

UIA World Congress of Architects Barcelona 2026 will analyse the capacity of architecture to transform reality over time

From this year until 2026, the curatorial team, together with an extensive network of collaborators of great national and international prestige, will turn Barcelona and its metropolitan area into an architectural research laboratory whose results will be presented during the Congress, which will be held from June 28 to July 2, 2026.

The Congress will have its main research location in Barcelona and will also develop research in other environments – national and international – to enrich the proposals and the debate.

The proposal was presented in an event that included the participation of the Minister of Housing and Urban Agenda, the Mayor of Barcelona, the Regional Minister of the Generalitat of Catalonia, the vice president of region I of the International Union of Architects (UIA), the president of the Higher Council of Colleges of Architects of Spain and the dean of the College of Architects of Catalonia (COAC).

Barcelona, January 17

The World Congress of Architects of the International Union of Architects (UIA), taking place in Barcelona in 2026, will present to the world six lines of research on the capacity to transform reality through architecture. This is the ambitious objective of **'Becoming. Architectures for a planet in transition'**, the winning proposal of the unprecedented competition for the curatorship of the World Congress, which was awarded in December and of which the architects **Pau Bajet, Mariona Benedito, Maria Giramé, Tomeu Ramis, Pau Sarquella, Carmen Torres and José Zabala** are the authors.

With an extensive professional and research career behind them, the curators of the UIA World Architecture Congress Barcelona 2026 have outlined the proposal in an institutional event, **held at the headquarters of the Architects' Association of Catalonia (COAC)**, which included the interventions of the Minister of Housing and Urban Agenda, **Isabel Rodríguez García**; the mayor of Barcelona, **Jaume Collboni Cuadrado**; the Minister of Territory of the Generalitat of Catalonia, **Ester Capella i Farré**; the vice president of the International Union of Architects, **Teresa Táboas Veleiro**; the president of the Higher Council of the Orders of Architects of Spain (CSCAE), **Marta Vall-Ilossera Ferran**; and the dean of the Architects' Association of Catalonia, **Guillem Costa Calsamiglia**.

Architectural research and praxis

The project will focus on research through the architectural project and will have *time* as its thematic axis, understood as *becoming*, that is, as a vector of change and transition. The main motto 'Becoming' will be declined in six lines of research, which will be curated by the team *Becoming*, with an extensive and international group of invited collaborators and whose conclusions will be presented throughout the Congress, between June 28 and July 2, 2026. As the team has explained: "**The gestures of *becoming* are careful, attentive and supportive and carry with them material, political, ecological and poetic interrelations that lead us to incredible and open perspectives.**"

The following six lines of research, which include elements so linked to current events such as circularity or interdependence, are as follow:

1. BECOMING BEYOND-HUMAN

¿How may we stimulate deeper awareness and action to take care of planetary human and nonhuman coexistence?

2. BECOMING ATTUNED

What forms of meaning, ethics and aesthetics may we engage within our everyday practice?

3. BECOMING EMBODIED

How may our values and desires be embedded in the transitions from matter to constructional delight?

4. BECOMING INTERDEPENDENT

How can we embrace conflict, empathy, solidarity and care as keys for enhanced, civic interpersonal relationships?

5. BECOMING HYPER-CONSCIOUS

Which tools and actions may we acquire to experience a hyperawareness of our territory to catalyse changes in our ways of living?

6. BECOMING CIRCULAR

Within post-extractivist and proximity policies of circularity, what shall be the form of territorial production and reproduction?

Barcelona as an architectural research laboratory

Barcelona, along with possible extensions to other environments, will become an architectural research laboratory with the aim that the World Congress of Architects will not only be of maximum relevance and interest to the global community of architects, but that, from its conclusions, knowledge and practices of real impact on the daily lives of people, and the future of the planet, will be derived.

Complementing the main research, the World Congress envisages, among its activities, an international competition and a workshop, both aimed at architecture students; conferences and debates, as well as many other side events. From all of this the central events of the Congress will emerge, in addition to different exhibitions and a catalog with the results of the six lines of research, which will precede the three days of the Congress, to encourage productive debate.

A Congress distributed along Barcelona's coast

The curatorial team proposes the coastline of the Barcelona metropolis as the venue for the international meeting with the intention of **"showing how the geographical framework of the congress participates in the geopolitical framework that the Mediterranean Sea represents, showing Barcelona as a Mediterranean city in constant transformation, which crystallizes the idea of the city's own construction over time."**

This highly complex strip, which houses the essential infrastructure for the metropolis, is called to take on some of the contemporary challenges of global interest, such as vulnerability to climate change, mass tourism or migratory fluctuations, among others.

A unique event to make architecture, architects and the city of Barcelona visible

"I think, celebrating this World Congress of Architects and understanding how architecture can transform reality also over time – time understood as a vector of change – seems to be a very successful approach. But above all **I am interested in how architecture will allow us to face many challenges that we have before us to improve people's lives**, which is ultimately what we are seeking, those of us dedicated to public service," stressed the **Minister of Housing and Urban Agenda, Isabel Rodríguez**, during her speech.

Barcelona's mayor, Jaume Collboni, remarks the great pride for Barcelona in being the first city in the world to host for the second time the most important event in the architecture sector, and highlights how the curatorship was chosen through an international competition. "Today's Barcelona and Catalan architecture is a top-level international reference," Collboni emphasizes, adding that the Congress and the World Capital of Architecture 2026 are unbeatable opportunities to "turn the city into the center of global architectural debate."

For her part, the Minister of Territory, Ester Capella, valued that **"the Congress stimulates the whole of Catalonia to be an international reference in the search for solutions to contemporary social, climatic and technological challenges, from the perspective of architecture."** And she wanted to underline as well how **"being the international epicenter of the global architectural and urban planning debate is a great opportunity and also a great responsibility"**.

In her turn to speak, the vice president of the International Union of Architects, Teresa Táboas, declared that "together, we can achieve a more balanced and sustainable future for the planet and humanity; and the UIA Congress in Barcelona will, without a doubt, be a global milestone for debate, collective reflection, and the search for solutions."

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In addition to thanking the institutional collaboration in the Congress, the **president of CSCAE, Marta Vall-Ilossera**, has valued that, with today's presentation, the work of the curatorship begins, "which is key - she said - for the **definition of the contents that the Congress will leave us as a legacy**, and to propose a **necessary process of reflection around the formats and themes of Architecture Congresses** in order that they serve to identify and address the challenges of architecture at all times, **give visibility to its capacity in improving the quality of life of people and opening to an encounter with the citizenship."**

The **dean of COAC, Guillem Costa Calsamiglia**, has highlighted the Congress' importance "as a space to showcase the **fundamental role of architecture** as a discipline capable of **transforming the environment by assuming the challenges of our times and improving the quality of life of people** who inhabit our towns and cities."

An unprecedented curatorial competition in the history of the UIA

'Becoming. Architectures for a planet in transition' is the winning proposal of an unprecedented curatorial competition in the history of the UIA World Congresses of Architects that was decided on December 20. The international jury highlighted **"the solvent and extensive network of collaborators, which guarantees and reflects the diversity necessary to provoke a relevant debate."** He also valued the topic for "its evocative quality and for including the greatest challenges of today." In addition to giving conceptual form to the congress, which is promoted by the Higher Council of the Orders of Architects of Spain (CSCAE), together with the Architects' Association of Catalonia (COAC), the Ministry of Housing and Urban Agenda (MIVAU), the Department of Territory of the Generalitat of Catalonia and Barcelona's City Council, the competition also wanted to rethink and update formats and themes regarding architecture congresses.

The competition's jury was made up of architectural professionals of recognized international prestige (Ángela García de Paredes, Bet Capdeferro, Carme Pigem, José María Sánchez, Josep Bohigas, Josep Ferrando, Josep Lluís Mateo, María Hurtado de Mendoza, Philip Ursprung and Zaida Muxí) and a representative of each organizing institution (the secretary general of Urban Agenda, Housing and Architecture of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Agenda, Iñaqüi Carnicero; the General Director of Territorial Planning, Urban Planning and Architecture of the Generalitat of Catalonia, Agustí Serra; the architect Mónica Rivera, representing the chief architect of the Barcelona City Council, Maria Buhigas; the president of the CSCAE, Marta Vall-Ilossera, and the dean of the COAC, Guillem Costa Calsamiglia). The organizing administrations, in addition to providing their institutional support, finance – in equal parts – the celebration of this World Congress of Architects, which has been recognized as an event of exceptional public interest in the General State Budget Law for 2023.

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