

City of Martin
Candidacy Project
for the Title of the
European Capital
of Culture 2026

Bide book
Pre-selection stage







2026

MARTIN

európske
hlavné
mesto
kultúry

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The Slovak Chamber Theatre is located in the National House, where they laid the foundations of organized Slovak theatrical life, museology, librarianship, ethnography and enlightenment at the end of the 19th century

Our project will benefit the city, the region and also Slovakia

We live in a globalised world in which everything is connected to everything. Not only among people but also at the level of states, continents, territorial units, settlements ... Our life is much more diverse, more colourful, more open than in the past. For several years now, we have not only been the people of one country, but we are part of a community of nations based on the principles of freedom, democracy and human rights. Membership of the European Union is of great importance to our economy, education and many other areas - including culture; and it is culture that brings diversity and difference to our world. Again, however, in its own continuity and external open synergy and influence. European cultures together form an exceptional mosaic based on the values of mutual respect and co-belongings that you will not find anywhere else in history, and probably not even at present.

For Slovaks, the City of Martin is a centre and symbol of national culture. It was and still is the scene of important events, the birthplace or residence of significant personalities of national and cultural life, and the capital of culture for Slovaks at home and abroad. Every street in the city, every building or square could talk for a long time about the people and the stories that have forever influenced the history and direction of Slovak culture. The past has created a unique basis for us to proudly continue today and to continue the development of Slovak culture. However, the world has changed and globalisation, in the best sense of the word, has not bypassed Martin. In the streets of the city you will meet hundreds of foreign students from 31 countries of the world - from the Seychelles to Iceland. Our institutions are reaching a world-class level and are developing and prospering despite the difficult times facing the world in the form of a pandemic.

The culture of the city has also changed. It is different. In Martin there are traditional institutions side by side that have shaped the Slovak nation, together with young alternative groups from which you can clearly feel new elements, genres or goals. This is the uniqueness of our city, with which no other city in Slovakia can compare. Martin was, is and always will be a city of culture. It will always be different, it will always indicate the direction of travel. We, proud Martiners, will take care of that.

The poet and public official Laco Novomeský once said that just as a building stands not only on supporting pillars, but also on mutually supportive forces, so the cultural building of nations adheres to forces that support each other. Today the national culture of Slovaks is no longer evolving and is not creating itself and only for itself. It is the diversity of Europe that gives it a new dimension and direction. The element of every other nation strengthens and enriches it at the same time, and vice versa. Slovak culture influences and becomes part of the European mosaic. We in Martin believe that a great future awaits and we will do everything we can to help. Also as the European Capital of Culture in 2026.

prof. MUDr. Ján Danko, CSc.
Mayor

In Martin, on St. Martin Day - November 11, 2020



Seat of the
Turiec Gallery
in the historic
building
of the former
county house
(built in 1772)

INTRODUCTION

Why does Martin bid for the title of the European Capital of Culture?

There has long been a certain perception in Slovakia that cultural and artistic life occurs spontaneously or it is organised by various institutions, and that is all. However from the point of view of the future of Martin (not only), such and similar thinking are both detrimental and also harmful. So far, there has been no will and interest in the metropolis of Turiec to engage creativity, invest and revive the story with a strong potential to attract people locally and from around the world. We used to call such activity a creative industry today. Conclusions of many expert studies clearly state that the so-called cultural and creative economy has a major impact on various vital functions of the city. In this context, it is necessary to stop understanding culture as a "superstructure" and a wasteful eater of money also in Martin. Namely, it is a key factor in terms of economic prosperity, social cohesion, lifestyle of the population, attractiveness for domestic and international tourism, a sense of honour and citizens belonging to the city ... At the same time culture attracts an educated workforce, offers the possibility of creative self-realisation, education, personal growth, international exchange ...

Through a candidacy project called MARTIN '26, the local creative community intends to change the city through culture. It is convinced that re-evaluating the function of culture in the modern information age and re-evaluating its organization at the municipal and regional level can trigger fundamental positive changes in the transition from the industrial age to the era of the educational society.

Participation in the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture is also fully in line with the rich traditions and significance of the Turiec metropolis in the history of Slovakia, which is also declared by the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 241/1994 Coll. on Martin as the Centre of National Culture of Slovaks.

Does Martin plan to involve its surroundings as well? Explain, why you made that decision.

This dimension is called „Touches and Connections“ in the city's project - according to an extremely successful play from the repertoire of the Slovak Chamber Theatre in Martin. The project will organically involve all villages and municipalities within the Turiec Region, institutions, societies and associations that are active not only in the city but also in the whole area: cultural, educative, artistic, educational and scientific institutions, civic, professional and interest associations (non-profit organizations, third sector), IT sector, church communities, organization of Scandinavian students of medicine at the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine (Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark, Finland), associations of national minorities, Roma community, association of handicapped citizens ...

A special category is the involvement and participation of Martin partner (so called twinned) cities from abroad: Jičín (Czech Republic), Hoogeveen (The Netherlands), Békéscaba (Hungary), Gotha (Germany), Kalisz (Poland), Báčsky Petrovec (Serbia), Ningbo (China), and co-operating cities abroad as Rijeka (Croatia) and Akureyri (Iceland).

Martin is a member of the Cooperation Network of Medium-Sized European Cities based in Sankt Pölten (Austria).

Written supporting opinions or acceptance letters sent by Martin's partners in connection with its candidacy are published on the website

<https://www.martin.sk/europske-hlavne-mesto-kultura-2026/ds-2152/p1=78621>

(comments on social networks as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn).

On 19 February 2020, representatives of all institutions, societies and civic associations operating in Martin and the Turiec Region had a meeting at the Municipal Office. They unanimously

declared their support for Martin's candidacy for the ECOC 2026 title. As of that date, a delegated six-member preparatory committee has been working to communicate with partners, evaluate projects delivered to it by 10 October 2020 on the basis of a published public call, and prepare an application for the candidacy project.

The Preparatory Committee decided to involve its surroundings because the project will be of benefit for the whole region. It is a project for the future and intensive support of culture, the arts, education, the creative industries, cultural infrastructure, science and research, the environmental sphere, regional development and tourism. It is a project about the future of the inhabitants of the city and the Turiec Region, especially young people who are not only looking for and finding work in the city, but also cultural, artistic, spiritual and intellectual activities. It is a project for all who will want to be involved in the preparation and implementation of a number of actions and programmes. They will thus have a unique opportunity to build an environment of creativity, innovation, creativity and the sustainability of cultural strategy. As the primary ambition and long-term goal of the candidacy project is the transformation and all-round development of the city and the region, the active involvement and participation of as many people and diverse components of the civic spectrum as possible will be essential and irreplaceable.

Overall Cultural Profile of Martin

Martin is the heart of Slovakia; a vibrant heart that for at least 100 years has driven cultural life to other regions of Slovakia. After the Second World War however Martin underwent a fundamental change that moved it from the city of culture, literature and art to the position of industrial city. Martin's central position in the cultural life of Slovakia was taken over by Bratislava. The candidacy for the title of the European Capital of Culture 2026 offers the city leadership and its citizens a unique opportunity to think and define the directions for the future all-round development of both Martin and the Turiec Region.

The City of Martin is located roughly in the geographical centre of Slovakia, about halfway between the capital of Bratislava and the City of Košice. Together with the nearby town of Vrútky they form conurbation in which approx. 65 thousand inhabitants live. Nearby there are towns that all together with Martin belong to one self-governing region. These are Žilina (85 thousand inhabitants), which is the administrative centre of the Žilina Self-Governing Region, Ružomberok (about 30 thousand inhabitants), Dolný Kubín (20 thousand inhabitants) and the popular spa town Turčianske Teplice (7 thousand inhabitants).

The town of Martin was founded at the beginning of the 12th century, the oldest surviving written record dates from 1284. From the middle of the 19th century until 1918, Martin was the natural capital of Slovakia, although not administratively approved. As already mentioned elsewhere, the present Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 241/1994 defines the City of Martin as the Centre of the National Council of Slovaks, which naturally motivates to take such a position in the wider European area.

Martin is a city that in the Slovak context is considered the motherland of domestic modern art. It has many years of experience in organizing major cultural events and one of the oldest traditions in Europe in this area. In 2026, for example, it will be the 165th anniversary of the Memorandum of the Slovak Nation adopted in Martin with the participation of thousands of people from all over Slovakia, the 163rd anniversary of the Martin August Cultural Festival, the 104th Theatre Harvest Festival - the oldest non-professional theatre festival in Europe, and the 60th anniversary of the Literary Spring - the oldest literary festival in Slovakia (the mentioned events used to have regular international participation).

After the capital of the Slovak Republic, Bratislava, Martin is home to the largest number of nationwide cultural institutions and, through the Slovak National Library, with its headquarters in Martin, is connected to the education of the whole world. Also other institutions that actively cooperate with foreign partners have had seats in Martin for a long time. In addition to the already mentioned Slovak National Library with its Literary Museum, Literary Archive, the National Biographical Institute and the Slovak Genealogical and Heraldic Society, there is also the Slovak National Museum (under its founding Ethnographic Museum, the Open-Air Museum of the Slovak Village - the largest ethnographic exposition in nature in Slovakia, the Andrej Kmeť Museum,

the Martin Benka Museum, the Museum of Czech Culture in Slovakia, the Museum of Roma Culture in Slovakia), Matica slovenská (the oldest Slovak cultural and scientific institution), Živena (the oldest Association of Slovak Women), the Slovak Chamber Theatre, the Turiec Gallery, the Turiec Library, the Museum of the Slovak Red Cross. Moreover, the Neografia Printing Company has been one of the absolute leaders in the book-printing industry for many decades (founded in 1943) and cooperates - literally - with the whole world. Amphitheatre in Martin with its capacity about 20 thousand seats is the oldest functional amphitheatre in Slovakia (in 2026, it will be the 85 anniversary of its construction).

An integral part of Martin's current cultural profile is also the private galleries, literary cafés, civic, professional and interest associations, educational institution and the societies of national minorities, disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Mention should also be made to the rich cultural-social and sporting activities of the large community of Scandinavian students of medicine at the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine, Comenius University in Martin. In 2026, a city from Finland will be also the European Capital of Culture, so the involvement of Scandinavian students in Martin's Candidacy Project will be multidimensional.

The city regularly hosts various festivals and competitions with both national and international art events. The Touches and Connections Festival is the largest exhibition of Slovak professional theatre. Additionally there is an international children's drawing competition of the Biennial of Fantasy and the Biennial of Book Art, which also has an international stance.

For the needs of a wide range of cultural and artistic events in Martin and its surroundings there are many buildings, or interior units, exterior areas and public spaces.

For example, there are many cultural areas such as an amphitheatre, theatre, gallery, Millennium (winner of the Construction of the Year in Slovakia 2003), the House of Trade Unions Strojár, and renovated spacious building of the former Bar Chamber, cinemas, libraries with their branches in residential areas, a pedestrian zone with the Millennium building in the city centre as well as garden pavilions, gazebos, parks, fountains, squares, cultural houses and recreation zones in housing estates, embankments. For sport there are swimming pools, a multi-functional sports hall, football and athletic stadium, an Airport situated in the Tomčany city district, and a large area of the former Warehouse of Intendance Material SIM (future SIM Art-Center). There are former industrial spaces, an area of the old hospital which now has vacant buildings, unused underpasses and overpasses, roofs of modern buildings, large staircases leading to cultural institutions,

There are ski resorts in Martinské hole Hills, in the Jasenská Valley and in Valča, pedestrian zone and a synagogue in Vrútky, spa complex in Turčianske Teplice, natural amphitheatre in Blatnica, mansions and manors, ruins of the Blatnica Castle, the Sklabiňa Castle and the Zniev Castle with their grounds, important archaeological sites ...).

To the issue of building, modernizing and expanding Martin's cultural infrastructure in connection with the Candidacy Project for the title of the European Capital of Culture 2026 will be given more space elsewhere.

Concept of the Programme to be implemented in the event of being appointed the European Capital of Culture

MARTIN '26 is a project of long-term multi-development of the city through culture. Naturally, both the entire project and the programme in 2026 aims to bring sustainable activities with a long-term effect on the cultural life of the city and the Turiec Region. The concept of the programme is therefore logically not based on the planning of one-off cultural events in 2026. On the contrary, it is a process of long-term development of a favourable creative environment and stimulating conditions for cultural operators in Martin, its immediate and more distant surroundings. In order to achieve the European dimension of the events, the programme structure will focus on deepening international partnerships and support for long-term cooperation of cultural operators from northern and central Slovakia. An equally important aspect will be the comprehensive support for new artistic initiatives with a long-term perspective.



*Roman Catholic Church
of St. Martin
- the oldest building
in the city
(built in the 13th century)*

Already the name of the City of Martin symbolically expresses the fact that various artistic genres form an important dimension of the city, that art is "IN" here and that contemporary Martin has the ambition to be "in" in art again. The content of the term "ART" in the European Capital of Culture (ECOC) Project will materialize into the implementation of specific activities in seven arts, which will be given due attention in 2026 (not only). Specifically: the Art of Word, the Art of Picture, the Art of Action, the Art of Sound, the Art of the Media, the Art of Reflection, the Art of Life.

In this project, "Art" will be understood in a broad, so to speak, ancient sense. For people art is everything that is inspiring, nice, good, meaningful ... In 2026, Martin can open up to diverse cultural activities, which will take place with the support of a wide range of residents of the city, the Turiec Region, various institutions, civic associations, non-profit organizations, twinned and partner towns ... The competition for the title of the ECOC 2026 motivates to re-evaluate the whole current conception of culture in Martin and to create strategic frameworks for its qualitatively different all-round development.

The strategic programme plan of the Seven Arts assumes that the "art" projects will be seven times "In" – i.e. innovative, intercultural, interactive, interdisciplinary, inspiring, intensive and thus inviting participants and spectators from all over Slovakia and abroad to Martin.

In terms of strengthening cultural infrastructure, the project envisages investments in reconstruction and modernization of the following buildings: the SIM complex in Priekopa (future SIM ArtCenter), the Amphitheatre in Martin and the Moskva (Moscow) Cinema. Over the course of five years these buildings will be transformed into a type of modern cultural infrastructure that will bring the city long-term development, a new identity and attendance. This is a key factor in terms of Martin's ambition to advance to the finals, i.e. to be among the four Slovak cities, of which the winner - the European Capital of Culture 2026 will be known in the course of 2021. In addition to the seven key projects (sectors), in each of the Seven Arts will take place as well as a series of other events, which together will create a comprehensive programming structure for 2026. These will be actions that will be of an exceptional nature and character in the relevant year. The creation and implementation of these events should fulfill two important functions of the ECOC Project.

1. To support the comprehensive involvement of citizens living in the city and its surroundings, to achieve popular participation from the local, regional to European level, to involve actors from the world of culture, art and socio-economic environment. It is based on the rich tradition and offer of culture and art in the city and its surroundings, on the proven cooperation of many entities in the cultural sphere.
2. To promote dialogue at a European level, get to know European citizens, highlight commonalities as well as the diversity of European cultures, initiate, enhance and facilitate cooperation between cultural entities, artists and cities from the particular Member States of the European Union in each cultural field.

The programme is composed of events that are stimulating in the medium and long term, and will have a major impact on the all-round cultural development of the city and the region, on sustainable cooperation and on its European dimension. The programme also aims to attract as many foreign fans of culture or tourists to this beautiful region with many natural beauties. Systematic support for tourism at a European level is one of the main pillars of the project.



*Historic first building
of Matica slovenská
(today Literary
Museum of the Slovak
National Library)
- national
cultural monument
(built in 1865)*

1. CONTRIBUTION TO LONG-TERM STRATEGY

Cultural strategy established in the city at the time of the application submission, including plans to maintain cultural activities after one year of title

The current cultural strategy is defined in the Programme of Economic, Social and Cultural Development of the City of Martin for the years 2016 - 2023 (hereinafter referred to as PESCD). Representatives of all major cultural and educational organisations operating in the city, civic, professional and interest associations actively participated in the process of its formation. In 2014 - 2015 these representatives, together with relevant employees of the municipal office and members of the Local Parliament, met at regular meetings of five working groups organised by the document compiler - the Development Agency of the Žilina Self-Governing Region. Public participation, whether in the form of 1400 completed questionnaires or in the form of citizens' contributions to the two public hearings of the document, also contributed to a more targeted focus of its strategic objectives and measures. These were subsequently reflected into 44 project plans in the action plan.

In accordance with the valid legislation, the PESCD is a medium-term strategic document, it is prepared in accordance with the goals and priorities set out in the National Strategy for Regional Development of the Slovak Republic, takes into account the goals and priorities of the Žilina Self-Governing Region and other national, regional and local conceptual and strategic documents. The focus chapters of the PESCD are also in line with the current strategic documents of the European Union - especially with the Europe 2020 Strategy.

In accordance with the requirements of the Act No. 539/2008, the PESCD is divided into:

- a** Analytical part - contains mainly the analysis of the initial position of the city and the region, estimation of future development, identification of internal potential and limits of its development
- b** Strategic part - contains the strategy of development of the city and the region, the main objectives and priorities of development in the coming period
- c** Programme part - contains a list of measures and activities to achieve the defined objectives, divided by defined areas (Transport and Infrastructure, Human Resources, Culture, Sport, Tourism)
- d** Implementation part - describes the organizational arrangements for the implementation of the program, including the system of monitoring and evaluation of its priorities
- e** Financial part - defines the resources for financial provision of the implementation of measures and activities

Cultural activists, motivated by the Martin's Candidacy Project for the ECOC title, in 2020 initiated updates, changes and additions to the mentioned Plan of Economic, Social and Cultural Development. The main objective of updating the strategy document was to strengthen the role and importance of a culture that cannot be an isolated discipline. On the contrary, it must be organically linked to education, the creative industries, urbanism, tourism, sport, the business sector and, last but not least, human resources development. Only in this way can the sustainable development of culture, as well as the maintenance of cultural activities after 2026, be ensured. The Preparatory Committee of Martin's Candidacy together with the members of the Culture Commission at the Local Parliament are currently working intensively on updating the PESCD which will be completed in April 2021.

An important part of the city's cultural strategy is the systematic care of cultural monuments. There are currently 139 items entered in the Register of Immovable Cultural Monuments in Martin. In summary, the metropolis of Turiec has the highest number of registered national cultural monuments from the districts of the Žilina Region. The monument zones Martin (declared in 1994) and Kláštor pod Znievom (declared in 1996) should also be mentioned. The condition of local monuments in good condition is comparable to the average of the Slovak Republic and the proportion of monuments in a satisfactory condition is much higher in the City of Martin compared to the national average. On the contrary, the share of disturbed immovable cultural monuments does not reach the national average. Not a single immovable monument is registered here in a desolate condition, while at the national level this is at 6% of monuments.

With the support of multiple funds (the European Regional Development Fund, the Norwegian Financial Mechanism, grant programmes of the Slovak Republic, as well as from the sources of the City of Martin and the Žilina Self-Governing Region) in recent years several historical monuments have been reconstructed and modernized. These include the Turiec Gallery, the Turiec Library, the Andrej Kmeť Museum, the Kohút's Villa, the building of the former Bar Chamber, as well as repair of roof shingles in the Open-Air Museum of the Slovak Village. The Martin Benka Museum is currently under general reconstruction. A special category is the National Project of Digitization of more than 2.5 million items directed by the Slovak National Library in Martin.

The City of Martin is not the founder of any memory or fund institution. As their owner it carries out its activities in the field of cultural infrastructure in the form of protection, maintenance and repairs of cultural monuments. The dominant part of them is located in the National Cemetery - an exceptional cultural monument of national to European importance. The current infrastructure owned by the city, which is used for the development of cultural, artistic and community life, includes the Turiec Gallery, the City Stage, the Moskva (Moscow) Cinema, former Bar Chamber building, House of Jozef Cíger-Hronský, amphitheatre, buildings and premises of former Warehouses for Intendance Material, primary art school, cultural house in the Záturčie suburb and a cultural dayroom in the Bambusky part which serves the Roma community.

The city's plans to strengthen the capacity of cultural and creative sectors, including the development of long-term connections between these sectors and the city's economic and social sector

The economy and the national-economic connections are undoubtedly crucial for society. According to Max Weber, however, modern economic reality depends fatally on the culturally based dispositions of individuals and social groups, on the quality of their ideas and on culturally conditioned beliefs. In a sense, even culture is superior to politics and economics, while the preservation and reproduction of culture as a sphere of institutions, symbols and social rituals is a crucial component of the stability of individual and community life. It is a strong support of life, as it provides an understandable form.

Based on the project, the City of Martin will become an intelligent city, flexibly responding to demographic development and benefiting from its location at a major traffic junction in the Turiec basin with many opportunities for all-round development of culture, art, the creative industries, tourism and sport, with a rich offer of cultural-social activities that will improve the quality of life of local people, domestic tourists, as well as tourists from Europe and the rest of world.

Martin is a young, modern, cultural city whose inhabitants have a tradition of distributing their culture to others. Looking out to the future, sustaining and constantly developing these attributes is a major challenge for the city as such for the people living in it. It was this internal motive that led it to the candidacy because the young modern and cultural city of the future is an innovative, open and collaborative city. As such, Martin sets the highest goals and accepts the greatest challenges. Therefore, it will be necessary to strengthen the capacity of the cultural and creative sectors, including the development of long-term connections between these se-

ctors and the economic and social sector in the city. The fundamental line of gradual implementation of this far-reaching plan is outlined in the Programme of Economic, Social and Cultural Development of the City of Martin for the years 2016 - 2023. The prepared updates and clarifications of this strategic document will already contain proposals for specific solutions.

The main intention of the project is to ensure that individual events take place in all existing cultural facilities (old and new) and public spaces. Programme themes are designed and implemented in cooperation with investment projects to take into account the gradation, culmination and their sustainability after 2026. The basic goal of investment projects is the reconstruction and modernization of cultural, memory and fund institutions and buildings that have the potential use for planned cultural, social and artistic events within the content fulfilment of the MARTIN '26 Project. These institutions and facilities, which with their overall programme focus strive for the development of culture in the city and region, have three founders - the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic, the Žilina Self-Governing Region and the City of Martin. The investment projects of the listed entities will play a cardinal role.

The main investment projects of the city to strengthen capacity will be the creation of the SIM ArtCenter in a large area of the former Warehouse of Intendance Material SIM, general reconstruction and modernization of the oldest and largest amphitheatre in Slovakia and the Moskva (Moscow) Cinema, which will become key places for fulfilling the intentions of the cultural and creative sectors. The outlook plans also include the creation of a new multifunctional part of the city from the former (now abandoned) buildings of the Neografia Printing Company with a large area, as well as a complex of hospital buildings with a huge area. In this context, it should be noted that in the coming years, the University Hospital in Martin will be completely moved to the newly-built premises above the city. In addition to the economic, social, administrative, business and entrepreneurial dimensions, the outlined multifunctional part will create an interesting space for rich cultural and artistic activities, creative industries and broad-based social life. In addition to the overall improvement of living standards right in the city centre, this will be directly related to the creation of new job opportunities, the use of qualified human resources and the deepening of the international dimension of Martin and the surrounding Turiec Region.

In the foreseeable future a decision will be made on the fate of the Révay Mansion in Turčianska Štiavnička which consists of a large park situated amongst fascinating natural scenery nine kilometres far from Martin. The city will make every effort to obtain this unique historical monument in its administration, which would from the point of view of the Candidacy Project (but not only) mean a huge potential for interior and exterior use.

The authors of the Martin's Candidacy Project are convinced that culture can significantly help to define the city's new identity. In defining the identity of its forgotten spaces - unused buildings, premises inaccessible to the public, closed production halls, where the forgotten fame shared by a large part of the city's inhabitants can be found. The public re-use of these spaces will act not only as an integration moment for the people who have worked there for many years, but also as an important economic and social aspect of the community. Strengthening the capacity of the cultural and creative sectors intends to combine the Martin's Candidacy Project with the transformation of the city centre, where new buildings will be built intended primarily for the culture, art and the creative industry.

Involvement of the European Capital of Culture event in the city's strategy

The fact that the ECOC event will be involved as an integral part of Martin's strategic development plans can be considered the biggest benefit of participating in the project - regardless of the fact how the competition of Slovak cities will end. The administrative conditions for the ECOC 2026 programme to be part of the city's development and to be of a permanent nature will be incorporated into the city's strategic document (PESCD) and the action plan based on it - the Culture Development Plan (CDP). In both of the mentioned documents, but especially in the CDP, a specific personal responsibility will be set for the fulfilment of individual tasks. Organizationally, the designated employees of the municipal office and the entire non-profit or-

ganization "Martin 26", which would be established immediately in the case of Martin's progress to the selection phase. Although the city would contribute to the activities from its budget, the non-profit organisation would constantly communicate and work with sponsors who would make a significant financial contribution to the implementation of the project.

The involvement of the ECOC event in the city's strategy would significantly affect the sphere of the creative economy, which is one of the mainstays of Martin's project. In this context, the city's strategy envisages intensive cooperation at various levels between individual sectors, financial partners, entrepreneurs in the creative industries and between sponsors, self-governments, public officials, cultural and artistic communities. Deepening cooperation and exploiting the potential of international partners for experience (good practices) transfer and networking will be particularly important. The established partnerships would be used for the presentation of local entities abroad. If Martin's project is successful, the Institute of Creative Economy as a functional tool for the systematic support and coordination of all activities related to this sector will be established.

Naturally, the city's strategy in fulfilling the vision of Martin's future counts on the next generation. Above all, it is the bearer of many, as yet unrealised intentions, it is ready with a free mind to receive new stimuli and to learn a critical way of thinking. On the other hand, it is who has not yet built a solid value system. It matters a lot on what values the young generation will consider to be followable and which they will reject as unnecessary for life. All value systems are part of culture and are also mediated through culture. The intention of the creators of Martin's project is to thoroughly examine the quality and value background of the prepared events and to conduct an open constructive dialogue about the true meaning of art and culture in the history of Europe, as well as about current development trends. This function will be performed in particular by the Art of Reflection section, which will be launched well before 2026.

From the point of view of involving the European Capital of Culture event in the city's strategy, it is most important to know that the effort to change the city through culture comes "from below", i.e. from citizens, civic, both professional and interest associations, cultural actors, volunteers, amateur and professional artists. Representatives of these communities and groups participate in large numbers on the creation of CDP, which creates favourable conditions for its quality implementation. The final form and especially the scope of implementation of the Culture Development Plan will depend on the success or failure of the Martin's Candidacy for the ECOC title. If successful, it will be approved by the Local Parliament and shall become binding. In any case, regardless of the final result, the relevant parts of the ECOC project - special innovative projects of a European nature with a presumption of sustainability - will be incorporated into the city strategy for the next decade.

Long-term cultural, social and economic impacts on the city (including urban development) if awarded the title of the European Capital of Culture

A characteristic word in relation to the cultural, social and economic impact on the city is "activity". Thanks to the activity creativity and space for creation will be developed, and language teaching will be deepened. The activity will require communication and will lead to an active culture - unlike sitting at a computer or television. The activity will be a characteristic feature of the creative community which is a vision of the city's Candidacy Project.

The eventual award of the ECOC title will deepen and broadly develop the activity in a fundamental way. It will affect all groups of the population - from schools to seniors. The result of the growth of population activity in the long run will be an increased offer of education and new job opportunities in culture, creative industries, tourism, and services. This is extremely important, especially from the point of view of keeping the young generation in the city and the region, and preventing their departure elsewhere. Increased interest in culture, tourism and services will lead to an increase in income and consequently to an improvement in the living standards of the population.

Horizontal topics were implicitly included in Martin's Candidacy Project: equal opportunities, work with disadvantaged and marginalized groups, information and education society. In addition to cultural, social and economic impacts, the project will also have a significant environmental impact with regard to the city and the region. The safety of residents, visitors and tourists, the cleanliness of streets, public spaces and spaces are a permanent attribute of life and will thus be constantly in the spotlight.

Through domestic (Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences - Institute of Mediamatics, Comenius University) and international (Croatia) partners in science, research and education, that support Martin's Candidacy for the ECOC 2026 title, the city participates in research of key competencies for the knowledge society in the context of historical, social and economic specifics of the Slovak Republic - APVV-18-0479 (2019 - 2023). Based on UN, UNESCO, OECD, EU and World Bank strategy documents, as well as the knowledge of European experts from several scientific disciplines, the project carries out basic research based on two basic pillars: the concept of the knowledge society and the concept of key competences.

The use of the relevant EU funds, which offer such an opportunity, will be particularly important with regard to the all-round development of the city and the region, the improvement of social status and living standards and the protection of the environment. Therefore, in the team that participates in the preparation of Martin's Candidacy, work people who systematically focus on project activities - from the search for suitable resources to the implementation of projects, including sustainability.

The positive economic impacts of the project on the city and the region would bring strong impulses and demand for culture, art and a rich social life. Logically, the demands on the quality of the offered cultural performances (events, concerts, festivals, performances, workshops, etc.) will also increase. Martin's Candidacy Project offers culture in all its broad scope, including "means" on how to achieve sustainability after 2026.

The city, which has the ambition to become the ECOC, needs to be open not only from a cultural, social and economic point of view, but also from an architectural point of view to new modern development concepts, urban trends and a reasonable revitalisation of the existing environment and former industrial zones. Due to its geographical location in the context of Slovakia or a wider European scale, Martin has these preconditions. Many places and streets of the city have strong genius loci with a universal cultural message of previous generations. From the point of view of logistical urban development, Martin still provides enough interesting spaces, which in the foreseeable future (for example until 2026) could become the subject of public, perhaps even international, architectural and urban planning competitions. A great, central challenge is the creation of a new multifunctional part of the city from the former (abandoned) buildings of the Neografia Printing Company with a large area, as well as a complex of hospital buildings with a huge area. In this context, it should be noted that in the coming years, the University Hospital in Martin will move to the newly-built premises above the city. The indicated new multifunctional part of the city will create, in addition to the administrative, commercial and entrepreneurial dimension, also interesting conditions for rich cultural and artistic activities, creative industry and broad-based social life. An interesting aspect for residents and tourists will undoubtedly be the establishment of a suitable space for the operation of functions and activities that are missing in today's center and will thus become an attraction for a wide range of interested parties. The complex in question could also mean a kind of milieu with a specific essence and charm. A possible award of the ECOC title would speed up in a cardinal way the materialisation of the idea of a new multifunctional part of the city right in its heart.

Martin has the advantage that, unlike other Slovak cities, it has a significant spatial potential for urban growth, while it is possible to maintain the natural urban integrity. From an urban point of view, perhaps the most important locality is the city's monument zone and the related completion of the central square. The Roman Catholic Church of St. Martin as a sacral building and the Turiec Gallery as a secular building represent some of the oldest and most important architectural monuments in the city. In recent years, a modern building of the Galéria (Gallery) shopping centre has been added to the area. A new multifunctional center with civic amenities will be built on the site of today's market, which should become an important urban element in completing the overall city skyline and a kind of connecting element of the current square and

the newly created open space in front of the hospital. A central territory of Martin in this way would gain a new dimension, get even closer to today's modern European cities and, contribute to improving the quality of life overall of its citizens. Additionally it would improve the offer for Slovak and foreign tourists.

If the city is awarded the ECOC title, the long-term planned construction plan regarding the territory of the Martin's Acropolis, i.e. the public space between the Slovak National Library and the National Cemetery, will be completed. The attractive memorial complex is designed as a construction and ideological completion of the National Acropolis.

An important factor in the city's vision and strategy is the comprehensive modernisation of existing infrastructure and the construction of new ones in developing areas, with a strong emphasis on ecological (environmental) consideration and sustainability. One of the basic starting points in the creation of urban concepts of a similar scale is the construction of quality transport connections and networks.

The overall north-south character of the city and the transverse connection of tracts, axes and street networks define a unique urban system in Slovakia, which is a good starting point for the logical development of Martin. The ECOC project represents an ideal opportunity to implement bold concepts that will ultimately make a major contribution to the all-round dynamic development of the city and the wider region, giving Martin a chance to play a dignified role as a cultural centre of European importance.

The metropolis of Turiec, as one of the few cities with its attractive natural environment and opportunities for winter recreation, is able to assert itself in the field of tourism all year round. In the case of the wider region, we can speak of a unique symbiosis of natural attractiveness and historical, cultural, artistic and sports potential. This important aspect represents a strong potential for the creation of further concepts and the use of innovative solutions in building and strengthening the local economy, alternatively for the long-term cultural, social and economic impacts on the city and the entire Turiec Region.

Plans of monitoring and evaluation

The city intends to introduce a special sophisticated project monitoring and evaluation system. The non-profit organisation "Martin 26" will be fully responsible for its implementation. The professional evaluation of individual events will be prepared by renowned experts of the relevant genre. The organisation will include a supervisory board performing control and internal monitoring at the first level. At the second level, the monitoring of the entire process will be performed by the Department of Strategic Development and the Department of the Chief Controller of the City of Martin. Systematic and detailed approach to the analysis and evaluation of all programmes; their financing, balancing individual copyright requirements, managing domestic and foreign promotion, the overall level of presentation of the event, the involvement of the population, the impact of the programme on audience, resonance among the professional and lay public, media output, technical support, management of organizational work, service activities, services, transport, health care...

2. CULTURAL AND ART CONTENT

Artistic vision and strategy of the cultural programme for 2026

The artistic vision and strategy of the cultural programme form the basis of the Cultural Development Plan, which is based on the need to change the city and the region through culture. All generational groups of the population will be actively involved in the process. They will thus have the opportunity to touch and connect with the rest of Europe while they will have sufficient space and technological background to carry out their activities.

As for the artistic vision, it expresses the new, modern identity of the city. It has three closely related areas:

SYNERGY OF CULTURE, ART, CREATIVE INDUSTRY AND TOURISM

In Europe, an interesting double process has taken place over the last three decades. On the one hand, there was an intense need for integration, new forms of alliance and cooperation. At the same time, however, there was an effort to atomize or, better said, an effort to manifest the quality of details. The processes outlined, as the practice of the past has shown, need not be fundamentally contradictory, and the field of culture, the arts and the creative industries, with its international language, is a privileged argument in this regard. Thus, the term of region got into completely new contexts of meaning. It expresses a certain geographical sphere, an area with a specific ethnic, historical, cultural or artistic identity. Therefore, in today's understanding, the region no longer represents something marginal or peripheral; on the contrary, the region has a real ambition to historically rehabilitate all modern forms of life, regardless of the dominance of the centre. The idea of a modern Europe therefore largely emphasizes diversity, inter-regional contacts, mutual exchange of information and, in particular, cultural and artistic values. The Turiec Region with its metropolis Martin and its historical continuity, literary, theatrical, artistic, ethnographic, spiritual, ecumenical, and other traditions, has a strong institutional background. These represent an outstandingly rich source of the indicated exchange namely on a Slovak, European and global scale. The authors of the MARTIN '26 Project perceive the mentioned source of exchange as a key starting point, which will be broadly reflected in strategic cooperation, respectively the synergy of culture, art, creative industry and tourism.

In this context, special emphasis will be placed on the creative economy and creative industries, which bring a direct link between culture and the economy and an innovative approach to traditional forms of economy. The aim is to create a still unconventional connection in Slovakia – connection of the economy and industry with culture and art. Martin's project is based on the experience of developed European countries that small inputs using human potential significantly affect the development of the environment and place the creative industries among the new trends in the expansion of European cities.

EUROPEAN CONTENT

Since the second half of the 1980s, the ECOC project has allowed cities on the old continent to present a one-year cultural programme that emphasizes the richness, diversity and common features of European culture. Another important aspect of the project is to increase the interest

of the inhabitants of European cities in what is happening in them and to strengthen the long-term cultural development of each of the participating cities. Martin's project is also consistently based on the above-mentioned aspects in terms of artistic vision and cultural programme strategy. European content will be fulfilled through a long-established network of international partnerships, contacts and ties from both the city and major cultural, educational and scientific institutions operating in its territory. These include the Slovak National Library, the Slovak National Museum, the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine at Comenius University. The strategic connection of culture, art and the creative industries with the business, financial and commercial sphere, the IT sector will also contribute to the acquisition and deepening of European content. More on the topic is mentioned in the European Dimension section.

CREATIVE COMMUNITY

Culture as a widely perceived phenomenon can prepare citizens for the fact that creativity will become the driving force of fundamental change in the city in the coming years and at the same time the goal of social movement. Therefore, a creative community will emerge in Martin, characterized by a knowledge-based economy, innovation in education in schools and beyond, in addition to lifelong learning and support for science and research. Active participation in planning and strategies, cooperation at an international level as well as solidarity and assistance to disadvantaged and marginalized groups will also appear. Broad-spectrum activities related to the fulfilment of the Martin's Candidacy Project (from the language training of the population to the active involvement of a wide range of citizens in programming) mobilize people's social consciousness and awaken in them a desire for new knowledge and a new way to use their own creative capacity. At the same time, citizens will be offered the opportunity to enter into a national and intercultural European dialogue with the prospect that the energy expended will be multiplied not only in 2026, but also in the future.

STRATEGY OF THE CULTURAL PROGRAMME FOR 2026

The original name of the city is Turčiansky Svätý Martin (Saint Martin of Turiec). During a more comprehensive study of national history, the interested party will find out that, just like once upon a time, what the patron saint Martin had gloriously distributed to sufferers and the poor, this city had also distributed. It shared with Slovakia and the world. Not only by the fact that Martin selflessly created conditions for the birth of the most important Slovak political, economic, social, cultural, artistic and media vision and programmes directly on its soil, but also by the fact that it literally "donated" them to its Slovakia. A substantial part of the top Slovak institutions, establishments and media were "moved" from Martin to Bratislava during the 20th century. At the same time, the plethora of local and regional communities that raised the cultural level in Slovakia were inspired and organised indeed by Martin. All subjects indirectly mentioned will be offered the opportunity to significantly participate in the content fulfilment of the artistic vision of the MARTIN '26 Project and the strategy of the artistic programme called Seven Arts.

I. THE ART OF WORD

The word is in the first place also because it was in the beginning ... At the same time, perhaps nothing is more characteristic for Martin than a word (text, literature, book). Several institutions at the head with the Slovak National Library, rich publishing activities, top-quality printing companies ... All of these were built in Martin - the city of books - for the word, its versatile cultivation, promotion and dissemination. The Word is considered in the project to be the best means of communication between people, whereas many of them, including its authors, still believe in the enduring power of the Word.

Guarantor: The Slovak National Library in Martin

Artistic guarantor: Peter Mišák - poet, writer, publicist, editor, organiser of literary life (lives in Martin)

II. THE ART OF PICTURE

Many important Slovak painters, graphic artists, illustrators, sculptors, scenographers, architects, designers and photographers came from Martin, or rather were created there (such as M. Benka, M. A. Bazovský, Ľ. Fulla, M. Galanda, V. Hložník, K. Plicka to name a few). Thanks to their performance, the metropolis of Turiec was, in the first half of the last century, together with Bratislava, the largest and most important centre of domestic fine art. In the background of fulfilling various authorial concepts, the line of an aesthetically impressive Martin's book, which reached European parameters, was also profiled at that time. Publications with an attractive visual design are published here to this day. The interesting, broad-spectrum and multi-generational art life in Martin also pulsates intensively in the 21st century.

Guarantor: The Turiec Gallery in Martin

Artistic guarantor: Peter Ďurík - renowned artist of visual art, book designer (lives in Martin)

III. THE ART OF ACTION

Martin has one of the oldest theatrical and dance traditions in Slovakia. The first theater group performed here regularly in their native language - the Slovak Choir. The professional Slovak Chamber Theatre grew smoothly from it, and several amateur ensembles and dance groups follow the rich traditions. Every year, the oldest and largest festivities of the amateur theatre called the Theatre Harvest Festival takes place in Martin (the oldest is also on a European scale). The largest theatrical events in Central Europe also took place here - "mass walking theatres". The Slovak Chamber Theatre is a frequent guest at foreign (European and world) theatre festivals. Theatre is the art of action, which with its dynamics and emotions expresses and characterizes time and its pulsation. Through the art of action, the project intends to activate citizens for events to change the city, or to support its all-round cultural development.

Guarantor: The Slovak Chamber Theatre in Martin

Artistic guarantor: Jozef Ciller - important scenographer, costume designer, university professor (lives in Martin)

IIII. THE ART OF SOUND

In the second half of the 20th century, music took the leading position among the fine arts after literature. Contemporary man lives in a time that seems to hate silence; in an era of ubiquitous music and sound. Music is given great importance in the project because in a certain sense it is as good a means of communication between people, nations and cultures as words. Music is on the emotional level, whereas words on the intellectual level. There are a number of genre-diverse musical formations in Martin and its surroundings, to which the project will provide an attractive presentation space.

Guarantor: Barmuseum Cultural Centre

Artistic guarantor: Róbert Mankovecký - composer, musician, dramatist (lives in Martin)

V. THE ART OF THE MEDIA

Today, all information is mediated by a medium. This fact gives the impression that the modern man is losing his immediate relationship to reality and that he/she is experiencing much more intensely the reality through a kind of secondary, artificial world. In the project, the media are

mainly understood as electronic media that have a complex effect on the contemporary - words, sound and especially images. Television, film, social networks, multimedia create a new, virtual reality that fundamentally shapes the value system of today's European.

Guarantor: TV Turiec (company established by the City of Martin)

Artistic guarantor: Marek Kianička - graphic designer, graphics (grew up in Martin)

VI. THE ART OF REFLECTION

Martin, as the centre of words, theatre and picture, was also a city of living, intellectual reflection of culture, art and social life. The work of outstanding profile personalities of Slovak critical thinking (such as S. H. Vajanský, J. Škultéty, Š. Krčméry) was created in the city. Milan Hodža, a native of the nearby Turiec village of Sučany and the first Slovak in the position of Prime Minister of the Czechoslovak Republic, is the author of a work of international significance - The Federation in Central Europe. The book was originally published in English in London in 1942. Hodža's visionary project of the Central European Federation of Free Nations was a forerunner of a united Europe. Several events within the project will be devoted to the broad-spectrum reflection of current topics in the field of culture, art, political and social events at home, in Europe and the world.

Guarantor: The Slovak National Library

Artistic guarantor: Vladimír Štefko - important theatre critic and historian, university professor (native of Martin)

VII. THE ART OF LIFE

The purpose of the project is not only to organise a series of cultural and artistic activities, but also to create optimal conditions and a strong background to ensure the sustainability of top culture and art and the discovery and understanding of cultural and historical realities ... Everything that should be prepared, should direct to overall change in the quality of life in the central part of Slovakia, which over the course of history has found itself on the periphery of European development. Although cultivating and enhancing a higher culture of life is also related to economic development, Slovakia has gone through a phase when economic development has outpaced the quality of life. To this day, you can see and feel it in many places. The particular effort to increase the economic level of the country and the people living in it cannot become the only goal and meaning of social movement. The answer to the question of what it is all for is important in this context. Programmes within the Art of Life section would try to find well-founded answers.

Guarantor: The Slovak National Museum & The Jessenius Faculty of Medicine, Comenius University in Martin

Artistic guarantor: Jana Oláhová - popular theatre, television and film actress, university pedagogue (lives in Martin)

Structure and scope of the cultural programme

Although the programme that is planned to be implemented is specifically prepared for 2026, it is also a programme that has been under preparation since 2020, as well as a programme on which the city will build after 2026. It combines cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and also experimental cultural manifestations; it is situated in the middle of Slovakia and at the same time open to the whole of Europe. SIEŤ 2020 (NETWORK 2026), the formation of which the project envisages, will be formed not only by the Martin and Turiec cultural, educational and scientific institutions, civic, professional and interest associations, but also

by Slovak cities and regions. Thanks to the active involvement of international partners, it will become the European Network 2026. In this context, mention should also be made to artistic residencies with the mobility of domestic and foreign artists will be created.

The basic ambition for the programme of the European Capital of Culture in 2026 is to revive not only Martin and the Turiec Region, but also the wider regions of the Northern and Central Slovakia. At the same time, it should stimulate the entire Slovak cultural and art scene. The structure of the programme is geographically divided into three basic areas:

- events in Martin and its surroundings (will be organized in cooperation with partner cultural, artistic and educational institutions, civic, professional and interest associations in the existing network, or in renovated premises for the needs of the ECOC and the development of the Turiec environment)
- events in the territory of the Northern and Central Slovakia (these will be cultural, artistic and educational projects to be specifically agreed with the municipalities concerned and the institutions operating in their territories in the years 2021 – 2022)
- actions outside the Northern and Central Slovakia and abroad (systematic efforts will be directed towards ensuring the export and top promotion of contemporary Slovak culture and art, creating new communication and cultural network in the European context – the partner cities abroad as well as institutions with long-term European (international) contacts and ties will participate at the programme implementation of the intention)

The overall structure of the MARTIN '26 programme is based on the above-mentioned continuity, innovation, openness and networking, which is divided into seven arts: the Art of Word, the Art of Picture, the Art of Action, the Art of Sound, the Art of the Media, the Art of Reflection, and the Art of Life. Above each section will be the responsibility of the interested professional institution and one outstanding personality of the relevant art as the main guarantor.

I. THE ART OF WORD

(selection from events and programmes)

House of European Literature (all year round)
- connected with residencies of poets and writers

Literature Tours (all year round)
- to support an alternative and sustainable form of creative tourism

I Read, You Read, We Read (May)
- presentation of original and European literary work in various non-traditional places

Literary Spring (July)
- the jubilee 60th year of the oldest literary festival in Slovakia (June)
Month of Author's Reading

Slam Poetry (August)
- presentation of the best Slovak and Czech performers

Slovak Literature in the Languages of Europe (September- October)
- an international exhibition and book project presenting translations of Slovak fiction and non-fiction literature into European languages

Martin's Poetic Autumn (September)
- Meeting of Central European Poets

One Language Culture (November)
- World Congress of Esperanto

Culture on the Hill (all year round)
- literary programmes organized by the Slovak National Library

2. THE ART OF PICTURE

(selection from events and programmes)

They lived and worked in Martin and Turiec (all year round)

- a representative exhibition of art works by Slovak artists

Sculpture in the City (all year round)

- international presentation of author's works, video projections, interactive objects and installations

Architecture Tours (all year round)

- multi-genre processing of stories of the Martin and Turiec buildings of Slovak to European significance, in order to support an alternative and sustainable form of creative tourism

World Press Photo (February)

- presentation of world reportage photography

Febio Fest 2026 (March)

- International Film, Television and Video Festival

Caricature Tours (April - May)

- presentation of contemporary Slovak and European cartoon humour in the interiors of several institutions

Biennial of Book Art 2026 (May - June)

- International Competition of Professional Visual Artists

Photography in the City (May - October)

- presentation of the work of Slovak and European photographers in various exterior parts of the city, including housing estates, suburbs

Street Art Communication (July)

- International Festival of Contemporary Street Art

International Art Blacksmithing Days (August)

Fantasy Biennial 2026 (September - October)

- International Children's Art Competition

3. THE ART OF ACTION

(selection of events and programmes)

Euro Dance Festival (February)

- Modern Dance Show

Kaukliar (the Juggler) (May)

- International Festival of Mimes and Clowns

Market of European Nations (June - September)

- an exhibition of the cultural traditions of the member states of the European Union

Touches and Connections (June)

- annual festival of Slovak professional theatres

Turiec Folklore Festival (June)

Days of Finnish Culture (July)

- in honour of the second city, which will receive the title of ECOC 2026

The Theatre Harvest (August - September)

- 104th year of the oldest amateur theatre festival in Europe

Children of the Wind (September)

- International Festival of Roma Culture and Art

Museum of the Slovak Village (Open-Air Museum) (all year round)

- customary events in the largest ethnographic exposition in nature in Slovakia

4. THE ART OF SOUND

(selection from events and programmes)

Welcome to Martin, Europe! (January)

- opening programme of the ECOC 2026 connected with a gala concert of Martin, Slovak and European artists

Bridges over the River of Silence (all year round)

- performances by handicapped and non-handicapped artists from several countries of the European Union

Central European Festival of Concert Art (March)

Concerts of Understanding (April - September)

- performances by top musicians from European countries in which Martin has its partners

Concerts on the Roof (May - September)

- performances by bands of various genres on the roof of the Millennium building

Cultural Summer (June - September)

- multi-genre concerts of Martin, Slovak and European bands

Music in the City (June - August)

- chamber concerts of classical music in exteriors of the city center and city districts

Martin Jazz Days

- International Festival (September)

FolkForum

- a show of contemporary Slovak, Czech and Polish folk music (October)

Martin Music Autumn

- classical music concerts (October - November)

GospelFest

- International Exhibition of Contemporary Sacred and Christian Music (November)

Barmuseum

- multi-genre concerts of Slovak and European bands (all year round)

5. ART OF THE MEDIA

(selection from events and programmes)

Center for Modern Art (all year round)

- international presentations of contemporary media art or new media

LOTOS (March)

- European Film Festival of Local Television Stations Dedicated to Culture, Human Rights, Freedoms and their Protection

Public Space Differently (April - September)

- an international project focused on current non-traditional forms of public space solutions

Amfiko (June - September)

- screening of Slovak and European films in the oldest and largest amphitheatre in Slovakia

The "Siakel' Brothers" Days (October)

- an interactive screening of films of the silent era of European and world cinematography (July)
Martin Travel Festival

Snow Film Fest (November)
- international screening of films about winter sports and adventures

We were honored, Europe!
- closing ceremony of the ECOC 2026

6. THE ART OF REFLECTION

(selection from events and programmes)

The Legacy that Unites Us (all year round)
- multi-genre presentation of all Slovak elements registered in UNESCO

Turiec Casino (all year round)
- dialogues on current cultural, artistic and political situation in Europe

Martin's Suburbs and Housing Estates
- a tour of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in order to support an alternative and sustainable form of creative tourism

Martin in the Context of European History (February)
- international scientific conference connected with a representative exhibition

Forum Romanum (March - April)
- a cycle of international dialogues on the full integration of the Roma, linked with screenings of documentaries

UNESCO in Martin (May - September)
- multi-genre presentation of elements of the European Union countries registered under the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Martin Night of Museums and Galleries (May)

The Milan Hodža Days (the 22nd year) (June)

Critical Platform (June - September)
- within the festivals as Touches and Connections, Literary Spring, the Theatre Harvest

European Heritage Days (September)

European and World Literature on the Pages of Slovenské pohľady (Slovak Views) magazine (October)
- an international conference on the occasion of the 180th anniversary of the oldest Central European cultural magazine, published by Matica slovenská in Martin

AICA
- World Congress of the Association of Art Critics (November)

7. ART OF LIFE

(selection from programmes and events)

Martiners (all year round)
- presentation of traditions, culture and art of European and overseas towns and villages called Martin

Turiec Herbal Oil Makers and Saffron Makers in European Context (February)
- international conference connected with multimedia exhibition

Farewell to Winter (March)
- carnival in the snow in ski resorts

Cultural Tours (all year round)
- cycling and tourist visits to cultural and historical monuments

International Community Art Festival (March)

Crazy Hugo Days
- presentation of various forms of contemporary European humour (April)

Festival of National Minorities' Communities Living in Slovakia (May)

Turiec Honey and Water Celebration (June)

Flower of Podhradie (July)

European Festival of Diversity (August)

Martin Gurman Fest & Tastes and the Scent of Europe (August)

Scandinavian Week (September)

Martin Wine Festival (October)

Saint Martin Days (November)

International Sausage Festival (November)

Regarding the scope and duration of the European Capital of Culture programme, the first event will be the opening event in early January, the last event (12 months). The closing ceremony in mid-December 2026. The programme will therefore last a whole year.

Linking local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental cultural expressions

There are several institutions and civic associations in Martin that pay systematic attention to cultural heritage and traditional art forms /the Slovak National Museum, Matica slovenská, the Turiec Cultural Centre, civic associations as Štúdio Pivnica (Studio Cellar), Pôvabnica Turca (Beauty of Turiec) and others/.

The concrete result is a wide range of year-round events in the Museum of the Slovak Village (open-air museum), amphitheatre, various cultural facilities, in the pedestrian zone, in parks, public spaces, including city districts.

The Slovak National Museum especially focuses on the systematic connection of the local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental cultural manifestations.

After the new, young progressive leadership of the institution took office (2018), this strategic line was reflected in all major cyclical ethnographic events organized in the open-air museum.. It is necessary to mention at least large programme units about Christmas and Easter traditions, Midsummer tradition, harvest festivals or folk crafts. Some of these programmes take place in atypical outdoor spaces, traditional art forms are cultivately confronted with modern ones, using new media (digital animation, interactive object and installation), various audiovisual means, mobile applications, information technology, 3D projections, multimedia presentations. ..

Thanks to creative workshops, spectators who have a unique opportunity to get to know manifestations of the local cultural heritage in an attractive atmosphere - especially folk crafts (blacksmithing, pottery, leatherwork, basketry, ceramics, glass, bobbin lace, corn husk dolls...) are actively involved in the process... In addition, those interested can make a product themselves under the supervision of master craftsmen. The product will remind them of the time spent at the ethnographic event.

In the coming years, museums in Martin and its surroundings will not only undergo reconstructions or architectural modifications, but also a major modernization of their offer. Various manifestations of cultural heritage and traditional art forms will be made available through new

technologies, touch screens and interactive installations will be available. An interactive guide called „Herbal Oilmaker“ would also be added to the Museum of the Turiec Herbal Oil Makers and Saffron Makers in the Blatnica Village. The guide will tell visitors stories and rich experiences from trips around Europe, which - as a successful tradesman or businessman - gained at the end of the 19th century. There will also be educational interactive walkways to important places connected with the local cultural heritage. They will be equipped with a modern Slovak-English information system. Those interested will be brought to these places by a tourist train with a well-experienced guide.

A new, innovative and experimental cultural expression will be the promotion and access to traditional Turiec music and singing within the project of "music playing" bus stops. People can install music notes with lyrics related to the particular region in their mobile phone via QR code at individual bus stops. People waiting for the bus can fill their free time by singing a song according to notes. If you do not understand the music notes, the QR code will serve you instead of it. Friendships can be spontaneously formed between passengers at bus stops.

Singing together is undoubtedly made for that. Perhaps the only "disadvantage" may be "complaints by performers" that their singing was cancelled by an instant bus...

After the introduction of the latest application (3D projection) to the mobile phone via QR code, the waiting person will even be able to sing with "live" (3D) Turiec music! It should also be noted, in addition to music notation and environmental dimension (protection of birds from flying into the glass fillings of stops), that the well-thought-out graphic concept of bus stops will also contain clear Slovak-English information about ECOC programmes, an information system that informs tourists where they currently spend time, where the nearest service facilities are, respectively how to get to them, basic contacts to important institutions ...

The MARTIN '26 Project also envisages an innovative or experimental form of promotion and presentation of both Slovak and European elements registered under the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Since 2001, UNESCO has recognized this international recognition for exceptional forms of folk and traditional expressions such as music, dance, national rituals and mythology, knowledge and practices related to nature and the world, experiences associated with traditional production, as well as distinctive cultural environments. Until November 2020, seven Slovak elements came under the UNESCO's wing: the Fajara, the Music of Terchová, Bagpipes and Bagpipe Culture, Puppetry, Horehronie Multi Vocal Singing, the Blueprint and Wire Craft. In Martin, respectively the Turiec Region, all the above elements are developed, with the exception of the Horehronie Multi Vocal Singing. Some of them have strong international connections, which will be originally presented at the Market of European Nations (Art of Action).

One of the important programme goals of the ECOC is to bring to an innovative approach to all the elements of the countries of the European Union, registered under the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Involvement of local artists and cultural organizations in the planning and organization of the cultural programme

The Martin's Candidacy Project is not just about culture being a term that we could replace with a category of civilization or a hierarchy of values. It is also about the fact that we are all people of culture, because through it we take statements on the changes of the world around us. Artists and cultural organizations *“feel like bees that have to explain to bears that they cannot be evaluated just per kilogram of honey produced, but that they play a much more serious role in pollination.”*

(P. Potoroczyn)

Countless number of artists and cultural workers live and work in Martin and its surroundings - poets, writers, dramatists, artists, sculptors, actors, theatre performers, performers, musicians,

dancers, book designers, photographers, filmmakers, architects, scenographers, cartoonists, ceramicists, artistic wood carvers, museologists, librarians, booksellers, publishers, translators, art collectors, folklorists, methodologists ...

A large part of them (almost 60 people) has long been involved in the preparation of the MARTIN '26 Project, respectively the planning and organization of cultural programme. Representatives of artists are represented in the ECOC Preparatory Committee, the Culture Commission of the Local Parliament (City Council), the governing body of the Council of National Culture. At these forums, they came up with a plethora of various proposals and recommendations, initiated the creation of several interesting projects, commented on the fundamental strategic issues of the Candidacy Project, to which all their relevant suggestions, innovative solutions and interesting ideas were actually incorporated. Martin's visual artist and scenographer, Ján Novosedliak, is the author of the logo and visual of the candidacy. As many artists - especially artists and actors - teach in primary and secondary art schools, so their pupils and students will also be creatively involved in the cultural programme. Specifically, it will be not only a creative dimension and performance in various events (performers), but also participation in the comprehensive promotion of the entire project, preparation and implementation of numerous indoor and outdoor exhibitions, workshops, creative workshops, presentation of new media, communication strategy, volunteering. ...

Among the artists living in Martin and its surroundings who have been actively involved in the ECOC project are also well-known personalities: scenographer and university professor Jozef Ciller (laureate of many domestic and international awards), doyen of Slovak drama Mišo Adamov Kováč, theatre, television and film actress Jana Oláhová (she acted in many Slovak and Czech films to name a few), actors as Marek Geišberg, Ján Kožuch, František Výrostko, visual artist Peter Ďurík, musicians Dušan Antalík, Milan Dočekal, Róbert Mankovecký ...

A special category of supporters from the top artists is represented by the Turiec natives living in Bratislava, but also in the Czech Republic, Austria and Italy.

It includes, for example, the famous and internationally acclaimed actress, Barbora Bobulová, the double Czech Lion award holder actress, Zuzana Kronerová, singer, Jana Kirschner (all three natives of Martin), and the world-famous violinist Dalibor Karvay (a native of the Vrútky town).

There are three founders of cultural organizations based in Martin: the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic (the Slovak National Library, the Slovak National Museum - Ethnographic Museum, the Museum of the Slovak Village, Andrej Kmeť Museum, Martin Benka Museum, the Museum of Czech Culture in Slovakia, the Museum of Roma Culture in Slovakia), the Žilina Self-Governing Region (the Slovak Chamber Theatre, the Turiec Gallery, the Turiec Library, the Turiec Cultural Center) and the City of Martin (the Cultural Stage, the Turiec Television). Matica slovenská, the oldest national cultural and scientific institution, is defined by law as a public institution.

All mentioned organizations by a letter of acceptance supported the MARTIN '26 Project and their representatives are creatively, organizationally and managerially involved in the preparation and implementation of the cultural programme. The Slovak National Library will be the guarantor of large projects within the Art of Word section, the Slovak Chamber Theatre, the Turiec Gallery, the Slovak National Museum and Matica slovenská are responsible for key activities related to their main activities (theatre and stage programmes, visual arts, connecting local cultural heritage and traditional art forms with new, innovative and experimental cultural expressions, presentations of folk crafts, programmes in open-air museum, folklore).

As follows from the above, the planning, preparation and implementation of the cultural programme will be based on a wide network of professional cultural organizations in addition to civic, professional and interest associations, educational and scientific institutions. The largest of them will make full use of the rich intensive contacts with their European partners. An integral part of this process will be, for example, the cooperation of the Slovak National Library in Martin with its Finnish partner.



Residential building
of Matica slovenská
(built in 1926)

3. THE EUROPEAN DIMENSION

One of the basic lines of the MARTIN '26 Project is an artistic and cultural programme that can create a platform for new communication in the European space and bring a number of innovative intentions, thoughts and ideas. It will also provide the necessary European dimension for focal points, perspective contacts and connections, cultural and artistic exchanges, which will contribute to a mutually enriching relationship on the Martin-Europe route.

It must be repeatedly emphasized that Martin's project does not have the character of a one-off event, it is a fundamental transformation process. It is not a matter of one city or region; it is a matter of the whole Slovak Republic as an integral part of Europe, as well as a matter of all other member states of the European Union. From this point of view, a functional system will be prepared to fulfil the European dimension of the project. A system that ensures the achievement of goals, a system that gives creative space to the individual, but at the same time does not depend on the individual.

The system of touches and connections, which will be implemented by the non-profit organization named „Martin 26“.

This system is based on the following sequence of steps:

- actively seeking and contacting artists, cultural actors, managers, bodies, institutions and their
- acquisition for the idea of the Seven Arts Project
- finding out their contacts abroad, existing connections to networks, overall potential
- to contact them, exchange information and offers (Touches)
- selection of appropriate joint activities
- creation of projects and micro-projects
- creation of partnership-based projects from EU operational and community programmes
- the emergence of active networks generating the programme and policies
- implementations: joint projects, mirror projects, hosting, exchanges of artists and programmes, residencies (Connections)
- ensuring "traffic" in these networks, ensuring the sustainability of search, creation and implementation

In the process of creating and deepening the European dimension, the Martin's project is also supported by partner institutions and societies that already work internationally (the Slovak National Library, the Slovak National Museum, the Museum of Slovak Living Abroad at Matica slovenská, the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine at Comenius University and societies of national minorities' communities).

The above-mentioned system is "horizontal", i.e. set up for the implementation of all selected projects. The Seven Arts will be adhered vertically. Each of the arts will include support of Europe's cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue with a view to greater mutual understanding among European citizens, the emphasis on common aspects of European cultures, heritage and history, as well as European integration and reflection on current European issues.

It is necessary to draw attention to the programme materialisation of the mentioned considerations from both the content and formal side. Concerning the content, the following will be offered:

1. cultural wealth through famous personalities, popular works, interesting topics
2. cultural diversity through national and regional specificities and attractions (elements registered in UNESCO and others)

The formal side of the system will make full use of state-of-the-art information technology, social networks, analogue, electronic and internet media, advertising and PR as part of "traffic".

Touche with the past, touche with the future, touche with freedom and touche with cultures will focus on highlighting common aspects of European cultures. Martin's project is based on the basic premiss that individual national cultures in Europe have several specific features that unite them. At the same time, it is also true that the common features of national cultures prevail over local differences resulting from ethnic, historical, mental or geographical (geopolitical) differences. The deeper purpose of the MARTIN '26 Project is to draw attention to the universality of European culture and at the same time to highlight the value of the individuality and diversity of individual national cultures.

The common values that are professed in Europe are the main idea base of the European Union.

The ideal of democracy, humanism, freedom, tolerance, the value of individual human life, equal dialogue as a necessary means of resolving conflicts, and other values were gradually born in the past. Our common duty and responsibility is to protect and develop them today, because they are the ones who characterize the uniqueness of European, ergo-Western civilization. The ECOC project must draw attention both to the universalism of European culture and to the need to preserve and develop cultural diversity.

There are more common aspects. These include, for example, solutions to current European issues:

- a radical change in lifestyle during a coronavirus pandemic
- the need to compensate for technology and the impact of information technology (culture softens scientific and technical progress and thus makes it more tolerable and bearable for people)
- tolerance, solidarity and human belonging (extremely important in times of migration crisis)

Laying emphasis on these common aspects within the Martin's project will be implemented in such a way that one of the specific goals of particular intentions in each of the Seven Arts has the task to draw attention to them openly.

The City of Martin has valuable practical experience in terms of cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue and greater mutual understanding between European citizens. This is directly related to the long-term forming and strengthening of relations with European partner cities. Empowerment is based on mutual interactions, interactions between local authorities, artists, cultural, educational and social organizations, civic associations and families. On the basis of the rich experience gained, it can be stated in general terms that it is necessary to support the mobility of people in public affairs, in education, in the arts, culture, the creative industries, business, regional development and tourism. The MARTIN '26 Project offers specific solutions in this regard, which would involve both primary and secondary school students, as well as university students, cultural workers and professional artists. There is a need for a systematic exchange of works of all kinds of art, exchange of know-how, goods, services and finances. Of course, in order to achieve these goals, it is necessary to improve the quality of roads, a wide range of services, modernize the objects of cultural and educational infrastructure ... Events within the ECOC would solve these issues in a fundamentally innovative way.

As we have already indicated, the implementation of the MARTIN '26 Project will also be based on a wide network of good contacts with many foreign cities and organizations. Thanks to them, European artists will be involved in the programme, wider cooperation with operators in different countries will be developed, and deepen new transnational partnerships. Not only partner cities from the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Hungary, Germany, Poland and Serbia

will actively participate in the implementation of this intention, but also European cities and towns, which have a name derived from the St. Martin's tradition, or Martin (France, Austria, Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain). Also the cities (states) that „the Amber Road“ (an important trade route - the connection between the Mediterranean and the Baltic) or the old trade and postal road „Via Magna“ connect them with Martin and the Turiec Region, will be involved. Cooperation with the places that form the European Cultural Route called „Via Sancti Martini“ will be also developed. The Council of Europe declared it a pilgrimage route in 2005.

The natives of Turiec were associated with many European and Asian countries as herbal oil makers and saffron makers. In the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, these well-known travel merchants carried out their activities from France to Siberia, from the Netherlands to Persia. Prosperous trading companies have been established mainly in Poland and Russia.

The implementation team will make every effort to actively involve as many European and other countries as possible (in relation to the above mentioned facts) in the European dimension of the MARTIN '26 project. The assumption is that there will be about 50 states.

An overall strategy to arouse the interest of the general European and international public

The first prerequisite for success in this area is to prepare events that will arouse the interest of the general European and international public. Martin's Candidacy Project in fulfilling this strategic goal is based on the assumption of a functional overlap of several factors. The main consideration is to carry out an event with the participation of artists well-known throughout Europe, who would draw attention to Slovakia and be a reason to visit it. An important factor will also be the performance of performers from other countries in domestic programmes.

They will attract their audience and after returning to their homeland they will spread information about Slovakia and respectively, Martin. Partner cities and organizations from several European countries will also be actively involved in the process. Their representatives will comprehensively promote the Martin's project in their countries, or spread good references about Slovakia and its culture, art, historical monuments, natural beauties, sports grounds ... Another factor is the promotion of domestic culture and events through artists who will be sent to performances abroad. Naturally, an equally important aspect will be the overall quality of both the programme and its organization and the level of services provided.

A factor of equal importance as culture is also the preparation of the city and the region for more intensive tourism, associated with the ECOC. The region of Central Slovakia represents a mountain cultural area with its typical characteristics. One of them is the natural connection of culture with nature and cultural tourism with nature. The implementers of the project will make every effort to ensure that the inhabitants of Europe come to the region of Turiec to visit also its natural beauties.

Therefore, they want to attract the European and international public also with a prepared rich offer of quality services - creating attractive service packages, comprehensive tourism products, availability of information and multifaceted promotion in all types of print and electronic media, social networks, web portals. All these tasks will be carried out by the Turiec Tourism Association. It will also ensure the necessary coordination of cooperation among all entities operating in tourism - on the principle of cooperative management.

The second prerequisite is the readiness to promote the ECOC event, as well as the region's tourism opportunities to the European and international public, so that they can succeed in the strong competition of cultural offers. There are several ways to achieve this goal. Projects will be prepared from various funds to promote the ECOC, either directly through the production of multilingual brochures, information brochures (and other printed matter) and the use of electronic media, or through human resources development - organizing creative meetings, workshops and educational training. The renewed Slovak Tourism Agency (SACR), also using the operational programmes of the EU Structural Funds, will focus on intensive promotion of the

MARTIN '26 Project abroad. Multinational corporations and companies, patrons of the event in Slovakia, will sponsor its promotion in all countries where they have their representation.

As Martin has long been involved in cooperation with several European cities in joint projects, the authorities and cultural organizations in each city, thanks to good partnerships, will help with the promotion of the ECOC (as cities from the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Latvia, Germany, Norway, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Sweden and Italy). Cultural, educational and scientific institutions based in Martin will also make a significant contribution. In this regard, international projects and partnerships of the Slovak National Library, the Slovak National Museum and the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine at Comenius University, should be mentioned in particular. Thanks to these renowned institutions, the European and international professional public will also be well informed about Martin as an ECOC.

A specific chapter of the strategy until 2026 is the programme connection with the Finnish city, which will also become the European Capital of Culture in the relevant year. We will make the widest possible contacts and ties with it, not only in the field of cultural exchange and art, but also in the field of tourism, sports, environmental protection and ecology, science, education and other activities. As for the above, a Slovak-Finnish project would be prepared, which will also take into account the common historical, personnel, business and other contexts connecting the two cities and the regions where they are located. As the successful Slovak writer and translator from Finnish, Alexander Salmel, has been living in the "Land of Thousands of Lakes" (Tampere) for a long time, the implementers will involve her in the MARTIN '26 Project.

Also a large Scandinavian community of students from the local Jessenius Faculty of Medicine at Comenius University (in total 531 students). Medical student organizations from Norway, Iceland, Sweden, Denmark and Finland will make a significant contribution to the promotion of the project in Scandinavia. At the beginning of September 2026, they will prepare the Scandinavian Week in the amphitheatre, the Museum of the Slovak Village, the Turiec Gallery, the pedestrian zone and in other places in Martin. In addition to the presentation of traditional culture, folklore, gastronomic specialties, film screenings, theatre performances, workshops, there will also be concerts of top musical ensembles (classical and popular music). Quality visual artists from the north of Europe will present their work in the field of new media (concept art, game art, video art, digital animation, interactive object and installation, expanded photography ...). Hundreds of tourists from all Scandinavian countries are also expected to attend.

The St. Martin's Cloak Foundation will also help to arouse the interest of the general European and international public. Through this foundation, municipalities and villages called "Martin" from Europe and overseas will support, in addition to the mobility of works and artists, also the all-round promotion of the ECOC. Naturally, the opportunity offered by a professional agency dedicated to marketing, promotion, advertising and public relations will also be adequately used.

Developing a connection between the Martin cultural programme and the cultural programme of other cities holding the title of European Capital of Culture

Living in a liberal democracy and a state of strong rule of law is not enough. Yes, all this is elementary and it also remains true that, thanks to the above-mentioned factors, Slovakia does not have to worry about its existence. On the other hand, it is true that all this does not say much about the fact why someone should look at Slovakia as a small, but still important country. It is therefore required to focus on the cultural and civilizational setting of the state and to provide answers to basic questions about the nature of society.

One of the basic goals is to build the basic skeleton of this society and to build a community around it that is strong enough that our children want to live here rather than elsewhere in the world. And also for Slovakia to be a dream destination of a modern lifestyle for people from the countries to which it belongs - that is, from the European Union. In other words, for the Slovak Republic to be not only a competitive state governed by the rule of law, but also a modern

Supporting statement
of the present
ECOS 2020

society in Europe with a well-developed culture, art, creative industry, tourism, science, research, sport, a well-functioning education system, health care, not to mention ecological and environmental considerations.

The strategy of the Martin cultural programme, with regard to the content fulfillment of the above-mentioned, also counts on strong inspiration from those cities that were the ECOC in the past and will gradually be the ECOC by 2025. The development of a connection with their cultural programme will take place in several lines. Systematic communication with representatives of individual European cities will soon be established, and in the years 2022 to 2025 these efforts, results and cooperation will be reflected in the realization of workshops, interactive exhibitions, presentations of materials, releases of events, films, music concerts ... Particular presentations will be dedicated not only for Martin's organizational team, but also the general public, while they will serve for its creative mobilization in the preparation and implementation of the project.

Thus, long time before 2026, the cultural connections of Slovaks with representatives of other European nations will be formed. Such touches in space would permanently transform Martin into an open European city with its own European identity. At the same time, suitable conditions will be created regarding the development of the creative economy and the bases for other domestic and foreign cultural operators, civic associations and artistic groups.

The image shows a formal letter on the official letterhead of the City of Rijeka, Croatia. At the top, it features the coat of arms of Croatia and the text: "REPUBLIC OF CROATIA PRIMORSKO - GORANSKA COUNTY CITY OF RIJEKA MAYOR". The date is "November 20th 2020". The recipient's address is "Mesto Martin (City of Martin) Vajanského nám. 1 036 49 Martin Slovenská republika (Slovak Republic) Att. Mr. Ján Danko, Mayor e-mail: jancoskova@martin.sk". The letter is addressed to "Dear Mr. Danko," and discusses the City of Rijeka's preparation for the ECOC 2026 candidacy, its support for the City of Martin's candidacy, and the potential for cooperation between the two cities. It is signed by "Vojko Obersnel, M.Sc." with his official seal and signature. Contact information for the City of Rijeka is provided at the bottom: "Grad Rijeka, Korzo 16, 51000 Rijeka, Hrvatska Tel. ++38551209527, Fax. 334008 www.rijeka.hr E-mail: mayor@rijeka.hr".

4.

IMPACT

Involvement of the local population and civil society in the preparation of the application, their involvement in the implementation in the relevant year

All efforts related to the development of culture and the deepening of its importance depend on one basic factor - the cultural level of the population and civil society. The ability of people to understand and support the modernization of Slovakia depends only on it. If society wants to move further from individual analyzes of the present to a more general diagnosis, it must necessarily become entangled in the cultural preconditions and possibilities of the population. The "National Memory" of the cultural community is structured mainly by cultural meanings transferred from the past. Each new generation must subject it to a critical analysis in terms of what we should keep in our collective memory and what should disappear from it.

The involvement of the local population and civil society in the preparation of the application was the first task of the Preparatory Committee. Connecting Martin and the Turiec Region for culture and pulling public opinion on the candidacy project is a basic, necessary and irreplaceable precondition for launching a campaign on the ECOC 2026. Since 19 February 2020, the Preparatory Committee has been communicating with the population through regional media and social networks (TV Turiec, Rebeca Radio, MY Turčianske noviny newspaper, Martinské noviny newspaper, Mestské noviny newspaper, Martinsko newspaper). Citizens were publicly invited to send until October 10, 2020 their projects, proposals, ideas, recommendations, intentions for potentially suitable cultural spaces, outdoor areas, public spaces, dilapidated (non-functional, uninhabited ...) buildings, which after reconstruction can serve to strengthen (expand) cultural infrastructure, people who can be of benefit regarding the initiatives, ideas, preparation and implementation of the Candidacy Project of Martin ...

Citizens could also send their positive and negative experiences related to local cultural life in electronic form. All constructive reactions were analyzed and evaluated online (videoconference) on October 16, 2020 by members of the Preparatory Committee, representatives of cultural, artistic and educational institutions, civic, professional and interest associations. Strict measures caused by the Covid-19 pandemic at the time did not allow the persons interested a personal meeting in the Turiec Gallery, organized by the Parta cultural platform.

Office hours were set up at the Municipal Office for citizens from June to October (during March to May this was not possible due to the coronavirus pandemic). The secretary of the Preparatory Committee, Igor Válek, provided citizens with relevant information on the importance of the bid for the ECOC title, presented the Martin's Candidacy Project, collected proposals and suggestions, intensively communicated with the media...

On February 19, 2020, representatives of civic associations operating in Martin and the Turiec Region declared their unanimous support for the city's candidacy. Later, all domestic entities were invited to participate in the preparation of the application and the Candidacy Project in the form of an official letter. By the specified deadline, 23 civic, professional and interest associations sent supporting opinions (acceptance letters). In this context, it should be emphasized that representatives of civic associations work in the Preparatory Committee of Martin's candidacy, the Culture Commission at the Local Parliament (City Council), as well as the Steering Committee of the National Culture Council, which brings together 25 personalities from the Turiec and national cultural, artistic, scientific and spiritual life, including university teachers.

Several civic associations actively participated in the promotion of Martin's candidacy already in the summer and autumn of 2020 (as Podoby slova, Barmuseum, Turiec Hungarians' Society, Parta).

SNM
- Ethnographic Museum
(expositions were
installed sequentially
in the years 1933 - 1938)

The largest supporting actions were as follows:

- Harvest of Creativity (August 27 - 30)
 - Concert on the Roof of the Millennium Building (September 11)
 - Literary Spring (Coronavirus caused that the date of the 54th year of this oldest literary festival in Slovakia had to move from the spring term to the beginning of autumn, September 22 – 25. The event also included promotion of the international project called “Blueprint – Cultural Heritage that Connects Us”)
 - the unveiling opening ceremony the Sándor Petöfi Memorial in Necpaly, the birthplace of mother of the famous Magyar Hungarian and Central European poet (October 3)
 - the Milan Hodža Days (December 8 - 13)
- More than three thousand people took part in the mentioned outdoor events. Spectators' participation in indoor events was limited by measures due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Many of the intended actions had to be cancelled for the corona.

All relevant proposals and suggestions by citizens and civic associations, which were delivered (sent electronically) to the Preparatory Committee, were implemented in the Candidacy Project.

Seminars and workshops will be prepared for residents and civic associations interested in actively participating in the content of the project in the next three years. They will focus on acquiring the skills needed to organize a cultural event, project management, application writing, marketing and PR. Upcoming young managers will have the opportunity to consult their ideas also with experts working with the ECOC team.

The Grant System 2026 will be available to all interested parties. It will provide applicants with „the famous fishing rod instead of the fish“. Grants will be focused mainly on the arts, culture, education, the creative industries, tourism and activities of marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

The Grant System 2026 so far assumes three types of support:

1. Structural grant - support for larger realistic projects within the ECOC agenda. (In this case, sponsorship would be fifty-fifty. Implementation will be based on cooperation and consultation with the central office. The grant would be re-paid in several installments based on an interdisciplinary report on the progress of the project implementation. Project team leaders could also take a certified management skills course.)
2. Small (action) grant called „Together we have it“ - support for shares up to 3.5 thousand euros. (Full support for smaller, short-term projects, people who want to try the organization of a cultural event with everything that such an intention contains - planning, budgeting, promotion, implementation, management, evaluation, billing.)
3. Grant called „Martin widely open“- special support for young people. (Allowing to complete a short internship in cultural institutions such as a theatre, museum, gallery or library. It could also be a form of practice accepted at secondary schools and universities. In case an intern or a group of interns would like to carry out their own cultural project during or after the internship, the ECOC would support them financially. Naturally, projects must be based on intern's cooperation with the particular institution.)

In conclusion, it is important to note that the MARTIN '26 Project will strengthen community development in a key way by activating the inhabitants of suburbs and housing estates, while comprehensively support the diversity of cultures of various social or religious groups, national minorities communities, alternative and experimental associations, subcultural society.

Creating opportunities to involve marginalized and disadvantaged groups

One of the main tasks of the project is to jointly prevent marginalized and disadvantaged groups or minority communities from closing in on each other. A multicultural society understands diversity as a strength, not a weakness. The starting point is that individual cultures can coexist, even with mutual interaction they move each other further, without one pushing the other out of space. The results of the indicated interactions are an open, tolerant society that looks more to the future than to the past. The cohesive force that every society needs in order to function is, in this case, the common will of the people living in the city and the region. For the creators of Martin's Candidacy Project, this is a strong, unquestionable decision that they want to live here together. Today, tomorrow, in twenty years ... It's a nice idea and it's not just a theory. It actually works in several developed countries. It can be rational to take the indicated path as well due to the reason that Slovak society consists of both marginalized and disadvantaged groups as well as multiethnic communities.

The irreplaceable mission of culture in the 21st century is to increase the quality of life of all groups of the population and to share the values that make up the meaning and content of the existence of the individual and the community. Without these values, society cannot exist. In order to better understand each other, dialogue is essential - meeting people with a desire to talk to each other. In order to communicate, listen and find out if they were able to reach a state of common understanding. Culture creates a unique platform for this.

The MARTIN '26 Project emphasizes the active involvement (integration) of marginalized and disadvantaged groups living in the city and the region. The main goal is to create suitable opportunities and adequate space not only for their own self-realisation and development of their talents and hobbies, but also for a comprehensive presentation of activities within the candidacy project. They can participate as performers or spectators. Specifically for disadvantaged (handicapped) citizens, the projects called the Bridges over the River of Silence and the International Festival of Community Art will be addressed. Various smaller all-season programmes will be organized by civic associations with a large contribution from a wide range of the Turiec volunteers.

One of the most significant issues in contemporary Slovakia, maybe the biggest, is the Roma issue. It is undoubtedly true that the ECOC project can also make a significant contribution to solving a problem that resembles a time bomb in society. Metropolis of Turiec comes up with an initiative that could be a good example also for other cities and regions in Slovakia. Martin's initiative is called the Forum Romanum and includes five phase:

1. Round table
2. Roma Eco Habitat
3. Workshops
4. Craft alley
5. Education

We will briefly introduce the second phase. The specifics of the Roma community, which is a progressively growing part of the population in Slovakia (also in a percentage), force us to think about a number of contexts. The basic task is the solution of urban-architectural-community housing in municipalities and villages. The Roma population must live together with their historical genetic code. A new vision of a more integrated coexistence of all ethnic groups commands to solve their living conditions and needs more openly. Simply, try to replace the entrenched Roma ghettos with a more open principle in the urban agglomeration. Among the solutions proposed in the project, we will mention here just one - the creation of special boutiques that would restore traditional Roma professions (blacksmithing, basketry, ceramics production) directly in their premises.

The exterior architectural-artistic and design solution would never be definitive, but it would have a chance for constant change. This nomadic principle of permanent change and improvi-

sation would help to create native inhabitants, children and young people, street artists, sprayers, art schools, eco-artists and other volunteers. The overall resolution of a number of social, architectural and financial equations of multiple unknowns creates space for the emergence of a new Roma architecture, within the project of Martin's candidacy, preliminary called the Roma Eco Habitat. According to the creators of the project, the indicated theoretical solutions and their practical implementation can open a new path for the whole of Europe.

The time implementation of the mentioned five stages is already elaborated in more detail. For the time being, for spatial reasons, we will only state that, in the final effect, the Forum Romanum initiative can contribute to a higher degree of Roma integration. From the range of diverse events, the largest one will be the international festival of Roma culture and art named „Children of the Wind“. A specific feature of the festival will be that it will not only be a show of Roma culture and a presentation of crafts, but especially an opportunity to meet artists of different skin colours, so that the event fulfils not a segregating but integrative function. The members of the Preparatory Committee firmly believe that the ECOC title and the related possibility of positive visibility in the European context can be a strong motivation for Roma to participate in the MARTIN '26.

The members of the Preparatory Committee firmly believe that the ECOC title and the related possibility of positive visibility in the European context can be a strong motivation for Roma to participate in the MARTIN '26 Project.

The Forum Romanum initiative will be one of the main pillars of the Art of Reflection section, because an open and unbiased dialogue with the Roma in Slovakia does not almost takmer exist. Undoubtedly, this could mean a qualitative leap to solve the Roma issue. The City of Martin is optimally suited for the implementation of such a project with far-reaching consequences. There are not as many Roma living here as, for example, in some Eastern Slovak cities, you can work with them less anonymously. The responsibility of the organization representing the Roma community will be particularly important, as the general experience of working with the Roma is such that they respect only their own (often informal) authorities.

Based on the above-mentioned, it can be concluded that the City of Martin, through the ECOC, wants to become a model for solving the Roma issue for other Slovak cities.

The overall strategy of audience development, in particular the connection with education and school participation

Culture as a widely perceived phenomenon can prepare the inhabitants of the city and the region for the fact that that creativity can become the main engine of all-round development in the coming years and at the same time the goal of social movement. In Martin, therefore, efforts will be made to create a creative community. It will be a community able to make full use of the latest technologies, find and evaluate information, communicate and individually create also in networks.

Characteristic features of the community will be the knowledge-based economy, innovation in education in schools and beyond, life-long learning, support for science and research, original ideas such as participation in planning and strategies, cooperation at the international level. Important elements in terms of implementation also include networking of young people (in schools and at home) and their participation in creation, independent scene, working with new media and their functional use in cultural processes, culture seven days a week, culture for all generations and social classes of the population.

Broad-spectrum activities in the implementation of the ECOC project, from the language training of people to the active participation of the majority of citizens in the creation of programmes, must mobilize the social consciousness of the population and awaken in them a desire for new knowledge. At the same time, the planned activities must innovatively use the creative capacities of the environment, offer real opportunities for participation in international and intercultural dialogue with the perspective that the expended energy will be multiplied not only in 2026 but also after the event (sustainability). The project has a clear ambition to transform Mar-

tin into a city of spirit, a city of free and meaningful creativity as the main precondition for the creation of universal values.

The application of the indicated strategy will be implemented as a matter of priority in the form of a harmonious functional connection with systematic education and constructive participation of all types of schools - whether they are in the founding competence of the city, Žilina Self-Governing Region, state or private sector.

It should be emphasized that Martin is not only the seat of dozens of cultural organizations, civic, professional and interest associations, but also the city of many schools. For example, one of the oldest and highest quality Slovak grammar schools (named after its founder from 11 August 1867 – after Viliam Paulíny Tóth) is located here, the extremely successful Milan Hodža Bilingual English-Slovak Grammar School operates in neighbouring Sučany, the Grammar School of Jozef Lettrich, a great vocational school of mechanical engineering, and secondary vocational school of business and services, secondary medical, business or transport school.

In total, there are five grammar schools, seven vocational schools, the Centre for Vocational Education and Training for Mechanical Engineering and Other Metalworking, seven basic art schools, ten leisure centres, and three language schools in the Martin District. The renowned Jessenius Faculty of Medicine at Comenius University, with its rich, long-established international contacts, ties and relationships, deserves special attention. It is one of the three medical faculties in the Slovak Republic and the only university education institution based in Martin.

According to the evaluation of ARRA (Academic Ranking and Rating Agency), it has long been the best Slovak faculty of medicine, or the best rated faculty in the Žilina Region territory. The faculty is systematically expanding and modernizing its educational infrastructure; with the support of the European Regional Development Fund, a new Library Information, Computing and Simulation Learning Centre building has been added to the school's premises in recent years. Thanks to the videoconferencing system, the academic library and audiovisual centre also enable students to watch live broadcasts of surgical procedures. Together with Vývoj Martin, a. s., the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine is a key institution in the Turiec Region in the research and development sector. It is also extremely successful in obtaining grants from the external environment, every year it implements and submits applications for funding dozens of projects, especially under the European Regional Development Fund and the European Social Fund, as well as various domestic grant agencies.

Many foreign students have studied and still study at the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine since its inception vzniku in 1969. Medics from the Scandinavian countries have long had the largest representation (Norway, Iceland, Sweden and Finland), while in the school year 2020/2021 they are studying 531 students in Martin! (As the second ECOC in 2026 will be a city from Finland, the "Scandinavian dimension" plays an extremely important role in Martin's project. The Mayor of the City of Martin, Ján Danko, as a former long-term dean of the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine, Comenius University in Martin, an internationally respected and acclaimed gynecologist and university professor who is personally intensively involved in this issue.

*SNM
– the Slovak
Village Museum
– Open Air Museum
the biggest natural
exposition
in Slovakia*





The building of the Slovak National Library is architecturally dominant in Martin (built in 1975)

5. MANAGEMENT

A. FINANCE

THE CITY'S BUDGET FOR CULTURE

What has been the city's annual budget for culture in the last 5 years (excluding expenditure on this application for the European Capital of Culture bid)? Fill in the following table

Year	Annual budget of the city for culture (in Euros)	Annual budget of the city for culture (in % from the whole annual budget of the city)
2016	664 356	2,01
2017	687 688	1,61
2018	1 243 979	2,94
2019	921 346	1,96
2020	864 260	1,60

The budget does not include staff costs

If the city plans to use funds from its annual budget for culture to finance the European Capital of Culture Project, indicate this amount, from the year of application to the year of the European Capital of Culture

The Members of Local Parliament (City Council) unanimously approved the candidacy for the title of European Capital of Culture 2026. Due to the fact that Martin has fought for this title in the past (got into the second round), the city management has a clear idea of the costs involved. The Members of Local Parliament (City Council) will approve the financing of the project from its annual budget for culture operatively after the possible progression of Martin to the next round (shorter selection).

How much of the total annual budget does the city plan to spend on culture after the year in which it would like to be European Capital of Culture (in Euros and % of the total annual budget)?

Currently, the amount of expenditure on culture ranges from 1.6% to less than 3% of the city's annual budget. They also take into account items related to the promotion, protection and maintenance of cultural monuments. In the case of a successful candidacy, the city, in addition to massive communication and promotion of the MARTIN '26 project, will focus on developing

the cultural infrastructure that is currently lacking, as well as supporting various projects in the field of culture, art and creative industries. The expected share of cultural expenditure will therefore be multiplied; in 2021 and 2022 to 3-4%, in 2023 and 2024 around 3.5%, with the approaching year 2026 it will increase to 6%. After 2026, a level of around 2.5 percent is considered sustainable.

Much of the resources - around 55% of the proposed budget of € 29 million in 2021 to 2026 - the city plans to obtain using EU funds, subsidies and endowment schemes. A selection procedure is currently being prepared for the staff reinforcement of the Structural Funds Department; from January 2021, an ECOC specialist will also be working in it. In addition, it is planned to use credit resources to supplement and renovate the existing cultural infrastructure.

The city manages only a small part of the cultural infrastructure. The founder of many cultural, educational and educational institutions is the Žilina Self-Governing Region. At the same time, Martin is a seat of many important central cultural, scientific and educational institutions, which are directly connected to the state budget. All these institutions support the Martin's Candidacy Project for the title of the ECOC 2026.

CURRENT BUDGET FOR THE TITLE-YEAR

REVENUE TO COVER CURRENT EXPENDITURE

Explain the total current budget (i.e. the funds that are specifically earmarked to cover current expenditure). The budget must cover the preparation phase, the year of the title, the evaluation and the provisions for follow-up activities related to the reference to the future. Fill in the following table as well.

Based on the experience of 2008, when Martin ran for the ECOC 2013 title, it is proposed in the 2021 budget to increase the amount of current expenditure by € 200,000. This item also includes more massive media support, marketing services and communication strategy, as well as representation and foreign expenses and staff costs. The individual years of the preparatory phase provide for a gradual increase in current expenditure, with an emphasis on 2026. The budget also calculates a financial reserve for the project evaluation.

Total revenue to cover current expenditure (in Euros)	From public sector (in Euros)	From public sector (in %)	From private sector (in Euros)	From private sector (in %)
4 658 000	4 448 000	95,94 %	210 000	4,06 %

PRIVATE SECTOR REVENUE

What is the structure of the revenues that you plan to receive from the public sector to cover current expenses? Fill in the following table

Private sector revenue to cover current expenditure	In Euros	%
Government of the SR	1 800 000	36,3
Municipality	1 220 000	24,6
Region	915 000	18,4
EU (except for the Melina Mercouri Award)	1 026 000	20,7
Others	0	0
Total	4 961 000	

The items of co-financing from the government and structural funds are indicative; nowadays their amount is only estimated.

PRIVATE SECTOR REVENUE/INCOME

What is the strategy for raising funds and support from private sponsors? How do you plan to involve sponsors in the event?

In the second half of 2020, interviews were held at the level of city management with all more relevant domestic and foreign (multinational) companies and companies operating in the territory of Martin or the Turiec region, regarding their involvement in the event. Several entities declared that if the candidacy is successful, they will financially support it as sponsors (joint-stock companies as ECCO Slovakia, ŽOS Vrútky, Trim Leader, the Neografia Printing Company, Duropack Turpak Obaly, ZTS Tees Vos, Hranipex, limited liability companies as Mar Sk, Turčan Delta, ŽOS Trading, KraussMaffei Technologies, GGB Slovakia, HBM Pharma, Volz Filters Sk, Engul).

In a short time, the city will intensify its efforts to obtain funds and support from private sponsors. The newly established non-profit organization "Martin 2026" will work systematically with them in cooperation with the local government management and the Department of Regional Development and Tourism. Sponsors will be involved in the event either directly - by supporting one of the ECOC projects, or indirectly - by investing in a city or region that will improve the overall infrastructure and environmental readiness.

In direct support, large retail chains and major companies in the automotive, energy, gas, construction, telecommunications and banking sectors, which support various cultural entities and activities, art, sports, philanthropic projects, will play an important role in financing individual projects ... Some of them have their own funds and foundations, through which they also award grants and scholarships. The non-profit organization "Martin 2026" will systematically apply for financial resources by offering the ECOC event programmes, as well as in the form of projects under calls from relevant funds (Slovak Gas Industry Foundation, Volkswagen Foundation, Kia Motors Slovakia Foundation, PSA Group Foundation, Orange Foundation, Pontis Foundation, Allianz Foundation, General Credit Bank Foundation, Tatra Bank Foundation, Open Society Foundation, Novum Foundation and others).

Many activities within the ECOC event, thanks to systematic promotion and good attendance, can attract sponsors who will address their target groups through them.

Indirect involvement of sponsors in recent years is confirmed by numerous examples of investments in Martin and its surroundings (creation of new residential zones, industrial parks and shopping centres, reconstruction of former industrial buildings and their areas, improvement of ski resort infrastructure, construction of hotels and guesthouses, construction of new sports grounds, expansion of the range of services and others).

CURRENT EXPENSES

Break down the structure of current expenditures in the following table

Expenditures for programme (in Euros)	Expenditures for programme (in %)	Promotion and Marketing (v Euros)	Promotion and Marketing (in %)	Salaries, overheads and administration (in Euros)	Salaries, overheads and administration (in %)	Others /administrative costs, monitoring, evaluation/ (in Euros)	Other /specify/ (in %)
3 774 830	73 %	568 810	11 %	361 970	7 %	465 390	9 %
Total current expenditure: 5 171 000 Eur							

BUDGET FOR CAPITAL EXPENDITURE

What is the structure of income to cover capital expenses related to the year of the title do you plan to get from the public sector? Fill in the following table

Private sector revenue to cover current expenditure	In Euros	%
Government of the SR	4 320 000	21,91
Municipality	2 828 000	14,34
Region	1 571 000	7,97
EU (except for the Melina Mercouri Award)	14 949 000	75,81
Others	161 000	0,82
Total	23 829 000	

Budget for capital expenditure

Have the public finance authorities (municipality, region, state) already voted to cover capital expenditures or made the relevant financial commitments? If not, when will they do so?

The city authorities have not negotiated to cover current expenses yet. The budget is always approved by the Local Parliament (City Council) at the end of the year - it is approved for the following calendar year. Current expenses are budgeted annually, capital expenditures are earmarked for individual investments.

Relevant financial commitments regarding the ECOC will be made immediately after Martin's possible progress to the selection stage, or between the shortlisted candidate cities.

However, the amount of 100 thousand euros is planned in the city's participatory budget for 2021. Citizens will vote to decide which public interest projects will be financially supported from this source during 2021.

The city management and the Local Parliament Members have long systematically supported the intentions to build and revitalize cultural infrastructure, renovate cultural monuments and historic buildings, apply innovations and modern forms of making cultural heritage accessible.

What is the fundraising strategy you will use to seek financial support from Union programmes funds to cover capital expenditure?

Current turning point in the transition to the new programming period of the European Union (2021 - 2027) together with new forthcoming Development Strategy of Slovakia - Agenda SK 30 are extremely focused on the use of extra-budgetary resources. At the same time, it promotes integrated and sustainable development through local initiatives. Integrated strategic planning and support for sustainable urban development offer, in accordance with the draft priorities of the Slovak Republic for cohesion policy, important goals and measures that were missing in previous programming periods.

The Europe Closer to the Citizens Programme offers comprehensive support for forms of tourism development, linking cultural heritage, living culture and tourism. Activities for the restoration and protection of cultural monuments and monuments also offer opportunities for drawing resources. From the point of view of Martin's candidacy for the title of ECOC 2026, this is a unique opportunity to support plans for the renewal and development of cultural infrastructure, collection institutions, the creation of cultural, creative, co-working and community centres. For Martin as a multicultural city, the possibilities of drawing resources to support activities regarding the preservation of folk traditions, the development of local identity, minority cultures and crafts are extremely attractive.

Within the MARTIN '26 Project, metropolis of Turiec will consistently use all possibilities of support from EU funds that the new programming period brings to culture, creative industry, education, tourism, regional development and community work. The Programme of Economic, Social and Cultural Development of the City will be updated in connection with integrated planning at the regional and local level. Experience of using extra-budgetary resources will be drawn from the regional library of project proposals for drawing in the new programming period will be prepared. The advantage will be the planned simpler access to financing of development needs from European funds. In particular, integrated territorial strategies and integrated territorial investments will be used for effective planning. The city will combine its rich experience in obtaining extra-budgetary resources and implementing projects with the experience of other socio-economic regional partners.

The aim is to use the offered resources as efficiently as possible to achieve a higher quality of life of the inhabitants. Implementation of demanding projects supported by EU funds in previous periods from the Integrated Regional Operational Programme and the Regional Programme, cross-border cooperation programmes, environmental quality programmes and human resources - with results reflected in school insulation, building cycle roads and infrastructure, community centre and many other public spheres - taught competent Martin inhabitants to accept great challenges. The new programming period from the point of view of the possibility of drawing resources on the field of culture, creative industry and tourism is undoubtedly such a great challenge.

The preparation of individual projects and applications will be systematically dealt with by the Department of Strategic Development, which is already coordinating and implementing this activity in close cooperation with the Department of Regional Development and Tourism. The non-profit organization "Martin 2026" will actively enter the whole process immediately after the possible progress of the city into the selection phase. All interested parties are already working intensively on the strategy of obtaining financial resources to cover capital expenditures. Regarding EU programmes / funds, attention will be focused on: Europe Closer to the Citizen, European Regional Development Fund, Creative Europe, Erasmus, COSME, Horizon 2020, Europe for Citizens, LIFE, Connecting Europe Facility, CET Transport, European Social Fund Development and the European Social Fund.

A special category of fundraising will be grants from programmes of various European countries, respectively mechanisms, funds and foundations - EEA Financial Mechanism and Norwegian Financial Mechanism, Interreg IIIA, International Visegrad Fund, CEI Cooperation Fund - Central European Initiative, European Cultural Foundation, Central European Foundation, Carpathian Foundation, Foundation - Centre for Contemporary Art, Swiss Financial Mechanism, French Institute ...

If appropriate, insert a table here stating how much you will spend on the new cultural infrastructure that will be used in the title year?

The sums that the City of Martin plans to spend in the title year on the new cultural infrastructure will be published immediately after any progress to the selection phase, or among the shortlisted candidate cities.

B. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Outline the planned governance structure for the implementation of the European Capital of Culture Year

The European Capital of Culture Project offers what no activity in the city nor in the Turiec Region can provide. It creates favourable preconditions for the implementation of far-reaching qualitative changes. In their implementation, through the grant programme to support creative and talented people, the infrastructure of culture and creative industries, art, education, transport, tourism, regional development, sports will be repaired and modified. This will have a major influence and impact on/to cultural and social changes that will take place gradually, requiring quality organization, cooperation and time.

The non-profit organization called "Martin 2026", founded by the City of Martin will be responsible for the implementation of the ECOC project and the fulfilment of the obligations. It is open to all entities that want to participate in any way in the all-round development of culture, creative industry, art and education in Martin, the Turiec Region and in global goals in the Žilina Region too. The organization is headed by a Director. Utmost attention will be paid to the selection of the Director by an independent commission set up by the founders. Each of them can offer their candidate for this position. The selection will therefore consist of several candidates. The director must be a top organizer and a manager, a generally recognized authority and a politically (party) independent person.

For the implementation of the ECOC program, the director of the organization within the programme department will have at his disposal a team of seven managers responsible for individual arts - according to the project. In addition to the manager, each art also has its own specialized (professional institution) and artistic guarantor (a well-known personality from the relevant milieu). The production of the programme will be ensured by the production division territorially, so that they have a certain database of collaborators in the assigned territory in implementing the Seven Arts Project.

The commercial site will be assigned to **the sales department** performing the following tasks:

- seeking sources of funding from EU funds and sponsors, submitting projects to the relevant funds
- management of sponsors
- marketing management
- programme sales management

The organizational department will be in charge of:

- management of human and financial resources
- implementation management
- investment management
- arranging visits and partnerships
- volunteer management

A functional network of volunteers is an extremely important component of the full operation of the organization, or comprehensive provision of the event. It will consist of people from the third sector, interested citizens, university and secondary school students. If Martin's candidacy is successful, a separate structure with a professional axis will be created in connection with the organization of volunteers.

The non-profit organization "Martin 2026" will have a board of directors and a supervisory board composed of representatives of the founders, public, cultural and artistic life, companies, sponsors and civic associations.

C. RISK PLANNING

**What are the main strengths and weaknesses of the project?
How do you plan to overcome the identified weaknesses?**

STRENGTHS OF THE PROJECT

- year-round rich offer of cultural, artistic, educational, scientific, sports and others events in the city
- the strong European (international) dimension of the project
- a dense network and good quality of cultural, educational, artistic, educational and scientific institutions
- the national character of memory and fund institutions with strong European (international) partnerships
- a wide range of civic, professional and interest associations (including societies of national minorities communities) and non-profit organizations (third sector), a functioning voluntary network
- number of foreign students of the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine, Comenius University in Martin (currently 641medics from 32 countries, of which 19 are European)
- qualified human resources
- a high number of cultural and historical monuments
- high potential to use the rich history, traditions, wide cultural and artistic offer for development of creative industry and the year-round tourist attractiveness of the area
- visits to the area by domestic and foreign tourists
- a wide range of cultural, sports and leisure time activities
- long - term and well - functioning relations with partner cities abroad (the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Hungary, Germany, Poland, Serbia) as well as relations with the Croatian City of Rijeka - European Capital of Culture 2020, which supported the candidacy of Martin
- long-term and well-functioning relations of the Slovak National Library, the Slovak National Library, National Museum and the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine, Comenius University in Martin with European and world institutions
- functional cross-border partnerships and their potential for further development of project cooperation in the field of protection, promotion and access to cultural and natural heritage

- the potential of the city regarding the development of cognitive and experiential tourism in the field of technical history
- realized public and private investments in tourism infrastructure
- top quality university education and its international dimension
- the potential to increase the innovative character of the city through significant investments in science and research infrastructure
- the potential for increasing the mobility of students and teachers within the European Union
- an ever-expanding network of cycle paths and their mobiliari in and around the city
- newly built modern athletic stadium with multifunctional use
- ecological stability of the area ensured by the system of protection of a large range of protected areas
- the advantageous geographical location of the city on the corridor route of the TEN - T network
- The City of Martin is also declared by the Act of the National Council of the Slovak Republic No. 241/1994 Coll. on Martin as the Centre of National Culture of Slovaks

WEAKNESSES OF THE PROJECT

- an ongoing trend of population decline in the city
- a decline in the proportion of people of working-age and an increase in the number of people over the age of 65 years.
- the attractiveness of the region and the richness of its culture, art and traditions are not being projected sufficiently into the growth of employment in sectors of tourism and creative industry
- debt investment in the infrastructure of sport and spending of free time built in the 20th century
- sufficiently attractive conditions not being created for the arrival of foreign investment and the development of the sector of domestic business
- insufficient use of the creative potential of the region in regards to the development of job opportunities
- traffic load and the state of the existing network of roads
- incompleteness of the superior road infrastructure limiting the development of the region
- situating the city outside the main line of the railway going through the regions
- insufficient infrastructure for the development of non-motorized and combined transport
- small portion of investment in industry and value-added business
- limited access to the main centre of tourism - Martinské Hole hills
- the negative impacts of development (mainly of the new transport infrastructure) on the ecosystem in the city and its surroundings
- insufficient establishment of regional brands (products)
- property non-settlement of land under a part of the sport infrastructure

OVERCOMING OF THE IDENTIFIED WEAKNESSES

In the appropriate parts of the strategic plan document Programme of the Economic, Social and Cultural Development of the City Martin for the Years 2016 – 2023, proposals of comprehensive solutions to a large portion of the identified weaknesses are being paid attention to.

The updates and additions of this document, which are being elaborated by members of the Candidacy Preparatory Committee and by representatives of civic associations operating in the city, are going to include specific solutions regarding the overcoming of weaknesses. Everything cannot be executed in the near future though. Solving long time problematic issues requires a time horizon of approximately 5 years, meaning till the year 2026, the identified weaknesses of the project should be solved.

If Martin will get to the next phase selection, a non-profit organization „Martin'26“ will be created. Its staff will immediately start making systematic steps to gradual removal of all the obstacles, which could relevantly endanger a full-featured fulfilling of the candidacy programme. An integral part of this process will be the initiation and the creation of different projects, looking for public and private resources, involvement of the city in different regional and European grant mechanisms and schemes, a systematic communication with the Žilina Self-governing Region, the Government of the Slovak Republic and international institutions.

D. MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

Present an outline of the planned marketing and communication strategy of the city for the year of the European Capital of Culture

The marketing and communication strategies will be directly connected to all relevant plans and intentions, fulfilling the content part of the Candidacy Project. There will be created a separate Komunikačný akčný plán (KAP - Communication Action Plan) aimed at goals, target groups, types of information, marketing and communication tools and timetable of implementation. The main goal of KAP is to systematically inform through internet pages, social media (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Youtube, LinkedIn), mobile operators, analogue and electronic media the public about the project, provide and deepen an intense communication between all cooperating partner components. Other tasks and goals of KAP include the improvement in city – citizens relationship, adequately functioning feedback while making decisions, forming and deepening a relationship to the culture of European states.

Target groups are: the management team of the project, structures of the City of Martin, co-operating subjects (civic, professional and interest associations, societies) and physical persons, the Žilina Self-governing Region, the European Commission, municipalities and villages in the Turiec Region, micro-regions, associations of municipalities and villages, universities, cultural, educational and scientific institutions (state, self-governing and private sector), partner (twin) cities in Europe and elsewhere, business companies, small and medium-sized enterprises, corporate associations, chambers of commerce, business clubs, the self employed and chambers of self employment, social partners, non-profit sector, regional development organizations, local communities, information centres and offices, international organizations and institutions.

The types of information provided are: information about strategies, action plans at a regional level, information about the project and its programme units, options of building partnerships, business oriented information, influences/impacts of the projects on the development of the city and region – specifically in the field of culture, creative industry and art (good examples from practice).

The marketing and communication tools used for achieving the desired effect are: communication face to face, the latest information technologies, web pages and social media, podcasts, mobile operators, newsletters, brochures, leaflets, billboards, buses and bus stops, trains and railway stations, retail chains, digital media, virtual library, discussion forum, video conferences, intense mail communication and prompt reactions to electronic questions, critique, proposals and recommendations, actions – ongoing cultural, artistic, educational, sport and other events, seminars, information days, workshops, conferences, activities of neighbour towns, cities and regions...

Marketing and communication will be supported by advertising – internet and social networks, press, outdoor advertising, radio and television (full-area, regional, local, internet bro-

adcasting), regular press news, interviews with journalists, press conferences and talks, advertising and propagation, which will be created with participation of a consortium of advertising agencies and professional public relations.

A special category of marketing and communication strategy represents the project of „music-playing“ bus stops. On individual stops, the interested can download to their phone through a QR code sheet music with lyrics of the Turiec folk song. Well thought through graphic concept of bus stops will, other than the sheet music record and environmental dimension (protection of birds from flying into the glass filling on bus stops) include a clear Slovak-English information about the ECOC programme, informational system, which will introduce tourists where they are currently spending their time, where are the nearest services, or to be more clear how to get there, contacts for important institutions...

The City of Martin as a founding member actively functions in many organizations whose goal is a systematic support of marketing and communication strategy in regard to the development of tourism in the Turiec Region (Malá Fatra Association, Cluster Turiec, Turiec - Regional Tourism Organization). Each of them successfully acquires for the stated purpose non-budget resources as well. Worth mentioning is the fact, that the City of Martin itself systematically realizes different activities for versatile support of marketing and communication strategy of tourism – for example the project called The Support of the Development of Tourism in the Turiec Region, subsidized by the European Fond for Regional Development.

How Does the City Plan to Emphasize the Fact that the European Capital of Culture is an Action by the European Union?

Generally the world's attention is most attracted by the political and economic dimension of Europe. But the old continent can be defined more as a cultural and historical phenomenon than as a geographical or economical term. One of the founders of European communities, Jean Monet, near the end of his life said that if the process of European unification could start again, he would start with the field of culture. It is culture which is the inseparable instrument of creating and of the content of European citizenship and European identity – through a better understanding of other cultures and our common heritage, however still fully respecting the cultural diversity. In this sense culture must be perceived as a collective good of all people and nations, as a sign of respect, freedom and creativity, as a story of their way through history.

The fundamental motto of the European Union is „unity in diversity“. It is a motto that is reassuring and ambitious at the same time. Reassuring, because the Union recognizes the incredible richness of national and regional cultures. Real European identity is naturally created by different nations and communities, traditions, histories, literatures, arts and folk traditions. But the motto is also ambitious, because it underlines the fact, that equality does not mean segregation, but instead recognition and acceptance of individuality, which at the same time makes unity possible. In other words: the richness of our diversity is a structural element of the European unity. Slovakia is a culturally rich country, which actively contributes in forming the common European identity. Without the Slovak, European family of cultures would be incomplete.

Previous lines create a basic ideological pillar of the MARTIN '26 Project. From this point of view, its authors will highlight at every relevant opportunity the fact that ECOC is an action of the European Union. One specific example for all: An extremely important component of the programme will be an attractive presentation of all elements of the Member States of EU, that are registered in the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The City of Martin will approach the individual states with an offer for a broad spectrum promotion and presentation – including workshops, concerts, theatre plays, movie projections, multimedia presentations... – of their elements included in the UNESCO List. This far-reaching intention will be covered by the project „Market of European Nations“ (The Art of Action).

6. THE ABILITY TO ACHIEVE GOALS

Confirm and present evidence about having a wide and strong political support and a sustainable commitment by the appropriate local, regional and national public authorities

A list of subjects operating in the city, region and also on an all-state level that through the form of letters of acceptance as of the day 30th November 2020 publicly supported the project MARTIN'26.

State administration: District Office of Martin

Self-government: The Association of Towns and Villages of Turiec - ZMOT (together 69 subjects), the town of Turčianske Teplice, the town of Vrútky, the town of Turany, the village of Belá-Dulice, the village of Žabokreky

Cultural institutions: the Slovak National Library, the Slovak National Museum – Museums in Martin, Matica slovenská, the Slovak Chamber Theatre, the Turiec Gallery, the Turiec Cultural Centre, the City Stage, CVČ (Centre of Free Time) Kamarát

Educational institutions: the Jessenius Faculty of Medicine, Comenius University, the Institute of Mediamatics in Martin, Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of Comenius University, the Grammar School of Viliam Pauliny-Tóth, the Grammar School of Jozef Lettrich, the Private Joint Art School, the Evangelical Private School, the Elementary Art School in Martin

Civic associations: Amfiko, Crea-edu, Deep Dance Club, Children's Folk Ensemble Turiec, the PhotoClub of Karol Plicka, Climbing Club Neolit, the Club of Slovak Tourists Turiec, the Cultural Platform Parta, the Hungarian Society of Turiec, Music is the message, Podoby slova (The Forms of Word), Pôvabnica Turca (the Charm of Turiec), the National Culture Council, Ruslana, Sommelier Club, the Association of Czechs in Martin, the Association of Slovak Writers, Step Art Roots, the Studio Pivnica, the artistic grouping of children from orphanages, disadvantaged communities and their friends Fénix, For the Statue of Saint Martin, Živena – Slovak Women's Association

Partner (twin), sister cities and organizations abroad: Bački Petrovac (Serbia), Békéscsaba (Hungary), Hoogeveen (the Netherlands), Gotha (Germany), Jičín (the Czech Republic), Kalisz (Poland), Rijeka (Croatia), Akureyri (Iceland), Ningbo (China), Public Library of Václav Čtvrtek, Business Academy of T. G. Masaryk, the Elementary Art School of J. B. Foerster in Jičín (Czech Republic), Local Community of Slovaks in Bački Petrovac (Serbia), PAR Rijeka (Croatia).

The letters of acceptance (supportive statements) of all 123 partners – including Turiec municipalities and villages – are published at

<https://www.martin.sk/europske-hlavne-mesto-kultury-2026/ds-2152/p1=78621>

When it comes to the supportive statements of economic, business and entrepreneurial companies, those will be available in case Martin will progress to the phase of selection, or rather among the cities of the shorter selection.

Confirm and present the evidence that the city has or will have an adequate and viable infrastructure for being the owner of the title. Answer these following questions.

Explain how will the European Capital of Culture make us of and develop the cultural infrastructure.

During the years 2021 – 2023 the ECOC Project Team will work out a detailed plan for the use and development of the cultural infrastructure. In the specific practice it will also mean, that it will prepare the infrastructure and many cultural activities as well, or let us say it will intensively work on opening the city to the project and on the project of a dialogue with the city. The intention is to pull into cooperation all interest groups that can contribute to fulfilling the vision of the MARTIN '26 Project – the transformation of the cultural, social and economic environment, which characteristics will be creativity, application of new thoughts, innovative projects and original ideas as well as a deeper public interest in culture, art and the creative industry. In a different part of this text it has already been mentioned, that Martin has an ambition of being the new cultural metropolis of the 21st century in the middle Europe area, with a sustainable development, improvement of the environment, a versatile development of the cultural industry and tourism. Through the project, by systematic steps it will make an effort to change the formerly industrial bastion into a post-industrial city with a strong creative potential, educational, university and scientific background, fully used present and new cultural infrastructure.

The new forms of cultural infrastructure will be SIM ArtCenter and multigenre cultural and art centre, Open Air Art Park as an attractive space for the realisation of huge exterior events, and the House of Creativity as a space for young art, realisation of multimedia projects and presentation of new media. In the forward-looking plans, there is also the use and development of cultural infrastructure through the creation of a new poly-functional section of the city from the former (now abandoned) buildings of the Neografia Printing Company with a huge area, and a large complex of hospital buildings with a big area. (In the following years The University Hospital will be completely moved to new pavilions in the wider centre of Martin.)

A separate category from the point of view of the strategy using and developing the cultural infrastructure would represent the Manor-House in nearby Turčianská Štiavnička, that the city is trying to get very hard. It's a precious monument with a beautiful nature area.

What are the city's assets in terms of accessibility (regional, national and international transport)?

Martin is situated in the middle of Slovakia. A visitor can get to its territory from every place in Slovakia so that he or she can come and go in one day. The city is a crossroads of international corridors from west to east and from north to south, in both road and railway transport. It is crossed by roads and railways of national and international importance.

ROAD TRANSPORT

In road transport, state roads I / 18 (E50) Žilina - Ružomberok - Poprad - Košice; I / 65 Martin - Kremnica - Žiar nad Hronom - Žarnovica; II / 577 Turčianske Teplice - mountain pass Šturec - Uľanka, are of international importance. The long-term plans include the construction of the R3 expressway, which will connect Hungary with Poland and go through Martin. The D1 motorway is currently being built from Bratislava to the centre of the Žilina Region. In 2026, the Dubná Skala - Višňové tunnel could finally be opened, through which the motorway on the Martin - Žilina route will pass.

Long-distance domestic transport is operated in the Martin district (in total) by 12 carriers on 14 routes, long-distance international transport is operated by 6 carriers on 8 routes. The suburban bus service is operated by two carriers on 21 routes.

Until 2026, the overall intention is to use the fact that Martin is in the middle of the anticipated NETWORK 2026. Two road circuits should be formed, on which special bus lines will be created for participants of the ECOC events. Northern circuit: Martin - Žilina-Terchová - Dolný Kubín - Ružomberok - Martin. Southern circuit: Martin - Turčianske Teplice - Banská Bystrica - Zvolen - Banská Štiavnica - Kremnica - Turčianske Teplice - Martin. The mentioned routes are planned to

be implemented as a product of cultural tourism or creative industry, i.e. as such they have a chance for sustainability.

Domestic and private bus transport connects Martin with almost all district cities in Slovakia. International lines to the Czech Republic and Poland also pass through the city. Regular long-distance bus services stop in the city centre.

Public bus transport is provided by the company SAD Žilina, a. s., operation Martin. From 2022, however, it will be fully under direction of the city. In addition to public transport, visitors to the Turiec metropolis can also use the services of private minibuses operating on the Martin - Vrútky line and back.

By 2026, the central bus station, located directly opposite the railway station, will be renovated. It provides long-distance and suburban bus transport, currently it has 17 bus stations.

With regard to increasing the attractiveness of public passenger transport, systematic attention is paid to the construction of new car parking places.

RAILWAY TRANSPORT

In terms of national and international rail transport, town of Vrútky (less than 6 kilometers away from Martin) is of strategic importance, which is an important transport hub connecting the Turiec Region with the whole of Slovakia, as well as the surrounding neighbours (the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary). Lines No. 180 (Bratislava - Žilina - Vrútky - Poprad - Košice) and No. 170 (Vrútky - Martin - Hronská Dúbrava - Zvolen) are connecting here. There is a regular network of public bus transport, private minibuses between Vrútky and Martin, and a taxi service is available 24 hours a day.

A special category in the coming years should be passenger transport from the Polish city of Bielsko-Biala to Martin. It is a project of Polish, Czech and Slovak border municipalities and villages within the Beskydy EuroRegion, financed from European Union funds.

The building of the railway station in Martin (including the entire area and access to trains) has been fully renovated and modernized since 2019.

CYCLING TRANSPORT

The share of cycling traffic in the City of Martin in the total division of transport activity is above average in the Slovak Republic. The backbone of the cycling infrastructure is two parallel lines leading in a north-south direction. One is represented by a separate route for cyclists from the city centre through the housing estates of Sever and Košúty to the industrial zone, the other is a separate route for pedestrians and cyclists on the banks of the Turiec River. The second mentioned route ensures accessibility to the centre from the city districts of Záturčie and Priekopa and from the neighbouring town of Vrútky, as well as the connection of city cycling routes with the regional network of tourist cycling routes. Soon, another approximately 22 kilometres of city bike paths connecting the individual city districts will be available. By 2026, the necessary mobiliari for bicycle transport will be developed - protected parking lots for bicycles, bicycle stands, charging stations for electric bicycles, automatic bicycle rental systems, sanitary facilities... In close connection with public passenger transport, a system of bicycle stands at public transport terminals will be developed.

In 2026, the Slovak and international participants in the ECOC events will also be served by the cycling route connecting Žilina with Martin and the Turiec Region. It will lead through the breathtaking natural scenery of the Malá (Lesser) Fatra Mountain Range, respectively alongside important historical buildings and monuments (the Strečno Castle, the Varín Castle - Starhrad).

AIR TRANSPORT

International passenger air transport is possible from Žilina Airport (30 kilometres from Martin) within the Žilina-Martin centre of the first level settlement. Air connections by regular lines are also possible from the airports in Sliač (distance - 85 kilometres), Poprad (distance - 122 kilometres) and Bratislava (distance - 233 kilometres).

Martin - Tomčany Airport is not an international airport as it does not have the infrastructure to be one. However, it is the only airport in the Žilina Region to have the status of a civil airport. It serves as a backup airport in general aviation emergencies, it is used by the University Hospital

in Martin for the secondary rescue service, and various local, regional and international events are regularly held here. It also provides sightseeing flights and will be fully available to participants in the ECOC 2026 event in this regard.

TRANS-EUROPEAN TRANSPORT NETWORK AND MARTIN

The TEN - T multimodal core network has ambitions to become a pillar of transport in the EU single market by 2030. The aim of building the network is safer travel, easier traffic, smoother and faster transfers and a reduction in the environmental impact of transport. Of the three corridors of the core TEN - T network passing through the Slovak Republic, the northern branch of the Rhine - Danube corridor, leading through Stuttgart, Munich, Prague, Ostrava, Žilina to the Slovak - Ukrainian border will reach Martin and the Turiec Region. The mentioned corridor also crosses the Baltic-Adriatic corridor within the Žilina-Martin centre of settlement of the first level, leading from the Polish ports of Gdansk, Gdynia, Szczecin and Świnoujście through the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria and Slovenia to the Italian port cities of Trieste, Venice and Ravenna.

SUPERIOR ROAD NETWORK LEADING THROUGH THE MARTIN DISTRICT

It consists of four motorways with a total planned length of 705 kilometres, and eight expressways with a planned length (including common sections) of 1,263 kilometres.

The city is located at the intersection of the D1 motorway and the R3 expressway, which confirms Martin's position as an important transport hub. The entire D1 motorway, as well as the R3 section from Martin to the state border of the Slovak Republic with Hungary, are included in the basic TEN - T network. While the Turiec section of the D1 motorway, including the Višňové - Dubná skala tunnel, is already under construction, the construction of the R3 expressway in the Martin district is in the preparatory phase

What is the absorption capacity of the city in terms of tourist accommodation?

Martin and its surroundings have a number of natural beauties, historical and cultural uniqueness, which for decades have been popular with domestic and foreign tourists. Fascinating natural wealth, rare cultural heritage and a rich year-round offer of cultural, artistic and sports activities determine the potential of the city and the region as an important tourist destination. The Turiec area is one of the natural tourist regions of the Slovak Republic. The Žilina Region, in which it is located, competes with the Bratislava Region every year in terms of visits. However, the nature of visit rate in these two regions is different. While in the case of the Bratislava Region a large part of guests are clients accommodated because of the performance of their work duties outside the place of residence, in the Žilina Region real tourists make up a higher proportion of accommodated guests.

A wide network of tourist accommodation and other functional services of various types is naturally adapted to tourism. There are quality accommodation options for undemanding visitors (campsites, bungalows, private accommodation, boarding schools and halls of residences for the medical faculty ..), family clients (pensions, cottages, a higher standard of private accommodation ...) and the most demanding tourists (large hotels and luxury guesthouses with top service of all kinds).

The absorption capacity of the City of Martin and the Turiec Region can handle the enormous influx of visitors in terms of accommodation. Only in Martin itself and its immediate surroundings there are hotels and tourist cottages (holiday lodges) with an accommodation capacity of 1,751 beds. Other types of accommodation offer 1,324 beds. Hotel Turiec has the largest hotel capacity in the city centre (134 fixed beds, of which 67 are luxurious rooms and apartments, the largest cottage is Chata Martinské hole (Cottage at Martinské hole hills) with 85 beds. An extraordinary increase in accommodation will occur after the construction of a new cable car to Martinské hole hills, which will move this popular ski resort to a qualitatively different level. Visitors also have large accommodation facilities in nearby popular winter and summer tourism

resorts (Turčianske Teplice, Jasenská Valley, Valča, Terchová, Žilina, Varín, Strečno), as well as in picturesque Turiec villages and well-known tourist locations.

At present (2020), the absorption capacity of 35,000 beds is available to tourists (including partner Turiec towns and villages).

What are the projects (including reconstruction projects) of the cultural, urban and tourist infrastructure that the city plans to implement in connection with the European Capital of Culture event between the present and the title year?

The growing interest of European clients (especially from the Scandinavian countries, the Czech Republic, Poland, Germany and the Netherlands) creates suitable preconditions in Martin and its surroundings regarding the further development of cultural tourism. And also in relation to the density of historical and cultural monuments and a wide range of cultural institutions, events and services. In connection with the ECOC event, it can be conveniently connected in the region with cycling, agro-tourism and spa tourism (Spa and Aqua Park in Turčianske Teplice), whose all-round development is also desirable. For example, thematic cycle routes focusing on important sections, events and personalities of local history and culture, created with the support of the European Regional Development Fund, are clear evidence of a functional harmonious link between history and culture and tourism.

In connection with the ECOC event, Martin can face a stage of dynamic cultural, economic and social development of the city and the region. Both investments of the private business sector and public resources – naturally, including municipal ones - will contribute to its implementation.

PRIVATE INVESTMENT

- comprehensive completion of a modern ski resort in Martinské hole hills
- expansion of accommodation, catering and other services for tourists under Martinské hole hills
- modernization of the sports complex in the city centre (stadiums, infrastructure)
- building a network of new sports venues in the city and its surroundings
- completion of the reconstruction of the building and premises of the former Tatra furniture factory - "chair factory" (the renovated building will serve as an important cultural point with multiple uses)
- construction of an amusement park for families with children based on Pavel Dobšinský's fairy tales (city centre)

PUBLIC INVESTMENT

- SIM ArtCenter: a comprehensive transformation of a large area of the former Intendance Material Warehouses in the Priekopa city district to a multifunctional cultural centre
- Open Air Art Park: major reconstruction and modernization of the amphitheatre in the city centre with capacity almost 20 thousand places (it is the oldest functional amphitheatre in Slovakia; in 2026 it will expire 85 years since its founding)
- House of Creativity: radical reconstruction of the Moskva (Moscow) Cinema in the city center
- construction of a new cable car to the Tourist Centre of the Martinské hole hills, quality improvement of its infrastructure



National Cemetery
- last resting place
of over 300
personalities of Slovak
cultural, artistic,
scientific, economic,
spiritual, political
and compatriot life

Amphitheatre
in Martin
is the oldest
and largest
in Slovakia
(built in 1941)

- in the space between the Slovak Chamber Theatre and the Andrej Kmeť Museum (in the city centre), a new multifunctional building will be built
- in connection with the completed renovation of the exterior, the interior of the building of the former Bar Association will be renovated for the needs of cultural, artistic and educational events and programmes in the city centre,
- completion of the complete reconstruction of the Martin Benka Museum in the city centre (founding personality of modern Slovak visual art, Martin Benka, lived and worked in the building)
- completion of premises and facilities (infrastructure) for athletes, trainers, doctors and masseurs, officials, technical staff, journalists (grandstand, auditorium, interiors, services, parking places...) of a modern athletic stadium in the wider city centre, which has been in operation since the summer of 2020. The Tartan track as one of the two in Slovakia meets world quality standards. The athletic stadium with a completed area and infrastructure will be fully available for the ECOC needs.
- completion of a cycle route that will connect Žilina (the seat of the region) with Martin and the Turiec Region
- reconstruction of the Literary Museum of the Slovak National Library located in the city centre (one of the most important historical buildings in Slovakia - the first seat of Matica slovenská, the oldest national cultural and scientific institution)
- construction of the Museum of Turiec Herbal Oilmakers and Saffronmakers in the interior and exterior of Pronay Mansion and Manor House in Blatnica near Martin (in the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries well-known Turiec travelling tradesmen connected the native region of Turiec with many European and several Asian countries)
- comprehensive modernization of all museums (equipment with new technologies, touch screens, interactive installations ...)
- construction of an educational trail to places connected with cultural heritage, respectively traditional art forms
- conversion of the Turiec River embankment into a recreation area
- reconstruction and widening of access roads to Martin
- improving the quality of urban roads and pavements
- renovation of some important monuments and architectural objects
- modification or modernization of train sets within passenger railway transport
- major modernization of the urban and suburban public bus transport fleet

Note: The mentioned investment actions will be implemented by 2026 and will be fully available to Martin, Turiec, Slovak, European and world participants of events, and programmes within the European Capital of Culture.





**City of Martin Candidacy Project
for the Title of the European Capital of Culture 26**

Bid book

Pre-selection stage

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I am very proud of the fact that my hometown of Martin is running for the title of the European Capital of Culture 2026 and I am certain that it has all the qualities to win. From the outside it may seem like a small town but in reality it carries a great historic legacy which is still well preserved thanks to many institutions, buildings, historic and cultural monuments and places which show that Martin was, so to speak, always the centre of historical events. Always closest to my heart is the open-air museum in Jahodnícke háje - the largest museum of its kind. I return there regularly and with each visit it has the ability to transport me into the life and traditions of our ancestors... Theatre shows, historic and modern cinemas, concerts, literary life and art schools that produce our young visual artists, musicians and singers... All of these activities are proof that Martin does not forget its roots, the past and its traditions as it is actively trying to pass them on from generation to generation, even in the 21st century.

Barбора Bobul'ová

(A native of Martin who has been living in Italy long term as a popular, world renowned actress. She has portrayed leading roles in successful movies and gained many prestigious awards such as the David di Donatello Award)

