

MITMA backs Barcelona's candidacy to host the UIA-UNESCO Congress

And World Architecture Capital in 2026

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USPA NEWS - The Ministry for Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda (Mitma), along with the Regional Government of Catalonia, Barcelona City Council, the Higher Council of Spanish Architects' Associations (CSCAE) and the Architects' Association of Catalonia (COAC), have signed the general protocol of action to promote Barcelona's candidacy to host the World Congress of the International Union of Architects (UIA) and the UIA-UNESCO World Capital of Architecture in 2026.

It is a competition against Beijing, which will be decided at the end of July at the IAU General Assembly in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). In the document, the signatories recognise the value of architecture and urban planning as factors towards a quality of life and a sense of social and cultural belonging, as well as a fundamental part of the right of citizens to a quality urban environment in which to develop their life projects. In this way, they show their full support for a candidacy that - they agree - could constitute a "great opportunity" to strengthen the role of the city of Barcelona, of Catalonia and of Spain as centres of production and thought of contemporary architecture and urban design, deepening their capacity to transform and improve people's lives.

At the signing ceremony, Mitma's Director General for the Urban Agenda and Architecture, Iñaki Carnicero, highlighted the unity and support of all levels of the Public Administration, together with the professional associations, in light of the great opportunity that the UIA Congress and the World Capital of Architecture represent for the city of Barcelona: "Union and consensus in Barcelona's candidacy. Architects and urban planners will have an ideal setting in Barcelona to reflect and discuss the quality of architecture and the cities of the future, for their capacity to improve social cohesion, well-being and people's health; in the conviction that the city of Barcelona contains all the necessary elements to find unique great value solutions for our societies."

Improving citizens quality of life

UIA congresses have been held since 1948, and each time they aim to address the challenges facing society through the rigorous knowledge provided by architects. Barcelona hosted the World Congress before, in 1996, with the title "Present and Future: Architecture in Cities," which was a resounding success with the public and had an international impact. Exactly 30 years later, being the World Capital of Architecture is an opportunity to shape a new event with international repercussions, conceived as a space for debate from which specific proposals will emerge to improve the urban quality of the city and, by extension, the quality of life of its citizens.

In the race towards Barcelona's designation, on 25 January 2019, the City Council used an institutional declaration to express its willingness to present its candidacy for the city to become the UNESCO World Capital of Architecture in 2026, a designation that is inextricably linked to the holding of the UIA World Congress of Architects. As Spain's representative to the International Union of Architects, the CSCAE formally submitted the proposal and the Barcelona City Council, the COAC and the CSCAE have worked together since then to present the bid dossier and the final candidature dossier. In January 2020, Barcelona was officially named by the UIA as a candidate city with only one rival, the Chinese city of Beijing.

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