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Having regard to the Decision No 445/2014/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 April 2014 establishing a Union action for the European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020 to 2033 and repealing Decision No 1622/2006/EC (Official Journal of the European Union, OJ L 132; hereinafter: Decision No 445/2014/EU), the Decision (EU) 2017/1545 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 September 2017 amending Decision No 445/2014/EU establishing a Union action for the European Capitals of Culture for the years 2020 to 2033 (Official Journal of the EU, OJ L 237; hereinafter: Decision (EU) 2017/1545) and the Decision of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia No 51000-1172018/3 of 10 January 2019, the Ministry of Culture is publishing:

**CALL FOR SUBMISSION OF APPLICATIONS FOR THE UNION ACTION "EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE" FOR THE YEAR 2025 IN THE REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA**

Throughout history, Europe has been a hub of artistic development of exceptional richness and great diversity where European cities have played a vital role in the formation and spread of culture.

The European Capital of Culture action is an initiative of the European Union governed by Decision No 445/2014/EU as amended by Decision (EU) 2017/1545.

The general objectives of the European Capital of Culture action have been defined as follows: to safeguard and promote the diversity of cultures in Europe and to highlight the common features they share as well as to increase citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural area, on the one hand, and to foster the contribution of culture to the long-term development of cities in accordance with their respective strategies and priorities, on the other hand.

In line with these objectives, activities developed by the city that will be designated as European Capital of Culture will strive to enhance the range, diversity and European dimension of its cultural offering, including through transnational co-operation; to widen access to and participation in culture; to strengthen the capacity of its cultural sector and the links of the latter with other sectors and to raise its international profile through culture.

In accordance with the calendar set out in the Annex of Decision No 445/2014/EU as amended by Decision (EU) 2017/1545, the title of European Capital of Culture shall be awarded in 2025 to one city in Slovenia and to one city in Germany.

The aim of this call is to trigger applications from cities in Slovenia wishing to bid for the "European Capital of Culture" title for the year 2025 and to lead to the designation of one of these cities, that may be awarded the Melina Mercouri prize which is funded from the respective Union programme supporting culture at the time of its award.

To assist cities in the preparation of their bid, this call provides an overview of the criteria that will be applied for the assessment of their applications in accordance with the criteria set out in the Decision No 445/2014/EU as well as information about the selection procedure. In annex 1, cities will also find the application form in Slovenian and English which they have to complete in both languages in order to submit an application.

The Managing Authority in charge of the selection procedure for the European Capital of

Culture title for the year 2025 in the Republic of Slovenia is the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter: Ministry of Culture).

Further details on the European Capital of Culture action may be obtained at the following webpages:

- [www.mk.gov.si](http://www.mk.gov.si)

- [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en.htm)

## **1. Outcome of the selection process**

The outcome of the selection process of the European Capital of Culture Union action is twofold:

- The award of the title of European Capital of Culture;
- The award of a pecuniary prize of 1.5 M€ in honour of Melina Mercouri.

To that extent, this call for submission of applications is also to be seen as the rules of the contest for the awarding of the Melina Mercouri prize.

The title and the prize are awarded on the basis of the same criteria detailed in section 2. The payment of the prize occurs in the course of the title-year and is conditioned and ruled by the requirements laid down in section 5 of this document.

## **2. Criteria for designating a city for the title of European Capital of Culture and awarding the Melina Mercouri prize**

### **a. Eligibility criteria**

*Eligible applicants:*

This call for submission of applications is exclusively addressed to the cities of the Republic of Slovenia which wish to apply for the title of European Capital of Culture 2025.

The title applies to a city. Cities may involve their surrounding areas if they wish so, but the title is awarded only to the city itself and not to the whole area. Therefore, where a city involves its surrounding area, the application shall be made under the name of the city.

Every application must be based on a cultural programme with a strong European dimension. The cultural programme shall cover the year of the European Capital of Culture title and shall be created specifically for the title.

For recollection, in case of claim relating to the activities carried out in the framework of the submission for applications the sole liability of applicants can be invoked.

*Formal criteria of the application:*

All candidate cities shall fill in the common application form laid down in annex 1. Candidate cities should note that there are different questionnaires for preselection and selection.

Candidate cities are invited to comply with the following formal requirements when drafting their application. Applications which do not follow these requirements at pre-selection or final selection stages<sup>1</sup> will be considered ineligible and not examined further:

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<sup>1</sup> More details about the pre-selection and selection stages are provided in section 3 of this call.

- The candidate cities shall communicate in writing to the Managing Authority their intention to submit an application at the latest one month before the deadline specified in section 4 below "Submission of applications".
- The application shall be written in Slovenian and in English. Both versions must be identical from content and presentation points of view. The English version of the applications will be the working version for the panel established to carry out the selection procedure.
- Candidate cities shall answer all the questions in the relevant questionnaire in annex 1.
- For the pre-selection stage, the English version of the applications shall not exceed 60 pages in A4 format. For the final selection stage, the English version of the applications shall not exceed 100 pages in A4 format. Applicants may include illustrations, graphics or any other visual elements (such as logos), but these are included as part of the page limit.
- For the pre-selection stage, applications shall be sent in paper and electronic formats within the deadline indicated under section 4 below "Submission of applications". For the final selection stage, applications shall be sent in paper and electronic formats within the deadline that will be indicated by the Ministry of Culture to the shortlisted cities after completion of the pre-selection stage.

b. Exclusion criteria

Candidate cities must sign a declaration on their honour certifying that they are not in one of the situations referred to in Article 106(1) and Articles 107, 108 and 109 of the Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union<sup>2</sup>, filling in the relevant form attached in annex 2.

c. Award criteria

The award criteria for the assessment of the applications are divided into six categories corresponding to the provisions laid down in Article 5 of Decision No 445/2014/EU and all six categories have the same weighting:

1. Contribution to the long-term strategy
  2. European dimension
  3. Cultural and artistic content
  4. Capacity to deliver
  5. Outreach
  6. Management
1. As regards the "contribution to the long-term strategy", the following factors shall be taken into account:
    - that a cultural strategy for the candidate city, which covers the action and includes plans for sustaining the cultural activities beyond the year of the title, is in place at the time of its application;
    - the plans to strengthen the capacity of the cultural and creative sectors, including developing long-term links between the cultural, economic and social sectors in the candidate city;
    - the envisaged long-term cultural, social and economic impact, including urban development, that the title would have on the candidate city;

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<sup>2</sup> Financial Regulation of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (Official Journal L 298 of 26.10.2012)

- the plans for monitoring and evaluating the impact of the title on the candidate city and for disseminating the results of the evaluation.
2. As regards the "European dimension", the following factors shall be taken into account:
    - the scope and quality of activities promoting the cultural diversity of Europe, intercultural dialogue and greater mutual understanding between European citizens;
    - the scope and quality of activities highlighting the common aspects of European cultures, heritage and history, as well as European integration and current European themes;
    - the scope and quality of activities featuring European artists, cooperation with operators or cities in different countries, including, where appropriate, other cities holding the title, and transnational partnerships;
    - the strategy to attract the interest of a broad European and international public.
  3. As regards the "cultural and artistic content", the following factors shall be taken into account:
    - a clear and coherent artistic vision and strategy for the cultural programme;
    - the involvement of local artists and cultural organisations in the conception and implementation of the cultural programme;
    - the range and diversity of the activities proposed and their overall artistic quality;
    - the capacity to combine local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental cultural expressions.
  4. As regards the "capacity to deliver", the following factors shall be taken into account:
    - the application has broad and strong political support and a sustainable commitment from the local, regional and national authorities;
    - the candidate city has or will have an adequate and viable infrastructure to hold the title.
  5. As regards "outreach", the following factors shall be taken into account:
    - the involvement of the local population and civil society in the preparation of the application and the implementation of the action;
    - the creation of new and sustainable opportunities for a wide range of citizens to attend or participate in cultural activities, in particular young people, volunteers and the marginalised and disadvantaged, including minorities, with special attention being given to persons with disabilities and the elderly as regards the accessibility of those activities;
    - the overall strategy for audience development, and in particular the link with education and the participation of schools.
  6. As regards "management", the following factors shall be taken into account:
    - the feasibility of the fund-raising strategy and proposed budget, which includes, where appropriate, plans to seek financial support from Union programmes and funds, and covers the preparation phase, the year of the title, the evaluation and provisions for the legacy activities, and contingency planning;
    - the envisaged governance and delivery structure for the implementation of the action which provides, inter alia, for appropriate cooperation between the local authorities and the delivery structure, including the artistic team;
    - the procedures for the appointment of the general and artistic directors and their fields of action;
    - the marketing and communication strategy is comprehensive and highlights that the action is a Union action;
    - the delivery structure has staff with appropriate skills and experience to plan, manage and deliver the cultural programme for the year of the title.

These criteria are explained and illustrated by examples in the Guide for candidate cities, which is available on the websites of the Ministry of Culture and the European Commission at the following addresses:

– [www.mk.gov.si](http://www.mk.gov.si)

– [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en.htm)

### **3. Procedure for the designation of one city as European Capital of Culture and the award of the Melina Mercouri prize**

#### **a. The panel of experts**

A panel of independent experts ("the panel") shall be established to carry out the selection and monitoring procedures.

The role of the panel is to assess the applications received from candidate cities, agree on a list of pre-selected cities as well as recommend one city for being awarded with the title of European Capital of Culture and the Melina Mercouri prize. At the end of the monitoring phase<sup>3</sup>, it is also the role of the panel to issue a report which will be the basis for the Commission's decision to pay or not the Melina Mercury prize to the city.

The panel will consist of up to twelve members.

For the purpose of the pre-selection and selection stages, ten members will be experts appointed by the European institutions and bodies, i.e. European Parliament, Council, Commission and Committee of the Regions, and the Ministry of Culture can appoint up to two members in consultation with the European Commission.

The same experts shall be appointed by the authorising officer of the Commission so as to give a recommendation about the award of the Melina Mercouri prize.

In accordance with Article 6 of Decision No 445/2014/EU, the experts shall be citizens of the Union, shall be independent, have no actual or potential conflict of interest in respect of a specific candidate city and have substantial experience and expertise in the cultural sector, in the cultural development of cities or in the organisation of a European Capital of Culture or an international cultural event of similar scope and scale.

#### **b. Phases of the procedure**

The procedure for designating one city as European Capital of Culture is broken down as follows:

##### **b.1 The selection phase:**

The selection phase is made of two different stages:

##### **- Pre-selection stage**

The Ministry of Culture will organise a pre-selection meeting on a date that will be specified later and published on the Ministry's website inviting all candidate cities which have submitted an application in response to this call in the deadline set below, to send a delegation for a hearing with the panel.

The panel shall assess each candidate city on the basis of its application and hearing against the objectives of the European Capital of Culture action and the criteria as specified in section 2 above.

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<sup>3</sup> More details about the monitoring phase are provided in section 5 of this call.

After this meeting, the panel will agree on a shortlist of candidate cities which shall be invited to revise and complete their application during the final selection stage. It shall issue a pre-selection report containing a general assessment of all the applications, the short-list of candidate cities which are to be considered further as well as recommendations to these cities.

The Republic of Slovenia shall then formally approve the short-list based on the report of the panel and the Ministry of Culture shall send a letter to short-listed candidate cities inviting them to complete and revise their applications, indicating the deadline for submitting such applications.

- Final selection stage

The short-listed candidate cities will complete and revise their applications with a view to complying with the award criteria as well as taking into account the recommendations contained in the pre-selection report. Each pre-selected city will send its revised application to the Ministry of Culture in due time.

At this stage, the panel may wish to pay a visit to the pre-selected cities to get *in situ* a better understanding of the candidacies as well as the level of ownership among the city's inhabitants and key stakeholders.

In any case, the Ministry of Culture will organise a selection meeting on a date to be specified later on the Ministry's website inviting all short-listed cities to send a delegation for a hearing with the panel.

The panel shall assess each short-listed candidate city on the basis of its revised application and hearing against the objectives of the European Capital of Culture action and the criteria as specified in section 2 of this call.

After this meeting, the panel shall agree on the recommendation of a maximum of one city for the title. If none of the candidate cities fulfil all the criteria, the panel may recommend not to award the title in the Republic of Slovenia in 2025.

The panel shall issue a selection report containing a general assessment of all the applications and a justified recommendation for the designation of one city for the title. The report shall also contain recommendations to the city concerned regarding the progress to be made by the year of the title.

b.2 The designation of the city as European Capital of Culture and the award of the Melina Mercouri prize

The Republic of Slovenia shall, based on the recommendation of the panel, designate one city to hold the title European Capital of Culture for the year 2025 and shall notify the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the Committee of the Regions of that designation no later than four years before the title-year.

At the same time it recommends a city for the title, the panel will also recommend the authorising officer of the Commission to award the Melina Mercouri prize to this city.

After the city has been officially designated, the authorising officer of Commission, upon this recommendation, may award it the Melina Mercouri prize which amounts to € 1.500.000<sup>4</sup>.

**4. Submission of applications**

The cities of the Republic of Slovenia wishing to apply for the European Capital of Culture title in 2025 shall reply to this call by filling in the relevant application form in annex 1 (there are two

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<sup>4</sup> Subject to the funding being made available under the relevant Union programme supporting culture.

questionnaires in annex 1: one for pre-selection stage and one more detailed for the final selection), as well as the "declaration of honour" form in annex 2.

Twenty paper copies and one electronic version of each application in English and 3 paper copies and one electronic version of each application in Slovenian must be sent to the following postal address and e-mail address no later than 31 December 2019:

Ministrstvo za kulturo (Ministry of Culture)  
Maistrova 10  
1000 Ljubljana  
Email: [gp.mk@gov.si](mailto:gp.mk@gov.si)

The candidate cities shall communicate in writing their intention to submit an application by 30 November 2019 at the latest.

Applicants will be informed by the Ministry of the receipt of their application within 8 working days.

By submitting an application, cities accept that their e-application at both pre-selection and selection stages be made public on the websites of the Ministry ([www.mk.gov.si](http://www.mk.gov.si)) and the the Commission ([http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en.htm)) at the end of the selection phase.

For formal requirements please refer to section 2 under a) of the call.

## **5. Monitoring and payment of the Melina Mercouri prize**

The Melina Mercouri Prize is awarded in connection with the designation of one city as European Capital of Culture. However, its payment will occur no later than the end of March 2025 provided that the city designated continues to honour the commitments it made at the application stage, still complies with the criteria stipulated in the call and takes into account the recommendations contained in the selection and monitoring reports of the panel.

The commitments made at the application stage shall deemed to have been honoured by the designated city where no substantial change has been made to the programme and the strategy between the application stage and the year of the title, in particular where:

- a) the budget has been maintained at a level capable of delivering a high-quality cultural programme in line with the application and the criteria;
- b) the independence of the artistic team has been appropriately respected;
- c) the European dimension has remained sufficiently strong in the final version of the cultural programme;
- d) the marketing and communication strategy and the communication material used by the designated city clearly reflect the fact that the European Capitals of Culture is an action of the Union;
- e) the plans for the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of the title on the city are in place.

Compliance with these requirements will be assessed by the Commission on the basis of a recommendation made by a panel of independent experts at the end of the monitoring phase, which runs from the designation of the city as European Capital of Culture up to the beginning of the year of the title.

Similarly to the selection process, the monitoring phase is carried out by the panel. The Commission will convene three monitoring meetings between the panel and the designated city in order for the panel to take stock of the preparations for the event and give advice with a view to helping the city to develop a high-quality cultural programme and an effective strategy. After the third meeting, the panel will issue a report which will be the basis for the Commission's

decision to pay or not the Melina Mercouri prize to the city. Please note that the payment of the prize is therefore not automatic.

Once the authorising officer of the Commission has issued the decision regarding the award of the prize, the city accepts that checks and audits by the Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and the Court of Auditors can be carried out.

Regarding the award and payment of the prize, the Law of the Union applies. The competent court or arbitration tribunal to hear disputes is the General Court of the Court of Justice of the European Union:

General Court  
Rue du Fort Niedergrünewald  
L-2925 Luxembourg  
tel.: (352) 4303-1  
e-mail: [GeneralCourt.Registry@curia.europa.eu](mailto:GeneralCourt.Registry@curia.europa.eu)

Financial or administrative penalties, or both, may be imposed on applicants who have made false declarations, or committed irregularities or fraud, in accordance with the conditions laid down in Article 145 of the abovementioned Financial Regulation applicable to the general budget of the European Union and in proportion to the value of the Melina Mercouri prize.

Once the title year ends, the city awarded the title of European Capital of Culture will have to produce an evaluation report using the common guidelines and indicators established by the Commission<sup>5</sup> and transmit it to the European Commission by 31 December of 2026 in accordance with Article 16 of Decision No 445/2014/EU.

## **6. Additional information**

Cities interested in the title may obtain information at the information meeting that will be organised by the Ministry of Culture. Further information regarding the information meeting will be published on the website of the Ministry of Culture.

Information on the European Capital of Culture action can be consulted on the website of the European Commission at the following address: [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/capitals-culture_en.htm).

Candidate cities are advised to read the guide for cities applying for the title of European Capital of Culture, which is available at the same address.

Cities interested in the title can obtain further information from the Ministry of Culture and from the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission at the following address:

Ministrstvo za kulturo (Ministry of Culture)  
Maistrova 10  
1000 Ljubljana  
Email: [gp.mk@gov.si](mailto:gp.mk@gov.si)

European Commission  
DG EAC  
Creative Europe Programme  
J 70 1/234  
1049 Brussels, Belgium  
Email: [EAC-ECOC@ec.europa.eu](mailto:EAC-ECOC@ec.europa.eu)

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<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/documents/ecoc/city-own-guide\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/documents/ecoc/city-own-guide_en.pdf).



The Rules of procedure, specifying in particular the name of the managing authority responsible for organising and managing the competition, as well as the rules for the pre-selection and selection meetings, including the language regime and the organisation of the candidate cities' hearings, will be available by 30 June 2019 at the latest on the website of Ministry of Culture.

In the function of the Minister of Culture

Dr Jernej Pikalo  
Minister of Education, Science and Sport