

I. BASIC PRINCIPLES:

1. Why does the city which you represent wish to take part in the competition for the title of European Capital of Culture?

WHY GABROVO?

'**Gabro-who?**' is an all too often heard exclamation of flabbergasted Non-Bulgarian people when confronted with the declaration that our town intends to become European Capital of Culture. The half indignant, half defensive correction 'Gabrovo!' leaves them still disoriented.

This anecdote from real life highlights one of the reasons why Gabrovo has decided to set itself the ambitious goal of running for the title.

We do intend to put us, metaphorically spoken, back on the map of Bulgaria, even more as we are situated in the centre of the country, but moreover we are convinced that we have to offer a **unique aspect of culture** to our European partners and friends: **Gabrovo is called the international Capital of Humour.**

It is a very specific humour, full of self-irony, which characterizes Gabrovians as an ingenious people when it comes to save money and any kind of resources, in that related to the Scottish.

But one should not misunderstand the little stories and anecdotes as mere jokes. They refer clearly to a life full of hardship and endangered by poverty. We, the Gabrovians of today have had to become **survival artists and experts in thriftiness.**

A second cliché rooted in our local history is the description of our citizens as people full of **initiative, engagement, ingenuity and entrepreneurship.** It goes back to the times of the Bulgarian Revival and the following period of industrialization when Gabrovo turned into a thriving city of textile manufacturing, leading to its labelling as the 'Bulgarian Manchester'.

It is this notion of **productivity and ingenuity** Gabrovo wants to build on with its application to become European Capital of Culture.

We are a city full of potential, developing into a new centre of production, business and solidly, based on the role of education we see as one of the most eminent instruments to create an **open - minded, skilled and active citizenship**, ready to shape its future. The notion of education as a central asset is additionally linked to Gabrovo being the founding place of the first secular School in Bulgaria. Having played an initiative role in the establishment of education and industry as well belongs to our identification with an image of an innovative character.

It might be seen in the light of this tradition that Gabrovo, backed by a wide range of projects of city revitalization, carried through in the framework of the plan for integrated urban development, has elaborated a **long-term Cultural Strategy**, wherein the Cultural Capital project is a major tool of renewal on all levels of society.

The region has unique cultural heritage not just as in artefacts, monuments and documents, but mainly as a part of **human capital.** We have a lot of facilities and initiatives in the field of culture, but our main power and key advantage are our ideas and our serious commitment to realize them.

Our proposal is aimed at offering an excellent opportunity to **mobilize the civic energies and establishing a basis for a sustainable development of the city** and the neighbouring area, belonging to the municipality.

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROCESS

Europe is not to be merely perceived as a geographical territory or a set of institutions, but a **philosophic attitude** towards value based, responsive and aware citizenship.

Culture in its widest aspects, including cultural governance and policy making, should be **enhanced Europe-wide** and assumed as a **productive tool** which could be instrumental for bringing about democracy and transparency, social and economic benefits, access and participation, respect for identity and diversity, intercultural dialogue and cultural rights.

We believe that culture could bring about changes and this forms our deeper understanding of **cultural capital philosophy as a whole**.

The idea of being a European Capital of Culture is to bring and experience together the **important areas of urban life and the social requirements of the future** and to derive from this a variety of measures, creative investments and ideas, which taken together as a whole **produce a sustainable output**.

For that reason this cultural programme relies on the perception that culture is only demonstrated in its wholeness by focusing on the **streamlined energy of the human capital**.

The diversity of culture can be fully understood and experienced only when the **creative endeavours of people and European citizenship** are considered.

Our programme is conceived as a **whole process**, encompassing a period of 6 years. It will be a **starting point** and will concentrate our efforts towards our common goal to achieve sustainable and positive attitudes, to make important decisions for future generations, to create appropriate living conditions for citizens. Culture in its broader sense is the means and the key for **shaping our urban society** towards the new dynamics of everyday life.

Furthermore, our focus is not directed to merely mechanical compilation of cultural events when drafting the programme, but mostly **takes advantages of the different processes** that allow guaranteeing a **meaningful understanding** of what exactly the status of European Capital of Culture provides.

Going through **more than 20 years of identity crisis and self – identification endeavours**, Gabrovo is aware that its **European identity should be rediscovered, reshaped and renowned**. We do need more Culture of political dialogue and democracy, Culture of education and care, Culture of infrastructure and investment, Culture of partnership and networking, Culture of management and planning, Culture of living.

For the year 2019 Italy and Bulgaria are the two countries designated to have one of their cities chosen as the Cultural Capital of Europe.

The City of Gabrovo has decided to participate in the run for this title, being aware that we share this ambition with a handful of the major cities of our country.



OUR REASONS

1. It is not only because Gabrovo needs more evidence and manifestations of culture, but mainly because **culture is recognized by us as a status of life.**

Striving to be European Capital of Culture includes more than the core-definition usually coming to one's mind at first thought on hearing the term "culture"; it comprises an area **much wider** than the classical, but too narrow field of the arts.

Culture seems to be **the fine engineering of everyday life**, which could tune, educate, inspire, balance, forge and bring to meaning the human capital within united Europe. This is the pure meaning of all that Europe is about – it's guiding principles, values and commitments to citizens.

Culture is a process - a process of understanding, participating and belonging.

Culture is way of **giving, sharing and accepting.**

Culture is a **creative driver for a change.**

Culture is the **way we see** the world and our special place in it.

Culture is the **way of responding** to the existential questions of living, may they be private or personal or relevant to the society as a whole. It is the **art of participating** as a full - scale citizen. It is the **art of innovation, of quality education, of open communication and independent media**, as it is the culture of open minds, the culture of mutual respect, and the culture of sharing.

Culture is a way of thinking.

Gabrovo and Europe has something to share, because we do have so many things in common. This process and way of thinking **is yet to come.**

2. We are seeking designation as a European capital of Culture because we perceive **culture as a driver for sustainable development.**

Becoming Capital of Culture **has the potential to change the lives of all citizens and all of them are invited** to become part of this process of change.

The participation and the preparation of the bidding process should be seen as being **already part of the chances** that this title is offering.

It is a **tool to enhance** the further development of Gabrovo:

- from liveable architecture to green and sustainable energy solutions,
- from intensified health service to innovative education projects,
- from entertainment, sports and recreation to classical and contemporary arts and
- for the development of tourism, business and work capacities.

The competition to qualify is a strong one, making our participation in it more challenging and more interesting, calling for our **united efforts of creative and visionary thinking** to invent future Gabrovo as a lively and liveable place for all its inhabitants and visitors.

We make it a success, even if it may be the case that we don't succeed in getting the title.

By investing our joint energy we evoke the most important instrument for successful development: **creativity**, which is central prerequisite for progress in all kinds of undertaking.

The participation in the bidding process is tightly related:

- much-needed boost to the cultural sector and
 - environment which was defined in the presentation as an 'inward-looking'
 - cultural milieu that needed to emerge from its cultural isolation.
3. As people who **always see perspectives and never miss the good opportunity**, the citizens of Gabrovo believe that their city deserves to become the European Capital of Culture in 2019.

We know that we are not the capital of today's Bulgaria.

We know that we have not been the historic capital of a former Bulgarian Empire.

But we do wish to become the future Bulgarian Capital of Culture of Europe, as we **trust in the potential of this city**, while we are aware of the necessity to carry on with the city development projects that have been started during the recent years, some of them successfully carried through, some still in progress, and others already planned for the years to follow.

4. The application for becoming Cultural Capital is **in itself an urban development project** on many levels:
- to develop the city of the future by practical as well as theoretical means,
 - to devise, sketch, plan and realize the vision of Gabrovo for the year 2019 and beyond.

OUR ASSETS

We are motivated by the energy of our reality of being

- a historical keeper of the mountain pass, connecting north and south, Gabrovo has the **confidence of a free and aspiration driven land** since the middle of the fifteenth century;
- a town of entrepreneurs, Gabrovo **creates a city with a European appearance** since the years of the Revival, a city with an industrial strength and modern education;
- an ingenious settlement Gabrovo **has built up the character of witty and industrious citizens** since decades, because the town was proclaimed World capital of humour;
- a self-confident city Gabrovo **gives birth to people who have their feet firmly on the ground and right in the centre**, because Gabrovo is the geographic centre of Bulgaria;
- a **place with dignity, overcoming borders**, Gabrovo doesn't miss the occasion to remind that from 1st April 1976 (quite seriously) a newly discovered planet was named "Gabrovo".

As people with unique character the inhabitants of Gabrovo are thrifty, curious, able to joke and laugh and to create and sell, abiding by the old motto “**Work, persevere and don`t be afraid**”.

As practical people, through a successful bid for the title European Capital of Culture, the Gabrovo is fully devoted to:

- take part in the competition with **the historic past of their city for a European future**;
- **transforming** culture and humour into industry and industry and humour into culture;
- **translate** its history and culture into the new language of the dialogue with the European cultures.

In this sense it is a win-win situation: we, as a city and as community, will benefit in any case, because the process will trigger and promote new ideas, necessary projects, positive energy, and, vital for vitalization in every field, it will enhance cooperation and communication.

It is up to us to turn the application a **success-story for Gabrovo in the long run**.

We often describe our city as being situated in the heart of Bulgaria, so let us keep in mind that a heart is a pulsating organ, as we, by fresh ideas, can give a vital impulse not only to our local community but to the organism of the whole country and beyond.

Becoming European Capital of Culture therefore is also **about balancing** the relationship between the defined centre and decentralized, even marginalized places.

It is about balancing the generations, as we know one of the major questions of not just our, but the European future societies. And in the same European aspect it is about searching for balance between the rich and poor, countries and people as well, between the conflicts and problems of the past and solutions for our common future.

Our bid for the European Capital of Culture Award **is founded on a long-term strategy**. Gabrovo is among the very few cities that has elaborated and adopted a **Strategy for Development of Culture for the reference period 2014 – 2024**. This is namely because the city authority and all relevant shareholders have commonly agreed, as a bounding consensus, that the cultural sector and the artistic industries are a priority and also a reinforcing factor for the development of the European Union and the quality of life of the European citizens. The aim of this strategic document is to analyse and summarize the vision, the main priorities, horizontal and sector policies, objectives and task and trough implementation of measures to improve public processes and the use of resources both on local and national level.

The vision of the Strategy is to promote Gabrovo as a **powerful platform** for international networking and event planning. In the period 2014 – 2024 the cultural sector of Gabrovo will be developed as a friendly environment for education, experiment, innovations and exchange. For that reason this application is a key instrument for the implementation of the Strategy, not only for the purpose of the final result, but mostly for the benefits of the process and the way to reach there.

Therefore the project displays the idea of celebration an **overall strategic development plan** for the city and the country.

What, for it, would be the main challenge of this nomination? What are the city's objectives for the year in question?

A main challenge is the **lack of information flow** between the administration of the city and its citizens. There is no fully developed culture of communication, a fact, which results in a low level of trust and conviction as well as missing out on the readiness for cooperation.

Along similar lines we have to establish a **new culture of collaboration**. The governing bodies tend to traditionally follow their vision of what is the common good for the population, partly not taking into account proposals or wishes uttered by members of the citizenship. This can lead either to frustration on both sides or to parallel procedures and activities which could be avoided.

There is a **shortcoming** in combining sound financial management with the open style of the initiative and the involvement of different type of entities, part of them private. The cultural policy has yet to open up more to independent cultural actors who pursue an unusual and sometimes audacious contemporary type of arts production. The definition of acceptance and success versus taking necessary risks has to be reshaped.

Likewise should the approach towards contemporary interpretations of traditions of cultural heritage as well as the development of a new 'cultural heritage' be revisited and redefined.

Another challenge of the more tangible kind is the **stressed economic situation** causing a shortage of local funding. The economic problems lead to a lack in attractive job opportunities or work possibilities at all, causing a brain drain which drives the spiral further on.

The city therefore intends to take the Cultural Capital event as a **serious chance to meet the challenges** mentioned above and to answer these problems with measures that have already been started to be implemented during the preparation process of the bid.

A major starting point was the **involvement of citizens** in the defining process of the goals of becoming Capital of Culture. We have to further intensify this process as one of the main aims is to incite a metamorphosis of the people from being mere inhabitants of the town to curious and self-responsible citizens, who are fully engaged in the process of change.

We want to establish **tools of communication**, redefining the information policy of the administrative bodies. Implementing these measures we will create a stronger feeling of identification in the citizenship, which will embark on plans for the development of the municipality on the basis of understanding and the clear message to be accepted as a partner.

To balance our cultural heritage with the contemporary arts the city will invite the artistic team to design a program along a series of thematic clusters, that shall be explored with the whole variety of artistic instruments, methods and concepts, linking via coproduction, workshops and residences the local cultural scene with national and international artists. This process of cross-fertilizing cultural projects and events will be furthermore defined by a strong accent upon socio-cultural and participatory formats. This approach shall ensure a diverse a coherent artistic program inviting citizens and visitors to explore the richness of cultural expression and to take part in it. The stimulating cultural biotope shall draw a strong attention to the city and cause a greater exposure to the outside.

The **increased attractiveness and visibility** as well as the development of the infrastructure

of the city and its transformation into aid 'green' city not only due to its parks and the surrounding nature but according to ecological standards, shall fuel the interest of business operators and visitors and will result in the creation of better opportunities for the business sector and tourism sector as well.

These factors together with the further development in the field of education and entertainment through new educational structures, as well as methods and the creation of areas designated to sports and other leisure time activities, as well as the enhanced cultural life are intended to **put a halt to the brain drain and transform it** into a brain gain, drawing students, young families, well trained workers and experts into the area.

The city has set out to become an **open, modern and successful place**, offering many opportunities to its inhabitants and the people from the whole area, which shall be more closely linked not only through the developments of infrastructure but the experience of the cooperation and participatory projects of our programme.

This ambitious process shall give a **boost to the economy**, raise the standard of living significantly and turn Gabrovo into an example for progress, made possible by joint efforts and the application of cultural instruments. We speak of a model city of citizens in the full sense of the word.

2. Explain the concept of the programme which would be launched if the city was nominated European Capital of Culture?

The concept of our programme is tightly related to **encompassing both Gabrovo and European cultural dimension**.

For a period of one calendar year the city of Gabrovo will organise **a series of cultural events** with a **strong European context** to help **bring the peoples of Europe closer together**.

The program of Gabrovo 2019 will start on New Year's Eve, the 31st of December 2018, with a public celebration of the beginning of this special year 2019, setting the key for the spirit of the whole city embarking on this journey throughout the following **twelve months of projects, festivities and collaborations**.

The 31st of December 2019, celebrated together again, will mark the end of the event only by name, but not as an ending of this process called Capital of Culture. The experience gained during our activities of 2019 will carry the spirit into the next phase of the **ongoing building of a lively community**.

The concept of the programme revolves around the notion of introducing an active and creative process through various and interrelated **THEMATIC CLUSTERS**.

These clusters in some aspects are partly overlapping each other, and do not only offer opportunities of synergies and cross-referential approach, but often **demand the combined tackling of a shared topic**. This will stimulate a **multi-layered dialogue** between cultural operators in different fields and other sectors of the urban community. It will involve to a great extent the **citizens themselves**, which is a core issue of the candidacy.

The topical clusters will define measures during the period until 2019, preparing the basis for the actual event, which we interpret as not strictly confined to this year, but perceive and will

treat as **gradually developing process** during which the face of the Capital of Culture will gain its shape, becoming more distinct and clear-featured, continuing to change with time.

Our suggestions of instruments of the creative approach are **thematically clustered in 9 sections**, all deriving from the main thematic concept of

BALANCING EUROPE

Our personal life, our communities and Europe as a whole concept is all about balancing. Finding the balance and keeping it is a tough job and requires a pretty high level of social sensibility. We find this topic exclusively up-to-date and quite inevitable in the modern society we live in. What is actually to balance? Where is the balance? Does it have a different meaning for the different European countries and cities? Does it vary as an understanding in the concept of young and old, rich and poor, among traditionalists and innovators? **Do we have the culture of balancing?** The answers of all these questions we need to find out.

Balancing Past & Future encompasses by definition the transitory state of presence which is identical with the constantly shifting operation ground. We have to learn to adjust and meet the new demands, but we must do so without losing our identity.

Questioning the double-faced flexibility, enabling us to develop and endangering ourselves at the same time, projects of this cluster will be instrumental in the development of the tools we need for mastering and analysing the changes: education as the prerequisite for the task of developing ourselves and our living conditions.

Tradition and transformation are keywords for our cultural heritage in relation to contemporary arts and life. We will re-energize the knowledge of the past and combine it in a holistic approach with contemporary findings.

Memory, the storage of our achievements and failures, will be opened for the shared understanding of ourselves. Oral history with its specific gift for personalizing historical events provides us with a greater insight into the intricate web of this area, feeding us with information which we will be able to utilize for the presence.

Balancing Young & Old is addressing the problems of an ageing society, together with those of an insecure future for the young. We are already developing models of bridging the gap between the generations as we have to come up with alternative concepts of living together. These concepts will be built on an attitude of caring and responsibility, where the generations share their skills, knowledge, experience and their stories.

As the older generation will find a more satisfying life in prolonged activity and autonomy, we will provide better conditions for the activities of the young ones, for leisure time, work, sports, entertainment and education. These concepts will be built on an attitude of respect, validation, caring and responsibility, where the generations share their skills, knowledge, experience and their stories.

As the older generation wishes for a more satisfying life in prolonged activity and autonomy, which our society will have to guarantee with new concepts, we have to provide better conditions for the desires and needs of the young people, as for places to meet and hang out, leisure activities, sports-facilities, entertainment, training and education and job-options.

Both groups need generation-specific health care that should include prevention-oriented information- and training programmes.

The models of education have to be reshaped according to the principles of lifelong learning and respect for the talents of each individual. The hierarchical definition of teaching has to be changed into a concept of sharing knowledge and information, where teachers and students join in a research project. Teaching and learning are both creative activities.

By changing the institutional and technical approach to education we will change the mind frame of the children, students and people involved in the educational process and allow them to grow, allow all of us to grow as a society of open-minded and self-assured individuals.

Balancing Democracy & Autocracy – Democracy is neither a globally accepted or existing nor, a once and for all guaranteed system in those places, where it is in function; its concept has always been defined differently, and not everywhere has it been applied according to the same rules.

As societies are shifting under the pressure of economic crisis and systems are changing, often connected with civil unrest or even civil war, we hold it of vital importance to deal with the topic of theories and practices of power, power sharing and government.

In this long-term discourse stretching over all fields of culture the citizenship will be intensively involved. The local older generation has experienced the period of communist society, the younger is unsatisfied with the political reality of present democratic governments, and both do not know enough about the democratic structure and instruments of the EU.

It needs the tools of sound and open information together with communication on eye-level, and the overall values of respect and inclusion, to discuss and construct on the basis of equal standards future-oriented models of participation and fair governing.

Therefore media-policy, media-quality, censorship, accessibility and distribution of information and other questions related to the topic will be on the agenda of this cluster as well.

Involving people from all sectors of society, from individuals, institutions, business, administration, NGOs and politicians we have to find on abroad level new forms of dialogue and power-sharing, building trust and reshaping the political culture.

This will be a core issue of the Capital of Culture year and echo in many directions of the program.

Balancing Have & Have Not - new social and economic concepts are badly needed in order to cope with the clear inequalities and the unbalanced distribution of wealth. As a candidate city situated in Bulgaria we cannot avoid to direct attention to this subject, being an expert in it by experience though not in solutions.

The widening gap between the rich and the poor is increasingly changing the social landscape of the EU countries, still differing in that aspect in the size of the phenomenon and its consequences from the rest of the world, where this fact has been defining the structure of society since long.

The gap between the 'richer' Europe and the poor countries of other regions and continents, as

well as the different standards within the European community itself leads to poverty-migration.

Violent clashes or conflicts superficially labelled as religious or racial tensions are often actually fuelled by social problems due to the unbalanced distribution of possession, income and chances.

To find new models of sharing, discussing the relationships of value and values, necessity and luxury, giving and taking, possession and use, is a prerequisite to maintain social peace and avoid discrimination and conflicts.

Being aware that these questions are as vital as complex, we plan to discuss this pressing topics on all levels and with all means in order to contribute to securing our common future.

Balancing City & Nature - the dialogue between the urban and the rural finds an ideal setting in our community. Ecological principles, green energy, sustainability and self-sufficiency are valid topics for our living quality and part of our development plans.

The redefinition of humans as not living independently from their natural surroundings is wide spread, but the consequences of this fact we try to avoid. We want to create a greater sensibility not only towards our environment but to our bodies as well, realizing and accepting both as interdependent living entities.

Gabrovo candidacy will make an impact on our attitudes towards nature perceived in a holistic way. We will introduce more nature into the city via parks, recreation areas and schoolyards and celebrate the relationship between the town and the nature with events along and across the river, while also bringing good quality food and healthy production methods to the fore.

Balancing Centre & Periphery - the dialogue between centre and periphery finds an ideal setting in the landscape of the area and of our minds. The redefinition of humans as creatures not being able to survive independently from their natural surroundings has been accepted as common knowledge by now, denied by hard-core ignorant only, who try to avoid/escape the consequences. But behavioural patterns need time to be changed, Gabrovo candidacy will serve as an accelerating agent.

We want to create a greater territorial balance between centre and periphery, as resources are being disseminated more equally.



Balancing Local & Global - being situated in the centre of the country, yet existing rather in the periphery, Gabrovo has decided to be an advocate for actions against marginalization.

This plan incorporates on one hand the refurbishment of our relationship to the other parts of the country, as well as the enhancement of active links to partners on international and in that aspect especially on EU-level, including a new look at the definitions of East and West as well as the juxtaposition of North and South.

As the connotations of periphery and centre, interpreted in a social context, point to the differing standards of living, of access to infrastructure and information, of integration and participation, we take the responsibility to foster inclusion of minorities and special needs, enhance accessibility and to design concepts of valuable decentralisation.

These questions are clearly linked to other theme clusters especially in the context of the fringes of society, and will be the contents of interdisciplinary and international projects.

Visible and invisible borders limit our possibilities, so we will have to transcend them in our search for answers.

Balancing Humorous & Serious - Gabrovo will use its status as Capital of Humour to develop humour as a unique instrument for addressing and shaping the social reality, an ideal tool for creation of constructive critique, positive energy and playful approach for original solutions. The people of Gabrovo, together with people from outside, shall be incited to re-invent humour.

It shall not stay confined to the walls of the House of Humour and Satire, but spread out to city-life like a beneficial virus infecting all fields of society. The method of humour will infuse parts of all other theme clusters, to counterbalance and enrich the seriousness of their matter.

We have to realize the motivating power of humour and send this liberating message to the world. To apply humour as a tool for tackling problems in a new way will be a rewarding learning process.

Humour, applied in an intelligent way, has energizing as well as the therapeutically qualities.

Balancing is actually the **raw material or the input** of what we suggest as main thematic clusters:

UNITED COLORS OF CITIZENSHIP

Balancing Have & Have Not

Balancing Democracy & Autocracy

Citizenship as a status is the output of the exact way we have managed to balance our own life and the social reality. Share your status with the others or help them change their own status. If you strongly desire a change ask for an advice and expertise how to do that. **How culture can enhance citizenship?** This is basically the inner meaning of the united colours of citizenship. Once we truly feel as European citizens, we can claim to have a different level interaction with all that is called “law enforcement” or more specifically the central and local authority, which can no longer be far and away but:

CLOSE AND PERSONAL

Balancing Have & Have Not

Balancing Democracy & Autocracy

This theme is included because of the powerful potential it has as far as our broader vision of culture is concerned. In that regard the relation authorities – society is reciprocal. That means that the citizens on one hand should be pro-active in public life, while the authorities need to undertake constant need assessment analysis to properly target these needs, on the other. This is equally valid for all spheres of social and economic life. Especially it is valid for culture, where the creative potential can flourish only when all basic communication channels function properly. **Do we have the right attitude to address the problems of culture bearers?** And when the communication channels really function properly, it is easy to:

PERSONALIZE YOUR DESKTOP

Balancing Centre & Periphery

Balancing Local & Global

Desktop personalization is a metaphorical way of sending the message that once we have decided to balance our reality and claim our citizenship status, once we have decided to establish close and personal relations with the formal structures of decision making, we have the platform to personalize our vision for the future and set the action plan. **Do we have our action plan of the cultural strategy in place?** A very important part of it is the:

EUROPEAN HUMOUR AND OTHER SURVIVAL TECHNIQUES

Balancing Humorous & Serious

A great part of Gabrovo inner spirit and concept of life is tightly connected with humour in all its forms: humour in jokes and verbal story-telling, humour and satire in arts, cinema, theatre and literature, self-irony as a survival technique in hard times and times of social turbulence, humour in street performances, culminating with the famous Carnival parade. Most of our annual big-scale international events and festivals are focused on humour. **Does our spiritual heritage touch many people and does it clearly send out important messages?** We believe that we can “infect” others with good mood and positive thinking, as laughter is energy and energy is a powerful driving force. Indeed it can be a survival technique and a guiding star when other lights seem to go out or when we happen to be far away from:

THE GREEN GREEN GRASS OF HOME

Balancing City & Nature

Home is where the heart is. People say that travelling is a window to the world. No matter where we go and whom we meet, we all are at home, because we share the same sky and, though diverse, nature is one continuum. The GREEN GREEN GRASS OF HOME theme aims to develop and educate an environmental-friendly attitude towards nature and to re-establish the innate relationship between men and nature. For that reason this thematic cluster is a recess and set of initiatives and events that give platform for our joint experience of the gifts of nature. **What are the barriers to outsource culture off the closed premises? Is it lack of adequate tourist infrastructure or a proper marketing and promotion plan?** Come in the open air for a cup of tea in the woods or for:

CAKE AND ALE – EUROPE EATS FRESH

Balancing City & Nature

Over the centuries, humans have shaped the crops we grow and the animals we raise to suit our needs, creating countless varieties adapted to local conditions. We decided to include food, culture and society theme to dwell upon the cross-cultural perspectives on eating behaviours, recipes and cookbooks, philosophical and religious perspectives on food and the body, social construction of culinary practices, beliefs, and traditions, politics of the family meal, psychological, cultural, and social determinants of taste, etc. Through the means of set of events we would like to discuss the different aspects of European hospitality and learn more of the great diversity of national cuisines. **Are you in need for food for thought?** Take a journey around Europe and through time. Stroll through an ancient market, cook a virtual meal, peek inside the dining rooms of illustrious and get ready for:

SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

Balancing Young and Old

Culture, during the 18th and 19th century came to refer more frequently to the common reference points of whole peoples, and discussion of the term was often connected to national aspirations or ideals. These thematic clusters are the mere manifestation of the distinct ways that people, living differently, classify and represent their experiences in acting creatively in the field of music, literature, dance, performance, cinema and theatre. And again it is a question of balancing between feverish beat boxing festivals on Saturday night or a quiet piano impromptu on Tuesday afternoon. Our colourful even calendar has it all. **What is on your agenda? Do you have a clear vision or you need to:**

ZOOM IN

Balancing Young and Old

Culture in relation to arts needs a more open modern debate, as well as studies and actual event manifestation for the sake of a better understanding of the place of traditional forms and the unconventional visual forms of media, communication and information in the postmodern world. **Have we deeply investigated the social and cultural shift from the verbal and textual to the visual as it has been accelerating in the past years?** Without the intention to prefer either form, we would like to equally experience both traditional forms of art and give the floor to the emerging forms of print images and graphic design, film and video in all interfaces and playback/display technologies, computer interfaces and software design, Internet/Web as a visual platform, digital multimedia, fine art and photography, architecture, design, and urban design. But to all of them we say:

WELCOME AND WELGONE

Balancing Past & Future

Gabrovo is a city with hundreds of years of history and a cultural heritage that embraces ancient civilizations. Visitors will find much to interest them in the town's history, culture, ethnography, religion, architecture and arts. Unique archaeological sites abound throughout the area – ancient settlement mounds, sanctuaries and tombs, remains of Roman cities, Byzantine and Medieval fortresses, architectural reserve, ethnographic complex, churches and

monasteries, among many others. **How can add to European cultural tourism being one of the largest and fastest-growing global tourism markets?** Culture and creative industries are increasingly being used to promote destinations and enhance their competitiveness and attractiveness. Many locations are now actively developing their tangible and intangible cultural assets as a means of developing comparative advantages in an increasingly competitive tourism marketplace, and to create local distinctiveness. We believe cultural tourism matters will bring Europeans closer together by highlighting the richness and diversity of European cultures and raising awareness of their common history and values.

These thematic clusters and their overlapping realms will be **brought to live together** with the potential of the existing cultural structures and institutions that shape Gabrovo's cultural climate, offering to them **a larger amount of opportunities**.

The program will be **process-oriented, incorporating projects, initiatives and specific events**.

It will encompass:

- the redefinition & development of existing formats & structures,
- the creation of new formats & structures,
- the establishing & intensifying of links between institutions, the independent sector and the citizens.

True to our definition of culture as a **complex web of tradition, values, concepts of living and working, the positioning of the individual within the society, and the relationship between different communities**, the programme is not centred around the arts alone, but extends the notion of arts towards a new art and culture of living together.

This art will be developed with **all instruments of creative approach**:

- performances, concerts, exhibitions, festivals,
- conferences, lectures, workshops, training programs,
- initiatives, projects, residences,
- creative policy making and administration,
- regional, national and international exchange programs, cooperation, coproduction.

The activities, going on throughout the whole year, will take place in and outdoor, following the seasons and their characteristic weather conditions and using them for specific events. A significant part of the program will be carried out in public space, open air and in unusual, as well as private locations, in order to reach and involve all citizens and to truly turn the whole city into the Cultural Capital.

The House of Humour and Satire is a very active cultural operator in the city, already well linked internationally, and will be an important player throughout the whole program, being also a unique item of Gabrovian identity. The mission of the museum is to collect, display and promote the humour of all peoples of the world in fine arts, literature and folklore, photography, posters and merry happenings all over the globe. It is a vast venue with its 10 exhibition halls, library, record studio, conference hall, souvenir stand, bar and free car park. Visitors can enjoy the expositions, as well as other funny attractions, on four floors. The museum hosts a rich stock called "Humour of Peoples" that includes more than 52, 000 pieces of art in painting, sculpture, caricature, graphics, photography and posters from 173 countries all around the world. The most interesting in the calendar of events are the International Biennial of Humour and Satire in Arts and the National Meeting of Storytellers.

The Drama Theatre and the House of Culture, the first staging performances with a lively ensemble of its own, the latter a venue for guest productions, theatrical and musical, both of them built in the style of history and technically to be modernized, will be highly interesting partners in their own right as well as hosting co-productions and other performances to be developed site specific.

The technically well-equipped modern multifunctional **Vazrazhdane (Revival) Hall** next to the Municipality building is an ideal multipurpose space for conferences, symposia, performances, lecture demonstrations and meetings. There the **Funny Film Fest** and the Magicians festival **Golden cat** take place annually.

The two major museums, both national, are the **Museum of History** displaying the origins and history of the town and area, focussing on the time of Gabrovo being called the 'Manchester of Bulgaria' and the unique **Museum of Education**, neighbouring the cultural-historically significant first secular school – the **Aprilov-Gymnasium**, providing interesting and stimulating objects and detailed information on the development of education in Bulgaria.

The city **Art Gallery** shows examples of artistic production by Bulgarian artists up to present times hosting temporary exhibitions as well.

It is also a venue of the autumnal and annual **International Festival of Chamber Music** which brings us to regular main events of Gabrovo's cultural life.

An essential event is the well-known **Carnival** with its parade through the centre of town and large participation of the local citizens and visitors from all over Bulgaria and beyond, connected to the **International Biannual of Humour and Satire in Arts and the Comedy Festival**, happening alternately every second year, both of them with international attendance. These events are spring festivals, whereas the **Festival of Spiritual Music** is taking place in autumn, with the churches lending their space as venues rich in atmosphere.

A newcomer is the Youth Festival **In the Centre** staged in early summer at various venues in and out of the town centre, and developing during the years to come will be even more decentralized.

In the independent sector there is the **cultural network Arteria** to be mentioned, together with the **Gallery Orlovska**, concentrating on contemporary arts and contents.

The annual **International Fare of Traditional Crafts** in the ethnographic open air complex Etar, the **Arts Plain Air** in the architectural and historic reserve of Bozhentsi, together with the open-air summer theatre production, round up the image of a city that leads an active cultural life throughout the year, but has to promote this fact more intensively as well as include more aspects of contemporary and alternative arts and establish stronger links amongst themselves and with new partners.

The European Cultural Capital provides the ideal multifunctional tool for the realization of this plan, involving also the citizens as **active cultural participants and co-creators**, with the local and international artist as **catalysing human factor**.

It will create a vivid biotope of all art forms and, working together with the planned **Christo Contemporary Arts Centre, the International Design Academy and the Design Centre** will establish new formats of production and presentation as well, carrying the arts into the open city space and to unusual venues and private houses.

The programme will **trigger a metamorphosis of the whole city and area**, not only aiming at the exterior but much more explicitly at the inner change, a fertilizing and renewing change of the cultural and social climate and minds.

This concept is an integral part of our vision for the development of the region, not designed for the sole purpose to participate in the bidding for European Capital of Culture.

We believe that culture is an essential part of sustainable development, together with the economy, infrastructure and demography.

For us culture is not just the dynamic expression of history and local identity, but the **main driving force**, not only closely connected to much needed economic growth as basis for a healthy city, but to the very quality of life, the happiness and full self-realization of the citizens.

This program is **projecting us to the future**, inciting social energy and providing the chance to make our ideas, memories and dreams accessible to other people in Europe, inviting them to share their and our visions, and together to invest in a dynamic understanding of Europe as a multicultural entity not of states but of people.

3. Could this programme be summed up by a slogan? (the answer to this question is optional at the pre-selection stage).

The slogan of our programme is tightly related to **encompassing both Gabrovo and European cultural dimension** through **BALANCING EUROPE** approach.

In an unstable world full of insecurity and inequalities, unrest and disharmony, stability seems to be the basis for establishing the wellbeing and safety of human existence.

But stability is a temporary state, which, once achieved, is already prone to losing its balance.

The elements of a momentary stabile system have to be constantly counterbalanced, taking all factors of influence into account.

This applies even more to situations where stability is a condition yet to be achieved.

Therefore balancing is a highly complex and permanent process of adjustments and rearrangements requiring a multitude of diverse qualities.

Balancing is an art.

It needs awareness and sensibility as well as alertness and the readiness to react.

It needs the recognition of opportunities, the calculation of risks and active decision-making.

It needs swiftness and efficiency as well as courage and creativity.

It requires self-assurance and trust in your capabilities.

It requires concentration and playfulness as well as foresight and fantasy.

And it requires permanent training and development of new skills.

It requires a fully developed human being.

The candidate city Gabrovo chose the principle of balancing as the method to address the topics it feels necessary to explore as a member of a European Union which is part of the global community of people.

4. Which geographical area does the city intend to involve in the "European Capital of Culture" event? Explain this choice.

The geographical area of the application involves the **territory of the municipality of Gabrovo**.

It is located in the **centre of Bulgaria**, on an area of 582 725 m², population 64 000. It's administrative centre is the city of Gabrovo, population 58 000, as the city is surrounded by 133 settlements /villages/.

Together with municipalities of Tryavna, Sevlievo and Dryanovo, Gabrovo constitute the Region of Gabrovo.

Nevertheless the municipalities of **the whole region of Gabrovo will be affected positively** by the whole process of application, associated with this candidacy.

The area is situated in the middle of Bulgaria, marked by the official geographical centre of the state. Often it is therefore described as lying in the heart of the country. But the heart is not a matter of geography alone. It is an organ actively pulsating, a pump, vital for the circulation of blood. It is in this sense Gabrovo deserves the connotation with the very heart, having, from its legendary foundation on, always been a place of productivity, pulsating with energy.

Situated in the valley of the river Yantra and embedded between dense forests and soft mountains, the long stretched town is a grown entity in dialogue with the surrounding nature. According to the local lore founded by a blacksmith, the town, right from the start, made use of the advantages the river and the woods are offering for production: knives, metal tools, turnery, textiles became well known and widely sold goods.

Examples from the period of pre-industrial craftsmanship and the dawn of industrialization can still be experienced in nearby open-air ethnographic museum Etara, where the ethnological open-air museum, besides presenting mansions in the style of the Bulgarian Revival, shows various types of water driven constructions, partly still used for the demonstration of traditional crafts and techniques.

While Etara is an artificially created display of historical houses, partly moved and partly copied from the whole region, the museum-village Bozhentsi is a historically grown architectural ensemble of traditional houses from the 18th and 19th centuries and as such under protection.

Uzana, situated on a wide stretched mountain plateau covering a part of a protected reservation park, is a beautiful and quiet summer- and winter-resort.

We want to strengthen the bonds linking us already, because we feel that the relation between the larger town of Gabrovo, the museum villages of Etara and Boshentzi, and the nature resort Uzana displays different aspects of the area shared by us, which could, if combined, highlight the qualities of each us.

Therefore we have the possibility to display different stages of human impact on and utilization of nature, different features of 'culturisation' in a conversation over time. The different atmospheres full of cultural and historical echoes form a virtual space of local culture.

Together we can offer a very special experience for visitors with different tastes and interest, creating a positive synergetic effect for all sides involved, as Gabrovo is:

The geographic heart of Bulgaria

The crossroad is a focal point, a place where all directions meet. It is the guiding star to our own path when all other lights go out...

Challenge and opportunity were hand in hand when Racho the Blacksmith – the founder of Gabrovo - set his foot in these lands to shoe the horses of global wanderers passing through the mountain ranges connecting northern and southern Bulgaria.

It is a privilege for us, his heirs, to converse with the river or share the silence of its banks, knowing that the crossroad is the stage for all important performances of life.

Situated at the foot of the central Balkan Mountains, in the valley of the Yantra River, Gabrovo is the geographic centre of Bulgaria with population 58 000 (total inhabitants of the municipality (including villages) are almost 70 000).

To be in the centre is not just historical change or geographical fortuity, it is a serious responsibility. You are visible from all of the sides, and you have the chance to see everything.

The Bulgarian Manchester

Most of the towns are established in the most appropriate climate and geographical places. Gabrovo is placed in the mountain- there is no fruitful soil and easy life. There a lot of reason to chose Gabrovo for our homeland: good transport connection, the river, the beautiful landscape etc. but the main reason is the opportunity to be independent and different. Protected by the mountain and powered by the river then by the steam but allows by audacity.

In the beginning of the 20th century, along the sweeping torrents of the Yantra River streams Gabrovo people placed cog wheels, mills and grindstones. They laid the foundations of a strong national industry, as we know today in Gabrovo and the surroundings and by that they converted the former settlement into a leading industrial centre to be named “The Bulgarian Manchester”. This only came to be because of the inner energy, ingenuity, hard work and common sense.

Bit by bit the small workshops grew into industrial enterprises. This environment naturally created a significant part of the leading industrial elite of the country and the first graduates in engineering. Here one of the most modern bank systems was introduced and many joint-stock companies and associations were founded.

Today Gabrovo has preserved its industrial image. The traditional branches of the Gabrovian industry such as textile, leather and shoe-making industry, as well as machine-building industry still take up a significant share. The existing Technical University in town, the skilled labour force and the active research work taking place determine the development of hi-tech business. Manufacturing of plastic products marked significant growth in recent years. Some new products such as cosmetics and chocolate were also introduced. Gabrovo has three separated Industrial zones, where the leading small and medium enterprises are situated.

This historical heritage has formed a unique spirit of Gabrovo. To rely on yourself/your own capabilities, also stubbornness, persistence, hard striving for success, to be thrift and to think

for economy. These specifics of the Gabrovian character are in the modern imperatives related to optimal use of resources, energy efficiency, sustainable economic growth and austerity measures.

Gabrovo – the city to host in Bulgaria

- 1835 - the first secular school
- 1840 - the first school library
- 1868 - the first application of the sonorous system of pronunciation of letters of the alphabet
- 1872 - the first physics laboratory
- 1882 - the first textile mill supplying fabrics for the royal court
- 1883 - the first Red Cross Association established
- 1887 - the first meteorological station
- 1918 - the first factory for shoe moulds
- 1936 - the first soap factory
- 1962 - the first modern concert hall
- 1996 - is found that the geographical centre of Bulgaria is placed near Gabrovo at Uzana nature area.
- 2013 - local community decided to participate in the competition for European Capital of Culture and to win it.

Gabrovo – the reform driver

In 2007 Municipality of Gabrovo set the beginning of its new history in local self-governance. In a time of new political context it left its palliative role of administrator and became a catalyst of new processes. In the years of financial crisis we succeeded in the establishment of a sustainable model of external financing.

In the period 2008 – 2013 Municipality of Gabrovo has prepared 39 project proposals for operational programme financing (only 4 are not financed). The total value of approved projects is 98 mln. EUR, as the co-financing of Municipality of Gabrovo is 7.7 mln. EUR.

Through EU financing Municipality of Gabrovo provides equal access to basic infrastructure, clean environment, high-quality services for education, social care, culture, business and administrative servicing.

The new model for aggressive attraction of public investments is not connected only in the rehabilitation of public infrastructure and opening of new social services. Our main goal are not bricks, concrete, pipes and asphalt. We want to be prepared for the competition of the future – the battle for qualified and quality human resources.

Gabrovo – the Capital of Humour and Satire

The city of Gabrovo is well known for the unique sense of humour of its citizens. Local humour centres round the alleged thriftiness of Gabrovians, but the roots of their humour actually lay in the inventive nature of the people. Citizens of Gabrovo reputedly excel in business and in bargaining, and developed their sense of humour as an aid to attract customers and improve business relations. As Gabrovo grew in industrial and economic importance to be called the Bulgarian Manchester during the Revival period, the city's brand of humour and reputation for shrewdness and economy spread nationally in Bulgaria.

Gabrovo prides itself on being the Capital of humour, as a House of Humour and Satire exists to promote humour both locally and internationally. The House of Humour and Satire is an exposition of traditional local humour art, including cartoons, photographs, paintings, sculptures, and verbal humour. The House combines features of a museum and an art gallery. Its motto is "The world lasts because it laughs".

It is said that the people of Gabrovo:

- cut off the tails of their cats so they can close the door faster when they let the cat out, in order to save heat. Indeed, a black cat with a cut-off tail is one of Gabrovo's symbols;
- put green spectacles on their donkeys so that the donkeys will mistake shavings for hay and eat it;
- sweat both in the smithy and when bargaining in the market place;
- are so aggressive in business that when something new has only just hit the headlines somewhere, it has already been done in Gabrovo, etc.

Gabrovo – the city of festivals

The Carnival

The Commotion, the Carnival parade and the Carnival Out of the Blue celebrate the history of the magic of carnival through the years and throughout Europe. We host, we experience, we give and we take, we share, we interpret, we provoke, we rekindle. We dress ourselves; we dress the buildings, the streets, the monuments, the rivers and the parks....

The International Fair of Arts

Every September masters of folklore craftsmanship and domestic art present their unique traditional tools and manual techniques to celebrate human inventiveness...

The international Biennial of Humour and Satire in Arts

The largest international event of the House of Humour and Satire that provokes various competitions for the humorous and satiric achievements in arts. The world lasts because it laughs ...

Painting Plain - Air

The annual plain-air takes place in Gabrovo rural areas, as seen through the eyes of the wind whisperers – those who know that a picture says a thousand words...

Funny Film Fest

This travelling cinematography will make you laugh on you, on life and on what we think of life. See our comedy projections in the halls, down by the river, on your favourite façade...

The Golden Cat

Experience the unique festival of magicians during the national tour "Made in Gabrovo" and see what lies beyond reality and our deceitful human perception of it...

The International Festival Days of the Chamber Music

Express yourself in a gentle way; broaden the format; provoke a broader international participation, live through music ...

Days of spiritual music

Save your soul and continue the tradition, enrich the agenda, go on a virtual tour of the “Songs of the bell”...

Youth festival “In the centre”

Develop further the idea of a youth festival and let’s make it an international platform...

Gabrovo – the city of bridges

Light up the bridges of Gabrovo through artistic illumination and make the sculptures dance...

The Festival of the Comedy Theatre

One of the most faithful Gabrovian audiences both informed and still critical...

Uzana - Meadow Fest

A balance between the serious discussion of eco themes and a creative way of expressing such green attitude by different forms of art - theatre, music, professional films and many, many more...

5. Please confirm that you have the support of the local and/or regional political authorities.

The City Council of Gabrovo has issued a **resolution 196/26.09.2013** on supporting the candidacy of the city of Gabrovo.



6. How does the event fit into the long-term cultural development of the city and, where appropriate, of the region?

The application is consistent with **the long – term cultural development of the city**, which intends to use Gabrovo 2019 to enhance its international image and to contribute to Europe 2020 Strategy.

The desire to host the European Capital of Culture event in Gabrovo 2019 stems both from the **formal cultural development policy and the cultural practices of the city**.

For the next 7-years period we have already planned to directly invest more than **38 mln. EUR in cultural infrastructure** to bring a new image and dimension to the city.

We will focus our efforts both on **renovating existing facilities** - House of humour and satire, Open air theatre, etc. and on **introduction of new ones** such as the Centre of contemporary arts. This process luckily **has already been started**. We have **already invested** more than 4.5 mln. EUR contracted European financing for renovation of the multifunctional city hall, promotion of Gabrovo carnival and the creation of the first interactive industrial museum.

These endeavours are **additionally strengthened** with the implementation of numerous public works projects which improve both transport accessibility of the city and its overall attractiveness of the urban areas and public spaces.

Our bid for the European Capital of Culture Award **is founded on key strategic documents, elaborated by the Municipality**.

- ***Integrated plan for urban recovery and development 2020***

The plan is being elaborated with the financial support of Operational programme Regional Development, funded by EU Regional development fund and targets to create instruments for overcoming the deficits of the economic, social and ecological issues of Gabrovo in the context of the long-term vision for urban development. As a result of the plan different target zones and measures for active interventions are defined, all of which with direct effect on cultural development.

- ***Strategy for Development of Culture 2014 – 2024***

Gabrovo is among the very few cities that has elaborated and adopted a **Strategy for Development of Culture for the reference period 2014 – 2024**. This is namely because the city authority and all relevant shareholders have commonly agreed, as a bounding consensus, that the cultural sector and the artistic industries **are a priority** and also a **reinforcing factor** for the development of the European Union and the **quality of life of the European citizens**.

The aim of this strategic document is to analyse and summarize the **vision, the main priorities, horizontal and sector policies, objectives and task** and trough implementation of measures to improve public processes and the use of resources both on local and national level.

The vision of the Strategy is to launch Gabrovo as a **powerful platform for international networking and event planning**. In the period 2014 – 2024 the cultural sector of Gabrovo will be developed as a **friendly environment for education, experiment, innovations and exchange**. For that reason this application is a **key instrument** for the implementation of the

Strategy, not only for the purpose of the final result, but mostly for the benefits of the process and the way to get there.

Basically the Strategy envisions the establishment of:

Contemporary Arts Centre

This centre is among the key tools of the Culture Strategy of Gabrovo. This paper provides the creating of a centre which will have the ambition to be the most significant national project in the field of contemporary arts. The centre will be named after the world famous artist Christo and it is aimed at being an emblem of the town, because of both its architecture and the quality of content, presented there.

The Strategy provides that this centre will be a multifunctional space with three gallery areas: the first one will be used for a permanent exhibition of Christo's works, the second one – space for presenting young artists and the third one will be main exhibition space, presenting international exhibitions annually, curated by internationally acknowledged curators. In the last one there will be a multifunctional hall for contemporary stage arts, a bookshop, a café and a restaurant.

European Capital of Culture nomination

The nomination of Gabrovo for European Capital of Culture 2019 is an important tool for carrying out the Culture Strategy of the town. Not only because of the end result which will be achieved in the competition, but also because of the request, done by the town while applying for it.

Gabrovo application for ECC will give the town a high European quality expertise which without doubt will be of use for the implementation of the Culture Strategy. By participating in the competition, Gabrovo will take up a position as one of the most significant culture centres in the country, and will be able to place a clear request for its long-term goals for being recognized as a national centre for contemporary arts.

System for communicating cultural events and projects

The tool is a research and design project for creating an innovative and complex outside advertising infrastructure which will help implement the Culture Strategy of Gabrovo, will help artists and cultural organizations develop by making popular projects and events, by realizing effective relations between producers (performers) and audience (citizens).

The territorial range of such a project could be out of the town boundaries in line with the targets for making popular and communicating the culture projects of Gabrovo.

Design Centre

The Design Centre (also called Design Factory or Design Workshop) will be a high technology equipped place for varied learning, experimentation and application of design. It will be a creative field of a new type for a wide range of people. Along with this, it will be a platform for testing and developing innovative ideas and their disposal for industry use. Researchers and entrepreneurs will meet there.

The Design Centre will be housed in a specially provided (reconstructed or new) building which will offer the following services: a workshop with computer managed machinery for varied design experiments (digital prototyping), a multifunctional hall for presentations, lectures and screenings, an exhibition hall, a library, PC working stations and a café. The

Design Centre will be opened to all and will operate by subscription. It will host periodically special events dedicated to new design developments applying to all spheres of life, and leading names in the field of design will be invited there to take part in workshops and demonstrations. It is important that a sustainable relationship with the industry to be established from the very beginning, and there will be an opportunity for developing projects specified by the industry. The Design Centre will have a special programme dedicated to children – robotics, engineering industry, weaving machinery, urban environment and ecology, interactive design technologies and other subjects related to the contemporary applications of design which are also relevant to the region.

International Design Academy

In its history, Gabrovo has taken on the appearance of educational, industrial and craft centre. The town has the unique winning chance to make use of its location and past by establishing the first and only International Design Academy in the country. Through appropriate gaining from local and foreign investments, the institution could repeat the successful model of the American University in Bulgaria and similarly to Blagoevgrad to become a regional centre for innovative approach in education. This will solve one of the main problems of the town – the decrease of young population.

International Residential Centre

The International Residential Centre will be a temporary working place for young and established experimental artists from all fields of the contemporary art. It will offer good conditions for work and presenting the result (studios, rehearsal rooms, equipment, stage) and a comfortable place for living. It will host training initiatives and presentations.

Informal Educational Centre

The creation of such centre is a tool, directed towards setting up an appropriate social environment for realization of the priorities of the Culture Strategy of Gabrovo. Its main functions are related to implementing educational policies on stimulating the citizen's and creative activity, for setting up a wide range of interests and needs for contemporary arts and culture, for preparation of audiences and development of an alternative stage. An important accent is the training of culture managers who will help in functioning culture institutes in the town in cooperation with the Residential Centre and Contemporary Arts Centre.

Training programmes for culture managers

The main tools in this field are: one-month summer schools for managers; municipal scholarships for majoring in this subject in prestigious universities; the scholarships will be bound by a condition for five years of work on the territory of the municipality; establishing a post-graduate qualification programme for managers in the field of art and culture; practice possibilities for culture managers in the culture institutes and the Residential Centre.

International Contemporary Art Festival

International Art Festival Gabrovo will be an entrance for the world contemporary art coming to Bulgaria, and meanwhile Bulgaria will appear on the world stage. It will be realized within a month and will unite different parts of contemporary culture in the fields: music, cinema, theatre, visual arts, photography, circus, opera, dance, design, architecture, and will demonstrate their active relations and interactions between them. The event set itself the task of being distinguished as the biggest contemporary art festival in Bulgaria and a platform for public appearance of young artists from the Balkan region.

Establishing a fund in support of carrying out the Culture Strategy

The fund will be financed by incomes from culture industries in the town plus extra gained financial resources by other donors. Its main target will be the implementation of the strategy and the biennial action plan which will be drawn up every 24 months and will include concrete measures for achieving the targets, set in this paper.

The fund will be managed by a board and an executive director, who will be appointed within a definite mandate. The responsibilities of the executive director will be related mainly to gaining outside resources and the operational managing of the institution. The decisions regarding what projects with what resources to be supported will be taken by a selection committee with one-year mandate, and its members will be international, national and local experts.

Regulation of competitions for architecture and urban environment

Promulgating the regulation of competitions for architecture and urban environment aims to regulate the processes of designing and construction of publicly significant objects, realized through the participation of public finance. By this means it will be established a platform for a democratic and transparent solving of urban problems and tasks. A very important lapse, which will be eliminated, is communicating of the investment initiatives with the citizens and organizations at a municipal level creating an adequate model for the contemporary society.

Project for bringing up to date and developing the identity of Gabrovo as a capital of humour and satire

The idea is the appearance of Gabrovo as a capital of humour and satire to become more varied and enriched through subjects related to the modern developing of humour, so that young audiences from the region, country and abroad to be attracted here.

Guidelines for reform of public culture institutes and administration

These tools must motivate the public culture institutions in two main directions – to create content in cooperation with international organizations and institutions, and to gain extra outside finance for producing this content.

The access of the public culture institutions to the resources of the urban fund Culture for creating culture content will be realized by the common rules of the fund, valid for all culture operators.

The managerial teams of the municipal culture institutions will be included in training programmes for culture management.

The activity of the municipal culture institutions will be devoted to the implementation of the Culture Strategy of Gabrovo since beginning of 2014.

Culture mapping

The main goal is to identify, research and visualize the existing and potential spaces (buildings and urban environment) which have or could accept culture content.



7. To what extent do you plan to forge links with the other city to be nominated European Capital of Culture?

This application implies **European partnership and participation** as a guiding principle.

The idea of European Capital of Culture is by definition a **transnational project** offering the great chance to work together on concrete projects.

In our case it offers the **additional chance to link** a representative of the so called 'new' EU-member states with an 'old' member, creating the opportunity for an exchange of experience and information on the basis of collaboration, thereby also reshaping the image of both partners and correcting projections.

Gabrovo 2019 has already established contacts with two candidates from Italy – **Lecce 2019 and Sienna 2019**. Italian cities, most of them rich in cultural heritage, iconic witnesses of European history, are certainly interesting partners also in respect to the fact that in some of the beautiful sets of historic architecture a drama of economic and social endangerment is unfolding staged by questionable political actors and of course within the wider theatre of the current crisis. The similarities and the differences of the situation of our two countries provide us with a rich variety of themes with European significance to be worked on together.

The intensity of contact will of course be depending on the choice of who will get the title of cultural capital on the Italian side, but already in the second stage of the selection process more concrete links can be established and possible project defined.

With the candidate city **Lecce 2019**, situated in the south of Italy, we have had first contacts and decided on two main topics of our future collaboration, as they are core-topics to both our communities' development:

Gabrovo, having been a model for school education in Bulgarian history and also now defining education as one of the strongest tools for building our future, will be a partner in Lecce's EDUtopia program for creativity in education and new models of learning with projects mainly connected to '**Balancing Old & Young**' – one of the subthemes in our cultural programme thematic cluster **BALANCING EUROPE**.

'**Balancing Democracy and Autocracy**' – another sub theme in **BALANCING EUROPE** cluster related to Lecce's DEMOCRAtopia and we will collaborate in *Democracy in Process* including talks, public consultations and participatory events.

Both projects are process oriented and shall start before the year of the event.

Furthermore there have been first contacts to **Siena**, a middle-sized city, with a lively University, and the oldest bank institute; the coincidence that the Historical Museum in Gabrovo holds as a treasure the first bank note of Bulgaria is not the only reason why we want to establish project links with the city of Siena, but there is also the fact that Bulgaria is not part of the Euro - currency club of the EU member states yet. The topic of banking systems, alternative concepts of exchange, economic theories and tensions is of high interest especially in the face of the economic crisis questioning the bonds of the European union. We would like to put this topic on the agenda of our European cultural explorations as part of our subtheme cluster '**Balancing Have and Have not**' and scrutinize it with various European partners in a complex multi-layered mix of tools and media.

We see the application as a starting point to develop closer contents-based relationships with possible partners. We have yet not far advanced from this starting point but will pursue the path of this expedition looking for co-travellers, that share similar questions and goals, during the on-going process.

The impact of the project on European scale will be more visible and more significant when collaborating with the Italian ECoC 2019.

In case your city gets the title, do you plan to cooperate with the other bidding cities in your country which have been pre-selected? (the answer to this question is optional at the pre-selection stage)

This project is a unique chance to weave a much needed **denser national network** on the basis of intensified cooperation.

If elected we would see it as our responsibility to strengthen the links between the pre-selected bidding cities as well as those who have participated in the first stage, especially also taking in account the developments that have been started by all the participants during the process of application.

The ECoC19 activities of Gabrovo shall not be confined solely to one city, territory or region, but should create **synergies for the whole country** to benefit from this process of open minds and actively tackling nationwide problems and topics through cultural development and creativity.

This process shall be started more detailed and concrete already in the second phase of selection.

Municipality of Gabrovo is an active partner of a **powerful network** - the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria. It's mission is to be:

- "The Voice" of municipalities in Bulgaria, as a reliable partner, centre for services for the municipal administration and promoter of international contacts;
- Representative and defender of the interests of local authorities under the legal powers of the association;
- Corrective of the central government, through the development and defending of the proposals for better regulation of local government,

in the joint efforts of local authorities to make a **full usage of the European membership and values.**



8. Explain how the event could fulfil the criteria listed below. Please substantiate your answer for each of the criteria (this question must be answered in greater detail at the final selection stage).

As regards "The European Dimension", how does the city intend to contribute to the following objectives:

- *to strengthen cooperation between the cultural operators, artists and cities of your country and other Member States, in all cultural sectors;*

Gabrovo19 will **utilize all contacts established** already up to the present point not only through a via many projects well linked administration of the Municipality but through cooperation of cultural operators, the business sector and NGOs, many of them linked with international and European partners.

Cooperation traditions go beyond the formal agreement between city authorities alone, as a effect example of this are the long interactions of the **Technical University of Gabrovo** with more than 50 foreign universities in more than 18 European countries. The Technical University Gabrovo has been over a long time period involved in collaboration and exchange programs with a growing number of partner universities, many of them based in Germany, but also in numerous other European countries from the Netherlands, Sweden, Austria to Slovenia to name some of them.

Independent **cultural networks like Arteria** hold contacts with European artistic and socio-cultural networks and artists and is participating in and organizing festivals with international attendance.

The **cultural community centre Bread house**, founded by a Gabrovian working with UNESCO, has initiated an international network of similar projects using the worldwide emotional and ritual connotations of this basic food item as a multifunctional socio-cultural tool.

Likewise is the **House of Humour and Satire** internationally well connected through its manifold activities that bring together local and national exponents of the 'comic' arts from caricaturists to performers with their colleagues from other countries.

While these initiatives will be going on and will participate with special projects in the program of the Cultural Capital year that may enlarge their contacts and possibilities of work, new links will be established specifically by the **Christo Contemporary Arts Centre and the Design Academy** with similar institutions, artists and experts of other European countries.

These projects will be designed as formats to be carried on beyond the Cultural Capital year, thus shaping sustainable contacts and exchange with the European partners.

International cooperation and joint projects, partly with **other national and Italian candidate cities**, focussing on political and socio-cultural themes involving citizen participation will strengthen the links between communities as well as individuals on a European level and will establish new civil society networks.

Together with the cultural and artistic events and festivities of the Cultural Capital year the activities of these institutions and initiatives will secure sustainable contacts in all cultural

sectors from education, arts and tourism to the political and socio-cultural agenda of civil society thereby contributing to a new urbanity of the city and its inhabitants, realizing themselves as active members of a European community of citizens.

Municipality of Gabrovo has **already established connections and partnership relations** in the field of culture with many European cities, in and outside Bulgaria.

We have signed **formal agreements for cooperation** as twin partners with 6 member states cities:

Preshov - Slovakia;
Aalst – Belgium;
Sisak – Croatia;
Mittweida – Germany;
Nowy Sanz – Poland;
Panevezis - Lithuania.

Each agreement signed is just a formal document. It is followed by a **detailed bilateral annual cooperation programme**, which stipulates the different measures for cooperation. These measures are bottom-up elaborated, so that people to people approach can be successfully carried out. The outcome is the annual implementation of social projects, cultural coproduction, educational initiatives, exchange and site visits of music, dance and performance formations, etc.

This application is supported by our partner cities which have officially presented to us their **letters of support**.

Over the years we have participated in **many European and International projects** covering various European regions. The Municipality of Gabrovo is one of the best performing in preparing and implementing European projects.

We do see a serious potential **to further intensify our European cooperation**. This is understood as further developing the existing cooperation and of course establishing of new partnerships.

This programme and its European diversity intents to focus on **creating such networks and encourage cooperation at European level** within the different clusters as introduced above. There are many project formats that could be used are we selected the European Cultural Capital. Culture provides endless opportunities in that respect. Out of all 13 festivals that take place annually in Gabrovo, 10 are with international attendance.

Our programme will be based on principle that all cultural institutions will actively participate in the event and will engage cultural operators and artists representing other European countries. From 2014, in accordance with the Cultural Strategy 2014 – 2024, Municipality of Gabrovo will set up a mechanism for supporting independent, innovative **artistic forms and grassroots initiatives** that will help to ensure a successful promotion of active participation in culture.

The period of preparation for 2019 is opportunity for us to establish **new and sustainable platforms** for cooperation and exchange of artists from other European cities. Gabrovo will

continue to be active in EU supported European networks for cultural exchange on all relevant sectors.

We will rely on the success model for cooperation of the platform **Artists in Residence**. It will allow us to invite artists in the area of music, visual arts, literature, theatre, architecture, etc., to participate in our cultural life and contribute for the development of the 2019 programme.

- *to highlight the richness of cultural diversity in Europe;*

Gabrovo has, through its shared history, **developed a distinctive cultural flavour and character of its inhabitants**, which contributes, displayed in a dialogue between tradition and contemporary culture, to the diversity of the European cultural cocktail.

The area covered belongs to the core-land of Bulgaria and was a **historical playground of European history**. Being a **natural cross-road between East and West, the Adriatic and the North**, these settlements were inhabited by different folks. In the 19 C trade boomed as the Gabrovian salesmen travelled to Russia, the Austro-Hungarian Empire and Italy, where they discovered new people and cultures and became better educated. The hunger for modern knowledge accelerated and in 1835 **the first Bulgarian secular school opened its doors in Gabrovo**.

After the Liberation Gabrovo was **one of the founders of the new Bulgarian state**. The Gabrovian deputies initiated many acts to support domestic industry and as a result Gabrovo became famous for its high quality products and pioneer industries. Thus it gained its other names such as the **Capital of mills, the Bulgarian Manchester and the Loan officer of Bulgaria**.

Many different people were passing through **leaving the flavours of the outer world**, but the main population settling here was from Bulgarian origin, a fact which, together with the pride of capable craftsmen and blacksmiths, resulted in a strong identification with the cultural heritage of the place, since its roots have been unbroken since centuries.

So what we find here is a strong **authentic cultural heritage** which is defined partly through older rural and agricultural aspects and items, but even more through the craftsmanship by especially all kinds of skilful smiths famous for their knives. This specific local cultural heritage can be experienced in an exemplary way in the open-air ethnological exhibition complex Etar and the protected historical village of Bozhentzi representing the architecture of the Bulgarian Revival. **Etar is a unique open air ethnographic museum on the Balkan Peninsula**, the only place in which a collection of water-operated industrial facilities for craftsmanship can be found in Bulgaria. Each September the International Fair of National Crafts – a meeting place of masters from near and far – takes place here.

The architectural reserve Bozhentzi is a picturesque valley that successfully preserves the spirit of times past, where beautiful landscapes, architectural forms and the spirit of the Balkan people create its original atmosphere and for that reason it hosts the international Painting Plain Air annually.

The House of Humour and Satire is a unique cultural institute of world humour and satire of national importance. It was established on 1st of April (the international day of humour) in **the Capital of humour – Gabrovo** as an heir of the typical Gabrovian wit. Under

the motto *The world lasts, because it laughs*, it is a museum of laughter, a gallery of world humour in art, an information centre and a tourist attraction for both children and adults.

Thus the heritage of Gabrovo **can add to the rich and varied tapestry of the European culture**. The resulting cultural diversity expands choices, nurtures a variety of skills, human values and worldviews and provides wisdom from the past to inform the future.

This project is focused on the meaning and significance of forms of cultural diversity for the **understanding of contemporary issues**, through meetings and exchange where different cultures meet. It gives the tools so that we all will be confronted with **different representational forms that portray cultures in various parts of Europe**, as we examine critically our own prejudices as they influence the perception and evaluation of cultural differences. With concern to the multiculturalism debates we should facilitate the accommodation of cultural diversity with less tension between national majorities and minorities, giving new emphasis to concerns with unity and social cohesion.

We shall **approach cultures holistically**, assuming the inseparability of economies, kinship, religion, and politics, as well as interconnections and dependencies.

- *to bring the common aspects of European cultures to the fore?*

As the uniting factor of European cultures the values of this culture are a favoured item.

The roots of the shared values of the European Union which lie at the core of its self-definition usually perceived as stemming from the Judeo-Christian tradition, the ancient Greek and Roman philosophy, states theory and practice and jurisdiction and the principles of Enlightenment leading to the Declaration of Human Rights.

Gabrovo19 plans to discuss not only the roots themselves but **the reality of these values** shaping the societies of Europe on many levels, using for this complex and even controversial task, amongst other instruments, public forums, symposia, media projects and artistic works relating to this cluster of topics. One of our partners in this discourse within the frame of **Balancing ,Democracy and Autocracy'** thematic cluster, but also including other related program clusters, will be Lecce2019 with its project DEMOCRATopia.

The questioning and evaluation of these principles is of eminent significance and importance to the consistency of social web of the member states and the EU as a whole, therefore we see it **as a responsibility** of European Cultural Capital to **make it a central matter**, also in the light of our own local history, which influences our presence.

Besides this long-term project touching all fields of culture **we will present common aspects of European cultural and artistic expression** in various co-productions, showing the richness of variations and versions of the approach towards our shared tradition and contemporary arts.

The common aspects of the European culture will be targeted through:

- **Strengthening a sense of European identity** and make it clear to citizens the **value of European civilisation** and of the foundations on which the European peoples intend to base their development today, that is in particular the safeguarding of principles of democracy, social justice and respect for human rights;
- **Preparing people to take part in the economic and social development** of the communities and in making concrete progress towards European union;

- **Making people aware of the advantages which the Community represents**, but also of the challenges it involves, in opening up an enlarged economic and social area to them;
- **Improving their knowledge of the Community and its Members States** in their historical, cultural, economic and social aspects and bring home to them the significance of the co-operation of the Member States of the European Community with other countries of Europe.

Can you specify how this event could help to strengthen the city's links with Europe?

Already the preparation process has created a greater awareness of the entity defined as European Union and strengthened the feeling of **being part of this entity**.

The necessity of the city's self-questioning in all aspects of contemporary urbanity and the historical background leading up to its present form and character, along with positioning ourselves within Europe and its culture(s) has brought our connection with and belonging to this political, economic and cultural organism more clearly to our consciousness as it is the case in the proceedings of everyday life where we tend to focus on our local affairs.

The cooperation, programs and productions involving European partners during the year of the event and the predecesing years will further enhance the awareness of these links and interdependencies between all our countries and cultures. Through the European contents of our program and through the development of concepts applicable in other member states we will be able to strengthen our relationship with European institutions and networks.

The **need to communicate on a European level** will stimulate the curiosity and eagerness to either learn foreign languages or to improve language skills that had not to be exercised so far. This will result in an increased flow of information, provide new opportunities for the business and tourism sector as well as enlarge the possibility of contacts on an individual level. It is through these contacts that a true feeling of belonging to the European community will be enhanced.

Gabrovo19 will create and project an attractive image of the city, which will be widely noticeable and will expose the city on a new level of visibility beyond the Bulgarian borders establishing the city and surrounding area as a location of interest on the European map.



9. Explain how the event could meet the criteria listed below. Please substantiate your answer for each of the criteria (this question must be answered in greater detail at the final selection stage).

As regards "City and Citizens", how does the city intend to ensure that the programme for the event:

- *attracts the interest of the population at European level;*

The city has, through history and geographical situation, **a great potential to draw the interest of visitors.**

However, for the momentary state we have to admit that Gabrovo and the area being part of the municipality is well known nationally as the so called Capital of Humour, as a place of rich cultural heritage, beautiful nature and as a significant town of Bulgarian Revival and successful industrialisation, but in all these aspects **is not enough known to the international community.**

Currently we are, in addition to a regional development project of joint distribution of tourist information including the municipalities of Sevlievo and Tryavna, **reshaping our tourism concept**, as the area deserves much more attention on an international level.

The nature resort of Uzana, a wide plateau amidst the mountain range of the Balkans, is a unique location as a family winter and summer resort and has great potential for outdoor activities, eco-tourism and eco festivals.

The open-air ethnological museums Etara and Bozhentzi draw individual and group tourism as well but have to be filled with more cultural life through programs and events connected to contemporary re-interpretations of traditional cultural production.

Gabrovo town itself, beautifully situated, is a mix of traditional Revival architecture mansions, bourgeois houses of the late nineteenth and beginning twentieth century in the centre, and the typical architecture of the communist era, with outstanding examples of an opulent historicism like the House of Culture. The city offers, in a concentrated space, the essence of the changing times and is a living museum of the different concepts of urban space.

The city and its cultural buildings will be the theatre of urban life throughout different periods specific to the area situated in the eastern part of Europe, a place still not experienced and displayed in the full potential of its exemplarity as a cultural, social and political epoch, therefore being of interest for visitors from all over Europe.

Visitors and artists as well as citizens **are invited to be witness and participants in the on-going process of the shaping and redefinition of the urban space** and concepts of living together. They will be invited to experience the expression of our shared dreams, fears, hopes and visions.

The program during the cultural year will consist of topics **valid for the whole of EU**, dealing with questions, problems and themes of importance for the future definition and development of this union through using international co-operations, exchange programs, symposiums and a variety of workshops covering all fields of cultural and artistic production.

Moreover it will **celebrate the richness of our shared European culture in its diversity** in a

unique display of theatre-productions and all kinds of the performative arts as well as exhibitions of arts and crafts from ancient and traditional to the contemporary artistic production.

This rich program will be communicated **on a national and international level** not just by the usual means of public relation and advertising, but through the diverse co-operations, residences and exchange projects.

- *encourages the participation of artists, stakeholders in the socio-cultural scene and the inhabitants of the city, its surroundings and the area involved in the programme,*

Already in the preparation of this bidding the local stakeholders, inhabitants and artists **were invited to embark through various tools of participation and have responded with rich input.**

Municipality of Gabrovo annually launches its budget funded **Programme for supporting projects in the field of culture** which financially supports organizations and individual artists for the creation of a cultural products via different forms of art. The programme for 2013 is especially **designed to support the candidacy** of Gabrovo for the Cultural capital of Europe. It aims to provoke innovative ideas and creative thinking approaches among artists in order to promote the cultural products of the city. In 2013 **4 projects will be implemented in Gabrovo.**

This process of open discussions is not finished with the first stage but **will be carried on in the same spirit**, as it will be a principle approach for the Cultural Capital as such.

Participatory methods are more than a handy tool for opinion finding and generating topics.

For Gabrovo19 they are a major part in creating the contents of cultural capital and the new community it wants to promote.

The world cafés that have played a lively part during the preparation discourse **will take place on a regular basis**, discussing questions relevant to the citizens also during the time of the event.

The **'Days of Creative Energy'** carried out in September 2013 brought together people from cultural institutions, artists, students, journalists, architects, members of the municipality, volunteers and NGO members sharing their critical viewpoints, voicing needs, wishes and ideas.

'Colourful salt' is another opinion finding initiative the name of which stems from a popular local herbal salt mixture playing on the notion of necessary, useful and diverse ingredients adding different flavours, will accompany the whole process and the year of the event. The 'Colourful Salt' activities shall be decentralized and spread out to the area, villages and neighbouring towns.

All these meetings have shown that the cultural capital project **has a strong catalysing effect**: people utter their frustrations, show their anger about the lacking structure or information, they come up with bright ideas, they link up with each other, they start to plan.

There is a need amongst the citizens for being heard, a need for being noticed, a need for being accepted as a partner in decisions. It may be that not all of the people dare to speak up,

not all of them want to contribute or think they are able to take part, but this has to be seen as a learning process in (self) trust and communication. These are 'classes' in empowerment, not through lecturing, but through shared experience.

A **wide range of workshops** is part of the program, some of them for specific target groups; others open to everybody who wants to enlarge his/her experience or skills. Due to the atmosphere of shared training and direct contact with a 'do' factor reservations crumble and give way to new possibilities of self-expression.

The information policy will be improved **to reach the largest number of population** possible and invite them to share their opinion. The events shall provide accessibility to all groups of people. A clear message has to be delivered: No Exclusion!

- *is sustainable and an integral part of the long-term cultural and social development of the city?*

This application is a sustainable and integral part of the **long – term cultural and social development of the city**, which intends to use Gabrovo 2019 to enhance its international image and to contribute to Europe 2020 Strategy.

The desire to host the European Capital of Culture event in Gabrovo 2019 stems both from the **formal cultural development policy and the cultural practices of the city**.

Our bid for the European Capital of Culture Award **is founded on some very important strategic documents, elaborated by the Municipality**.

- ***Municipal plan for development of municipality of Gabrovo***

The Municipal development plan is a main strategic document determining the development direction of the municipality, as it stipulates the objectives and priorities of the community, based on its specific characteristics and potential. The plan is being elaborated in consistence with the national and European policies for overall social and economic development.

- ***Integrated plan for urban recovery and development 2020***

The plan is being elaborated with the financial support of Operational programme Regional Development, funded by EU Regional development fund and targets to create instruments for overcoming the deficits of the economic, social and ecological issues of Gabrovo in the context of the long-term vision for urban development. As a result of the plan different target zones and measures for active interventions are defined, all of which with direct effect on cultural development.

- ***Strategy for Development of Culture 2014 – 2024***

Gabrovo is among the very few cities that has elaborated and adopted a **Strategy for Development of Culture for the reference period 2014 – 2024**. This is namely because the city authority and all relevant shareholders have commonly agreed, as a bounding consensus, that the cultural sector and the artistic industries **are a priority** and also a **reinforcing factor** for the development of the European Union and the **quality of life of the European citizens**.

The aim of this strategic document is to analyse and summarize the **vision, the main priorities, horizontal and sector policies, objectives and task** and trough implementation of measures to improve public processes and the use of resources both on local and national level.

The vision of the Strategy is to launch Gabrovo as a **powerful platform for international networking and event planning**. In the period 2014 – 2024 the cultural sector of Gabrovo will be developed as a friendly environment for education, experiment, innovations and exchange. For that reason this application is a **key instrument** for the implementation of the Strategy, not only for the purpose of the final result, but mostly for the benefits of the process and the way to get there.

Building on existing structures, revitalizing and reshaping them, as well as establishing new structures, the instrumentarium for creating cultural content **will be brought to a contemporary level**. As this process is not a matter of the renovation or construction of buildings alone the cultural capital will initiate and provide the contents to fill these structures, developing, staging and presenting projects that are internationally linked and up to the state of art, and at the same time promote further experimenting and extending the limits.

This process is future oriented and sets out to provoke a sustainable change of thinking, feeding a change of actions as well.

By the implementation of participatory tools the population will be involved not as merely passive audience and consumer of culture but will become **a co-creator and an active partner in the development process of their own city**.

This leads to a strong identification with the place and to further engagement, providing the environment for an emancipated citizenship and the democratization of society.

It is this mature, educated and active citizenship which is needed for the common and general evolution of social structures ensuring social peace, equality, responsible use of resources, and conditions for sustainable economy and progress.

Besides the implementation of structural development plans, it is this foundation of an open minded citizenship that will guarantee the sustainability of the Cultural Capital as a future creating process.

10. How does the city plan to get involved in or create synergies with the cultural activities supported by the European Institutions?

Since 2007 Municipality of Gabrovo is being very **active in making full usage of the European financing opportunities**.

Completed or on-going projects

Within the priority measures of the operational programme Regional Development 2007 – 2013 in Bulgaria, **we have attracted key investments in the field of culture** that both improve basic infrastructure and create favourable conditions for cultural development.

1. **We invest more than 4.5 mln. EUR** contracted European financing for 4 cultural projects:
 - Overall renovation and supply of modern technical equipment of the **City Multifunctional Hall** to daily host performances, conferences, concerts, festivals, individual and group expressions in all forms of art;

- **Promotion of Gabrovo Carnival** as an industry for new urban culture, through creating opportunities for its territorial spread and citizens` participation;
 - **Creation of the first for Bulgaria interactive industrial museum**, which will interpret the historic development of industry through the means of modern visual arts and digital media; **improvement of the basic infrastructure and attractiveness** of the existing open air ethnographic complex Etar, historical and architectural reserve Bozhentsi and the House of memories; **introduction of new cultural exhibitions, application of contemporary IT solutions** for the greater visibility of the destinations with cultural importance;
 - **Support for development of a regional integrated cultural and tourist product** in the municipalities of Gabrovo, Tryavna and Sevlievo to support and enhance interest towards competitive tourist attractions through diversification of tourist product, reduction of territorial concentration and balancing the territorial spread of benefits of tourism. Through project activities regional marketing products are created and disseminated.
2. In addition, **public works project** that have been already implemented or are in a process of implementation (renovation of parks, playgrounds, pedestrian areas, riverside alleys, etc.) we have succeeded in creating of favourable conditions and open-air spaces, appropriate for various forms of cultural events. With the financial support of the Regional development Fund of the EU we invest more than **5 mln. EUR in urban environment**.
3. **Project networking and participation** in cooperation with other partners:

Within the framework of INTERREG IV C Programme of the EU Municipality of Gabrovo participates in a 2012 - 2014 **project for innovative crafts** which aims to improve the entrepreneurship for set up of own business in the sector of creative arts and modern crafts through improvements of the efficiency of regional and local developmental policies. The project partners within the consortium unites 15 public and NGO organization from Italy, France, Spain, Romania, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Ireland, Hungary, Slovakia and Bulgaria.

Within the framework of INTERREG IV C Programme of the EU Municipality of Gabrovo participates in a 2012 - 2014 project for **promoting craftsmanship into a significant economic sector**. The project partners within the consortium are from Holland, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Latvia and Bulgaria.

Projects for next planning periods 2014 - 2020

The development of cultural projects is elaborated in the two important strategic documents of the City of Gabrovo: the **Integrated Urban Development Plan** and the **Cultural Strategy**.

These strategic documents are the foundation of the future overall development of the city.

The integrated plan and the cultural strategy encompass a **great number of projects** which improves cultural infrastructure in the next planning period 2014 – 2020 at a total value of **38 mln. EUR** – renovation and supply of technical equipment of the House of Humour and Satire, the House of Culture and the Open air Theatre, establishment a Centre for

Contemporary Arts, International Design Academy and Design Centre, etc. These projects are indicated in section 2.4 overall capital expenditures.

The documents also envision the implementation of **some smaller-scale projects** for establishment of multi-media centres and workshops for youth activities and creative industries.

The **financial resource for the implementation of the projects** as mentioned above will be mainly sought in the funding opportunities of Operational Programmes Innovations and Human resources Development. They will be instrumental for the establishment of new SMS in the field of creative arts, development of new forms of cultural products, as well as building the capacity of the entire cultural management sector.

In addition some projects will be implemented via public – private partnership for which financial support could be sought in the funding opportunities of the EU financial instrument JESSICA.

From 2014 **Creative Europe programme** will be an additional instrument for cultural professionals to be supported in order to reach new audiences and cultural exchange all over Europe.

Other initiatives

Gabrovo 19 **will establish new links and will intensify contacts already established** within the European networks and programs.

A logical tool of enhanced project based exchange will be our **twinning cities** even more so as projects with cultural or development content have been already carried out in the past incorporating artistic exchange as well as training programs. This will be based on the formal bilateral agreements that have already been signed.

Likewise there will be **co-operational links established with cities being selected as European Cultural Capitals** between now and 2019, for example Leeuwarden in the Netherlands.

The collaboration with Lecce 2019 European Capital of Europe candidate city on the topics of education and democratization are part of our shared concentration on these aspects of society development.

A vital role for the lively cultural environment in Gabrovo will play the **existing networks and partnerships** established between educational and cultural organizations in Gabrovo and their international partners, such as the Technical University, the Museum of History, the House of Humour and Satire, the Museum of Education, the Ethnographic open air museum Etar and the Architectural and Historic Reserve Bozhentsi, the Art Gallery, the Chamber Orchestra, the Drama Theatre, etc.

In support to its Capital of Culture application Gabrovo will continue to foster existing cultural European partnership in the implementation of **some of the largest festival**, such as Funny Film Fest, Autumn Fair of Crafts, Autumn Days of Chamber Music, Biennial of Humour and Satire in arts, Painting Plain Air Bozhentsi, Festival of the Spiritual Music.

All above listed projects and initiatives taken as a whole **will create synergies in our attempt to successfully bring cultural development to a straightforward and streamlined process.**

11. Are some parts of the programme designed for particular target groups (young people, minorities, etc.)? Specify the relevant parts of the programme planned for the event.

Besides a programme filling the year with projects, events and activities which we hope will be interesting and diverse enough for everybody to find his/her favourites, we plan and have started already to concentrate attention and activities especially to the following target groups:

Young People

Young people will be involved already in the preparation projects of all thematic clusters as the future cultural capital in six years will see them either as young adults beginning their professional lives or their studies, children will have changed into the next generation of teens, all of them wanting to have their wishes and visions realized.

In order to equip them with the best possible chances they will be an important part and target of the educational and training programs in all fields and shall be given the opportunity to widen their experience and minds especially in superregional and international encounters.

In the field of performances there will be events targeted to this young audience, such as concerts, contemporary formats of youth and children theatre, video films and competition.

The Youth Festival „In the Centre“ was launched end of June 2013, starting as a follow-up project to a successful beat box event in the previous year, but supplementing the music shows with a start-up conference, sports, skating, and open-air workshops for children and young people.

The festival, as an acclaimed combination of performative and participatory elements, will be an important part of the urbanizing activities as are the investments of the urban development plan in upgrading education structures and sports facilities, which are widely needed.

Senior citizens

In September 2013 a successful cross-generation pilot project was taking place in the area: „Grandparents on loan, Grandchildren borrowed“ brought young people from the age of 16 to the mid-twenties together with couples from the older generation. They lived and worked together at the elders' house, sharing their different experiences and special skills, offering mutual insight into traditional and modern approaches and ways of living, and established a new bond between the generations of the project-grandparents and grandchildren.

This initiative, designed after the idea of a young Gabrovian student, and carried through as a joint venture of the municipality, NGOs, volunteers, and businesses, will certainly be carried on in a larger scale.

It evoked interest not only within Bulgaria but as far as Japan, since the problem of an increasingly aging population with loosening bonds between the generations in all developed countries is calling for new ideas.

Creating a new culture of relationship between the old and young as well as stimulating the exchange of generation-specific knowledge through a direct personal contact, this project will be developed as a model to be implemented within a new network to be established in other regions of Bulgaria and will be 'exported' to other countries as well.

Senior citizens will actively participate in the 'Balancing Past & Future' projects.

As urban memory they will be the guides of special tours in Gabrovo and the neighbouring places, not just adding a personal flavour to history, but giving also the more recent past its place within the city and the area.

History is shaped and experienced by humans: the elders will remind visitors, young people and all interested of the human live stories that build the visible and invisible city.

Musical visitations, solo musicians or small musical formations like duos or trios, professionals and amateurs, come with specific, not too long programs to the private house or home of families, old people, or persons confined to bed. They bring their music to those who are not able to attend a concert, may it be traditional folk music, classic music or other styles.

Music gives joy, hope and consolation, it may have a therapeutically, a soothing or lightening up effect, it may be calming or energizing, but it is always a truly human tool of expression beyond language: it touches people and their feelings when other means of communication fail to reach them.

There will be a data bank set up, a calendar with available times, musicians, and programs, where one can order the personal musical visitation.

People with special needs

In public buildings, administration, social support and health care, cultural institutions, museums and other places of interest the means of information and orientation shall be adjusted towards the specific needs of sight and hearing.

With the participation of members of the target groups, audio guides, braille information, marks of orientation, clear directory maps and other specifically designed devices and concepts for information and orientation will be developed.

To enhance their sensibility, free them from possible insecurity, and equip them with an adequate behavioural instrumentarium, the employees of public institutions will be trained in addressing and supporting persons with handicaps according to their special needs.

These training units promote of course not a technical but an emphatic approach and will use also means of improvisation theatre and performative lecture demonstrations as mediating tools. This sensibilisation program shall be offered to schools and companies as well.

The Roma Minority

In Gabrovo municipality we find, compared to other areas, a relatively small percentage of Roma population.

But the Decade of Roma Inclusion, which was declared in 2005, is fast approaching its end in two years without having achieved a satisfying solution for problems that need to be tackled more effectively in the whole of Europe.

We are aware that together we still have to go further on the way of developing the conditions for our common better future that can be reached only without discrimination.

Gabrovo participated with its community centres, kindergartens, and primary as well as secondary schools in the EU project 'Different people, One Europe'. Its success was a proof that prejudice and clichés are best tackled through addressing children.

Beyond the important social and economic questions of unemployment, housing, and education that need to be solved, it is essential to change also the mind-set of the majority population.

Continuing the approach of 'Different People. One Europe' we will, using the tools of various art forms, together with children in schools and after-school-programs to create sensibility, respect and understanding in a multicultural setting.

Amongst others there will be a long-term workshop project for circensic arts and skills established, aimed at children and young people, including juggling, clowning, acrobatics, music etc. with presentations along the way.

THE ROMA SAGA

A Narrative Theatrical Circus

Inclusive Training & Performance Project for Kids & Young People

In the year of the event there will be an intensified workshop process:

International & local artists, acrobats, musicians, and social workers with expertise in intercultural work develop with children and young people from the Roma community a circensic spectacle telling their history, stories and dreams. The show will be presented to a public audience. This will, besides the learning of new skills and self-expression, create pride, validating feedback, the experience of success, and visibility in a positive context.

The participating artists/musicians will also present themselves in a concert.

Likewise shall artists coming to Gabrovo for a concert or other type of show extend their stay to give a workshop open to the public or a specific master class.

Thus the project addressed to a specific target group can offer learning possibilities for other members of the community and creates benefit for the population as a whole broadening the intended integrative and inclusive aspects.

12. What contacts has the city or the body responsible for preparing the event established, or what contacts does it intend to establish, with:

- *cultural operators in the city?*

The cultural operators have been informed of the city's plan to participate in the bidding for Gabrovo 2019 and they have been invited to the process of the preparation of the bid. All of them have expressed their support unanimously, which is already a visible part of their publicity, public relation material and appearance.

There has been a formal meeting and discussion on the topic with the mayor of Gabrovo, representatives of the city departments of culture, tourism, public relations and the directors of the cultural institutions as well as separate meetings and more detailed talks on a personal level.

They will be engaged partners in the events of the cultural capital year, with specific programs, cooperation and co-productions, also on an international level. The contents of the programs, in context with the main theme clusters of Gabrovo 2019, will be developed by them and further discussed and shaped in the following period.

- *cultural operators based outside the city?*

So far having ensured the expressed support of the mayors of our regional neighbouring towns, we will in the next time invite all cultural players, from institutions over community centres to other NGOs, to a start-up meeting for our collaboration. With most of them we have experience in former cooperation and joint ventures, also as part of the integrated regional development plan.

Cultural operators from other towns and areas, besides the already connected 'Stara Planina' network of smaller municipalities in this area, especially from the co-bidding cities will be contacted likewise in the near future.

- *cultural operators based outside the country?*

Besides the contacts with operators from our twinning towns, where there already have been exchange programs such as joint exhibitions, and the meetings with representatives from Lecce 2019, as well as Leeuwarden 2018, contacts that will be intensified in preparation of our concrete projects, we will establish contacts to other international cultural operators according to the contents of specific projects that will be defined in the on-going process.

Existing international contacts with Portuguese and Greek networks concerning the preservation and development of cultural heritage and crafts will be strengthened on the basis of project work.

Name some operators with whom cooperation is envisaged and specify the type of exchanges in question.

(The answer to this question is optional at the pre-selection stage).

Mainly the local cultural operators are: House of Humour and Satire, Ethnographic Open – Air Museum Etar, Architectural and Historic Reserve Bozhentsi, Art Gallery, Regional History Museum, House of Memories, National Museum of Education, Regional Library, Drama Theatre, State Muppet Theatre, House of Culture, Chamber Orchestra, Community Centres, Folklore Ensembles, etc.

At this phase we want to refrain from naming other operators of projects that have to be devised more thoroughly and in greater detail. Should we go on to the next selection-stage we certainly will be able to give the detailed information.

13. In what way is the proposed project innovative?

The innovation aspect of this project **must be seen in the overall application process** as a tool for introducing new and better solutions to meet new requirements, new needs and new tendencies.

1. up to now, in Bulgaria and particular in Gabrovo, **Culture has never been streamlined to such extent as a powerful development instrument**, being able to generate an

immense creative energy that only waits to be fully discharged if only given the proper conditions to do so. This application sets the ambition to see Culture in a broader sense as a whole set of instrumentarium that streamlines all separate initiatives into a result – oriented entity. For that reason, in the context of our application, Culture is mostly seen as a way of social commitment of society then merely seen as a limited (though important) manifestation of arts. That is why it is not accidentally that this initiative encompasses a period of 7 years, because it is considered as a coherent process, rather than a sporadic set of events. This **holistic approach** towards all elements of urban, cultural, social and economic development and linking them together represent an unprecedented learning process.

2. this project very much relies on **the broad participatory platform**, involving all generation, which has never been done before. The application process as already started is a pure form of community commitment. This is of course tightly connected with the **bottom-up approach**, which clearly states that besides the formal and obligatory commitment of the city authorities, it is the community resource and inner energy that must be and can be the true driver and generator of the process. For that reason the management structure itself of the project is designed to function exactly in this way. Innovative for this place will be the extent and intensity of interdisciplinary and participatory projects especially in cooperation on equal level between institutions and citizens besides the usual volunteering structures. The city authority is by no means responsible for the firm political and administrative will, for creating the framework and all favourable conditions for the project, but it is in the grass route approach where the truly successful project implementation must be sought.
3. A very important part of the innovative aspects is the **founding of new structures and tools** for the very creation of innovation itself, as there is not only the Christo Contemporary Arts Centre, which will facilitate a new approach to the perception and the production of contemporary artists and will offer possibilities for the people to explore their own creativity as well, but also the International Design Academy, which, together with the Design Centre, by definition will be a place of 'inventing the future'. The initiative 'Made in Gabrovo', inviting and hosting artists and designers from different places and backgrounds in Gabrovo in order to develop and create new products, introduce them here and then export, present, make 'use' of their work under the labelling of MiG, is an actual innovation. The same approach is set into action also with new ideas and concepts, that are developed locally and then, after successful pilot projects, shall be transported and implemented nationwide or internationally.
4. as an additional tool of innovative instrument for approaching problems and triggering creative solutions we want to develop and implement, based on scientific research and experimental practice, is **the element of humour**. This specific method of mixed humour and ingenuity, applied as a unique working approach under the verb 'to gabrowise', is an innovative and serious enterprise. For that reason one of our programme's cluster themes is called 'Humour and other survival techniques'. A very important part of the cultural programme belongs namely to the events that celebrate humour, emotions, imagination and aspirations of people of Europe, i.e. celebrate life. We are dedicated to exploring various forms of humour and learning how they can actually benefit interrelations between people, education, communication, etc. Of course the obvious side effect will be that we all will have a lot of fun.
5. To realize that innovation lies at the core of this project and will be the energy propelling the city beyond the year of EcoC, **we have to first re-new or minds.**

Therefore one of the instruments to spur innovative attitudes and inventions is the founding of new structures and tools for the very creation of innovation itself, as there will be not only the Christo Contemporary Arts Centre, which will facilitate a new approach to the perception and the production of contemporary artists and will offer possibilities for the people to explore their own creativity as well, but also the International Design Academy, which, together with the Design Centre, by definition will be a place of 'inventing the future'.

The initiative 'Made in Gabrovo', inviting and hosting artists and designers from different places and backgrounds in Gabrovo in order to develop and create new products, introduce them here and then export, present, make 'use' of their work under the labelling of MiG, is an actual innovation.

The same approach is set into action also with new ideas and concepts, that are developed locally and then, after successful pilot projects, shall be transported and implemented nationwide or internationally.

Innovative for this place will be the extent and intensity of interdisciplinary and participatory projects especially in cooperation on equal level between institutions and citizens, exceeding the usual volunteering structures.

As an additional tool of critical assessment and innovative instrument for approaching problems and triggering creative solutions we want to develop and implement, based on scientific research and experimental practice, the element of humour. This specific method of mixed humour and ingenuity, applied as a unique working approach under the verb 'to gabrowize', is an innovative and serious enterprise.

Innovation is a (r)evolutionary process driven forward by creative minds.

Gabrovo19 will be part of this evolution.

14. If the city in question is awarded the title of European Capital of Culture, what would be the medium- and long-term effects of the event from a social, cultural and urban point of view?

Being European Capital of Culture is a **unique opportunity** for a city. It is a **unique opportunity for Gabrovo** in terms of regeneration and promotion in all aspect of the community.

This title is not only a natural result of a straightforward, clearly stated and meaningfully designed application process if a city achieves successfully in doing so. It is a **declaration** for a new perception, new creativity and change of image. For this and for much more, this title is a **status**.

Gabrovo 2019 will:

- **strengthen the social cohesion and common understanding of citizenship** – this is far beyond the notion that any person who holds the nationality of an EU country is an EU citizen. The concept of citizenship in this application will have a far greater scale, as it is understood as a tool to improve the way we go through life and the way we experience life and why not the way we feel about life. Through all the platforms that Gabrovo 2019 will give, the people of Gabrovo and the people from other Bulgarian or foreign European cities can jointly dwell on the matters and issues of the common European policies, which in one way or another

are implemented in our everyday life. Regardless of the themes – education or social care, urban regeneration or planning, arts and crafts, leisure or business, innovation or technologies, environment or energy, one way or another, our national governments and both regional and local authorities are summoned to implement these shared policies. It is up to us to make them above all, models of good governance with due respect to the bottom – up approach.

- **promote social inclusion** – the provision of rights to all individuals and groups in society, such as employment, education and training, entertainment, self-expression, public planning, etc. is very beneficially facilitated through this application. The grass – root principles and the broad participatory platform of the project are key to promoting social inclusion. This will also create a higher level of trust in the sense of mutual trust and self-confidence, as well as self-esteem.
- **boost of activation and motivation**, as it will also lead to more intensive cooperation, shared responsibility and community building. It will establish and intensify the local, regional and also international contact between business, NGOs, institutions, citizens and create useful networks. Through the enhanced exchange of information, the manifold possibilities for learning processes, the experience of various skills (amongst others organisational, managerial, artistic, etc.), a change of perspectives and a change of mind-sets will be triggered, that will be influential for the further development.
- **enhance intercultural dialogue** – the cultural programme of the application will consist of a rich diversity of challenging events within the different thematic clusters. They will give important platforms on topics like European citizenship, balancing European realities, environment and nature, entertainment and cuisine, humour, arts and crafts, tourism, etc. the dialogue between people from different cities will be facilitated not only through the conventional forms of formal verbal discussions, but also through non formal interactions, participation in events and follow-up activities.
- **as a whole give a greater exposure and higher visibility and a change of image**, which will draw visitors, and via creating an attractive place for investment, studies, work and living invite new business operators, students, and, stopping the 'brain drain', create 'stayers'. The cultural sector will benefit from the national and international exchange and show more diversity and contemporary approach, as will the cultural heritage sector from the revitalization process and the strengthened context with present life and production.
- **develop infrastructure, structures, streetscape** and such will be more than a tool for increasing tourism and investment, it will have an economic return, result in Gabrovo being a place of true quality of urban live for its citizens who will carry the positive energy of cultural capital into the future.

15. How was this application designed and prepared?

The application of Gabrovo has been subject to a **broad public campaign and discussion**, starting on the level of local authorities /Mayor and City Council/, all levels of municipality structures, culture, educational and social institutions, civil organizations and NGOs.

The evolving of the application **as a process** started in the beginning of the year, as during the **Days of the Urban Planning** that took place in April 2013 the idea became more visible.

During that time the **Strategy for Development of Culture 2014 – 2024** has been prepared and later approved, as well as the **Integrated Plan for Urban Rehabilitation and Development**, as both focused the public attention during numerous meetings and public discussions. During the meetings and discussions the basic problems in the culture sector **were formulated as well as the biggest challenges for all involved in the sector**, with the active citizens' participation.

Thus and via the broad platforms of a series of public consultation, the Capital of Culture application **evolved and became much clearer**. As a natural process it was considered as one of the **best possibilities for Gabrovo** and it was viewed as a **mechanism** not only for the quantity of culture forums but also for a qualitative change in the living standards.

In the summer of 2013 the Mayor of Gabrovo **officially announced the intension** of the City to take part of the European Capital of Culture competition. It happened during the closing event of the project Gabrovo – Industry for a New Urban Culture and more specifically during the event dedicated to the settlement in Gabrovo of its newest inhabitant – the hornet, which was installed on the façade of the House of Humour and Satire. This artistic metal installation on the building of the very symbol of Gabrovo is quite deliberate and comes to show that humour, among others, can be also stinging.

Then we started **the meetings with directors of culture institutions**, devoted entirely to the application preparatory process were aimed at identifying the problems of the sector, planning changes, activating new partnerships, initiating new culture events and involving new audiences, introducing new meanings to the existing culture spaces and working out alternative ones.

This was carried out with **the highest commitment of mayor and mayor's office** and by the **devoted work of the municipal administration**, especially the PR and Culture department.

It is a great asset that the local community in particular managers of the cultural institutions, headmasters of educational facilities, NGO and business representatives or just individuals showed a **keen support and ownership of the application**.

The **following initiatives marked our efforts to target the public** for the cause of the present application:

World Café Method as simple, effective, and flexible format for hosting large group dialogue. **4 creative meetings** were held in the framework of significant public events. They were aiming at creating a network of constructive discussions on problems in relation with culture as a means of way of life and communication. Ideas were accumulated and generated, strategic planning and analysis of the present situation in Gabrovo in respect to culture life, social and educational sectors and business climate were carried out. Opportunities for investments, changes in the public environment, tourism development, the region environmental problems and challenges to the young people were discussed.

- **Days of creative energy** – 90 participants in 8 focus groups /culture institutions, media, sports, social workers, youth organizations, architects, free artists, public administration/ streamlined their creative energy as a driver of change.

- **Global Libraries network** - meeting with 60 participants from 23 community centres and libraries from Gabrovo, representatives of culture institutions and public administration.
- **Development of the System for Planning and Delivery of Social Services at Local Level Project** - a separate panel of the seminar was devoted to culture, the place of arts in the socialization process and options for the social groups for active involvement into the application preparation.
- **Youth Forum** devoted to volunteering; it was organized by IMCA – Gabrovo, one of the most active youth organizations in supporting Gabrovo candidacy.

Gabrovo in My Dreams Schoolchildren Initiative - the most popular campaign organized in Gabrovo; it was aimed at stirring to activity the creative energy and involvement of Gabrovo youths. On the very first day of the school year every Gabrovo student received a gift notebook /branded with the ECoC sign/ and they were asked to cut out a sheet and draw or write their dreams about Gabrovo future. More than 6000 sheets of messages, drawings, suggestions, and overall projects have flooded the ECoC application office. This specific referendum showed not only a more beautiful and colourful Gabrovo, but it reminded us in a naïve and entirely sincere way how different everything looks when approached with love. More parks, flowers, cinema hall, street equipment for sports and entertainment, colourful facades, new open-air stages and museums, swimming pools and bicycle alleys, futuristic quarters, palms and new bridges, cats of course /with or without tails/, even chocolate houses... All sheets, photographed and printed on large posters are exhibited at public spaces around the town – they are the platform, program, aims and meaning of our candidacy – to make real the dreams of our children for a more beautiful, green, colourful and entertaining... Gabrovo.

Gabrovolike.me - a site and Facebook group specially worked out for the Gabrovo candidacy have started under the title of gabrovolike.me. The name is not accidental and it is purposely not connected with the year 2019 /as it is the case with the other candidate towns/. The name delivers the message that we should like to work for Gabrovo not because of the candidacy or only for 2019 purpose – it is the beginning of a long way. Only for a week after the start of Facebook campaign more than 2000 likes has been registered; it was considered as a specific record and a clear sign for support. Very fast it was transformed into a real discussion area and a place for active sharing of ideas. Up to now we have 25 000 users from Bulgaria and abroad.

Discussion Forum was set up in the local media; one of the most popular names in the field of Gabrovo culture /painters, writers, sculptors, translators, school- and university professors/ took part in it.

Colourful Salt /typical local mixture of salt, pepper and herbs/ - unique platform created for sharing Gabrovo – the town as it is and what we all want to be. A spot for collecting ideas and projects created especially for the application. Colourful Salt is a kind of provocation to thought and sincerity, also creativity stimulus. The platform is on-line accessible on the program site and it ensures democratic access.

Business Forums and Meetings - discussions on culture projects together with local business and possibilities for active partnership. As it is stated quite ingeniously the Gabrovo program is aimed at transforming culture into business and business into culture; the local business was showed a special attention during the application preparatory stage. Meeting Rotary and Lions clubs, more than 50 personal meetings with entrepreneurs and the most important enterprises were held. The Gabrovo Chamber of Commerce – a special partner and active participant in the preparation – supported the activities by its monthly business bulletin and Europe Direct network.

II. STRUCTURE OF THE PROGRAMME FOR THE EVENT:

1. What structure does the city intend to give to the year's programme if it is designated „European Capital of Culture“ (guidelines, general theme of the event)? How long does the programme last?

(This question must be answered in greater detail at the final selection stage).

For a period of one calendar year the city of Gabrovo will organise a **series of cultural events** with a **strong European dimension** to help **bring the peoples of Europe closer together**.

The program of Gabrovo 2019 will start on New Year's Eve, the 31st of December 2018, with a public celebration of the beginning of this special year 2019, setting the key for the spirit of the whole city embarking on this journey throughout the following **twelve months of projects, festivities and collaborations**.

The 31st of December 2019, celebrated together again, will mark the end of the event only by name, but not as an ending of this process called Capital of Culture. The experience gained during our activities of 2019 will carry the spirit into the next phase of the **ongoing building of a lively community**.

The concept of the programme revolves around the notion of **introducing an active and creative process and THEMATIC CLUSTERS** connected with it.

For the success of our programme we strongly rely on the **European dimension** of its content, as follows:

BALANCING EUROPE

- Past & future
- Young & old
- Democracy & Autocracy
- Young & Old
- Humorous & Serious
- Democracy & Autocracy
- Have & Have Not
- City & Nature
- Centre & Periphery
- Local & global

Key words: Tolerance, Polarity, Conflict, Marginal groups, Negotiation, Balance, Benchmark, Standard, principles, Values, Integration, Culture

1. UNITED COLORS OF CITIZENSHIP

- European policies for environment, social care and integration, healthcare, education, employment, citizens participation, energy efficiency, sustainable transportation, economic development, social progress
- Interactions among local stakeholders
- Interactions with partner cities of Gabrovo
- Interaction with candidates cities for ECoC

Key words: Democracy, Donation, Dedicate, Politics, Civil Society, Public Discussions, European

2. CLOSE AND PERSONAL

- Good governance
- Transparency of public administration
- Result oriented administrative servicing
- Civil society in action
- Public discussions
- Serve with a smile

Key words: Discussion, Bureaucracy, Round table, Service, Efficiency, Governance, Empowerment, Leadership, Responsibility, Transparency, Consensus, Equity, Inclusion, Rule of law, Accountability, Participatory, Good practices, Media

3. PERSONALIZE YOUR DESKTOP

- Strategic urban planning as a process
- Integrated Plan for Urban Development of Gabrovo
- Cultural Strategy of Gabrovo
- Smart cities and citizens
- Projects and initiatives
- Technical University
- Business and Innovation
- Technologies and Media
- Gabrovo vision for 2021

Key words: Brain, Business, Entrepreneurship, Technical University, Non-formal education, Enterprise, Design Academy, Business, Tech-Park, Territory, Spaces, Intelligent, Holistic

4. EUROPEAN HUMOUR AND OTHER SURVIVAL TECHNIQUES

- The Humour of European people as a way of perception
- Celebrations of laughter
- The Carnival and its commotion
- Humour and satire in Arts
- Housing the humour – museums of humour
- The beauty and energy of the smile
- Europe smiles and laughs
- The Architecture of humour

Key words: Humour, Human, Irony, Smart, Talent, Emotion, Ingenuity, Character, Jokes

5. THE GREEN GREEN GRASS OF HOME

- Man and nature
- Nature heritage
- Green and eco initiatives and thinking
- Herb gathering
- Eco forums and events
- Uzana resort area and the Balkan mountain

Key words: Ecology, Sustainability, Nature, Flora & fauna, Eco, Education, Culture of living, Harmony, Peace, Men and God, Divine

6. CAKE AND ALE – EUROPE EATS FRESH

- The art of cooking
- Food for thought
- /inter/National cuisine
- Traditional and modern in gourmet
- The culture of nourishment
- Dinning out

Key words: Food and drinks, Leisure, Communication, Culture of living, Socialization, Sharing

7. SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

- Cinema and theatre
- Festivals
- Literature
- Music and dance
- Sports
- Indoor and outdoor performances
- Spaces and places

Key words: Leisure, Art, Entertainment, Need, Communication, Expression, Feelings, Anger, Love, Joy, Aspiration, Celebration, Exaltation, Excitement, Reading

8. ZOOM IN

- Galleries
- Fine arts
- Exhibitions
- Plain – airs
- Contemporary forms of art
- Photography
- Sculpture
- Architecture

Key words: Impressions, Expressions, Beauty, Colours, Shades, Light and dark, Perspective, Vision, Creation, Eternity, Transition, Interpretation, Movement and static, Engineering

9. WELCOME AND WELGONE

- Tourism
- Traditional and interactive museums
- Places of interest
- Marketing of destinations
- Integrated tourist product

Key words: Experience, Knowledge, Memories, Acquaintances, Present and past, History, Nature, Participation, Religion, Artefact, Discovery

2. What main events will mark the year?

**For each one, please supply the following information:
description of the event / date and place / project partners / financing
(The answer to this question is optional at the pre-selection stage).**

Being still in the phase of collecting and combining the ideas, visions and wishes of the citizens, as well as the business and cultural operators, may they be institutional or independent, authority linked or nongovernmental, we think it premature to fix main events at this point. Nevertheless we have developed **the concept and the thematic clusters** which give the overall framework of the events.

Though probable projects have been invented already we would use this creative process not in an appropriate and responsible way by pouring them into fantasy products before fully developed.

Existing events that are cultural assets of Gabrovo and characteristic for town and area we decided not to mention in order not to declare them main event before putting them into relationship and context with major projects to be developed.

Out of these reasons the question of main events will be answered if Gabrovo is selected to continue into the second stage.

3. How does the city plan to choose the projects/events which will constitute the programme for the year?

(The answer to this question is optional at the pre-selection stage).

The final responsibility for the program will be with the artistic director and his team who will **develop a complex and diverse program with the participation of local partners and citizens**. The artistic director will communicate the program to the other bodies of the management structure of the project. The projects will be selected according to the spirit and discussed goals of the Cultural Capital in a transparent process of decision-making during the preparatory years.

This question will be answered in greater detail in the next selection stage.



III. ORGANISATION AND FINANCING OF THE EVENT:

1.1 What kind of structure is envisaged for the organisation responsible for implementing the project? What type of relationship will it have with the city authorities?

When choosing the structure for the implementation of all of the activities planned, we relied on criteria such as: flexibility, transparency, clear responsibility, sound financial management, ability for adequate decision making, perspectives for sustainability of the structures and processes, maximum representations of all of the partners and stakeholders and opportunities for mobilisation of potential of players outside the initial frame of institutions.

The main challenges of the organizational structure are: how to combine mainly public source of the financing of the project and the involvement of wide range of public, private even individual players, how to guarantee open character of the initiative with the needs of sound management (including financial).

For the purposes of project implementation an independent governing body will be established as a community foundation.

So Gabrovo Cultural Capital project will be prepared and implemented by GABROVO 2019 foundation which is now in a process of establishment.

It is planned that the new body will be formally established with a resolution of the City Council Gabrovo. The existence of the Foundation will be not limited in the time i.e. it will continue to exist and work after the end of the project.

The legal status of GABROVO 2019 will be defined by its Statutes to be further elaborated in a written form.

The guiding principles of the foundation operation will be as follows:

- **legal independency of the governing body** – the legal status of GABROVO 2019 envisages to be independent of the structures of the Municipality. Nevertheless, it will work closely with the departments of the city authority.
- **community based representation and partnership** – the bottom-up approach is leading as it will allow for participatory and multi-level governance and involvement of maximum representation of community stakeholders, as seen in the concept of the collective governing body below.
- **transparency and accountability** – according to the stage of application (pre-selection, preparation of the full application form and nomination) the foundation will carry out regular public sessions along with other forms of publicity which will guarantee and ensure the transparency and accountability of the process. In addition all of the expenditures made on the basis of public financing, are subject of detailed reporting to the Mayor and the City Council.

Organizational concept of the Foundation:

STEERING COMMITTEE

15 members of the local community (Bulgarian government, city authority – Municipality of Gabrovo, City Council of Gabrovo, Regional governor, nominated representatives of the business, cultural institutes and organizations, artistic organization, NGO sector, Technical

university of Gabrovo, municipalities, supporting the candidacy, etc.). Each of the organizations or groups will appoint one representative to serve on this collective body. The Mayor of Gabrovo will chair the Steering Committee. The steering body will have regular public sessions where all interested parties can attend and have their participatory platform. The steering committee, will act as a supreme governing body of the foundation. It is based on the highest representation of all of the involved partners.

Steering committee will be responsible for the strategic **planning and guidance** of the foundation. All of the principal decisions will be generated or will **be subject of approval of the committee**.

According to the statutes of the foundation meetings of the Steering committee will be organized at least 6 times per year.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The executive team of the project (Managing Director, Artistic Director, Financial Manager, Communication Manager and Administrative Manager) will be the core of the daily project implementation in line with the strategic policies as developed by the steering body. It will deal with the planning, time-table and scheduling, organization and launching of events, monitoring and reporting.

1. **Managing Director** – should Gabrovo be selected as a European capital of culture this position will be taken by a person nominated by the Steering Committee, following a transparent procedure. Among the qualification criteria will be that this person must be experienced in strategic planning, project cycle management, public policies implementation. This position will be responsible for the overall coordination and implementation of the project and will regularly report to the Steering Committee. The executive director general will act as a head of professional administration of the foundation. In his activities he/she will work in close cooperation with the artistic director.
2. **Artistic Director** – should Gabrovo be selected as a European capital of culture this position will be taken by a person selected after an international open call. This mostly creative position will be mainly responsible for the development and implementation of the artistic programme.
3. **Financial Manager** - should Gabrovo be selected as a European capital of culture this position will be responsible for the sound and reasonable financial management of the programme.
4. **Communication Manager** - should Gabrovo be selected as a European capital of culture this position will be responsible for the communication and publicity of the programme, i.e. promotion of events, dissemination of materials, relations with media, website management, etc.
5. **Administrative Manager** - should Gabrovo be selected as a European capital of culture this position will be responsible for the technical administration and logistics of the programme.

Working meetings and progress meetings will take place as necessary. The operation of the executive team will be duly provided with suitable premises and equipment in order to deliver efficient and adequate project outputs all tightly bound to the main concept of the programme.

In addition to the governing bodies and administration various **councils** will be established. The main goal of the councils will be to ensure the best possible cooperation between in thermal resources of the foundation and stakeholders. In addition the councils will ensure maximum involvement of all of the interested parties and maximum publicity. Through the councils additional external expertise and ideas will be collected. Additionally, involving famous people from the field of culture, connected or supporting Gabrovo, additional publicity and advertisement will be ensured.



1.2 If any area around the city is involved in the event, how will the coordination between the authorities of the relevant local and regional authorities be organised?

Though the application is of Municipality of Gabrovo, the **involvement through partnership and support of a broader territorial** area will be beneficial and respectively duly insured, as we can build on the existing relations already in place.

- The involvement of the neighbouring municipalities will rely on the existing relations that will be further developed. Representatives of the Regional governor and the other supporting municipalities will be included in the Steering Committee.
- The formal networks established by The Regional Association of Municipalities Central Stara planina as an organisation which is established to serve the needs of the municipalities in the region will also be beneficial.
- The Regional Information Centre located in the city of Gabrovo as a regional event planner and disseminator of information
- On-going joint projects with neighbouring municipalities, which are in implementation
- The Global Libraries Network as a powerful communication tool for networking in town peripheries through the existing community centres

1.3 According to which criteria and under which arrangements has or will the artistic director of the event been chosen?

Should Gabrovo be selected as a European capital of culture this position will be taken by a person selected after an international open call.

What is or will be his/her profile?

International experience and expertise in cultural projects, arts management, cooperation and communication, program developing, communication and marketing strategy.

When will he/she take up the appointment?

After the decision of Gabrovo being elected as a European capital of culture.

What will be his/her field of action?

This mostly creative position will be mainly responsible for the development and implementation of the cultural programme.

(This question must be answered in greater detail at the final selection stage)

2. Financing of the event:

2.1: What has been the usual annual budget for culture in the city over the last 5 years (excluding expenditure for the present ECoC application)? Please fill in the table below.

Year	Usual annual budget for culture in the city (in euros)	Usual annual budget for culture in the city (in % of the total annual budget for the city)
2009	1 655 247	9,07%
2010	1 452 621	9,08%
2011	1 548 485	10,08%
2012	1 576 498	10,58%
2013	1 497 299	9,78%

2.2: Please explain the overall budget for the European Capital of Culture project (i.e. funds that are specifically set aside for the project). Please fill in the tables below.

Total Expenditures (in euros) in the budget	Operating expenditures (in euros)	Operating expenditures (in %)	Capital expenditures (в евро)	Capital expenditures (%)
42 000 000	42 000 000	100%	0	0%

[In case the city is planning to use funds from the usual annual budget for culture to co-finance the ECoC project, please indicate the amount which will be taken from the usual annual budget for culture from the year of the submission of the bid to 2019 included: Euros]

Total income in the budget (in euros)	From the public sector (in euros)	From the public sector (in %)	From the private sector (in euro)	From the private sector (in %)
42 000 000	35 700 000	85%	6 300 000	15%

Income from the public sector	in euros	(%)	Please specify: amount planned, secured
National government	5 000 000	14,01	planned
City	6 000 000	16,81	planned
Region	800 000	2,24	planned
EU	17 700 000	49,58	planned
other	6 200 000	17,37	planned
total	35 700 000	100%	planned

2.3.: Please explain the *operating* budget for the ECoC project. Please fill in the tables below.

a) Overall operating expenditure:

Operational expenditures (in euros)	Programme expenditures (in euros)	Programme expenditure (in %)	Promotion and marketing (in euro)	Promotion and marketing (in %)	Wages, overheads, administration (in euros)	Wages, overheads, administration (in %)	Other (please specify)
42 000 000	31 500 000	75%	7 140 000	17%	3 360 000	8%	

b) Planned timetable for spending operating expenditure:

Timetable for spending	Programme expenditures (in euros)	Programme expenditures (in %)	Marketing and promotion expenditures (in euros)	Marketing and promotion expenditures (in %)	Wages, overheads, administration (in euros)	Wages, overheads, administration (in %)	total for the year (in euros)
Year-5 2014	180 000	0,57	180 000	2,52	100 000	2,98	460 000
Year-4 2015	250 000	0,79	200 000	2,80	150 000	4,46	600 000
Year-3 2016	300 000	0,95	350 000	4,90	200 000	5,95	850 000
Year-4 2017	1 900 000	6,03	450 000	6,30	250 000	7,44	2 600 000
Year-1 2018	9 200 000	29,21	2 300 000	32,21	800 000	23,81	12 300 000
ECOC year 2019	15 200 000	48,25	3 140 000	43,98	1 560 000	46,43	19 900 000
Year+1 2020	4 470 000	14,19	520 000	7,28	300 000	8,93	5 290 000
Total	31 500 000	100,00	7 140 000	100,00	3 360 000	100,00	42 000 000

2.4.: Overall capital expenditure:

Capital expenditures (in euros)	Funding of new cultural infrastructure or upgrading existing facilities (including museums, galleries, theatres, concert halls, arts centres etc) (in euros)	Urban revitalisation (renovation of squares, gardens, streets, public space development etc) (in euros)	Infrastructures (investment in the underground, rail stations, dockyards, roads etc) (in euros)
205 183 109,94	38 077 102,52	67 557 000,00	99 549 007,42

If appropriate, please insert a table here that specifies which amounts will be spent for what type of capital expenditure over the years from the application to the ECoC year.

Capital expenditures (in euros)	Funding of new cultural infrastructure or upgrading existing facilities (including museums, galleries, theatres, concert halls, arts centres etc) (in euros)	Urban revitalisation (renovation of squares, gardens, streets, public space development etc) (in euros)	Infrastructures (investment in the underground, rail stations, dockyards, roads etc) (in euros)
	<p>Culture Buildings</p> <p>Rehabilitation of a key cultural infrastructure sites in Gabrovo - House of Culture, Summer Theatre, Centre for Informal Education "Radeon Umnikov", Centre for contemporary art "Cristo", House of Humor and Satire, Drama Theatre "Racho Stoianov"</p> <p>€ 23 300 000,00</p>	<p>City parks</p> <p>Rehabilitation and renovation of green areas for wide public use - Park "Markoteya" and Park "Bazhdar".</p> <p>€ 2 580 000,00</p>	<p>Tunnel under "Shipka" pass</p> <p>Construction of a tunnel under the Shipka peak. The project aims to reduce the traffic outside the city areas and to provide a faster link between northern and southern Bulgaria</p> <p>€ 50 000 000,00</p>
	<p>Gabrovo Sports</p> <p>Construction and reconstruction of a</p>	<p>Urban revitalisation</p> <p>Construction,</p>	<p>Western ring road of Gabrovo</p> <p>The project is an</p>

	<p>sports infrastructure sites - "Aprilov" Stadium, Sports Hall "Orlovets" and training complex, sports centre "Hristo Botev" - "Hristo Botev" stadium and adjacent sports facilities, water park "Markoteya" - swimming pool, Extreme Park "Dyado Dyanko".</p> <p>€ 9 000 000,00</p>	<p>reconstruction and rehabilitation of streets, parking lots, bicycle lanes and sidewalks, reconstruction of the city squares, rehabilitation of a city green areas and public residential areas, reconstruction of a market places.</p> <p>€ 64 977 000,00</p>	<p>extension of the tunnel under the Shipka pass project</p> <p>€ 47 519 466,00</p>
	<p>6-th District</p> <p>Rehabilitation of a central city area with a concentration of cultural heritage - Group monument of culture</p> <p>€ 1 700 000,00</p>	<p>The pedestrian bridge</p> <p>Construction of a bridge over the Yantra River for pedestrian and bicycle traffic in the area of sports hall "Orlovets"</p> <p>€ 715 808,63</p>	<p>Eastern street and tunnel</p> <p>Construction of Eastern street and tunnel forming a strategically important communications link serving the eastern part of the city.</p> <p>€ 713 732,79</p>
	<p>Tourist infrastructure</p> <p>Development of cultural-historical tourist product and the related infrastructure. The project includes rehabilitation of some of the most attractive and popular National Cultural heritage sites - architectural and ethnographic museum "Etara", architectural and historical reserve "Bojenci", the Dechkov house, establishment of interactive museum of</p>		<p>Crossroad near "Shivarov" bridge</p> <p>Reconstruction and reorganization of a crucial crossroad distributing essential traffic in other strategic directions. The project also includes improvement of the adjacent areas and solving environmental problems related to the Yantra River</p> <p>€ 600 000,00</p>

	industry. € 3 177 228,81		
	Creative approach Creating multimedia centres and workshops for youth activities and creative industries. € 899 873,71		

2.5 Have the public finance authorities (city, region, State) already voted on or made financial commitments? If not, when will they do so?

The City Council Gabrovo has supported this application. When the Foundation Gabrovo 2019 will be established a **special fund will be launched**, which will be used for financially supporting the initiative by the municipal budget.

Financial commitments by the state will be confirmed after the pre-selection state and will be reflected in the forthcoming national budget.

2.6 What is the plan for involving sponsors in the event?

The philosophy of the project implies **the involvement of both private and public sector** in supporting the event.

Involving the society in all its forms has a **financial aspect**, but is also a **question of commitment to the cause**.

Gabrovo 2019 application is being **very well accepted by local businesses**, which is a key prerequisite for its future financial stability.

The present project will **encompass the financial possibilities** of the following financial sources:

- Membership tax of the key participants
- Private donations from individuals and business
- Grant financing
- Income from ECoC activities
- Development of creative industries
- Souvenir industries and ownership rights
- Advertisement and lease

- Coproduction
- Merchandise
- Sponsorship
- Public donation fund

The sponsors involving process will be an **inseparable part of the Communication strategy** of the project.

2.7 According to what timetable should the income be received by the city and/or the body responsible for preparing and implementing the ECoC project if the city receives the title of European Capital of Culture? (please fill in the tables below)
(The answer to this question is optional at the pre-selection stage).



a) Income to be used to cover operating expenses

Source of income	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	total
EU	193 936	252 960	358 360	1 096 160	5 185 680	8 389 840	2 223 064	17 700 000
National government	54 740	71 400	101 150	309 400	1 463 700	2 368 100	631 510	5 000 000
City	65 688	85 680	121 380	371 280	1 756 440	2 841 720	757 812	6 000 000
Region	8 740	11 400	16 150	49 400	233 700	378 100	102 510	800 000
Sponsors	69 000	90 000	127 500	390 000	1 845 000	2 985 000	793 500	6 300 000
other	67 896	88 560	125 460	383 760	1 815 480	2 937 240	781 604	6 200 000
total	460 000	600 000	850 000	2 600 000	12 300 000	19 900 000	5 290 000	42 000 000

b) Income to be used to cover capital expenditure

Source of income	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	ECOC year 2019	2020
EU	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
National government	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
City	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Region	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Sponsors	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

2.8. Which amount of the usual overall annual budget does the city intend to spend for culture after the ECoC year (in euros and in % of the overall annual budget)?

Presently Municipality of Gabrovo allocates an average of **10 % of its annual budget** for culture, i.e. 1.5 mln. EUR.

Municipality of Gabrovo will **gradually increase the budget share for culture** through the increase of incomes of the operating cultural institutions, tourism and newly introduced attractions. Based on our projections and preliminary estimations, in 2020 the increase of the relative share of culture in the municipal budget will be 3.3%.

For the period 2014 – 2019 the share of the budget that comes from the Municipality for financing the ECoC event equals to 6 mln. EUR, which represents 16.81% of the total budget for the event.

During the application preparation Municipality of Gabrovo will encourage the public-private partnership approach as well as all means for a **more sustainable cash flow management**.

The ECoC application will **further intensify** the developmental processes of the creative industries for a considerable added value.

Municipality of Gabrovo will continue to allocate budget for culture in order to keep up with the **ambitious goals that we have set to ourselves**.



IV. CITY INFRASTRUCTURE

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

Because of its strategic location and proximity to the geographical centre of the country, the city of Gabrovo is a **major transportation hub with national and international importance**.

Gabrovo Municipality has a **well-developed technical infrastructure** in terms of road transport and railway transport.

Its favourable geographical location makes it possible for Gabrovo to provide **fast connection to airports, river ports and seaports**. Convenient roads connect Gabrovo Municipality to the surrounding municipalities and towns in northern and southern Bulgaria.

471, 2 km of roads have been constructed on the territory of the municipality, 170, 2 km of which are part of the national road network and 301 km are municipal roads.

Gabrovo is an **intersection point of two of the national arterial thoroughfares**, which are of great significance to the European road network, i.e. road E-85 as part of the trans-European transport corridor № 9 (Helsinki - St. Petersburg - Kiev - Bucharest - Ruse - Veliko Tarnovo - Gabrovo - Dimitrograd with deviations to Greece and Turkey) and Hemus Motorway Sofia – Varna.

The road E 85 project – construction of a toll tunnel on ‘Shipka’ road - is a project of national significance.

The European railway line CE 95 passes through Dryanovo and Tryavna. There is a deviation from Tsareva Livada to Gabrovo.

Distance to the airports in Bulgaria:

Gorna Oryahovitsa – 60 km;

Sofia – 220 km;

Varna – 274 km;

Bourgas – 234 km;

Plovdiv – 150 km;

The municipality has a small airfield in the village of Mezhdene which has concrete covering and allows gear landing. At this stage, the airfield is not included in the official aviation network of the country.

The nearest river port of Svishtov is 130 km. away.

The nearest seaport of Bourgas is 234 km. away.

Distance to important destinations in Bulgaria:

Sofia- 220 km.

Bourgas- 241 km.

Varna- 279 km.

Rousse- 152 km.

Gorna Oriahovitsa Airport - 60 km.

'Kapitan Andreevo' Check Point, Turkish border - 219 km.

'Kulata' Check Point, Greek border - 404 km.

'Kalotina' Check Point, Yugoslav border - 278 km.

By a decision of the Council of Ministers, the major project "**Gabrovo Ring Road - Phase I**" and a **tunnel under Shipka pass** is included in the Operational Programme "Transport" as a priority project with national importance. The Western Ring Road of Gabrovo will be implemented within the current programming period and the tunnel under Shipka (as more complex and capital intensive facility) remains for the next programming period 2014-2020. Funding for the ring road now is provided and there is an application form for the tunnel co-financing under the Operational Programme "Transport".

At EU level the construction of this road will lead to optimizing the relationship between the Baltic and the Mediterranean and the Baltic and Black Sea. At national level it will lead to a full geographical unity of the country. And locally it will solve the serious problem of Gabrovo associated with car traffic that passes through the central part of the city that due to geographic features of the terrain creates difficulties.

2. What is the city's absorption capacity in terms of tourist accommodation?

Currently in the municipality of Gabrovo there are **97 categorized accommodation** facilities (including hotels, guest houses, and rooms for rent, chalets, holiday homes and bungalows).

In 2012 on the territory of the municipality there are **83,620 registered overnight stays**, of which 74,282 (88.83%) are by Bulgarians and 9,338 (11.17%) by foreigners. The total number of overnight stays in 2012 increased by **14.95%** compared to 2011. This trend is due to the great interest in Gabrovo as a green destination with excellent opportunities for vacation in the mountains, eco-tourism, combining authentic atmosphere of the Bulgarian National Revival with the capabilities of Gabrovo city as a modern urban culture. The vision for development of tourism in the municipality of Gabrovo is based precisely on this synthesis between nature and culture.

In the last years there has been **growth of individual tourists**, i.e. - unorganized groups, families with children and friends. Most of them choose the comfort and hospitality of a country house or a family hotel in the outskirts of Gabrovo and to visit cultural sites in Gabrovo region.

A growth was observed in the **visits of cultural institutions and landmarks** of Gabrovo. This is a positive finding against the economic negatives and subsequent outflows in the tourism industry worldwide.

In 2012 the total number of visitors of cultural institutions in the municipality of Gabrovo is **273,609 people**, of which 246,981 (90.27%) are Bulgarians, and 26,628 (9.73%) are foreigners. The data show an increase in visits by **9,009 people, or 3.4%**, compared to the previous 2011. Cultural institutions with the largest share with a number of tourist visits are Ethnographic Open – Air Museum Etar, House of Humour and Satire and Architectural and Historic Reserve Bozhentsi. The total share of them three institutes is 73.73%.

EU-funded projects are an important part of the strategy of Gabrovo in tourism:

Project BG161PO001-3.1.03-0028 “Integrated project for the development of cultural and historical tourism product and related infrastructure”, funded by Operational Programme “Regional Development” 2007-2013;

Project BG161PO001-3.2.02-0037 “Support for the development of a regional integrated tourism product in the municipalities of Gabrovo, Tryavna, Sevlievo”, funded by Operational Programme “Regional Development” 2007-2013;

Project BG161PO001-1.1.10-0026 “Gabrovo - industry for new urban culture”, funded by Operational Programme “Regional Development” 2007-2013.

Expectations: In the following years in Gabrovo is expected a **growth of the tourist number**, built new hotels and increasing the bed base in the hotels. It would be implemented a better marketing of destination which includes event marketing and confirms Gabrovo as a good direction for eco, cultural, event, sports, adventure and congress tourism.

3. What projects are to be carried out between now and the year for which the city is applying for the title of European Capital of Culture in terms of urban and tourism infrastructure, including renovation?

What is the planned timetable for this work?

(The answer to this question is optional at the pre-selection stage).

For the period 2014 – 2019 the following main projects will be carried out, in terms of urban and tourism infrastructure, including renovation:

new cultural infrastructure or upgrading existing facilities (including museums, galleries, theatres, concert halls, arts centres, etc.)	urban renovation (renovation of squares, gardens, streets, public space development, etc.)	infrastructure (investment in technical infrastructure)
Culture Buildings 2016 –2018 Rehabilitation of a key cultural infrastructure sites in Gabrovo - House of Culture, Open Air Theatre, Centre for Informal Education "Radeon Umnikov", Centre for contemporary art "Cristo", House of Humor and Satire, Drama Theatre	City parks 2014 – 2017 Rehabilitation and renovation of green areas for wide public use - Park “Markoteya” and Park "Bazhdar".	Tunnel under “Shipka” pass 2014 - 2016 Construction of a tunnel under the Shipka peak. The project aims to reduce the traffic outside the city areas and to provide a faster link between northern and southern Bulgaria

<p>Gabrovo Sports</p> <p>2014 – 2019</p> <p>Construction and reconstruction of a sports infrastructure sites - "Aprilov" Stadium, Sports Hall "Orlovets" and training complex, sports centre "Hristo Botev" - "Hristo Botev" stadium and adjacent sports facilities, water park "Markoteya" - swimming pool, Extreme Park "Dyado Dyanko".</p>	<p>Urban revitalisation</p> <p>2014 – 2020</p> <p>Construction, reconstruction and rehabilitation of streets, parking lots, bicycle lanes and sidewalks, reconstruction of the city squares, rehabilitation of a city green areas and public residential areas, reconstruction of a market places.</p>	<p>Western ring road of Gabrovo</p> <p>2013 - 2015</p> <p>The project is an extension of the tunnel under the Shipka pass project</p>
<p>6-th District</p> <p>2018 – 2020</p> <p>Rehabilitation of a central city area with a concentration of cultural heritage - Group monument of culture</p>	<p>The pedestrian bridge</p> <p>2014 – 2015</p> <p>Construction of a bridge over the Yantra River for pedestrian and bicycle traffic in the area of sports hall "Orlovets"</p>	<p>Eastern street and tunnel</p> <p>2015 – 2016</p> <p>Construction of Eastern street and tunnel forming a strategically important communications link serving the eastern part of the city</p>
<p>Tourist infrastructure</p> <p>The city treasures</p> <p>2019 – 2020</p> <p>Development of cultural-historical tourist product and the related infrastructure. The project includes rehabilitation of some of the most attractive and popular National Cultural heritage sites - architectural and ethnographic museum "Etar", architectural and historical reserve "Bojenci", the Dechkov house, establishment of interactive museum of industry.</p>		<p>Crossroad near "Shivarov" bridge</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Reconstruction and reorganization of a crucial crossroad distributing essential traffic in other strategic directions. The project also includes improvement of the adjacent areas and solving environmental problems related to the Yantra River</p>

<p>Creative approach</p> <p>2018 – 2020</p> <p>Creating multimedia centres and workshops for youth activities and creative industries.</p>		
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V. COMMUNICATION STRATEGY:

1. What is the city's intended communication strategy for the European Capital of Culture event?

(This question must be answered in greater detail at the final selection stage, in particular with regard to the media strategy and the mobilisation of the public and the inhabitants. At the final selection stage, consideration must be given in particular to the partnerships planned or established with the written press and the audiovisual sector with a view to ensuring media coverage of the event and the plans relating to this strategy).

One of the key elements is **Communication through Participation**.

Starting on a local level, already the preparation process for the EcoC 2019 application has created a new approach defined by **dialogue and involvement**.

The invitation to share ideas and wishes, like the children did with their texts and drawings for the school project 'Gabrovo of my Dreams', launched especially for the application campaign, as well as the invitation to be an active part in specific projects **will link people personally to the event**.

They become **multiplying distributors of the event** and of its participatory approach, as described by the ripple effect: each person involved can be compared to an item thrown into the water, creating widening circles of waves, spreading the news and the message.

Messengers (like 'ambassadors') - Gabrovians living and working in other places or abroad will spread the vision of Gabrovo EcoC 2019 and create further personal contacts.

The local media will be active partners in the process. The local newspaper „100 News“, small, but widely read especially by the middle-aged and the older generation, is not only supportive, but actively interested in promoting specific projects.

The radio station shall be partner in media programs. With interviews it has already spread interest and information during the application process.

Being a city without a local TV program, Gabrovo will **set up a web TV**, which will also be part of the media project aimed especially at young people.

'Balancing' – Campaign: Using the internet, we invite people to come up with their own associations to 'Balancing' and send photos or short videos showing their interpretation either in a serious or humorous way.

Local, national, international

The intensity of advertising, public relation and communication will follow a **clear time schedule**. During the preparation process the activity will gradually build up, intensifying in the year before the event. In the year of Cultural Capital there will be very specific campaigning added, which will be even more contents-linked than until then.

The communication strategy is an **instrument of creating contents, meaning, action** itself, **not a mere distributing tool**.

Journalist, national and international, as well as travel writers will be specifically addressed

and at some point also be invited and introduced to Gabrovo.

The message, vision, contents and program will be distributed in general as well as with specific focal topics and targeted information via the electronic media: websites, Facebook, e-mail outs, and Radio & TV.

Tourist information

Appearances, display and networking at national and international fairs is important. Travel Agencies shall be briefed especially and equipped with tourism material.

Strategic Posters (Hotspots, cultural institutions & meeting places, community centres, travel ports / airports, train-& bus stations; hotels, restaurants, cafés; shops; pedestrian zones, schools, etc.)

Cultural Institutes & Embassies are natural targets of international campaigning and could be asked to host performances and **showings connected to the Cultural Capital**.

Contacts:

Twinning Cities will be at the same time targets and operators of information.

The Business Sector can make use of its connections as well as addressing business partners.

Likewise is the Technical University a portal to its international partner institutes.

Participants in cooperation and productions are messengers by their direct involvement, when they share their experience either back home or travelling on.

Communication is Contents Sharing.

2. How does the city plan to ensure the visibility of the European Union, which is awarding the title?

Visibility is more than just a matter of displaying the EU-logo in all the classical places like letterheads, information and campaigning material, websites, programmes, posters, banners, stickers. It is more than the omnipresence of the wreath of stars set amidst the all-encompassing blue sky like background in all possible media and places, beautiful and inspiring as it may be. It is self-understood that all this will be done **according to the regulations and guidelines** in all phases of the project and the event.

But besides ensuring the visibility of the European Union in these usual ways we see it as essential for our understanding of European Capital of Culture to **shed a thematic limelight** on aspects of shared history, concepts and ideas as well as questions and problems of this our union.

Therefore Europe and the European Union will be topic and matter of specific projects carried through during the year of the event as well as during the preparation process, creating a **presence and awareness of the European Union** beyond the usual economic and everyday political connotations.

This awareness of being connected through shared values and the permanent process of negotiating and defining them, as well as through shared problems and the urgency to look together for solutions in a search open to all, made us choose the title **BALANCING**

EUROPE as a **visible sign of this necessary union for a stable future**.

Visibility is, via the common roots of the words, **related to vision**: we would like to make the European Union **clearly visible via the shared visions and ideas** of the people participating as artists, audiences and citizens in the projects for European Capital of Culture, promoting and proving this union and its spirit through their collaboration and engagement.

VI. EVALUATION AND MONITORING OF THE EVENT:

Does the city intend to set up a special monitoring and evaluation system:

- for the impact of the programme and its knock-on effects?

Monitoring and evaluation is the **assessment of the project implementation** in relation to:

- general concept logic;
- project relevance;
- agreed schedules;
- use of inputs and resources;
- milestones and challenges;
- overall effectiveness of implementation.

The monitoring and evaluation process will be very important tool **adopted by the Foundation Gabrovo 2019**, as it provides the **continuous feedback on implementation** (both expected and unexpected) in relation to grant concept.

This project envisions that a **whole monitoring and evaluation system** will be elaborated especially for the ECoC event by the **Department of management and marketing at the Technical University of Gabrovo**. In its capacity of a member of the Steering Committee, the Technical University will provide a highly – professional academic and practical expertise in order to develop and integrate this assessment within the overall project implementation.

The monitoring and evaluation system to be elaborated will encompass **all tools and techniques of assessment** - the different types of assessment, participants in this process, the documentation that needs to be drafted, etc.

The evaluation and monitoring system **will be elaborated in 2014 at the latest** in case Gabrovo application is successful, so it will operate in place with start of project implementation.

Although the monitoring and evaluation system will be addressed in details on a later stage, in general the Managing Director and his/her team **will undertake monitoring and evaluation** during implementation as a review of progress, a prognosis of a project's likely effects, and as a way to identify necessary adjustments in implementation.

During the project implementation the executive team will manage the implementation process, as the Steering committee will observe the outputs of the monitoring and evaluation process. For that reason the managing Director and his/her team will be responsible for the preparation of **regular interim reports**, which would be **presented to the Steering**

Committee.

The implementation of the event will be a subject to **both intermediate and final monitoring and evaluation**. Intermediate assessment will be applied in the course of implementation, as the final assessment will take place at the end of the event and some years after the conclusion of the programme.

- for financial management?

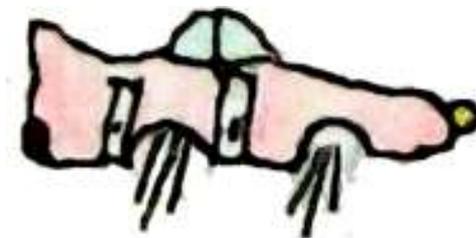
The financial management of the programme will be responsibility of the executive committee of the management structure Foundation Gabrovo 2019.

The Financial Manager and his/her team will be responsible for the **adequacy of the financial management system** in order to ensure that:

- financial management complies with the framework of the programme;
- expenditures made are accurate, allowable, supported by source documentation and properly allocated;

The Steering Committee on its behalf will provide advice and recommend additional activities and processes that could help improve the quality, effectiveness and efficiency of the financial management.

Here again the monitoring and evaluation procedures as far as financial management is concerned will be elaborated in details by the Technical University.



VII. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

1. What, in your opinion, are the strong points of the city's application and the parameters of its success as European Capital of Culture and what, on the other hand, are its weak points?

A main asset is the **existence of the Cultural Strategy** of the Municipality of Gabrovo which lists specific instruments and projects for the development of the cultural life. These projects will be carried through in any case, though maybe in a slower pace and step by step enlarging without the boost of becoming European Capital of Culture.

It is the **commitment of the authorities** to use these cultural means to realize the vision of Gabrovo as an open and lively place for learning, experiencing and fulfilling one's potential, and by ensuring this vision of an active city offer the base for a healthy and satisfying life and work balance for all its citizens.

This goal is not only backed by the political and public institutions, but supported by the **strong conviction of the citizens** themselves who are craving for new chances and willing to participate in their creation.

In the same way the **clear support by the business operators and companies in the town** and the neighbouring area is an important asset and will be a guarantee for cooperation on all levels and the sustainability of the developments.

The feeling of necessity combined with the **freshly awakening spirit of engagement**, ingenuity and togetherness, as it has been in the high time of bloom in Gabrovo's past, this feeling of revival triggered by the very idea of becoming Capital of Culture is definitely one of the strong elements and will be carried on.

One of the weak points of this application is an **infrastructure that needs to be more developed**, as it is the case in the tourism sector with its lack of sufficient and adequate accommodation. The Municipality has already started to tackle this problem via development plans and will intensify the cooperation with private businesses and entrepreneurs.

The **lack of funds** does not come as a surprise in a country that struggles to leave its position as economic tail-light behind. But need is the mother of inventiveness, and we are using the challenge of the application to develop a net of alternative financing models, besides implementing, via sound management and budgeting, the classical tools of financing.

A probably overcautious and time-consuming thorough weighing of arguments for and against the participation made us embark the application process comparatively late. Certainly a weakness which we had to compensate **through intensity and the combined energy** of all those who really were convinced of the idea once it was decided that we have reasons enough to trust in our capacities.

Exactly these weak points are some of the problems we have to tackle with this application: by developing the municipality's infrastructure, by creating possibilities for new financial and economic resources, and by building up our self-esteem and positive pro-active thinking we will create some of the basic prerequisites for the development of the area and its people.

2. Does the city intend to develop particular cultural projects in the coming years, irrespective of the outcome of its application for the title of European Capital of Culture? Please comment.

True to the city's self-set task of generating a renaissance-process it **will develop and enhance specific cultural projects** independent of the result of its application for the title of EcoC.

As mentioned in I.6 & 14 as well as in IV.3, the Municipality of Gabrovo has devised a **Culture Strategy** which was unanimously accepted and confirmed by the City Council. Gabrovo 2019 is one of the strategic instruments of this strong commitment to urban development. The Cultural Strategy 2014 – 2024 precedes as well as exceeds the timeframe of EcoC 2019.

It is accompanied by the **Integrated Development Plan 2014 - 2020** containing amongst other goals the recovery and development of urban environment, public infrastructure and human resource in respect to cultural institutions and projects as well.

Both of these tools will be applied in a **mixed strategy** of establishing on one hand new structures and projects, while on the other hand renovating, adjusting and further developing existing structures.

Both documents give examples of the variety of projected activities, incorporates the classical, but necessary renovation aspect of cultural buildings, naming **key objects of cultural importance designated for reconstruction and recovery**, such as the House of Culture, the Open Air Theatre, the Drama Theatre, the House of Humour and Satire.

Further planned investments in **local community centres** and educational institutions via the development of **multimedia centres** and the implementation of the concept of '**environment as the third teacher**' in schoolyards are an essential part of the city's approach to facilitate creative activities in a broader sense with regard to their social and educational aspects.

The project '**Town treasures**' will create a network of culture routes and thematic eco-paths, together with a landmark information system and a lightening concept for culture heritage sites.

Amongst the tools that are marked as priority instruments for cultural development are the following:

The creation of the **Christo Contemporary Arts Centre**. This institution is a major project of the city's culture strategy as it will be a focal point of presenting and developing national and international contemporary art work as well as facilitating a lively exchange between artists and citizens.

The **International Design Academy**, the first centre for innovative education in this field/branch in Bulgaria and as such of more than regional interest for students at the moment going abroad, is planned to be established in a revitalized and refurbished now abandoned building. It will harbour different departments of design, partly also branches in connection with local industries.

The **Design Centre** is planned to be established in a revitalized building. It will consist of a workshop for design experiments, a multifunctional hall for presentations and lectures, an exhibition hall, a library and a café. It shall establish a sustainable relationship with the industry also via developing projects specified by the industry. The centre will have an interactive programme dedicated to children which, amongst robotics, urban environment and ecology, shall also be related to contemporary design relevant to the region.

A **system for communicating cultural events and projects** will be developed in order to create an innovative and complex outside advertising infrastructure which ensures an effective information between producers/presenters and audience.

The **regulation of competitions for architecture and urban environment** will establish a platform for a democratic and transparent process of design and construction of publicly significant objects and efficient solutions of urban problems and tasks as well as communicating these investment initiatives to the citizens.

The **development of guidelines for a reform of public culture institutions and administration** shall motivate the institutions to search cooperation with international organizations and institutions and to find extra financial sources in addition to public funding.

Training programmes for cultural managers offering summer-courses, postgraduate qualification, and scholarships for in this field prestigious universities (bound to a timeframe of conditional work on the territory).

3. Please add below any further comments which you deem necessary on the subject of this application.

It is always with words far too bare that one can **thank all the participants in shaping the process of a teamwork** like this application, may they be institutions, networks, school classes, students, individuals, all, who let themselves get involved, also by sharing their critical opinion, in the development of the ideas and visions for Gabrovo 2019.

We want to express **the promise and commitment to go on with this process together** no matter what the outcome of this our application will be, out of necessity and conviction.

The principles and aims of our Candidacy for European Capital of Culture **are not locally rooted alone**. They are valid for **the whole of Europe** and the entity defined as European Union.

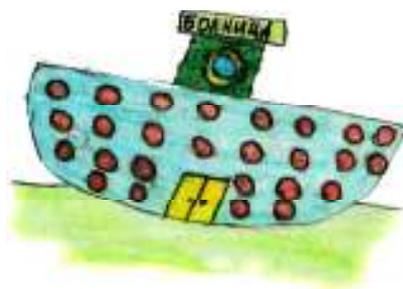
We **share with all the people of Europe** an intense feeling of insecurity and social stress. We share with all the people of Europe a craving for change and new chances!

We have to invent and achieve concrete ways of balancing the striking inequalities threatening with their consequences the ideal and reality of a common liveable Europe!

We have, through creative and joined thinking and acting, to balance our hope and fears!

For addressing our future we need the courageous and persistent balancing of our living conditions and our lives!

Balancing is a creative process.





5 968 children from all schools in Gabrovo took part in the preparation of this application.

Their ideas of a better world were put together in “Gabrovo in my dreams” campaign.

Due to the limited size of the application form we used only a very small part of their drawings to present to you visionary Gabrovo.

The team of Gabrovo 2019 hopes that we gave our best to deserve the support of our little citizens and believe this project makes a dream come true.

Dreams too are a question of balancing.