

IB⁺

UTOPIA

NOW!

Student Competition
Call for entries dossier | 2026

OCCASION | MOTIVATION

On the occasion of its 100th anniversary in 2022, IB launched a student ideas competition for the benefit of the next generation of architects – UTOPIA.

The goal of the competition is to provide students with a platform for future-related topics. The competition is held every two years.

The third edition turns to a pressing question within contemporary architectural discourse: the urgency of architectural action in the present. How can architecture respond decisively – and responsibly – to the realities of today?

TASK | NOW !

Why talk about UTOPIA at a time when architecture and the building industry face urgent, real challenges that demand immediate response? Why venture into the realm of visions when Helmut Schmidt famously remarked back in 1980 that anyone with visions should see a doctor?¹

Since Robert Musil's *The Man Without Qualities*—a novel whose blank-slate protagonist echoes the placeless cities described in Rem Koolhaas's *Generic City*—we've understood something essential: "If there is a sense of reality, then there must also be a sense of possibility."² And this sense of possibility lies, in many ways, at the heart of our profession as architects.

Against this backdrop, we must confront the unsettling observation that Rutger Bregman, in *Utopia for Realists*, summarizes in essence as follows: We no longer have a new dream (...) because we can't imagine a world better than the one we live in now.³

This is a dramatic realization—especially since we know that the very creation of our almost fairytale-like prosperity has contributed to the multiple global crises we face today.

This urgency—the need to act now—was already reflected in the submissions for the most recent edition of UTOPIA.⁴ Despite Bregman's gloomy prognosis, the competition entries clearly expressed both the desire and the freedom to imagine a better reality and to act in that spirit—echoing the idea of a "pragmatopia" that Andreas Ruby introduced in 2003 in the *Metapolis Dictionary for Advanced Architecture*.⁵

1 Helmut Schmidt, Interview with *Der Spiegel*, 1980

2 Robert Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*, Part I, Reinbek near Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2015 (reprint), p. 19.

3 cf. Rutger Bregman, *Utopia for Realists*, Reinbek near Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2019, n.p.

4 <https://www.ittenbrechbuehl.ch/de/utopia-2024>

5 Manuel Gausa, Vicente Guallart, Willy Müller, Federico Soriano, Fernando Porras and José Morales, eds., *The Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture: City, Technology and Society in the Information Age*. Barcelona: Actar, 2003.

The result is an architecture that combines vision with feasibility and approaches today's challenges with a blend of humor and social awareness.

Perhaps this aligns with the idea of UTOPIA as Thomas More first described it in 1516⁶: not a moment in time, not the future or the past, but a place. A place of possibility. And that is exactly what UTOPIA offers: a place for visions, dreams, and utopias.

This competition centers on the urgent need to live and create utopias now—without waiting for a better “later” or a better “elsewhere.”

Is there a utopia that does not project a distant future, but instead reflects the architectural conventions of the present—and, in doing so, sets the present in opposition to itself?⁷

Can a utopia be imagined, built, and lived—here and now?
What is your vision of such a place? What is your “UTOPIA : NOW !”

⁶ Thomas More, *Libellus vere aureus, nec minus salutaris quam festivus, de optimo reipublicae statu, deque nova insula Utopia* (Louvain: Thierry Martens, 1516).

⁷ cf. Michael Newman, “Conversation Piece: Florian Graf’s Roles,” in: *Florian Graf. Collection Cahiers d’Artistes 2011*, Edizioni Periferia, 2011, German edition, p. 2 ff.

PRIZE MONEY

A total sum of CHF 10,000 will be awarded. Distribution of the prize money is at the discretion of the jury.

DATES

Registration	February 26 until March 30, 2026
Questions until	March 30, 2026
Submission	May 4, 2026
Jury meeting	June 4, 2026
Announcement	July 2026
Award ceremony	September 3, 2026 in S AM Schweizerisches Architekturmuseum (Swiss Architecture Museum)

REGISTRATION

Download of competition documents and mandatory registration for the competition is via the following link: www.ittenbrechbuehl.ch/utopia

Individual and team submissions are permitted. The competition is open to students from all fields of study (interdisciplinary teams are welcome).

One author's letter must be submitted per competition entry; all team members must be listed on the form. A copy of each team member's certificate of enrollment must be included.

QUESTIONS

Questions can be addressed to the following email address until March 30, 2026: utopia@ittenbrechbuehl.ch. Answers will be published under www.ittenbrechbuehl.ch/utopia.

EXCLUSION

IB employees cannot take part in the competition.

PROCEDURAL LANGUAGE

Competition documents are available in German, English, French, and Italian. The procedural language will be English. Submissions are required in English.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

The following should be submitted: one A1 format document (portrait) with title (top right) and one video (max. 90 seconds playing time).

The A1 poster must include: text, drawing(s), and image(s).

Deadline for submission (exclusively digital) is May 4, 2026.

DIGITAL SUBMISSION COMPONENTS

One compressed folder (max. 150 MB) uploaded to the following platform:

www.ittenbrechbuehl.ch/utopia containing:

- Page in A1 format (portrait) with title (top right), as PDF file.
- Video in MOV format (QTime) or MP4 with title as file name.

Separately:

- Text as Word file
- Drawing/s
- Image/s
- Author's letter and student ID (copy)
- Teams are required to enclose copies of student IDs of all members.

EXHIBITION

The posters of the prize winners and shortlisted entrants will be exhibited during the award ceremony and for at least one additional week. Additional presentations are scheduled.

JURY

Jeanette Kunsmann	Architect, Editor-in-Chief of DETAIL magazine, Munich
Adrien Meuwly	Architect, Professor ETH, Comte/Meuwly, Zurich
Tanja Reimer	Architect, Visiting Professor EPFL, DOSCRE, Zurich
Valentin Rilliet	Visual Artist, Zurich
Yuma Shinohara	Curator, S AM Swiss Architecture Museum, Basel

Not entitled to vote:

Karina Hüssner	Architect, Business Development, IB Atelier
Daniel Blum	Architect, IB Atelier
Lidor Gilad	Architect, Head of Design, IB

PERMISSION

Jeanette Kunsmann

Jeanette Kunsmann

Adrien Meuwly

Adrien Meuwly

Tanja Reimer

Tanja Reimer

Valentin Rilliet

Valentin Rilliet

Yuma Shinohara

Yuma Shinohara

Karina Hüssner

Karina Hüssner

Daniel Blum

Daniel Blum

Lidor Gilad

Lidor Gilad



AUTHOR'S LETTER

TITLE

TEAM MEMBERS

(Name and
no. of student ID)

DETAILS OF CONTACT PERSON

Surname, first name

Address

Post/ZIP code, place

Country

Telephone (with prefix)

E-mail address

Bank account number

COURSE OF STUDY

University

Address

Current semester

Bachelor _____ semester

Master _____ semester

By signing, the contact person confirms the correctness of the details provided, the validity of the enclosed student IDs as well as the use and publication of all work submitted.

Place and date

Signature