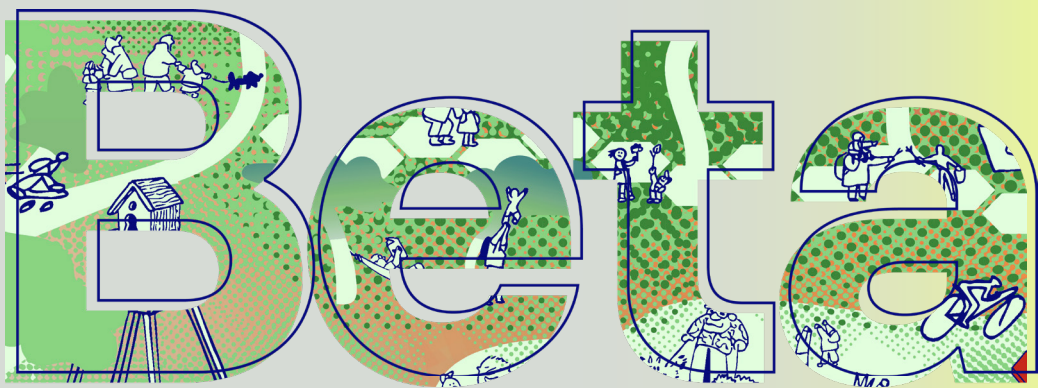


In Practice

as opposed to 'in theory'



1. **Introduction:** Beta – Timișoara Architecture Biennial

2. **Beta 2026:** In Practice – *as opposed to 'in theory'*

3. **The Site:** Former Technical College 'Ion Mincu'

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1. Introduction

Beta – Timișoara

Architecture

Biennial

The 2026 edition of the biennial is curated by Andreas Kofler and Tudor Vlăsceanu.

Beta – Timișoara Architecture Biennial is a cultural project of the Timiș Territorial Branch of the Romanian Order of Architects, organised by a dedicated team. **The 2026 edition will be the sixth, marking twelve years of continuous activity.**

Over time, **Beta has become the main architectural event in western Romania, with a Euroregional reach and strong collaborations with neighbouring countries** such as Serbia and Hungary. An important part of its international connections stems from Beta's membership in the **LINA community**: a network linking relevant institutions with emerging practitioners and thinkers working at the intersection of architecture and other cultural fields, aiming to promote new talent.

Beta unfolds through a series of actions, projects, events, and exhibitions structured around three pillars: Education, Profession, and City. **It advocates for an architecture of action, driven by the desire to be proactive, collaborative, and engaged in dialogue.** Its ambition is to grasp the full and complex map of the built environment. Beta promotes interaction between different actors before addressing concrete interventions: **dialogue instead of statements, collaboration instead of isolation, and processes instead of one-off events.**

2. Beta 2026

In Practice – *as opposed to 'in theory'*

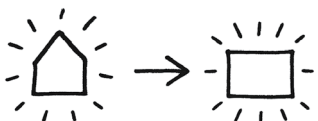
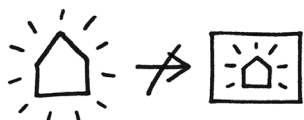
In Theory

The potential of international architecture biennials, triennials and large-scale exhibitions lies in **connecting people and sharing knowledge** through collective exploration. Yet they are increasingly subject to strong economic and ecological criticism, as well as concerns over how the format itself has evolved. What sets out to be a cultural exchange also tends to become insular in character, its capacity to reach and engage a wider audience varying considerably. This may as well lie in the act of exhibiting architecture itself.

Architecture exhibitions are mostly built around projects that are elsewhere, gone, or have never been realised. To exhibit them, their doubles are imported: drawings, models, fragments, and the people who deliver their narratives. What flows into this act of **representing something where it is not** is, in fact, a logistics chain: matter and knowledge are displaced, packed, shipped, and reassembled, often at substantial ecological, economic, and human cost, and sometimes with little sensitivity, connection, or real effect in the context where they are received.

This introduces a distance between what architecture is and what can be experienced in exhibition spaces. Unlike art, architecture can only appear in exhibitions through proxies and fragments – or, in theory – which inherently carries **the risk of disconnecting exhibitions from the realities of building, making, and everyday life.**

In Practice



The question is how to redirect resources from logistics and representation towards something that can connect and remain – or, more radically, how to turn exhibitions into **acts of practice rather than displays of theory**. This begins with recognising that the theme of a biennial has a substantial impact on the form it eventually assumes in space. Engaging with a site starts with a responsibly chosen theme and continues in curating – or rather developing – **projects that test ideas where they are meant to act**.

Building on this approach, the **2026 edition of Beta** – Timișoara Architecture Biennial **turns a disused building into a project in progress**, a work under negotiation, and, more importantly, a display of how architects practice. Instead of staging a temporary show, funds are directed to site-specific projects that simulate, sketch, mock up, question, and **might remain – as built matter or as lessons learned**.

Like every project, this one too will be a negotiation of visions and constraints, ideas and conditions, failure and reinvention. The curatorial intent is not to conceal this process but to offer visitors both an insight and a role in how architecture takes shape, not just as what gets built but as a (con)sequence of countless options, simulations, and discoveries.

Architecture unfolds as a continuous experiment, a collective exercise in transforming theory into matter.

In practice also refers to an architecture that leaves visible the complexity that constitutes it. What this biennial aims to leave behind is not a finished building, but a meaningful new layer – one that acknowledges and builds on what came before, and remains open to what comes next. An architecture in its beta stage. An aesthetic of traces and transitions in which architecture does not seal or finalise a project but lets it remain in flux, inviting continuation and accommodating an array of uses and appropriations.

3. The Site

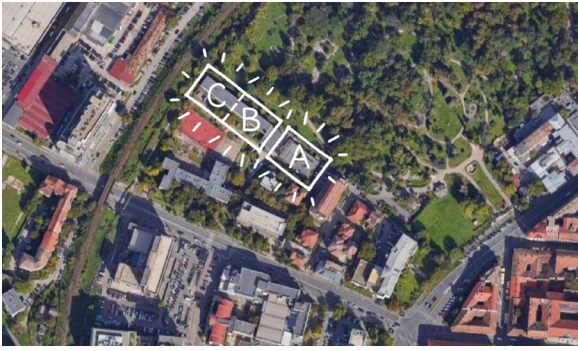
Former Colegiul Tehnic 'Ion Mincu'

The former Colegiul Tehnic (technical college) 'Ion Mincu' at Strada Borsec Nr. 6 is **not a monument** in the traditional sense. In theory, its architectural value is modest, almost generic. *Yet in practice*, preservation is not solely a matter of style or memory but one of embodied matter, about **working with resources that have been used to create what already exists.**

Keeping the building's structure means retaining its **grey energy**: the CO₂ already bound in its materials and frame. To intervene here is not a gesture of nostalgia, but one of responsibility – an experiment in transforming what is inert into what is active, turning existing matter into a new form of agency.

With this, Beta shares the ethos of **HouseEurope!**, an emerging European initiative advocating for the reuse and transformation of existing buildings. Its work promotes a shift from demolition to renovation – both as an ecological necessity and as a cultural act of care for what already exists.

The ensemble consists of four building volumes aligned along the edge of the Botanical Park, forming a continuous front between the green space and the urban fabric.



Corp A: the former canteen is a tall light-filled single-storey building with great potential to serve as the main gathering point of the Biennial.

Corp B and Corp C: the main school buildings are two two-storey volumes that once hosted classrooms, a gym, and offices.

Corp D: a technical annex located between Corp A and Corp B hosting a heat substation, fragile in structure and unusable for the Biennial, yet spatially significant as it could become a dead volume within the sequence.

The Botanical Park of Timișoara is an arboretum dating back 1877, redesigned in its current form by Silvia Grumeza in 1966. The park has scientific, educational, and recreational purposes. Covering nearly ten hectares, the park is organised into several thematic sectors, although their distinctions have largely faded over time. Locals note that the label 'botanical' is now somewhat misleading, as the park no longer reflects the character implied by its name.

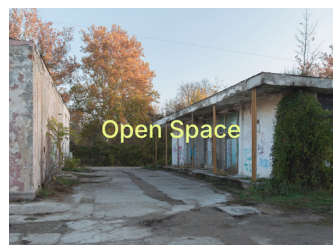
Without a doubt, the lush backdrop is also a **strategic opportunity**: the linear sequence of the four school building volumes faces the park directly, inviting the interventions proposed through the open calls to work with the landscape: dissolving boundaries, extending space, and cultivating continuity between architecture and vegetation. Where physical boundaries exist (a fence) or cognitive ones with the deteriorated Corp D, the design challenge is to reach out to the park as an active partner in the project's spatial and experiential logic.

Beyond the event itself, **the Beta biennial represents a critical turning point for the school building**. We anticipate the building's conversion into a public cultural spot, integrated with the adjacent park. The biennial will not only inaugurate this new chapter, but it will act as an advocate and catalyst for the building's future, thus providing a framework for its development, with the potential for **several interventions to remain as lasting legacies**.

Working with the Site

For Call 1 & 2, participants are invited to propose potentially permanent interventions that reimagine the relationship between the building, its context, and the city. To support the development of your proposals, we outline below several site-specific opportunities and constraints that will also guide our own approach. Participants are encouraged to engage with these aspects and may use them as possible starting points for their work:

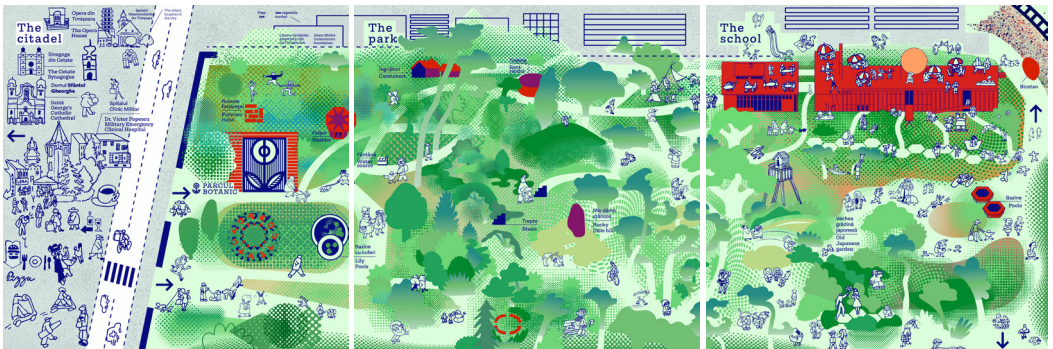
- **Flipping the Script:** turning the building's back to the park into its new front door
- **Solving the Open Space:** transforming the lifeless and currently inaccessible open space near Corp D into a new social gathering place
- **The Fence Question:** rethinking the boundary toward the park – remove, transform, or reinterpret it
- **Building a Presence:** enhancing the building's visibility and relation to the park
- **Architectural Elements:** treating 'broken windows' and material decay as chances for innovation
- **Public Interface:** making a currently hermetic building more open and accessible
- **Circulation:** reconfiguring internal routes to suit a contemporary cultural use



Beyond these specific opportunities, our core approach investigates essential themes with direct relevance to the school building. We regard aspects such as materiality, reuse strategies, bio-based construction, circular processes, questions of comfort, and 'slow heat' **not only as inspiration, but also for practical application** – addressing everything from energy efficiency and local sourcing to insulation and repair.

Proposals of all scales are encouraged. For the most ambitious ideas that exceed the available budget, prototypes or key fragments may be built for the biennial, while the complete project vision can also be conveyed through drawings and models, paving the way for potential continuation of the project beyond the event.

The citadel, the park, the school – site triptych (Illustration: Sorina Vazelina)



Bringing the building back into practice

Before the interventions resulting from the open calls are implemented, the building will undergo **an initial phase of repair and cleaning**. For this purpose, a set of ***Site Transformation Guidelines*** has been developed on site together with the curators. This document outlines **a series of targeted actions aimed at making the structure safe, legible, and usable again**: removing low-quality or redundant additions, repairing damaged surfaces, stabilising critical areas, revealing spatial and material qualities, and – through a few punctual openings – adapting the circulation for cultural use. This preparatory work marks **a first step in bringing the building back 'into practice'**.

All elements and materials removed during this process that remain in good condition will be carefully collected and stored in **a dedicated 'Building Component Depot'**, most likely located in Corp C, room C.0.07. Doors, tiles, flooring, bricks, and other components will serve as a **shared resource** for the projects developed through the open calls, as well as for future transformations of the site.

4. Open Calls

The Timișoara Architecture Biennial 2026 is launching **three open calls** inviting architects, designers, artists, and collectives to engage directly with the former technical college. All calls propose the building as a laboratory, a space of invention, experimentation, and collective transformation.

The first call invites **spatial repairs and transformative interventions** that reactivate the building. The second focuses on (re)defining **thresholds and transitions**, particularly in relation to the surrounding park.

The third introduces the **office in residence**: a collaborative experiment in which different teams occupy the building week by week, each addressing a distinct aspect of its transformation.

Together, these initiatives explore **architecture in practice**: as invention, process, and shared responsibility. **The open calls complement a selection of invited contributions.** The final balance between the two modes of participation will be established by the curatorial team.

Call 1: Spatial Repairs and Transformative Interventions

A series of on site interventions should question the existing building and enhance, invent, repair, propose new ways to use and move with the building, during and beyond the biennial.

Location: A former technical college in Timișoara, the main venue of the 2026 edition of the Beta biennial.

Objective: To activate/engage with the building and its context through spatial, architectural, or material interventions that explore through architecture, that experiment and prototype.

Concept: Participants are invited to propose potentially-permanent installations that reimagine the relationship between the building, the context, and the city. The building becomes a living laboratory: part construction site, part exhibition. Projects may introduce new entrances, spatial connections, structural additions, and/or revisit architectural elements that redefine how the building is perceived and used during and ideally also beyond the biennial.

Expected outcome: Installations or built interventions that reveal and test new ways of inhabiting and updating the building and its surroundings – making visible architecture's capacity to adapt, evolve, and engage with its environment.



Space: The available spaces can, *in theory*, be described as small rooms (30–50 m²), medium-sized studios (60–100 m²), and large halls (135 m²).

In practice, however, they are not neutral containers but partners in symbiosis with the projects they host. Proposals should emerge from the spatial conditions of the chosen room, react to its current state and material reality, and consider how their contribution might continue once the biennial concludes. A detailed documentation of the available spaces will be provided with this call.

Budget: For each selected proposal, a total budget of €3,000 (gross) is foreseen. Depending on the scope and feasibility of the proposal, this amount may be complemented by additional support. The organisers are willing to assist selected teams in seeking complementary funding or material sponsorships through local partnerships, production support, or external travel grants.

Call 2: Thresholds and Transitions

A focus on the spaces in between inviting interventions that reconnect the building to its surroundings and the circulation of its users.

Location: The outdoor and in-between areas of the biennial's venue. The exterior and transitional zones include entrances, courtyards and the open ground surrounding the site. But also the botanical garden through which the main access of the biennial will be possible.

Objective: To activate the open-air spaces of the site, fostering new relations between the building, its context and the visitors' circulation through it. The call invites proposals that mediate between separate structures and between the built and the natural – turning residual or overlooked areas into shared, usable ones during and past the biennial.

Concept: Participants are invited to work *in practice*: to experiment directly with the site's existing conditions and test how architecture or other



interventions can reconnect circulation and use. A particular focus lies in 'bridging' the building to its immediate urban infrastructure and to the broader green ecosystem of the city, extending spatial, environmental and social reach. Proposals should work with what exists, valuing transformation over replacement and acknowledging the site's current fragility as part of its spatial and cultural potential.

Expected outcome: Projects may take the form of modest yet precise spatial gestures: pathways, outdoor furniture, ramps, signage, or other micro-interventions that link interior and exterior or establish new ways of crossing and gathering. These interventions may also consist of elements that can shift position or be tested in multiple locations across the site: transforming, connecting and testing what might remain.

Space: Circulation areas such staircases, access routes, façades, loading zones, forgotten patches of greenery and other residual or interstitial spaces connecting the different parts of the building with and through the adjacent park.

Budget: For each selected proposal, a total budget of €5,000 (gross) is foreseen. Depending on the scope and feasibility of the proposal, this amount may be complemented by additional support. The organisers are willing to assist selected teams in seeking complementary funding or material sponsorships through local partnerships, production support, or external travel grants.

Call 3: Office in Residence

Over the course of the biennial, several offices take over a space that will become an effective public office. Its project: the building itself. The office becomes a space in which to present and interact with the general public. The 'office in residence' will run for six consecutive weeks, from May onwards (to be confirmed), each led by a different team and addressing a distinct theme related to the building's transformation.



A potential schedule:

Week 1: Interim and future use

Week 2: Circulation and urban scale

Week 3: Engineering

Week 4: Façade and insulation

Week 5: *to be defined/proposed*

Week 6: Into Practice

Each week will conclude with a public moment of sharing, before the following team takes over the space and continues the process.

Location: The canteen building of the school, serving as an evolving workspace for a series of short-term residencies.

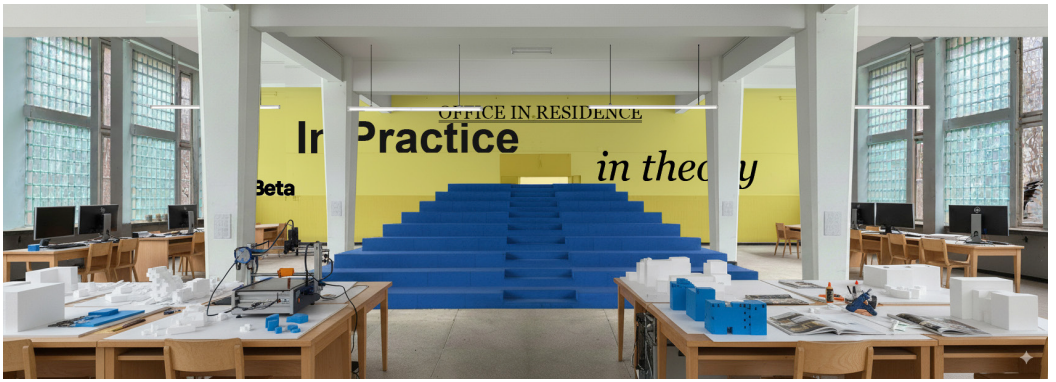
Objective: To collectively rethink and gradually transform the site through a sequence of week-long residencies. Each team will focus on a specific architectural or infrastructural aspect, such as spatial program, circulation, thermal insulation, material reuse, or energy, building a continuous and cumulative process.

Concept: Throughout the biennial, a different office will inhabit the building each week. Their interventions will overlap and interact – a relay in which each team may choose to build upon but also question what came before. Every week, a moderated handover will take place, where one team presents its research, drawings, or material traces to the public and the next ‘office in residence’. The residency functions at once as a workshop, performance, and public forum.

Expected outcome: A collectively authored transformation of the building over the duration of the biennial, documented through weekly handovers and public events. The outcome may include drawings, models, fragments, installations, or other spatial traces – together forming an open and cumulative experiment in architectural production.

Space: The space should become an in-situ office for the disused building around which the Biennial will rotate.

Budget: Each selected ‘office’ will receive travel costs and accommodation (for 2 ppl) and an additional total honorarium of €1,500 (gross).



Conceptual visualisation of the Office in Residence in the former canteine

5. Submission Guidelines

Deliverables

Each proposal must be submitted as a **single PDF** (max. 10 MB) via this [Google Form](#) containing all required pages in **A4 portrait format**. The aim is to keep the submission format light and accessible, focusing on the clarity of the idea rather than graphic perfection.

Call 1 and Call 2

Each team is asked to submit:

One A4 page presenting the **proposal**, including:

- a **sketch or visual representation** of the idea,
- a **short written description** of the spatial repair and/or transformative intervention project,
- an **indication of the proposed location** within the building or site,
- a **brief note on how and where the materials could be sourced**.

One A4 page introducing the **team**, including:

- names and short bios of the members,
- a short statement on the team's general approach or interests.

Call 3

Each team is asked to submit:

One A4 page stating the **chosen theme** for their 'Office in Residence' week, accompanied (optionally) by a **sketch and/or conceptual outline**.

One A4 page introducing the **team**, including:

- names and short bios of the members,
- contact details,
- (optional but very much welcomed) a **suggested local partner, collaborator, or association** with whom the team would like to work during their week in residence.

Eligibility

Teams may submit applications to all three calls. However, each team can be selected for only one of the first two calls, while it may additionally be eligible for selection under Call 3.

Based on the current budget forecast, the organisers anticipate selecting the following minimum numbers of proposals:

Call 1 – Spatial Repairs and Transformative Interventions: 5–8 proposals selected through the open call process. The organisers reserve the right to select fewer proposals should the number of feasible or qualifying submissions be lower.

Call 2 – Thresholds and Transitions: approximately 3 proposals selected through the open call process. The organisers reserve the right to select fewer proposals should the number of feasible or qualifying submissions be lower.

Call 3 – Office in Residence: 3 teams selected through the open call process.

The organisers aim to achieve a balanced distribution among local, national, and international participants. However, the final distribution will depend on the number and quality of received applications and cannot be guaranteed in advance.

By submitting a proposal, applicants agree that their work (in full or in part) may be included in the exhibition and/or in the accompanying publication of Beta 2026. The organisers reserve the right to present or reproduce submitted material for curatorial, educational, and communication purposes, always with appropriate credit to the authors.

Who Can Apply

This call is **open to a wide range of applicants**, including (but not limited to): architects, artists, designers, landscape architects, graphic designers, students and established professionals, independent practitioners, offices, ad-hoc collectives, and interdisciplinary teams.

*We particularly
welcome:*

- interdisciplinary collaborations;
- proposals developed with local actors, associations or communities;
- approaches that work with space, context, and existing or reusable materials;
- process-based, low-tech or material-conscious approaches and collaborative methods;
- prototypes or tests that draw on local resources, knowledge, or craftsmanship.

Applicants should be interested in working with transition, transformation, and the realities of an evolving site.

Selection Process

The selection will take place in two stages. In the **first stage**, applicants are invited to submit a concise concept proposal outlining the main idea, its relevance to the theme *In Practice*, and the approach they intend to pursue.

In the **second stage**, shortlisted teams will be invited to an online review/working conversation with the curators and the Beta team. These conversations offer an initial exchange on the submitted proposal, allowing applicants to clarify their intentions and enabling the selection committee to assess the ability of each team to move from concept to implementation.

All submissions will be evaluated by the curators together with the Beta team.

– For **Call 1 and Call 2**, the evaluation focuses on the relevance of the question raised, the contribution to the theme *In Practice*, and the team's ability to translate thinking into concrete spatial or material action.

– For **Call 3**, the evaluation focuses on the clarity of the proposed research question, the added value it would bring when developed on site, and the proposed methodology for sharing insights with visitors.

The final selection will be made after the conversations with the shortlisted teams.

Resources for Applicants

To support the preparation of proposals, applicants can download **site plans, floor plans, sections, and photographic documentation** (we kindly thank David Dumitrescu) of the former technical college on the [Beta website](#) or [via this link](#).

Timeline

Calls 1, 2, 3 Publication: 19.11.2025

Phase 1

Submission: 8.12.2025
Jury: 9.12–10.12.2025
Notification: 12.12.2025

Phase 2

Shortlist Conversations: 16.12.–17.12.2025 (please save the date)
Jury: 18.12.2025
Production and installation: March – April 2026
Exhibition opening: May 2026

Q&A

Questions can be submitted until 25 November 2025 to this address:
ideas@betacity.eu

The answers will be published on the following day on the [Beta website](#)

Acknowledgments

This call has been developed in close collaboration with the **Bouwmeester Maître Architecte (BMA)** team in Brussels, ensuring that its structure and criteria reflect the BMA's approach to transparency, accessibility, and public value in architectural procurement and commissioning.

The collaboration between the **BMA** and **Beta – Timișoara Architecture Biennial 2026** is framed as a process of mutual learning and exchange of good practices between European public institutions engaged in shaping the built environment.

This partnership has been made possible through the **New European Bauhaus (NEB)** framework — an interdisciplinary initiative of the European Union that fosters cross-border collaboration among Member States through shared principles of **sustainability, inclusion, and aesthetics**. Within this context, the dialogue between Brussels and Timișoara serves as a concrete example of how European cities can learn from one another, strengthening collective capacities for responsible architectural practice and public design governance.

The initiative is further supported by **HouseEurope!**, a European campaign advocating for a cultural and political shift from demolition to transformation. Their endorsement underlines the urgency and relevance of Beta 2026 – In Practice, aligning its aims with a broader European movement that promotes reuse, repair, and the care for existing buildings as an act of collective responsibility.

Tudor Vlăsceanu and Andreas Kofler extend their **sincere thanks to the Beta Team and all partners** for their input and collaboration. Special thanks to **Sorina Vazelina** for the illustration.



The 2026 Beta Team

Credits: David Dumitrescu

Hosted by:



Primăria
Municipiului
Timișoara



ASOCIAȚIA
MILTONIA

betacity.eu