen | Arch + Ing
- Architects Council of Europe
- Hrvatska komora arhitekata (Croatian Chamber of Architects)
- Zbornica za arhitekturo in prostor Slovenije (Chamber of Architecture and Spatial Planning of Slovenia)
- Cyprus Architects Association
- Bundesarchitektenkammer (BAK - Federal Chamber of German Architects)
- Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e)
- Universitat Politècnica de València (UPV)
- SEPA Engineering GmbH
- Magyar Építész Kamara (Chamber of Hungarian Architects)

Cooperation Partners:

- International Union of Architects (UIA)
- Ordine degli Architetti, P.P.C. della Provincia di Bolzano (Chamber of Architects in South Tyrol)
- Conseil National de l'Ordre des Architectes (French Order of Architects)
- Czech Chamber of Architects
- Swiss Society of Engineers and Architects

Project Partners



Cooperation Partners



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