

Introduction to the Austrian ADC system and potentials of transferability

WP3, D3.1, D10

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1. Introduction

The Federal Chamber of Architects and Chartered Engineering Consultants (BKZT) is the umbrella organization for the four regional Chambers in Austria, in which the professionals are members. All authorized Architects and Chartered Engineering Consultants in Austria have to be member in a regional Chamber. As Chartered Engineering Consultants are active in over 160 different branches of Engineering this is a broad professional coverage. All Chambers are corporate bodies of public law and are represented by honorary elected professionals (election every 4 years). They are divided in two sections, one for Architects and one for Chartered Engineering Consultants and have different expert groups and committees. Professional regulations as well as regulations about the structure, the rights and obligations of the Chamber and its bodies are part of a Federal Law (Ziviltechnikergesetz).

The main features of the competition system in Austria are regulated in the Federal Procurement Act (BVerG). In particular, it states that the organization of competitions must be based on competition rules. The BVerG does not contain any detailed specifications in this regard. Resulting from that some architecture specific questions are not defined in detail, necessitating additional efforts to guarantee an ADC system most appropriate to achieve a high level of architectural quality, organizational transparency and economic efficiency. The tools listed below seem most suitable to be adapted in other countries in order to advocate for ADCs in general and desirable frameworks especially.

2. BKZT's tools to maintain and improve architectural design competition standards in Austria

2.1. Procurement platform - www.architekturwettbewerb.at

"Architekturwettbewerb.at" is a supporting tool for architects and public and private clients with the aim of simplifying, improving and thus enhancing the use of Architectural Design Competitions as a mean to support design and co-creation for more sustainable building and planning processes. Thus, it is an important instrument for architectural quality (Baukultur). The platform was initialized in 2007 and is financed by the Austrian Federal Chamber of Architects and Chartered Engineering Consultants.

The platform provides an up-to-date overview of upcoming and ongoing proceedings. Additionally, it offers transparency regarding information on the ADCs, including the minutes of the jury, and all available information is publicly accessible.

In addition, the Website is offering a broad variety of communication tools for all involved players in the competition process and the public.

The platform's main functions include:

- **The announcement of published tenders**

Current architectural competitions and other procedures are announced, using data from the clients' public announcements. The chambers develop, record and maintain this data so that [architekturwettbewerb.at](https://www.architekturwettbewerb.at) always provides an up-to-date overview of upcoming and ongoing proceedings.

- **Evaluation of the procurement procedures**

The regionally competent Chambers of Architects and Chartered Engineers with their specialized competition committees evaluate the legal and quality assurance standards of the procurement documents that are published. These evaluations lead to the award of different categories of procedural quality (red, yellow and green note) and help public and private clients to improve- based on the evaluation feedback - their procedures in order to get the best possible results for their projects. They also provide orientation for participating architects and help them to decide about risks and benefits of a participation. The evaluation is based on the "Competition Standard for Architecture" published by the Federal Chamber of Architects and Chartered Engineering Consultants.

Procedures carried out in cooperation with the chamber are marked and certified separately with the "green note" which provides an important orientation for participating architects.

- **The documentation of procedures**

Competitions are documented with submitted projects including the winning schemes and the realization of the winning project and is added to an archive dating back to 2007. The documentation of the realizations is provided in cooperation with <https://www.nextroom.at/>. Statistical analysis of the documented procedures allows authorized users to detect trends and developments only in an additional backend interface.

- **The building documentation**

Buildings resulting from procedures that cannot be documented by "nextroom – architektur im netz" are recorded by the chambers.

- **The analysis of the procedures**

Fully anonymized statistics on the frequency of use of competitions and the type of the accomplished competitions represent an efficient tool to further develop competitions in the future.

2.2. Influence on ADCs by advising the clients on cooperation procedures and by sending expert jury members

Certification criteria for an architectural competition in cooperation with the Chamber of Architects and Chartered Engineering Consultants

The BKZT offers to consult (public) clients on the form, procedure and composition of the expert jury of ADCs. The "Wettbewerbsstandard Architektur - WSA 2010", competition rules developed

by the BKZT, defines the criteria for cooperation between the chambers and the commissioners of competitions. The essential requirements for a just and fair competition, from which one can expect to obtain the best solution for the advertised design task, include:

- Clear definition of procedural rules in accordance with the competition rules (WSA 2010 - Part B)
- Anonymity of the participating planning teams until after the jury's decision
- Independence of the jury
- Composition of a jury that is independent of the client and based on subject-specific criteria
- Setting of an appropriate amount of prize money or corresponding compensation for expenses
- Low-threshold participation criteria
- A balanced ratio of effort and risk through a corresponding declaration of intent to award a planning contract in the subsequent negotiation process.

2.3. Wettbewerbsstandard Architektur

Beyond being an internal Leitbild the WSA 2010 is an important guideline for private and public clients and functions as a tool advocating ADCs, by offering orientation on how to organize and structure ADCs.

The WSA's core values are defined as follows: Architectural design competitions (ADC) are an important tool for the (public) procurement of architectural services. They provide a quality-based procedure leading to optimized solutions for each planning project. For architects it is an important way of accessing the market and strengthen their market position.

Advocating the open ADC

In the WSA the open competition is recommended to be the standard procedure of the ADC. It provides a variety of different design concepts for the planning task, shows the entire range of possible solutions for the task and thus makes maximum use of the potential that the competition offers for deciding design questions. The open ADC is aimed at an unlimited number of eligible participants who will be invited to submit competition works when the competition is published. Openness in the sense of a low-threshold opportunity for architects to participate is crucial for the quality of the competition results and should be promoted with appropriate framework conditions.

The advantages that give the open ADC a special status compared to other procedures are:

- Density of information: With active participation, the contributions to an open ADC represent an overall cross-section of expert opinions on the planning task at hand. They provide the client with an overview of possible solutions and thus help to clarify expectations, further decision-making processes, variants, etc.
- Objectification: The comparative discussion of the competition entries in the jury achieves a particularly convincing level due to the number and diversity of the planning concepts. However,

due to the anonymity of the participating planning teams, the discussion of intellectual and creative arguments remains consciously within the framework of the professional criteria set out in the competition rules.

The exchange of different opinions in the assessment process is thus embedded in the logic of the competition system and becomes comprehensible. The client can rely on the jury's arguments in all further decisions.

- Sociopolitical relevance: Architects submit planning services in open ADCs in a way that would never be the case in any other procurement process. The socio- and cultural-political added value is given democratic legitimacy and relevance by delegating the assessment process to an independent jury. The openness of access to ADCs is not only an advantage for people and institutions that have to decide and be responsible for processes relevant to the public, but is actually a postulate in the context of fundamental social values such as participation, equal treatment and transparency. At the same time, the principle of the best project, with its fundamental claim to innovation, formulates an approach on how challenges for society as a whole can be addressed and solved.

3. Transferability

3.1 Transfer of knowledge and experience

architekturwettbewerb.at is a multifunctional tool that has considerably raised the awareness and the technical knowledge about Architectural Design Competitions in procuring authorities and for participating architects in Austria. It is also a reference book as well as a constantly available online-exhibition with Best -Practice examples. Architectural Design Competitions are important for many European countries, even though the procuring frameworks and levels of experience are very different. Stakeholders in other countries therefore have a strong interest in gathering knowledge about ADCs. They can easily access the information from the platform.

3.2 Transfer of the quality assurance system (note-system)

The Austrian ADC evaluation system (red-green-yellow note) provides clear and easily understandable orientation for architects and public procuring authorities and supports the improvement of the procedures. Beyond being a helpful evaluation tool for architects considering to participate in specific ADCs, the note-system is a concise communication system, making problems visible and therefore is a useful element in political advocating towards optimum ADC conditions.

3.3 Transfer of the technical infrastructure supporting architekturwettbewerb.at

The ADC database is also a backend communication tool. With the latest relaunch communication functions have been improved in several ways, e.g. it became easier to select users with new filter functions and direct correspondence via the platform became possible. A dashboard facilitates communication between users and there is a possibility to comment on PDF documents with an activity log. The creation and graphical display of statistics became possible as well as the saving and exporting of search results.

3.4 Networking at European level / Cross-border ADC

As the ADC platform with its different functions has proved to be interesting for stakeholders in other countries as well, it is possible to take over the tool by contract with the BKZT and adapt it to national requirements (client-system). The first organization to do

so was the Bavarian Chamber of Architects, which means that the first transfer experiences have already been made.

3.5 WSA as template for other national guidelines

As described above the Wettbewerbsstandard Architektur is a compilation of recommendations and specifications concerning the organization and structure of ADCs. Its editorial outline can function as a template for other national architectural organizations to articulate and structure their recommendations and standards regarding ADCs. Adaptations like that could function as elements in advocating ADCs.