

Government of the Republic of Croatia

To: Mr. Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister

cc: Mr. Branko Bačić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Physical Planning,
Construction and State Assets

Ms. Rajka Bunjevac, Croatian Chamber of Architects, President

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Dear Prime Minister,

The Architects' Council is informed that all spatial and master plans for cities and municipalities in Croatia designate specific locations for which open architectural competitions are required in order to be able to apply for a building permit and subsequently undertake construction.

We understand that this requirement exists for significant urban locations, important types of public buildings and complex heritage sites. Spatial and urban master plans have been adopted after long and complex procedures, prepared by the planning specialists, and have also been pre-checked by the Ministry of Physical Planning, Construction and State Assets itself before coming in the force.

The Republic of Croatia has a 150-year long tradition of holding public architectural competitions for important interventions in space that have significantly influenced the quality of the built environment. Such a rare tradition has contributed greatly to the planned and balanced development of Croatian cities and regions as well as to the overall architectural quality of buildings over the last century.

However, it appears that the Ministry has now decided to adopt a narrow interpretation of a provision from the Spatial Planning Law, basically restricting public competitions to sites that are owned by cities or municipalities and designated exclusively for public use, while excluding critical national infrastructure and all new buildings and interventions that would be located on privately owned land.

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

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

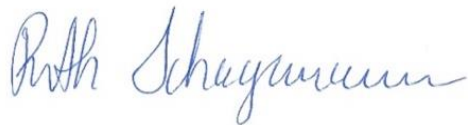
Competitions offer multiple benefits to clients, competitors and society including quality, innovation, flexibility, cost efficiency, public participation, equal opportunity and creativity.

There are many possible competition forms and procedures. However, regardless of the chosen form and procedures, the combination of a *good design brief*, *good procedures* and a *good jury* guarantees a *good result*. We also draw your attention to the Architects' Council of Europe policies dedicated to promoting the practice of architectural design competitions, which are supported by 51 ACE Member Organisations representing more than 620,000 architects from 35 European countries.¹

The action taken by the Croatian Ministry for Physical Planning, Construction and State Assets is likely to significantly reduce the number of open architectural competitions in Croatia, and furthermore, will impact negatively on the architectural quality of the built environment, not to mention public involvement and the transparency of procedures.

We deplore this action, which is at variance with the recent trajectory of the Davos Declaration - Davos Quality Principles or the European Union's "Towards a shared culture of Architecture" report – and we urge the Croatian Ministry to reverse this policy.

Yours sincerely,



Ruth Schagemann
President
Architects' Council of Europe

¹ <https://www.ace-cae.eu/practice-of-the-profession/architectural-design-competitions-adc/policy-positions/>