

Founding Act

Davos²⁰²³ Alliance

Conference of Ministers of Culture
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Davos *Baukultur* Alliance – Founding Act

The Davos *Baukultur* Alliance is being launched at the second international conference on high-quality *Baukultur* in January 2023, on the eve of the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Switzerland. The Alliance unites *Baukultur* actors from the public and private sectors and civil society.

High-quality *Baukultur*. *Baukultur* encompasses all activities with spatial impact, from craftsmanship details to large-scale urban planning and landscape, from heritage conservation to contemporary creation. High-quality *Baukultur* is defined by well-designed cities, villages, buildings and infrastructure. High-quality *Baukultur* creates a living environment that is good for people's well-being and health. This concept was introduced by way of the Davos Declaration 2018 and is implemented through such initiatives as the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System, the EU Work Plan for Culture 2019–2022 and continuously 2023–2026, the EU Council Conclusions on high-quality architecture and built environment for everyone and the New European Bauhaus initiative.

Motivation. We are in times of upheaval and uncertainty. Global challenges, such as climate crisis and loss of biodiversity, armed conflicts, crises of energy and resources and pandemics are fundamentally shifting our societies and therefore the priorities for business. These are also *Baukultur* challenges. Hence, we all need to work together. The Davos *Baukultur* Alliance addresses these challenges through interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral and multilevel cooperation to – jointly – find new and better solutions for our living environment.

Benefits. The Davos *Baukultur* Alliance brings together leading actors engaged in improving our living environment in a socially responsible and sustainable way. The Alliance facilitates multisectoral networking and cooperation, fosters education and training, offering new opportunities for exchange and knowledge creation. In doing so, it significantly influences and contributes to the development of *Baukultur* in Europe and beyond. Furthermore, the Alliance makes high-quality *Baukultur* a driver for reputable and successful business.

Key activities. The Davos *Baukultur* Alliance advocates high-quality *Baukultur*. It supports its members to implement high-quality *Baukultur* in the transformation of our living environment. It organises focus groups for its members that analyse and discuss key challenges and propose new solutions. The Alliance reaches out to stakeholders on national, regional and local levels and encourages them to engage in multi-stakeholder cooperation and to provide education and training. In doing so, it contributes to better building and develops innovative frameworks for *Baukultur* quality management for its members.

Operating model. The Davos *Baukultur* Alliance is an informal network of international *Baukultur* actors meeting in regular plenary meetings and focus groups. Its organisation is governed by a steering committee drawn from Alliance members from the public and private sectors and civil society. The steering committee will be responsible for the rules of procedure to be agreed on by the Alliance's members. The Alliance's secretariat is hosted by the World Economic Forum (WEF). Switzerland will cover the operating expenditure for the first five years (2023–2027).

Membership. Members of the Davos *Baukultur* Alliance are companies internationally active in construction, real estate or finance, national ministries/agencies for culture and other relevant domains, as well as intergovernmental organisations and international non-governmental organisations engaging in *Baukultur*. Members commit to the objectives and principles of the Davos Declaration 2018, the Davos *Baukultur* Quality System and strive to implement high-quality *Baukultur* in their activities. They actively engage with other members for high-quality *Baukultur* in Europe and beyond.

We, the members of the Davos *Baukultur* Alliance, stressing that *Baukultur*, as a common good, is the shared responsibility of the public and private sectors and civil society, and that there is an urgent need to raise awareness of the cultural, social, economic, environmental and technical issues at stake:

A) Commit to the objectives and principles as set out in the [Davos Declaration 2018. Towards a high-quality *Baukultur* for Europe:](#)

“The central role of culture in the built environment

1. Culture enables and drives economic, social and environmental sustainability. It shapes our identities and defines our legacies. Therefore, culture must be placed at the centre of development policies and its contribution to the pursuit of the common good must be emphasised. There can be no democratic, peaceful and sustainable development if culture is not at its heart.

2. Policies must stress the need for culture-centred, sustainable approaches to development everywhere and on every scale. The value and irreplaceability of Europe’s landscapes and cultural heritage must be underlined, with the emphasis not only on cities and urban areas but also on peripheral and rural areas and their interconnectivity.

3. There is an urgent need for a holistic, culture-centred approach to the built environment and for a humanistic view of the way we collectively shape the places we live in and the legacy we leave behind.

The concept of *Baukultur*

*4. *Baukultur* embraces every human activity that changes the built environment. The whole built environment, including every designed and built asset that is embedded in and relates to the natural environment, is to be understood as a single entity. *Baukultur* encompasses existing buildings, including monuments and other elements of cultural heritage, as well as the design and construction of contemporary buildings, infrastructure, public spaces and landscapes.*

*5. In addition to architectural, structural and landscape design and its material realisation, *Baukultur* is also expressed in the planning processes for building projects, infrastructures, cities, villages, and open landscapes.*

*6. *Baukultur* refers to both detailed construction methods and largescale transformations and developments, embracing traditional and local building skills as well as innovative techniques.*

Our vision for a high-quality *Baukultur*

*7. We urgently need a new, adaptive approach to shaping our built environment; one that is rooted in culture, actively builds social cohesion, ensures environmental sustainability, and contributes to the health and well-being of all. This is high-quality *Baukultur*.*

*8. The design of the built environment, the relationships between objects and their built and natural surroundings, spatial coherence, scale, materiality: these are all factors which have a direct impact on our quality of life. A high-quality *Baukultur* is therefore expressed in the application of conscious, well-debated design to every building and landscaping activity, prioritising cultural values over short-term economic gain. High-quality *Baukultur* thus not only fulfils functional, technical and economic requirements, but also satisfies people’s social and psychological needs.*

*9. Cultural heritage is a crucial component of high-quality *Baukultur*. The way we use, maintain and protect our cultural heritage today will be crucial for the future development of a high-quality built environment.*

The benefits of a high-quality *Baukultur* for society

*10. High-quality *Baukultur* improves our sense of place. By enabling people to identify with their living spaces, it fosters an inclusive and cohesive society, counteracts discrimination and radicalisation, and promotes integration and civic awareness. This is not only relevant for city centres and historic sites but for every aspect of Europe’s living environment; suburban and rural areas, villages, industrial zones, and infrastructure.*

*11. High-quality *Baukultur* fosters vibrant and mixed-use neighbourhoods. It creates built environments which embrace contemporary cultural expressions while at the same time respecting cultural heritage. It provides sustainable living conditions and strengthens social resilience by producing decent, affordable, and accessible housing.*

*12. High-quality *Baukultur* protects the environment. It supports sustainable transport and responsible land use, increases urban green spaces and promotes health and biodiversity.*

13. High-quality Baukultur adds economic value by creating higher-quality and more durable assets and favourable conditions for economic prosperity within society. It uses resources sustainably, thus ensuring that future generations will also be able to benefit from positive social and economic development.

Towards a high-quality Baukultur

14. High-quality Baukultur requires striking the right balance between cultural, social, economic, environmental and technical aspects of planning, design, building and adaptive re-use, in the public interest for the common good.

15. High-quality Baukultur must form part of the relevant legal instruments. The central goal of high quality for the whole built environment, including cultural heritage, must be made obligatory in all activities with a spatial impact. The requirement for high quality must be considered at the same level as economic or technical interests. Applicable standards and norms should also be compatible with the goal of high quality.

16. High-quality Baukultur can only arise in the context of interdisciplinary discourse and through multilevel and cross-sectoral cooperation between policy-makers, competent authorities and professionals. Since it encompasses creative, functional and social aspects, all relevant disciplines and professionals must take part on an equal footing. One key example of an instrument for fostering high quality is interdisciplinary and widely-debated design competitions. To be successful, high-quality Baukultur also requires the participation of civil society and an informed and sensitised public.

17. High-quality Baukultur calls for efforts in the field of education and awareness-raising, with a view to enabling better judgements regarding Baukultur. All those involved, public and private sector alike, bear responsibility for the quality of our built environment, which will be passed on as a legacy to future generations."

B) Commit to the eight principles as set out in the Davos Baukultur Quality System:

*"**Governance.** High-quality Baukultur follows good Governance. High-quality Baukultur promotes quality-oriented and place-specific processes, led by skilled actors working in teams. It facilitates public engagement and contributes to transparent and inclusive participatory governance for decision-making, management and care for the place."*

*"**Functionality.** High-quality Baukultur fits the purpose. The design and construction methods of high-quality Baukultur satisfy the human needs for health, comfort, safety and accessibility. They are enduring and the results adaptable to existing and changing uses and purposes, whilst safeguarding built heritage."*

*"**Environment.** High-quality Baukultur protects the Environment. High-quality Baukultur contributes to conserving natural resources and biodiversity, mitigating climate change and thus supporting sustainability. It preserves, promotes and develops an intact natural Environment and diverse cultural and natural landscapes through responsible land use and settlements, sustainable mobility, energy efficiency, and use of durable construction materials and methods with regard to the whole life cycle."*

*"**Economy.** High-quality Baukultur adds economic value. High-quality Baukultur prioritises cultural values and long-term investments over short-term economic gain, conserves and increases economic value, and is high value in use. It maintains and develops resources through long-term uses in alignment with the location and the design, Economy of construction and operation, and through the use of high-quality, long-lasting building fabric."*

*"**Diversity.** High-quality Baukultur connects people. High-quality Baukultur reflects and promotes inclusive societies and encourages mixed uses, thus facilitating interaction and shared responsibility, which lead to social and spatial cohesion. It contributes to a diverse culture of planning."*

*"**Context.** High-quality Baukultur results in spatial coherence. Places of high-quality Baukultur refer to their built and natural Context. They embrace built heritage and contemporary creation, and dialogue with local features and their characteristics in terms of age, scale, typology and materiality."*

*"**Sense of place.** High-quality Baukultur improves the Sense of place. High-quality Baukultur shows characteristics that foster people's emotional response to the place establishing a positive relationship with it. It promotes attachment to the place through its strong identity and distinctiveness, thus contributing to fulfilling social, psychological and cultural needs."*

*"**Beauty.** A place of high-quality Baukultur is beautiful. High-quality Baukultur takes into account the sensory perception and understanding of the relationship between objects, spaces and people, increasing people's life satisfaction and quality of life. It emphasises the need for positive aesthetic appreciation and a fulfilling relationship between people and the place."*

C) Aim to implement these objectives and principles in our policies and our activities and, in cooperation with all members, further the goals of the Davos *Baukultur* Alliance through participating in open dialogue and acting in a solution-oriented manner.

Davos, 16 January 2023

Signatures

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