

Report from the Meeting of the European Directors for Architectural Policies (EDAP)

Adapting Urban Areas
to Progressive Climate Change

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01

Introduction

The meeting of the European Directors for Architectural Policies (EDAP) in Gdańsk constituted one of the elements of the Polish Presidency of the Council of the European Union. The meeting aimed not only to continue the work initiated by previous presidencies, but above all to exchange good practices concerning the architectural and construction policies of the EU Member States.

The event brought together delegates from European countries, representatives of the European Commission and key experts in the field of architecture. The choice of Gdańsk as the venue was symbolic – the city, with its history of solidarity and contemporary challenges related to revitalisation and flood protection, constituted an ideal case study for modern

02

Welcome and Opening Remarks: Responding to Global Challenges

The meeting began with speeches by invited guests who emphasised the role of architecture in public safety and public health.

Mr Krzysztof Paszyk, Minister of Economic Development and Technology, presented the position that high-quality architecture is a public service of strategic importance. He pointed out that climate change forces us to abandon short-term gains in favour of long-term resilience. Referring to data on the potential cost of climate inaction (7% of EU GDP), he argued that the state has a duty to safeguard architectural standards that protect the lives and property of citizens. He stated that well-designed buildings and public spaces directly translate into the mental and physical well-being of citizens.

Mr Piotr Grzelak – Deputy Mayor of the City of Gdańsk – welcomed the participants to Gdańsk, emphasising the city's identity as the cradle of freedom. He indicated that contemporary Gdańsk is a 'thriving' city, which in urban planning terminology denotes dynamic development but also growing tensions between development needs and environmental protection. The related urban planning solutions must be the result of social dialogue. He described the presence of experts from across Europe as an opportunity to find answers to questions concerning the balance between modernity and heritage, as well as the city's resilience to climate change, which is particularly important for a port city.



Kunstsz Wodny, fot. Dominik Paszliński, mat. gdansk.pl

Mr Normunds Popens, Deputy Director-General, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (EAC), representing the European Commission, emphasised the importance of the New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative as a bridge between science, technology and culture. He pointed out that high-quality architecture must become accessible to everyone rather than remaining the domain of luxury projects. He noted that architecture must respond to the needs of an ageing society and excluded groups, combining aesthetics with the circular economy. The European Commission sees the EDAP format as a key link connecting the European vision with the administrative practice of Member States.

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Public Procurement as a Tool for Quality

In accordance with the agenda, the first substantive part of the meeting concerned a summary of the activities of the EDAP group in the field of public procurement, continuing themes from the Belgian Presidency.

The discussion was based on Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement, repealing Directive 2004/18/EC, with particular emphasis on barriers occurring in its application. Experts pointed out that legislative processes in Member States often favour the lowest price due to the ease with which it can be audited, which should be considered an erroneous approach in the context of architecture. Wider use of architectural competitions and the evaluation of tenders based on Life Cycle Cost (LCC) were proposed, allowing the costs of operation as well as the potential demolition or renovation of a building in the future to be taken into account.



04

The Future of the EDAP Format

The most extensive segment of the discussion conducted during the meeting concerned the evolution of the EDAP group itself. Participants critically analysed the existing framework of cooperation.

4.1. From Informality to Political Influence

The existing EDAP format had been perceived as a valuable yet informal platform for knowledge exchange. In Gdańsk, a strong call was voiced for the professionalisation and institutionalisation of the group's activities.

It was noted that the EDAP agenda depends too heavily on the priorities of a given presidency. The creation of a 'Permanent EDAP Secretariat' or a structure ensuring substantive continuity between presidencies was proposed, which would make it possible to conduct multi-year research and legislative projects.

It was proposed that the EDAP format should aim to develop solutions intended to recognise the role of EDAP as an advisory body that could provide opinions on EU initiatives concerning, among others, energy efficiency or waste management.

4.2. The Relationship between EDAP and the New European Bauhaus (NEB)

The debate on the future of the format was inseparably linked with the NEB. Directors considered whether EDAP should become the 'executive arm' of the NEB at the governmental level.

It was indicated that the NEB provides ideas and vision ('Beautiful, Sustainable, Together'), while EDAP enables the implementation of these ideas within national frameworks through appropriate administrative and legal instruments (building regulations, planning guidelines). Thus, EDAP could play the role of a 'translator' of NEB ideas into the language of concrete state regulations.

4.3. Summary

At the conclusion of the discussion, representatives of Ireland summarised the debate. They emphasised that, in view of the 'EU Work Plan for Culture 2023–2026' coming to an end in 2026, it is necessary to reflect on the future of EDAP. In their view, the future of EDAP must be linked to increasing the visibility of the group; attention should also be given to how architectural solutions can be communicated externally so that they are understandable and accepted not only by experts but also by the wider public.

05

High-Quality Architecture on the Political Agenda

This session focused on how to persuade political decision-makers at national and local levels to invest in quality.

It was agreed that the argument convincing to decision-makers is not always the beauty of architecture but its 'resilience'. It was emphasised that high-quality architecture will reduce the impact of climate change on quality of life while also limiting costly repairs throughout the life cycle of buildings.

Participants agreed on the importance of the quality criteria contained in the Davos Declaration and the need to incorporate them at the national level with regard to public buildings.





06

Martina Juvara: People – Places – Global Outcomes

The afternoon session consisted of presentations and workshops referring to the main theme of the meeting, namely adapting urban areas to progressive climate change.

It began with a presentation by Ms Martina Juvara (Director URBAN Silence/ISOCARP Scientific Committee) – People – Places – Global Outcomes. Her presentation constituted a call for a radical shift in the planning paradigm.

She pointed out that European countries are characterised by a high level of urbanisation which, combined with developed economies, makes the decarbonisation of cities essential. Although this assumption is generally accepted, due to growing pressure on expenditure and international uncertainty it is increasingly being questioned.

She presented an overview of various international approaches to decarbonisation and transformation in urban neighbourhoods resulting from recent commitments undertaken under the UNFCCC (the 2025 Nationally Determined Contributions) and discussed pilot projects at the city level and other initiatives related to climate and resilience.



07

Katarzyna Zielonko-Jung: Climate Change as a Challenge for Architectural Design and Urban Planning

Next, Dr Katarzyna Zielonko-Jung, PhD, DSc. Eng. in architecture, discussed the challenges faced by architects due to progressive climate change.

She analysed the problem of overly dense development, which prevents proper air circulation in cities and creates urban heat islands. Participants agreed that it is necessary to introduce minimum standards for 'biologically active surface area', not only in percentage terms but also in functional terms (e.g. the capacity for water retention).

In her presentation she emphasised that architecture cannot focus solely on adapting to climate change but should also contribute to its mitigation. Buildings must not only emit less CO₂ but also protect residents from the consequences of changes that can no longer be avoided.



08

Monika Arczyńska: Workshop – Cost or Benefit – How to Talk About Sustainable Solutions in Cities?

At the end of the substantive session, workshops were conducted by Dr Monika Arczyńska focusing on strategies for communicating sustainable solutions to investors and local communities.

The workshop resulted in the refutation of the claim that ecological solutions are costly. It was emphasised that proper design taking into account the appropriate orientation of the building, the correct arrangement of glazing and the use of natural ventilation are decisions that do not generate additional costs at the construction stage yet bring significant savings during operation.

The workshops demonstrated that giving up part of the usable floor area in favour of high-quality greenery and water retention ultimately increases the market value of the entire development and reduces the costs of maintaining urban infrastructure.

09

Conclusion

The meeting in Gdańsk confirmed that the EDAP format is evolving towards becoming a strategic centre of architectural thought within the European Union. However, it remains necessary to develop solutions that will ensure the continuity of activities undertaken within the format.

The proceedings concluded with the announcement of the next meeting, which will take place within the framework of the Danish Presidency in November 2025 in Copenhagen.

