

Tallinn Architecture Biennale TAB 2026

Curatorial Competition Announcement

The Estonian Centre for Architecture (ECA) invites proposals for the curatorial concept of the eighth edition of the Tallinn Architecture Biennale (TAB) 2026.

Founded in 2011, Tallinn Architecture Biennale is Estonia's foremost international festival dedicated to architecture and the built environment. The TAB is organized by the Estonian Centre for Architecture.

The appointed curatorial team will be entrusted with formulating a central concept for TAB 2026. The TAB 2026 must engage spatial and architectural possibilities, with a clear connection to the Estonian context—broadly defined to include regional linkages, such as those with the Baltic or Nordic countries. The theme should possess conceptual clarity and topical urgency, with the potential to resonate with broader national and international architectural and cultural discourse.



1. *Saaremaa Landscape*, Konrad Mägi, 1913–1914, oil on canvas, Viisandi, Estonia.
 2. *Mud Terrain at the XXVIII Song Festival "Kinship" at the Tallinn Song Festival Grounds*, 6 July 2025, Photograph by Sander Sinnepe.
 3. *Participants in the Baltic Way near the town of Rapla, Estonia, 23 August 1989*, Photograph by Abramochkin, Yuri. © IMAGO/Yuri Abramochkin / IMAGO/SNA.
 4. *Departure for War (Sõttamine)*, Nikolai Triik, 1909, Painting, Tartu Art Museum, Estonia.

5. *Moon Rainbow (Kuu vikerkaar)*, Kaljo Põllu, 1989, From the series Kalivägi, Art Museum of Estonia.
 6. *Apartment Building (Khrushchyovka) on Võimla Street (now Lutsu 16), Tartu*, Unknown, 1960, Photograph, Tartu City Museum, TM F 643:35.
 7. *Satellite Image of the Baltic Sea*, Copernicus Programme, May 2021, Satellite photograph, European Space Agency.

Aims and Ethos of TAB

TAB aspires to:

- Cultivate a sensitive, forward-thinking, and high-quality architectural discourse;
- Provide an international platform for the articulation and distribution of Estonia's architectural thought and practice;
- Encourage new angles of perception, offering fresh visions and critical insights into the field of architecture.

1. Structure of TAB 2026

The Tallinn Architecture Biennale 2026 will take place between September and November 2026, comprising two key components:

Core Programme

Conceptualised and realised by the appointed curatorial team by September 2026, the core programme includes:

- Curatorial Exhibition
- TAB Catalogue
- TAB Symposium
- Tallinn Vision Competition

Supplementary Programme

Subject to funding and further agreement, this may include:

- Outdoor Installation Competition — featuring a temporary installation, potentially located in front of the Estonian Museum of Architecture.
- One-week Visiting Lecture-Workshop — Hosted by the curatorial team at the Estonian Academy of Arts, this event will be directly linked to the curatorial concept and thematic framework of TAB 2026.

Satellite Programme

A diverse set of architectural and interdisciplinary events, created by a broad range of partners, that echo and expand upon the central curatorial theme.

2. Curatorial Competition Objectives

The competition seeks:

- A compelling thematic framework
 - One that responds to the urgencies of our time, reflects the local context of Estonia, and remains open to broader international perspectives.

- A curatorial team
 - Capable of articulating and enacting this vision across multiple formats and media, including exhibition-making, writing, public programming, architectural theory, as well as architectural discourse.

The conceptual clarity and intellectual cohesion of the biennale's core programme are paramount. The most resonant editions of TAB have emerged when the exhibition, symposium, and publication merge into a single, multilayered discourse—one that situates architecture within broader societal, cultural, and environmental contexts.

Throughout the process, the Estonian Centre for Architecture will provide comprehensive production support, ensuring the curators are equipped to realise their vision with rigor and ambition.

3. Participation

The TAB 2026 Curatorial Competition is open to the public and welcomes proposals from Estonia and abroad. Architects, interior architects, landscape architects, urban architects, designers, curators, and scholars of architecture and art history—as well as those who work across and between these disciplines—are warmly encouraged to submit proposals. At least one of the team members must be an architect, landscape architect, urban planner, or interior architect.

International collaboration is encouraged, but the curatorial team must maintain a connection to the local context. Any collaboration between national and international members should be meaningful and substantial, rather than merely symbolic. The curators are expected to function as a cohesive and committed team. As representatives of TAB 2026 in both local and international media, fluency in both Estonian and English within the team is essential.

Structure of the Competition

The competition will unfold in two stages:

- Stage I requires the submission of a written curatorial concept (see below for detailed requirements).
- Stage II, if chosen, will consist of oral presentations of the selected concepts before the jury.

Should the jury determine that a winning proposal has emerged decisively in Stage I, it reserves the right to forgo Stage II.

- Questions may be submitted in Estonian or English. All received questions, along with their answers, will be published on the TAB website (tab.ee) under the Competitions section.
- All competition entries must be submitted in both Estonian and English. In case of discrepancies between the two versions, the team must indicate which language version should be considered the original.

Submissions must be delivered digitally to:
info@tab.ee

The deadline for submitting Stage I entries is:
08 September 2025 at 23:59 (Tallinn time, GMT+2).

Eligibility Restrictions

To ensure the integrity and relevance of the curatorial process, the following eligibility criteria and restrictions apply:

- At least one member of the curatorial team must be a certified architect, interior architect, landscape architect, or urban planner.
- The team must be fluent in both Estonian and English, as the curators will represent TAB 2026 in local and international media and professional contexts.

Ineligible Participants

To uphold transparency and impartiality, the following individuals and their close associates are excluded from participation:

- The chairperson, members, alternate members, and advisory experts of the competition jury;
- The author(s) of these competition rules;
- Any person involved in the preparation or organisation of the competition, or who may possess privileged access to internal information or exert influence over jury decisions;
- Close relatives (spouse, domestic partner, direct ascendants or descendants, siblings) and business associates of the above individuals, including those who share ownership in professional enterprises operating within the same field.

Sanctions Requirement – No Links to Russia or Belarus

Participants must not have any ownership or control ties to the Russian Federation or the Republic of Belarus, either directly or through parent, subsidiary, or affiliated companies. Furthermore:

- Participants and their affiliates must not be subject to sanctions imposed by the European Union or the Republic of Estonia.
- No sanctioned persons, companies, supply chains, or materials may be involved in fulfilling the assignment.

Exclusion is grounded in the following legal frameworks:

- Public Procurement Act of Estonia, § 95 (1) clause 3:

“The contracting authority may exclude a tenderer from the procurement procedure if the tenderer is subject to any exclusion grounds laid down in sanctions imposed by the European Union or the Republic of Estonia.”
- Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014, particularly Article 5k, prohibits entering into public contracts with sanctioned individuals or entities.

By submitting a proposal, participants confirm compliance with all of the above conditions.

4. The Tasks

The curators will be responsible for conceiving and overseeing the following core components of the biennale, each of which must reflect and amplify the chosen curatorial vision:

4.1. Curatorial Exhibition

- At least half of the exhibited works must be commissioned specifically for TAB 2026 and relate to the local context.
- A minimum of one-third of the participating artists or practices must be architects with an Estonian background.
- The exhibition must include no fewer than nine individual works. If the curatorial team has a clear different idea about having more or fewer exhibits, this can be discussed.

The primary venue for the Curatorial Exhibition is the Estonian Museum of Architecture, located in the historic Rotermann Salt Storage. The exhibition may occupy:

- The first-floor gallery space
- The third-floor gallery

Should the curatorial team wish to propose alternative or additional venues, they are welcome to do so, provided the rationale is clearly articulated. Please note that the use of external venues may incur additional rental costs and must be coordinated with the Estonian Centre for Architecture.

4.2. TAB Catalogue

The curatorial team will compile the TAB 2026 catalogue, which shall serve as a critical and reflective companion to the exhibition and broader programme.

- At least one-third of the catalogue's content must consist of original texts or visual material authored or commissioned by the curators that articulate, elaborate, and contextualise the biennale's main theme.

4.3. Symposium

The curators will develop the content for the TAB 2026 symposium, an academic and discursive forum exploring the themes of the biennale.

- The symposium should draw connections between the curatorial exhibition and broader architectural debates, facilitating exchange between scholars, practitioners, and experts.
- At least one-third of the invited speakers must be of Estonian origin or based in Estonia.
- The curators will be responsible for conceptualising the programme, as well as inviting and confirming the speakers, while ECA will coordinate the logistics and production of the event.

4.4. Tallinn Vision Competition

The curatorial team will be responsible for curating the Tallinn Vision Competition—an initiative developed in collaboration with the Municipality of Tallinn that addresses site-specific urban challenges and explores forward-looking spatial visions for the city.

The competition will contribute to the implementation of the Tallinn 2035 Development Strategy and serve as one of its practical tools. The specific focus of the competition will be defined during the preparation of the competition brief.

The curatorial team will be tasked with:

- Develop the initial concept for the Tallinn Vision Competition based on the input of the municipality;
- Formulate the competition brief and rules;
- Contribute to the overall structure and content of the competition;
- Participate in the jury process;
- Provide input on the format and design of the competition exhibition.

4.5. Structure of Developing the Curatorial Concept

The development of the curatorial concept—including the exhibition, catalogue, and symposium—will unfold across three structured stages:

1. Preliminary Project
2. Main Design Project
3. Working Design Project

Each of these stages will include opportunities for dialogue and feedback between the curatorial team and the ECA. These iterative check-ins are intended to ensure that the process aligns with the overall timeline while allowing space for curatorial development and refinement.

The precise calendar for development and review will be agreed upon in collaboration with the selected curatorial team.

4.6. Public Engagement and Representation

Beyond the programme itself, the curators are expected to represent and advocate for TAB 2026 both in Estonia and abroad—before, during, and after the biennale. This includes, where necessary, engaging with potential sponsors, developing new partnerships, and employing creative strategies to expand the reach of TAB within the international architectural community.

The curators are encouraged to imagine and propose additional formats or activities that extend the biennale's reach, deepen its discourse, and foster international dialogue.

The communication strategy for TAB 2026 will be developed collaboratively by the Estonian Centre for Architecture (ECA), the communications team, and the appointed curatorial team.

4.7. Supplementary Program

The supplementary program is separate from the Core Program and is subject to additional funding. Its realization will be developed in consultation between the curatorial team and the Estonian Centre of Architecture (ECA).

Installation Competition

The curators will curate and oversee the TAB installation competition, which will culminate in the construction of a temporary architectural structure in collaboration with the Municipality of Tallinn and the ECA. The curators will develop the initial concept, prepare the competition brief, and participate in selecting the winning entry alongside ECA's production team.

→ The installation will be selected through an international, two-stage, portfolio-based competition.

One-Week Studio at the Estonian Academy of Arts

As part of TAB 2026, the selected curatorial team will have the opportunity to lead a one-week studio at the Department of Architecture, Estonian Academy of Arts (EKA). This is a chance to test ideas, engage directly with students, and explore the curatorial theme in an academic setting. The format and focus of the studio will be developed collaboratively with EKA and the curatorial team.

5. TAB Interdisciplinary Satellite Programme

Complementing the core programme curated by the appointed team, the TAB 2026 Interdisciplinary Satellite Programme extends the biennale's reach across disciplines, practices, and publics. While thematically aligned with the curatorial concept, the satellite programme embraces a broader, cross-disciplinary approach, inviting dialogue between architecture and adjacent fields such as art, design, performing arts, music, film, academy, critical theory, ecology, technology, and the social sciences.

The satellite programme is conceived in dialogue with the curators' vision, yet it is curated and managed by the Estonian Centre for Architecture (ECA). Its final scope and composition will be developed in collaboration with a range of institutional, academic, and cultural partners (The Estonian Academy of Arts, The Association of Architects, and the Estonian Museum of Architecture).

This extended programme serves as a space of experimentation and exchange, fostering intersections between local and international voices, and offering multiple entry points into the themes of TAB 2026 for diverse audiences.

6. The Budget

Curatorial Fee and Support

For the fulfilment of the responsibilities outlined in this document—namely the delivery of TAB 2026's core programme (the symposium, curatorial exhibition, and catalogue)—a curatorial fee of €22,000 will be awarded.

The total production budget for the realisation of TAB 2026's core programme is €72,000, inclusive of the curatorial fee.

To broaden the scope and ambition of TAB 2026, both the ECA and the appointed curatorial team are encouraged to pursue additional funding opportunities, whether through public cultural grants, private sponsorships, or international collaborations. These supplementary resources may serve to expand the visibility, scale, and impact of the biennale.

The ECA's production team will work in close collaboration with the curators to ensure the successful artistic and logistical delivery of the biennale. This support extends across the planning, production, and public presentation phases.

Indicative Allocation of the Core Programme Budget (€72,000)

- Curatorial Fee – €22,000
- Curatorial Exhibition – €34,000
(including artists'/architects' fees, production and shipping costs of the exhibits)
- Symposium – €8,000
(including speakers' fees, travel, and accommodation expenses)
- Catalogue – €8,000
(including participants' fees, editing, layout, and graphic design)
- Tallinn Vision Competition – Subject to separate funding; budget TBA

The budget is indicative and may be adjusted based on curatorial input and the availability of additional funding.

7. Competition Entry Requirements

All entries must be submitted in both Estonian and English.

Stage I: Submission of the Main Concept

8 September 2025

Participants are invited to submit a comprehensive curatorial proposal in the form of a PDF document (maximum size: 20MB; resolution: minimum 300ppi or vector quality). Stage I is anonymous. No indication of authorship may appear on the submitted boards or materials, aside from the project title. All identifying information—names, CVs, portfolios, team roles—must be provided in a separate document.

The Stage I submission must include the following elements in the following order:

- A title for TAB 2026, presented in both Estonian and English.
- A synopsis of the proposed curatorial theme (up to 300 characters), provided on a separate page.
- A clearly articulated concept for the curatorial exhibition, including an initial list of proposed participants (up to 6,000 characters).
- Visual material, comprising:
 - 1 to 3 key concept illustrations (drawings, collages, visual metaphors, spatial diagrams, or other relevant representations);
 - 3 visual references (precedent projects or illustrations that contextualise the proposal).

- A short description of the relevance of the proposed theme (up to 1500 characters) within the Estonian context and its resonance with broader international architectural and cultural discourse.
- A short conceptual outline of the symposium, including how it will engage the main curatorial theme and a preliminary list of suggested speakers (up to 2,500 characters).
- A list of topics to be developed as original content for the TAB 2026 catalogue, expanding on the curatorial theme.

Accompanying Document (separate PDF):

Identifying information:

- The title of the project;
- A complete list of curatorial team members, including the distribution of roles, authorship of specific components, and designated lead persons for each biennale event;
- A concise joint portfolio (maximum 5 pages);
- CVs for all team members;
- The name of the lead curator who will be responsible for the coordination of the team and will act as the signatory for the curatorial contract with ECA.
- A confirmation that, if selected as the winning team, the curators agree to undertake the responsibility of curating the Core Programme of TAB 2026.

After evaluating the submitted proposals, the jury will invite up to five teams to advance to Stage II. During Stage II, the shortlisted teams will present their concepts either in person or digitally. Based on these presentations, the jury will select the winning entry. The jury reserves the right to cancel Stage II if a clear winner emerges from the first stage.

Stage II: Oral Presentation

26 September 2025

Teams selected for Stage II will be invited to present their proposal to the jury in person or online. For this stage, each team must prepare the following materials:

- A further development of the curatorial concept, including refined content and strategies for implementation, to be clearly articulated in the presentation delivered to the jury.
- A brief evaluation of the lifecycle and environmental footprint of the proposed curatorial exhibition;
- A brief overview of how the supplementary and satellite programs will support and enhance the core program.

The meeting with the jury will last a maximum of 30 minutes: 10 minutes for the presentation, followed by 10–20 minutes for discussion, questions, and answers.

Review and Selection Process

All submitted proposals will first be reviewed for compliance with the competition rules by a qualification committee composed of Maria Helena Luiga and Mariann Drell. Should minor technical deficiencies be identified, the committee may contact applicants to request their correction. However, proposals with non-compliant or incomplete content will be disqualified from further evaluation.

Only the entries approved by the qualification committee will be forwarded to the jury. From these, the jury will select up to five proposals to advance to Stage II. At this stage, the selected teams will present their proposals orally (virtually) to the jury, who may pose clarifying questions.

8. Prize Fund

To honour the creative and intellectual labour of the applicants, the total prize fund for the competition is structured as follows:

- Winning Proposal – €3,000
- The Remaining Teams Selected for Stage II (4 teams) – €1,000 each

The full amount of the prize fund will be disbursed regardless of the number of participants or the final outcome of the competition. All Stage II participants are entitled to the respective honorarium as recognition of their contribution to the advancement of architectural discourse. By participating in Stage II, teams grant the Estonian Centre of Architecture (ECA) the right to use their titles and visuals for communication and publicity purposes.

9. Evaluation and Criteria

All submissions will be evaluated by the jury according to the following criteria:

- Relevance and originality of the curatorial theme
 - How does the proposal respond to the urgencies of contemporary architecture and spatial culture?
 - Does it offer a distinct or visionary lens through which to frame the biennale?
- Feasibility of realisation
 - How realistic and achievable is the proposed vision within the scope of the biennale's budget, timeline, and institutional framework?
- Team qualifications and capacity
 - The experience, clarity of roles, and collaborative potential demonstrated by the curatorial team.

10. Composition of the Jury

The evaluation of the submissions will be undertaken by a jury of distinguished professionals representing Estonia's architectural and cultural institutions, as well as recent curatorial experience within TAB:

- Sille Pihlak – Architect at PART Architects; Dean of the Faculty of Architecture, Estonian Academy of Arts
- Aet Ader – Architect at B210; President of the Estonian Association of Architects
- Kristiina Reidolv – Head of the Estonian Centre for Architecture
- Jaan Kuusemets – Architect at DAGOpen OÜ; Associate Professor at TalTech University; member of the TAB 2024 curatorial team

- Roland Reemaa – Architect at LLRRLRR; Visiting Lecturer at Estonian Academy of Arts and Central Saint Martins (London, UK)

Moderator/Advisors:

- Maria Helena Luiga – Architect, Producer at the Estonian Centre for Architecture
- Mariann Drell – Interior Architect, Strategist at the Estonian Centre for Architecture

This jury will assess all qualifying entries according to the criteria outlined above and conduct the Stage II interviews to determine the curatorial team for TAB 2026.

11. Legal Relations

- The Estonian Centre for Architecture (ECA) is the principal organiser of the Tallinn Architecture Biennale (TAB) and will ensure the smooth execution of all technical and organisational aspects of the event.
- This competition is public and open. By submitting a proposal, all participants acknowledge and confirm their participation under the terms of this call.
Only the project titles and authors of the Stage II entries will be publicly disclosed.
- Upon the conclusion of the competition, the ECA will enter into an agreement with the winning curatorial team or curator. This agreement will formalise the framework for developing and delivering the curatorial programme as defined in these competition rules.
- The intellectual property rights to the works created by the curator(s) in the context of TAB 2026 shall remain with the main organiser (ECA). However, the rights to the individual works exhibited in the curatorial exhibition will remain with their respective authors, unless alternative arrangements are mutually agreed upon between the organiser and the authors.

12. Schedule

The curatorial competition for TAB 2026 will follow the timeline below:

- 10 July 2025 – Official announcement of the competition
- 8 September 2025 – Deadline for submitting Stage I entries
(by 23:59 Tallinn time, GMT+2)
- 17 September 2025 – Announcement of Stage I results and shortlisted teams
- 26 September 2025 – Deadline for Stage II: presentations and jury interviews with selected teams
- 13 October 2025 – Public announcement of results and winning curatorial team
- 9–13 September 2026 – Opening Week of TAB 2026

All deadlines are based on Tallinn local time (GMT+2).

Questions and Additional Information

For inquiries or clarifications regarding the competition, please contact:

Estonian Centre for Architecture

info@tab.ee

www.tab.ee