

THE ART EXPLORA – ACADÉMIE DES BEAUX-ARTS EUROPEAN AWARD

Championing innovation in cultural engagement

2026 AWARD RULES

Art Explora shares arts and culture with everyone - locally, nationally and internationally - inspiring new encounters between arts and audiences. We work in partnership with artists, cultural organisations and communities, exploring all art forms, and creating unforgettable cultural experiences.

The last few years have seen significant changes in the cultural and creative industries. This is due not only to the outbreak of COVID-19 and the rapid conversion to digital technologies, but also to the powerful impact of international social movements and significant funding cuts. Arts and cultural organisations are questioning their role within our societies, seeking new ways of engaging with audiences, and responding to the challenges of our times.

Open to all non-profit European cultural organisations, the European Award encourages new forms of audience engagement and participation in arts and culture, supporting innovative projects, across all art forms, that can be shared, replicated and scaled across Europe. Working against all social, economic and geographic barriers, the Award encourages access to arts and culture for everyone, and champions new dialogues between arts and audiences.

The European Award offers a publication which highlights the best practices imagined across Europe, from our Award laureates to our 20 shortlisted projects. It also summarises the workshops and round-table discussions hosted during our professional networking event, *Arts & Audiences*, which provides a chance to share, celebrate and discuss new methods of connecting with audiences.

Our beliefs

- We believe in stimulating new forms of audience engagement and participation, increasing access to the arts, and supporting projects that will create a meaningful legacy across Europe.
- Innovation comes from all sectors and art forms. We encourage cultural projects that can be shared, replicated and scaled across Europe.
- We believe collaboration is the key to success, and we encourage partnerships within and beyond the cultural and artistic sector.
- To ensure that support is tailored to the scales of different cultural organisations, regardless of their sector or location, Awards are based on the organisations' annual expenditure.

The Award is organised by Art Explora, a foundation located at 9 Place de la Madeleine, Paris (75008), France, in partnership with the Académie des beaux-arts.

Article 1 : The Objective and Scope of the European Award

1. : The Awards

The total amount of the European Award is €180,000, divided into 5 Awards that will support the most innovative practices.

Applicants are invited to apply to one of these 3 categories based on the organisation's annual expenditure in the 2025 financial year:

- Category 1 Award of €30,000 (for cultural organisations with up to €200,000 annual expenditure);
- Category 2 Award of €40,000 (for cultural organisations from €200,000 to €1 million annual expenditure);
- Category 3 Award of €50,000 (for cultural organisations with over €1 million annual expenditure).

By submitting their application, candidates automatically become eligible for the Special Jury Award and the Audience Choice Award, each worth €30,000.

2. : Application dates

The application must be completed online, via the website www.artexplora.org, from **Monday 16th March until Friday 26th June 2026, at 11:59p.m (CET)**.

Article 2 : Application to the European Award

1. : Eligibility criteria

Applicants must be registered as non-profit cultural institutions or organisations, from the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Northern Macedonia, Kosovo, Montenegro and Serbia) and Ukraine.

Only one application is allowed per cultural organisation.

Applicants can submit:

- a new project proposal
- an existing project with a new innovative dimension

The objective is to encourage innovation and experimentation to develop, diversify and encourage audience participation within the arts and cultural sector.

Applicants must submit an estimated project budget where the Award income depending on their category (€30,000, €40,000 or €50,000) is **no more than 80% of the presented budget**.

2.2 : Application file

➤ **Applications must be submitted in French or English**

- The project manager's contact details.
- Details of the cultural organisation: organisation type, organisation description, legal entity, number of people working on the project.
- A complete document presenting the project (max. 5 pages) for which the application is made specifying:
 - Project objectives and summary
 - Priority Target audience
 - Project partners
 - How the project can be replicated or scaled
 - Timeline and delivery schedule
- Photos and videos of the project (if available), which can be used for communications (free of rights), with the associated credits directly in the document caption.
- Total estimated budget for the project – itemised: the budget must be presented in the form of a table, to help the jury understand the nature and amount of various expenses, and the different sources of funding expected, **including, potentially, the Art Explora Award** allocated to your category (Refer to the budget template).

➤ **Optional elements**

Additional and optional items may be added to the application: photos, videos, a press review, letters, etc. For these additional items, French and English is not compulsory but preferred.

Any incomplete application that does not meet the eligibility criteria and conditions or is sent after **26th June 2026** cannot be accepted.

No participation fee is charged.

Article 3 : Assessment of the Application File

3.1 : Selection criteria

The jury will pay particular attention to the following criteria:

- **Innovation & engagement:** ability to demonstrate innovative audience engagement, participation and access to arts and culture. We are looking for projects with clear plans for lasting impact and legacy. Innovation is assessed according to what exists in the the project's home country and in comparison to other existing European initiatives.
- **Partnership:** ability to collaborate or develop partnerships within and beyond the cultural and artistic sector, for example education, health, etc.
- **Replicability:** ability of the project to be shared, replicated and scaled across Europe. A clear methodology may be proposed in the application as a model that may inspire other organisations.
- **Impact & reach:** ability to assess the project's impact based on the quality of audience engagement, the number of participants involved, and its effectiveness in reaching underserved communities.

3.2 : Shortlist

Once applications are closed, a shortlist of 20 projects will be made by the Art Explora team, with the help of a group of Art Explora volunteers recruited especially for this task. These 20 projects will then be sent to the jury.

3.3 : Final jury

The jury consists of 9 members: 4 academics appointed by the Académie des beaux-arts, 4 experts appointed by Art Explora and the chairman of the jury, Frédéric Jousset.

The jury will decide the Awards winners.

The jury reserves the right to select a project from the shortlist. The Jury's Special Award is granted to a project that the jury agrees unanimously has left a strong impression and holds great future potential.

Article 4 : Selection and Award Procedures

The Jury will appoint a winner in each of the 3 categories and one for the Jury Special Award. The overall grant of €150,000, allocated according to category, will be distributed as follows:

- Category 1 (cultural organisations with up to €200,000 annual expenditure) : €30,000
- Category 2 (cultural organisations from €200,000 to €1 million annual expenditure) : €40,000
- Category 3 (cultural organisations with over €1 million annual expenditure) : €50,000
- Special Jury Award : €30,000

The Jury's decision is final.

The Award must fund the establishment of a new project or the expansion of an existing one with a new dimension. It can cover capital or operating expenses.

Following the Award ceremony, a subsidy agreement will be established between the winner, Art Explora and the Académie des beaux-arts. The winners will provide information on the project's progress and will send a final evaluation report to Art Explora.

The shortlisted applicants will be revealed in October. The 5 winners will be publicly announced at an Award Ceremony planned for **late November 2026**.

The amount of the Award will be paid in euros. Conversion into any other currency remains the responsibility of the winner, as are the costs of this conversion.

Article 5 : The Audience Choice Award

An Audience Choice Award of €30,000 will be granted to one of the 20 shortlisted applicants.

The public will be asked to vote for their preferred project, online via the Art Explora website. Each person can vote three times: one vote for each of the three categories.

Votes will be open from **2nd October to 12th October 2026 at 11.59pm**. The timestamp of your vote will be recorded through the server of the website: www.artexplora.org.

If the project receiving the most public votes also wins in Category 1, 2, or 3 as determined by the jury, the Audience Choice Award will instead be given to the runner-up. The exact number of votes received by the winner and other applicants will not be disclosed to the public.

The Audience Choice Award should allow the winner to launch their project or to develop a new dimension of their existing project. A subsidy agreement will be established between the winner of the Audience Choice Award, Art Explora and the Académie des beaux-arts.

Detailed voting procedures and those applicable to if a tie between several applicants occurs will be described in an amendment to these regulations and published on the Art Explora website when voting opens.

Article 6 : Communication

By participating in the Award, each of the applicants authorises Art Explora and the Académie des beaux-arts to use the elements of their application (except for budgetary and financial data or items explicitly mentioned as confidential) in its communication on the Art Explora - Académie des beaux-arts European Award.

Art Explora reserves the right to communicate the list of applicant cultural organisations or to give a few examples, beyond the 20 shortlisted applicants.

Art Explora will present the 20 shortlisted applications on its website as soon as the shortlist is announced, to give them visibility and promote an exchange of best practice. This will consist of a short presentation text of the cultural organisation and its project as well as one or more visuals, with the credits provided by the cultural organisation at the time of their application.

An annual publication presenting the major trends and best practices on audience engagement, participation and access to arts and culture will also be created and widely available via the Art Explora website at the launch of the European Award 2026. It will consist of presentation texts and illustrative visuals, with the credits provided by the cultural organisations at the time of their application.

Art Explora may need to request more visuals and illustrations to complete the web presentation of the 20 shortlisted applicants and the drafting of the publication. By applying, each cultural organisation thereby agrees to permit access to image resources (photographs, videos, etc.) that are necessary to showcase the projects.

It is understood that the visuals, illustrations, images and films may possibly be cropped and edited differently from the initial shot. Art Explora and the Académie des beaux-arts refrain from using images or films that could infringe on the privacy or reputation of the persons photographed or filmed. This also covers any harmful context.

Consequently, and in accordance with the provisions relating to image and name rights, the institutions applying for the Art Explora - Académie des beaux-arts European Award authorise Art Explora and the Académie des beaux-arts to fix, reproduce and communicate to the public the visuals, illustrations, images and films provided at the time of their application, unless otherwise stated in writing. The use of these elements is intended for video production and distribution, and dissemination of content via social media, website or publication. The authorisation is valid for the legal term of literary and artistic protection and for as many publications as are necessary for their use or for the use of audio-visual work in which the elements provided may be incorporated.

This permits dissemination of materials globally.

The winners are invited to communicate on the European Award 2026. These elements will be the subject of a specific article in the subsidy agreement to be signed between the Award-winners, Art Explora and the Académie des beaux-arts.

Article 7 : Modification or Cancellation of the European Award

The organisers cannot be held responsible if the Award must be cancelled due to unforeseen circumstances.

Article 8 : Applicable Legislation

These rules are subject to French law. These terms and conditions are written in French and English, but only the French version will prevail in the event of a dispute.

Article 9 : Acceptance of these Rules

Any application on the Art Explora website implies tacit acceptance of these rules. These rules have been filed with SCP VENEZIA & Associés, Judicial Enforcement Officers in Neuilly-sur-Seine, France (92200) and will be available on our website during the whole duration of the Award.

For further information, please email:

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