EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028

PROGRAMME AGREEMENT

between

The Financial Mechanism Committee

established by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway

and

The Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic,

hereinafter referred to as the "National Focal Point",

representing Slovakia,

hereinafter referred to as the "Beneficiary State"

together hereinafter referred to as the "Parties"

for the financing of the Programme "Culture driven local development"

hereinafter referred to as the "Programme"

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Chapter 1
Scope, legal framework, and definitions

Article 1.1
Scope

This Programme Agreement between the Financial Mechanism Committee (hereinafter referred to as the FMC) and the National Focal Point lays down the rights and obligations of the Parties regarding the implementation of the Programme and the financial contribution from the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028 to the Programme.

Article 1.2
Legal Framework

1. This Programme Agreement shall be read in conjunction with the following documents which, together with this Programme Agreement, constitute the legal framework of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028:

a) Protocol 38d to the EEA Agreement on the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028;

b) the Regulation on the implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028 (hereinafter referred to as the "Regulation");

c) the Memorandum of Understanding on the Implementation of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028, entered into between the Donor States and the Beneficiary State; and

d) any guidelines adopted by the FMC in accordance with the Regulation.

2. In case of an inconsistency between this Programme Agreement and the Regulation, the Regulation shall prevail.

3. The legal framework is binding for the Parties. An act or omission by a Party to this Programme Agreement that is incompatible with the legal framework constitutes a breach of this Programme Agreement by that Party.

Article 1.3
Definitions

Terms used and institutions and documents referred to in this Programme Agreement shall be understood in accordance with the Regulation, in particular Article 1.6 thereof, and the legal framework referred to in Article 1.2 of this Programme Agreement.

Article 1.4
Annexes and hierarchy of documents

1. Annexes attached hereto form an integral part of this Programme Agreement. Any reference to this Programme Agreement includes a reference to its annexes unless otherwise stated or clear from the context.

2. The provisions of the annexes shall be interpreted in a manner consistent with this Programme Agreement. Should the meaning of any provision of the said annexes, so interpreted, remain inconsistent with this Programme Agreement, the provisions of the annexes shall prevail, provided that these provisions are compatible with the Regulation.

3. Commitments, statements and guarantees, explicit as well as implicit, made in the preparation of the programme are binding for the National Focal Point and the Programme Operator unless otherwise explicitly stipulated in this Programme Agreement.

Chapter 2
The Programme

Article
2.1 Co-operation

1. The Parties shall take all appropriate and necessary measures to ensure fulfilment of the obligations and objectives arising out of this Programme Agreement.

2. The Parties agree to provide all information necessary for the good functioning of this Programme Agreement, including risk assessment and response analysis, and to apply the principles of implementation as set out in the Regulation.

3. The Parties shall promptly inform each other of any circumstances that interfere or threaten to interfere with the successful implementation of the Programme.

4. In executing this Programme Agreement the Parties declare to counteract corrupt practices. Further, they declare not to accept, either directly or indirectly, any kind of offer, gift, payments or benefits which would or could be construed as illegal or corrupt practice or giving rise to a conflict of interest. The Parties shall immediately inform each other of any indication of corruption or misuse of resources related to this Programme Agreement.

Article 2.2
Main responsibilities of the Parties

1. The National Focal Point is responsible and accountable for the overall management of the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028 in the Beneficiary State and for the full and correct implementation of this Programme Agreement. In particular, the National Focal Point undertakes to:

a) comply with its obligations stipulated in the Regulation and this Programme Agreement;

b) ensure that the Certifying Authority, the Audit Authority and the Programme Operator properly perform the tasks assigned to them in the Regulation and this Programme Agreement;

c) take all necessary steps to ensure that the Programme Operator is fully committed and able to implement and manage the Programme, including ensuring the appropriate allocation of staff and other resources, throughout the programme period;

d) take the necessary measures to remedy irregularities in the implementation of the Programme and ensure that the Programme Operator takes appropriate measures to remedy irregularities in projects within the Programme, including measures to recover misspent funds; and

e) make all the necessary and appropriate arrangements in order to strengthen or change the way the Programme is managed.

2. The FMC shall, subject to the rules stipulated in the legal framework referred to in Article 1.2 of this Programme Agreement, make available to the Beneficiary State a financial contribution (hereinafter referred to as "the programme grant") to be used exclusively to finance the eligible cost of the Programme.

Article 2.3
Objective(s) of the Programme

1. This Programme Agreement sets out the objective(s), outcome(s), outputs, indicators and targets for the Programme.

2. The National Focal Point shall ensure that the Programme Operator implements and completes the Programme in accordance with the objective(s), outcome(s), outputs, indicators and targets set for the Programme.

Article 2.4
Programme grant

1. The maximum amount of the programme grant, the programme grant rate, and the estimated eligible cost of the Programme shall be as specified in this Programme Agreement.

2. The programme budget annexed to this Programme Agreement shall:

a) contain a breakdown between the Programme's budget headings; and

b) indicate the agreed advance payment, if any.

3. The management cost of the Programme Operator shall not exceed the amount specified in this Programme Agreement.

Article 2.5
Special conditions and programme specific rules

1. This Programme Agreement shall list any conditions set by the FMC with reference to Article 6.3.2 of the Regulation. The National Focal Point shall ensure compliance with these conditions and take the necessary steps to ensure their fulfilment.

2. The National Focal Point shall ensure compliance with any other programme specific rules laid down in this Programme Agreement.

Article 2.6
Reporting

The National Focal Point shall ensure that the Programme Operator provides financial reports and a Final Programme Report in accordance with Chapter 9 and Article 6.8 of the Regulation as well as other reporting in accordance with guidelines adopted by the FMC.

Article 2.7
Monitoring and audits

The monitoring and audits referred to in Chapter 10 and Chapter 11 of the Regulation shall not in any way relieve the National Focal Point or the Programme Operator of their obligations under the legal framework regarding monitoring of the Programme and/or its projects, financial control and audit.

Article 2.8
Modification of the Programme

1. Unless otherwise explicitly stipulated in this Programme Agreement, any modification of the Programme is subject to prior approval by the FMC.

2. Budget reallocations to and from calls and pre-defined projects (both within the same outcome and between outcomes) are permitted without a modification of the Programme Agreement or prior approval by the FMC for an amount of up to 10% of the total allocation for each planned call or pre-defined project.

3. Changes to the Programme which have been agreed in their entirety through a modification of the relevant Memorandum of Understanding do not require a modification of the Programme Agreement. In such cases, the Programme Agreement shall be updated by the FMC.

4. Programme specific exceptions from paragraph 1, if any, are set in the annexes to this Programme Agreement.

5. Expenditures in breach of this Article are not eligible.

6. Should there be a doubt as to whether a modification of the Programme Agreement is

required, the National Focal Point shall consult the FMC before such modifications take effect.

7. Requests for modifications shall be submitted and assessed in accordance with Article 6.7 of the Regulation.

Article 2.9
Communication

1. All communication to the FMC regarding this Programme Agreement shall take place in English and be directed to the Financial Mechanism Office (hereinafter referred to as the FMO), which represents the FMC towards the National Focal Point and the Programme Operator in relation to the implementation of the Programme.

2. To the extent that original documents are not available in the English language, the documents shall be accompanied by full and accurate translations in English. The National Focal Point shall bear the responsibility for the accuracy of the translation that it provides and the possible consequences that might arise from any inaccurate translations.

Article 2.10
Contact information

1. The contact information of the Programme Operator is as specified in this Programme Agreement.

2. The contact information for the FMC and the Financial Mechanism Office are:

Financial Mechanism Office

Att: Managing Director

EFTA House

Avenue des Arts, 19H

1000 Brussels

Telephone: +32 (0)2 286 1701

E-mail: fmo@efta.int

3. Changes of or corrections to the contact information referred to in this Article shall be given in writing without undue delay by the Parties to this Programme Agreement.

Article 2.11
Representations and warranties

1. This Programme Agreement and the awarding of the programme grant is based on information provided by, through, or on behalf of the National Focal Point to the FMC prior to the signing of this Programme Agreement.

2. The National Focal Point represents and warrants that the information provided by, through, or on behalf of the National Focal Point, in connection with the implementation or conclusion of this Programme Agreement are authentic, accurate and complete.

Chapter 3
Projects

Article 3.1
Selection of projects and award of grants

1. The National Focal Point shall ensure that the Programme Operator selects projects in accordance with Chapter 7 of the Regulation and this Programme Agreement.

2. Eligibility of Project Promoters and project partners is stipulated in Article 7.2 of the Regulation and, in accordance with paragraph 4 thereof, subject only to the limitations stipulated in this Programme Agreement.

3. Pre-defined projects shall be outlined in this Programme Agreement.

4. The National Focal Point shall take proactive steps to ensure that the Programme Operator complies fully with Article 7.5.2 of the Regulation.

Article 3.2
Project contract

1. For each approved project a project contract shall be concluded between the Programme Operator and the Project Promoter.

2. In cases where a project contract cannot, due to provisions in the national legislation, be made between the Programme Operator and the Project Promoter, the Beneficiary State may instead issue a legislative or administrative act of similar effect and content.

3. The content and form or the project contract shall comply with Article 7.9 of the Regulation.

4. The National Focal Point shall ensure that the obligations of the Project Promoter under the project contract are valid and enforceable under the applicable law of the Beneficiary State.

Article 3.3
Project partners and partnership agreements

1. A project may be implemented in a partnership between the Project Promoter and project partners as defined in point (y) of Article 1.6 of the Regulation. If a project is implemented in such a partnership, the Project Promoter shall sign a partnership agreement with the project partners with the content and in the form stipulated in Article 7.10 of the Regulation.

2. If one of the parties to the agreement is an entity from the Donor States, the partnership agreement

shall be in English and shall be based on a template provided by the FMC.

3. The eligibility of expenditures declared by a project partner is subject to the same rules as would apply if the expenditures were declared by the Project Promoter.

4. The National Focal Point shall ensure that the Programme Operator verifies that the partnership agreement complies with this Article. A draft partnership agreement or letter of intent shall be submitted to the Programme Operator before the signing of the project contract.

Chapter 4
Finance

Article 4.1
Eligible expenditures

1. Without prejudice to Article 8.9 of the Regulation, eligible expenditures of this Programme are:

a) management costs of the Programme Operator in accordance with the detailed budget in the financial plan;

b) payments to projects within this Programme in accordance with the Regulation, this Programme Agreement and the project contract; and

c) payments to activities funded by the bilateral funds allocated to the programme.

2. Expenditures of Project Promoters and project partners are eligible provided that they are in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 8 of the Regulation and any further provisions contained in this Programme Agreement.

3. The first date of eligibility of expenditures in projects shall be set in the project contract in accordance with Article 8.14 of the Regulation. The first date of eligibility of any pre-defined project shall be no earlier than the date of entry into force of the Programme Agreement.

4. The maximum eligible costs of the categories referred to in paragraph 1 are set in this Programme Agreement. Programme specific rules on the eligibility of expenditure set in this Programme Agreement shall be complied with.

Article 4.2
Proof of expenditure

Costs incurred by Programme Operators, Project Promoters and project partners shall be supported by documentary evidence as required in Article 8.12 of the Regulation.

Article 4.3
Proof of conditions fulfilled for simplified cost options

Costs of the Programme Operators, Project Promoters and project partners that are covered by simplified cost options shall be supported by the proof of conditions fulfilled in accordance with Article 8.13 of the Regulation.

Article 4.4
Payments

1. Payments to the Programme shall be made when all relevant conditions for payments stipulated in this Programme Agreement and the Regulation have been fulfilled.

2. Payments to the Programme shall take the form of an advance payment, interim payments and payment of the final balance and shall be made in accordance with Articles 9.2, 9.3 and 9.5 of the Regulation.

3. Payments of the project grant to the Project Promoters may take the form of advance payments, interim payments and payments of the final balance.

4. The National Focal Point shall ensure that payments are transferred in accordance with Article 9.1.2 of the Regulation.

5. Chapter 9 of the Regulation shall apply to all aspects related to payments, including currency exchange rules and handling of interests on bank accounts.

Article 4.5
Transparency and availability of documents

The National Focal Point shall ensure an audit trail for financial contributions from the EEA Financial Mechanism 2021-2028 to the Programme in accordance with Article 9.8 of the Regulation.

Article 4.6
Irregularities, suspension and reimbursements

The FMC has the right to make use of the remedies provided in the Regulation, in particular Chapter 13 thereof. The National Focal Point has a duty to take all necessary measures to ensure that the provisions in Chapter 12 and 13 of the Regulation regarding irregularities, suspension of payments, financial corrections and reimbursement are complied with.

Chapter 5
Final provisions

Article 5.1
Dispute settlement

1. The Parties waive their rights to bring any dispute related to the Programme Agreement before any

national or international court and agree to settle such a dispute in an amicable manner.

2. If a demand for reimbursement to the FMC is not complied with by the Beneficiary State, or a dispute related to a demand for reimbursement arises that cannot be solved in accordance with paragraph 1, the Parties may bring the dispute before Oslo Tingrett.

Article 5.2
Termination

1. The FMC may, after consultation with the National Focal Point, terminate this Programme Agreement if:

a) a general suspension decision according to Article 13.6 of the Regulation or a decision to suspend payments according to point (h) of Article 13.1.1 of the Regulation has not been lifted within 6 months of such a decision;

b) a suspension of payments according to Article 13.1 of the Regulation, other than under point (h) of Article 13.1.1, has not been lifted within one year of such a decision;

c) a request for reimbursement according to Article 13.2 of the Regulation has not been complied with within one year from such a decision;

d) the Programme Operator becomes bankrupt, is deemed to be insolvent, or declares that it does not have the financial capacity to continue with the implementation of the Programme; or

e) the Programme Operator has, in the opinion of the FMC, been engaged in corruption, fraud or similar activities or has not taken the appropriate measures to detect or prevent such activities or, if they have occurred, nullify their effects.

2. This Programme Agreement can be terminated by mutual agreement between the Parties.

3. Termination does not affect the right of the Parties to make use of the dispute settlement mechanism referred to in Article 5.1 or the right of the FMC to make use of the remedies provided in Chapter 13 of the Regulation.

Article 5.3
Waiver of responsibility

1. Any appraisal of the Programme undertaken before or after its approval by the FMC, does not in any way diminish the responsibility of the National Focal Point and the Programme Operator to verify and confirm the correctness of the documents and information forming the basis of the Programme Agreement.

2. Nothing contained in the Programme Agreement shall be construed as imposing upon the FMC or the FMO any responsibility of any kind for the supervision, execution, completion, or operation of the Programme or its projects.

3. The FMC does not assume any risk or responsibility whatsoever for any damages, injuries, or other possible adverse effects caused by the Programme or its projects including, but not limited to inconsistencies in the planning of the Programme or its projects, other project(s) that might affect it or that it might affect, or public discontent. It is the full and sole responsibility of the National Focal Point and the Programme Operator to satisfactorily address such issues.

4. Neither the National Focal Point, the Programme Operator, entities involved in the implementation of projects, nor any other party shall have recourse to the FMC for further financial support or assistance to the Programme in whatsoever form over and above what has been provided for in the Programme Agreement.

5. Neither the European Free Trade Association, its Secretariat, including the FMO, its officials or employees, nor the FMC, its members or alternate members, nor the EFTA States, can be held liable for any damages or injuries of whatever nature sustained by the National Focal Point or the Beneficiary State, the Programme Operator, Project Promoters or any other third person, in connection, be it direct or indirect, with this Programme Agreement.

6. Nothing in this Programme Agreement shall be construed as a waiver of diplomatic immunities and privileges awarded to the European Free Trade Association, its assets, officials or employees.

Article 5.4
Entry into force and duration

1. This Programme Agreement shall enter into force on the date of the last signature of the Parties.

2. This Programme Agreement shall remain in force until five years have elapsed after the date of the acceptance of the Final Programme Report.

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This programme agreement is drawn up in two originals in the English language.

For the Donors	For the National Focal Point
Signed in Brussels on 16/04/2026	Signed in Bratislava on 30/04/2026
.....	.....
Kristin Hansen	Martin Hudzík
FMC Chair	Director General/National Focal Point

Annex I to the Programme Agreement

Roles	
Programme Operator:	Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic
Donor Programme Partner:	Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage (RA) Arts and Culture Norway (ACN) Icelandic Centre for Research (RANNIS)
IPO:	-
Other Programme Partner(s):	-

Indicator	Disaggregation	Unit of measurement	Data source	Baseline	Planned Target[1]
PA05 objective: Increased participation, sustainability, and diversity in culture and cultural heritage.					
Outcome 1: Revitalised and sustainably managed cultural heritage					
Number of revitalised cultural heritage sites used as local cultural or community spaces		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	15
Number of participants that attended cultural, educational or community activities at supported cultural heritage sites		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	7,500
Number of institutions applying preventive conservation practices		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	30
Annual number of monuments monitored by preventive conservation experts		Annual number	Inspection reports	100	150
Output 1.1: Cultural heritage sites restored (adaptive reuse)					
Number of cultural heritage sites restored		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	15
Number of cultural heritage sites restored in disadvantaged areas		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	7
Number of cultural heritage sites restored within UNESCO World Heritage properties		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	5
Number of cultural heritage sites restored with participation from persons in vulnerable situations		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	15
Number of cultural heritage sites restored with climate change mitigation or adaptation measures		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	15

[1] Planned targets included in the above table represent the level of ambition at the time of Programme Agreement conclusion or following major modifications of the Programme. These targets shall not be used to measure the level of success of the programme. Actual targets following project contracting shall be reported on annually in the Country Reports and the Final Programme Report.

Output 1.2: Cultural heritage sustainably managed					
Number of integrated management and operational plans developed		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	15
Number of cultural or community events held in revitalised cultural heritage sites		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	150
Number of events held in revitalised cultural heritage sites co-created with members of vulnerable groups		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	50
Output 1.3: Preventive maintenance and monitoring strengthened					
Number of inspection teams operational		Cumulative number	Project contract	3	5
Number of professionals trained to apply preventive conservation and maintenance practices		Cumulative number	Documentation (agenda, attendance sheets)	0	180
Mobile application for preventive maintenance developed		Binary	Supporting documentation	No	Yes
Manor house revitalisation strategy developed		Binary	Strategies	No	Yes
PA05 objective: Increased participation, sustainability, and diversity in culture and cultural heritage.					
Outcome 2: Cultural participation and artistic freedom strengthened					
Number of local communities with improved access to arts and culture		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	25
Number of people from local communities participating in cultural activities		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	2,500
Output 2.1: Artistic creation, presentation and mobility delivered					
Number of independent artist groups supported		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	5
Number of artists or cultural experts participating in residency sessions / mobility events	Gender	Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	30
Number of arts or cultural events supported		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	180
Output 2.2: Safe and inclusive cultural participation and information integrity enhanced					
Number of events encouraging cultural dialogue and promoting media and information literacy (MIL)		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	15
Number of safe spaces created or regularly operated		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	16
Number of arts or cultural events co- created with members of vulnerable groups		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	30
Output 2.3: Audience development, community participation, and digital reach expanded					
Number of local multi-stakeholder partnerships created		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	8
Number of community-led cultural initiatives delivered		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	30
Number of digital outputs (streams, virtual tours, podcasts, apps) developed		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	30

Number of events that include accessibility measures for people with disabilities		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	30
Output 2.4: Sectoral resilience, knowledge and capacity increased					
Number of artists and cultural professionals either directly involved in project activities or indirectly benefiting from the supported organisations	Gender	Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	200
Number of publicly accessible datasets, methodologies (open evidence base), recommendations / policy briefs created		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	5
Number of independent cultural operators involved in the projects		Cumulative number	Project promoter records	0	20
Bilateral Outcome: Enhanced collaboration between beneficiary and donor state entities involved in the programme					
Level of relevance of the partnership		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4
Level of effectiveness of the partnership		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4
Level of efficiency of the partnership		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4
Level of added value of the partnership		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4
Level of sustainability of the partnership		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4
Level of involvement of the project partner in the project		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4
Level of trust between partners		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4
Level of overall satisfaction with the partnership		Scale 1-5	FMO survey	N/A	4

Conditions

General

1. The maximum level of funding for investment in infrastructure and equipment (hard measures) is set at 60 % of the total eligible expenditure of the Programme. The maximum level under Outcome 1 is set at 75 % of the total eligible expenditure of Outcome 1, and the maximum level under Outcome 2 is set at 20 % of the total eligible expenditure of Outcome 2.

1. The National Focal Point shall ensure that the Programme Operator ensures that Project Promoters:

    - Keep any buildings purchased, constructed, renovated or reconstructed under the project in their ownership for a period of at least 5 years following the completion of the project and continue to use such buildings for the benefit of the overall objectives of the project for the same period;

    - Keep any buildings purchased, constructed, renovated or reconstructed under the project properly insured against losses such as fire, theft and other normally insurable incidents both during project implementation and for at least 5 years following the completion of the project; and

    - Set aside appropriate resources for the maintenance of any buildings purchased, constructed, renovated or reconstructed under the project for at least 5 years following the completion of the project. The specific means for implementation of this obligation shall be specified in the project contract.

Pre-eligibility

Not applicable

Pre-payment

Not applicable

Pre-completion

Not applicable

Post-completion

Not applicable

Eligibility of costs - period	**First date**	**Final date**
Eligibility of costs	06/06/2025	30/04/2032
Grant rate and co-financing		
Programme eligible expenditure (€)		€ 62,164,705.88
Programme grant rate (%)		85.00 %
Maximum amount of Programme grant - EEA Financial Mechanism (€)		€ 52,900,000.00
Maximum amount of Programme grant - Norwegian Financial Mechanism (€)		-
Maximum amount of Programme grant - Total (€)		€ 52,900,000.00

PA	Budget Heading	EEA Grants	Total grant	Programme grant rate	Programme co-financing	Programme eligible expenditure	Grant advance payment
PM	Programme management	€ 3,675,000.00	€ 3,675,000.00	85.00 %	€ 648,529.41	€ 4,323,529.41	€ 432,353.00
PA05	Outcome 1 (EEA Grants)	€ 38,257,000.00	€ 38,257,000.00	85.00 %	€ 6,751,235.29	€ 45,008,235.29	€ 700,000.00
PA05	Outcome 2 (EEA Grants)	€ 10,568,000.00	€ 10,568,000.00	85.00 %	€ 1,864,941.18	€ 12,432,941.18	€ 540,000.00
BF	Bilateral funds at programme level	€ 400,000.00	€ 400,000.00	n/a[2]	n/a[3]	€ 400,000.00	€ 0.00
Total		**€ 52,900,000.00**	**€ 52,900,000.00**	**85.00 %**	**€ 9,264,705.88**	**€ 62,164,705.88**	**€ 1,672,353.00**

Retention of management costs	
Retention of management costs - Percentage of the management costs	10.00 %
Retention of management costs - Planned Euro value	€ 432,352.94

[2] Grant amount of bilateral funds at programme level is not relevant for the calculation of programme grant rate

[3] Grant amount of bilateral funds at programme level is not relevant for the calculation of programme co-financing

Culture driven local development

Operational rules (Annex II)

1. Programme summary

This Annex sets out the operational rules for the programme. The Programme Agreement is based on the MoUs, the Concept Note, and comments made by the FMC. Commitments, statements and guarantees, explicit as well as implicit, made in the Concept Note, are binding for the National Focal Point and the Programme Operator unless otherwise explicitly stipulated in the annexes to this Programme Agreement.

Outcome 1 "Revitalised and sustainably managed cultural heritage" shall be addressed through an open call (Call 1) and a pre-defined project (pre-defined project 1).

Call 1 shall support the sustainable restoration and revitalisation of cultural heritage sites through adaptive reuse and participatory approaches, ensuring their adaptation to local needs and specificities, with focus on sites located in priority districts and dedicated funding to UNESCO World Heritage properties.[4]

Pre-defined project 1 shall strengthen the monitoring and preventive maintenance of cultural heritage sites by building the capacities of teams involved in the inspection, diagnostics and preventive maintenance of national cultural monuments, as well as of property owners.

Outcome 2 "Cultural participation and artistic freedom strengthened" shall be addressed through an open call (Call 2) and two pre-defined projects (pre-defined project 2 and pre-defined project 3).

Call 2 shall reinforce freedom of expression by supporting artistic creation, cultural exchange and mobility, while fostering safe spaces for dialogue and cultural engagement – including for young people, promoting social inclusion and strengthening resilience to disinformation.

Pre-defined project 2 shall establish in the city of Trenčín safe spaces for dialogue, cultural programming, and bilateral exchanges benefiting young people, disadvantaged groups, and local communities through the promotion of reading and media literacy, inclusive cultural programming, and strengthened capacities of cultural professionals.

Pre-defined project 3 shall strengthen Slovakia's cultural sector by providing a clearer and more up-to-date understanding vision of its development and needs through targeted research and the establishment of an exchange platform connecting academics and cultural professionals.

2. Selection of projects

2.1 Calls and availability of funds (including number of calls, duration of calls, and estimated size):

[4] "Priority districts" shall be understood as districts designated in accordance with Act No. 271/2025 Coll. on the Support of Priority Districts and the generally binding legal regulation issued by the Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Informatization of the Slovak Republic, which keeps and publishes the list of priority districts.

Modality	Available amount (€)	Project grant rate (%)	Minimum and maximum project grant amount (€)	Indicative launch date and duration of call
Outcome 1				
Call 1	€41,508,236	100% 95% for projects with non-public entities as project promoter	€850,000 – €5,000,000	Launch date: Q2-Q3 2026 Duration: 3 months
Outcome 2				
Call 2	€9,732,941	100% 95% for projects with non-public entities as project promoter	€200,000 – €700,000	Launch date: Q2-Q3 2026 Duration: 3 months

The project grant rate shall in all cases be set at a level that complies with the State Aid rules in force and takes into account any and all other forms of public support granted to projects. Any remaining costs of the project shall be provided or obtained by the Project Promoter and/or project partners.

Under both calls, projects addressing challenges arising from the invasion of Ukraine shall be granted additional points. Under Call 2, particular attention shall be given to projects aiming to encourage collaborations with Ukrainian artists in Slovakia.

Projects under call 1 shall consist of investments in the sustainable restoration, revitalisation and management of national cultural heritage sites:

- Listed on the Priority Restoration List, or
- That are important for the improvement of the UNESCO World Heritage property, provided that the applicant is the UNESCO site manager, or

- Related to a national minority or ethnic group's heritage, where the intended use demonstrably benefits these communities.[5]

Call 1 specifics:

- The call shall encourage support for vulnerable or marginalised communities through funding the two highest-ranked projects targeting these communities, provided they meet the minimum quality standard.[6]
- Priority shall be given to cultural heritage sites located in priority districts through the award of additional points.
- At least € 20 million shall be allocated to projects focusing on UNESCO World Heritage properties submitted by UNESCO site managers in Banská Štiavnica, Levoča, Spišské Podhradie, Bardejov, and Ružomberok.
- Partnership with Donor state entities shall be encouraged.

Call 2 specifics:

- Priority shall be given to independent cultural operators that operate as inclusive cultural and community hubs.[7]
- The highest-ranked project in each self-governing region implemented in partnership between two or more independent cultural operators shall be supported, provided they meet a minimum quality standard.[8]
- The call shall support the inclusion of vulnerable or marginalised communities through funding the three highest-ranked projects targeting these communities, provided they meet the minimum quality standard. At least one of the projects supported shall address marginalised Roma communities as the primary target group.
- Partnership with Donor state entities is mandatory.

2.2 Eligible applicants and project partners:

Modality	**Eligible applicants**	**Eligible partners**
Call 1	Any entity, public or private, commercial or non-commercial and non-governmental	Any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, as well as non-governmental organisations, established as a legal person either in

[5] For the purposes of this Agreement, "national minority" or "ethnic group" refers to a minority or ethnicity officially recognised as such in the Slovak Republic, in accordance with Article 34 of the Constitution of the Slovak Republic.

[6] For the purposes of this Agreement, "vulnerable or marginalised communities" shall mean communities whose members face structural barriers to participation in cultural and community life due to social, economic, territorial, ethnic, cultural, disability-related or age-related disadvantage, and who are therefore at greater risk of exclusion, underrepresentation, limited access to cultural expression and weaker resilience to disinformation, hate speech and extremism. This includes, in particular, Roma from marginalised Roma communities, social, ethnic and cultural minorities, persons with disabilities, women, and young people in disadvantaged areas or in situations of vulnerability.

[7] For the purposes of this Agreement, "independent cultural operator" shall mean non-public legal entities active in the cultural and creative sectors.

[8] Self-governing regions refers to the "Vyššie územné celky" (VÚC).

	organisations, established as a legal person in Slovakia. Natural persons shall not be eligible.	the Donor States, Beneficiary States or a country outside the European Economic Area that has a common border with Slovakia, or any international organisation or body or agency thereof, actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of a project. Natural persons shall not be eligible.
Call 2	Any entity, public or private, commercial or non-commercial and non-governmental organisations, established as a legal person in Slovakia, and operating in the cultural and creative sectors.[9] Natural persons shall not be eligible. Mandatory partnership with at least one entity from one of the Donor States.	Any public or private entity, commercial or non-commercial, as well as non-governmental organisations, established as a legal person either in the Beneficiary States or a country outside the European Economic Area that has a common border with Slovakia, or any international organisation or body or agency thereof, actively involved in, and effectively contributing to, the implementation of a project. Natural persons shall not be eligible. For Donor State partners: Any entity, public or private, commercial or non-commercial and non-governmental organisations, established as a legal person in one of the Donor States, operating in the cultural or creative sectors. Natural persons shall not be eligible.

[9] For the purposes of this agreement, “cultural and creative sectors” shall be understood according to the definition in Regulation (EU) 2021/818 establishing the Creative Europe Programme (2021 to 2027).

2.3 Selection procedures:

Applications that meet the administrative and eligibility criteria shall be reviewed by three impartial experts. Each of the following entities shall be invited to nominate one expert: the Donor Programme Partners, the Programme Operator and the relevant public institution. All experts shall be independent and external to the entities nominating experts.

All Selection Committees shall include five voting members:

- For Call 1, the members shall be representatives of the following entities: Riksantikvaren, the Programme Operator, the Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic, a member nominated by representatives of civil society and one additional member appointed by the Programme Operator.
- For Call 2 the members shall be representatives of the following entities: Arts and Council Norway, RANNÍS, the Programme Operator, a member nominated by representatives of civil society and one additional member appointed by the Programme Operator.

The Selection Committees shall reach its conclusions through majority votes where no consensus can be reached. The rules and procedure of the Selection Committees shall be included in the call for proposals.

3. Pre-defined projects

1) "Pro Monumenta III"

Project Promoter:	The Monuments Board of the Slovak Republic
Donor project partner(s):	Norwegian Directorate for Cultural Heritage (RA)
Other project partner(s):	Diocese of Spiš (SK) Diocese of Nitra (SK)
Total maximum eligible costs:	€ 3,500,000
Project grant rate:	100.00 %
Maximum project grant amount:	€ 3,500,000
Estimated duration:	40 months

Building on the achievement of two previous initiatives (Pro Monumenta I and II), the project aims to strengthen the monitoring and preventive maintenance of cultural heritage by enhancing the capacities of monument administrators and property owners in inspection, diagnosis, and preventive management. It will develop modern digital tools for this purpose and promote broader public awareness. Together, these efforts will help establish a robust network dedicated to the sustainable care of cultural heritage while supporting local development and improving climate resilience. The methodology and expertise gained will be transferred to other countries, including the Donor States.

Key activities shall include:

- **Strengthening expertise and skills in preventive maintenance** through regular courses, trainings, and workshops for employees of major public and church administrators of National Heritage Sites.
- **Enhancing digital tools and integrating new technologies** including the development of a specialised mobile application using data from existing digital databases as well as the preparation of methodologies and manuals for damage prevention and climate adaptation of national monuments.
- **Public educational and awareness-raising activities** such as broadcasting targeted thematic programmes on the maintenance of monuments, modernising the project's website, and organising educational and promotional events.
- **International transfer of knowhow**, including the introduction of similar preventive maintenance systems abroad, professional internships, exchanges of methodologies and good practice among partners, and the exploration of innovative solutions and sustainable-use opportunities for manor houses and small manors.

2) "Culture SiTY / Kultúra SiTY"

Project Promoter:	City of Trenčín
Donor project partner(s):	WEXFO - World Expression Forum Bodø2024 Legacy AS Hamsunsenteret (The Hamsun Centre)
Other project partner(s):	Creative Institute Trenčín (SK)
Total maximum eligible costs:	€ 2,200,000
Project grant rate:	100.00 %
Maximum project grant amount:	€ 2,200,000
Estimated duration:	48 months

The project addresses the challenges posed by polarisation and disinformation by strengthening democratic resilience and social inclusion in a medium-sized city, through the enhancement of its cultural spaces and the reinforcement of networks with Nordic partners and smaller Slovak towns. It is based on the bilateral initiative *Culture Connects – Trebø More Culture* (2024–2025).

The project aims to establish safe spaces for dialogue, culture programming, and bilateral exchanges in the city of Trenčín and Norway, as well as in Iceland through Artist in Residence programs. Building further on the partnership with the European Capital of Culture Bodø 2024, these activities will benefit young people, disadvantaged groups, and local communities, thereby deepening the progress achieved in the context of its designation as European Capital of Culture 2026.

Structure around three main strands, key activities shall include:

1. **Promotion of reading and media literacy** to build a symbolic home of freedom, through activities involving public libraries, literature, and storytelling festivals in Norway and Slovakia, and the municipality's cultural and education departments. This includes, inter alia, the creation of a Youth Community Centre at Fiesta Bridge and the delivery of youth-driven events to design and implement a wide range of creative, educational, civic and international activities that complement and connect with existing programmes in the city.

2. **Inclusive cultural programming**, with activities focused on accessibility and audience engagement, supported by international participation in events (such as festivals, amateur football matches, etc.).
3. **Strengthened capacities of cultural professionals**, through the organisation of targeted capacity-building activities—particularly supporting emerging professionals, women, and single parents.

3) "Contemporary Culture Forum: Research-Driven Insights and Strategies"

Project Promoter:	Faculty of Arts, Comenius University Bratislava
Donor project partner(s):	Arts and Culture Norway (ACN)
Total maximum eligible costs:	€ 500,000
Project grant rate:	100.00 %
Maximum project grant amount:	€ 500,000
Estimated duration:	48 months

The project aims to provide a clearer and more up-to-date understanding of the Slovak cultural sector, enabling the development of more inclusive, evidence-based, and sustainable cultural policies. Centred on research and the analysis of systemic sectoral challenges, the initiative will support the testing and implementation of innovative approaches by equipping both public and independent cultural institutions with tailored methodological frameworks designed to enhance cultural practices across the sector.

Thus, the project responds to the increasing uncertainty in the cultural sector due to outdated operational models, a persistent gap between theory and practice, and a lack of strategic vision with insufficient research and data which makes it difficult for institutions to respond to major societal shifts while lacking practical tools to create meaningful and inclusive cultural content.

Key activities shall include:

- **Joint reflection and knowledge exchange** through the establishment of a dedicated experts forum intended to provide sectoral analyses and stimulate innovation.
- **Comprehensive mapping and analysis of the cultural sector**, generating insights into on-the-ground realities and the professional environment in which cultural actors operate.
- **The development of policy recommendations**, facilitated by co-design formats that ensure the effective translation of theory into operational guidelines.
- **Targeted engagement of key stakeholder groups**, with particular attention to Slovak and Norwegian experts, to foster long-term bilateral cooperation.

4. Bilateral relations

The funds for bilateral relations at programme level shall contribute to strengthening cooperation and shared cultural development, capacity building, and research collaboration between Slovakia and the Donor States. Support shall, inter alia, be provided to the following:

1. Management of UNESCO heritage sites
2. Fostering synergies with other relevant UNESCO instruments (both the 2003 and 2005 Conventions and the World Heritage Leadership Programme)
3. Supporting the organisation of conferences, events, learning laboratories and study visits that relate to the programme's thematic priorities
4. Match-making events to initiate collaboration and support the preparation of joint projects between Slovak organisations and partners from the Donor States.

The further use of the bilateral funds allocated to the programme shall be agreed between the Programme Operator and the Donor Programme Partners in the Cooperation Committee.

The Cooperation Committee shall consist of representatives of the Programme Operator and the Donor Programme Partners. The Programme Operator and the Donor Programme Partners shall agree on the rules and procedures applicable to the Cooperation Committee.

The Slovak Ministry of Culture and the Slovak Monuments Board shall be members of the Cooperation Committee.

5. Programme management and financial parameters

5.1 Special rules on eligibility of costs:

- Management costs shall take the form of eligible direct staff costs actually incurred and a flat rate of 30% of eligible direct staff costs, covering all remaining costs, in line with Article 8.7 in the Regulation.

5.2 Programme administrative structures:

- The Programme Operator shall ensure that all supported projects and activities are consistent with the values and principles set out in Article 1.3.1 of the Regulation, and abstains from supporting operations that may fail to do so, through procedures described in, inter alia, the management and control systems and the project contract. The project selection procedure shall be conducted in accordance with the values and in a transparent and non-discriminatory manner. The Programme Operator shall during project selection and prior to signing project contracts, assess the compliance of the project activities and all entities involved within the project with the common values listed in Article 1.3.1 of the Regulation. Concerns regarding compliance with the values may be raised by the impartial experts scoring the projects and during the Selection Committee meetings, and shall be recorded in the minutes of the meeting. An obligation on continued compliance with the values, including clear indications of the consequences for failure to do so, shall be included in the project contract. The project contract shall also require that the values listed in Article 1.3.1 of the Regulation are reflected in governance, decision-making, internal procedures and communication with partners. Throughout project implementation, projects shall report on compliance with the values, and the PO shall carry out substantive monitoring on this aspect. Suspected breaches of the principles of implementation shall constitute a risk factor, and influence selection for verifications and monitoring. Both administrative and on-the spot verifications may be

conducted, as appropriate. The Programme Operator is committed to take corrective measures where necessary at all stages of the project lifecycle in cases of non-compliance with the values.

6. Miscellaneous

N/A