



EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION
LANDSCAPE AWARD OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

7th Session – 2020-2021

APPLICATION FORM

Presentation

The European Landscape Convention aims to promote the protection, management and planning of landscapes and to bring together European co-operation in this field. It is the first international treaty exclusively devoted to all dimensions of European landscape. Taking into account the landscape, natural and cultural values of the territory, it contributes to promoting the quality of life and well-being of Europeans.

The Resolution on the Rules governing the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 20 February 2008 at the 1018th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, draws attention to the fact that Article 11 of the Convention institutes the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe and that it is in keeping with the work carried out by the Council of Europe concerning human rights, democracy and sustainable development. It effectively promotes the territorial dimension of human rights and democracy by acknowledging the importance of measures taken to improve the landscape for people's living conditions.

Opened to the Parties to the Convention, the Award is intended to raise civil society's awareness of the value of landscapes, of their role and of changes to them. Its objective is to reward exemplary practical initiatives aimed at successful landscape quality objectives on the territories of the Parties to the Convention. The Award is conferred every two years and the files presenting applications must reach the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe.

At its meeting held in Strasbourg on 28-29 April 2008, the Steering Committee for Cultural Heritage and Landscape (CDPATEP) decided that applications should be submitted to the Council of Europe Secretariat through the Permanent Representations of the Parties to the Convention.

*We would be very grateful if you could send no later than **30 January 2021** the following elements of the candidature file (20 pages maximum) established for your country on the basis of the proposals forwarded to you by the Ministries:*

- by E-mail, the Application form completed to: maguelonne.dejeant-pons@coe.int; susan.moller@coe.int;*
- by post, a copy of the Application form completed together with a CD-Rom, DVD or USB key, containing the all the additional material to: Maguelonne Déjeant-Pons, Executive Secretary of the European Landscape Convention, Council of Europe, Agora (A4-15V), F- 67075 STRASBOURG Cedex.*

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Please note that:

- participation to the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe is only open to local and regional authorities and their groupings and non-governmental organisations, as stated in the Resolution CM/Res (2008)3, Appendix, Article 2;*
- the application form must be completed in all its parts, in one of the two official languages of the Council of Europe (English or French);*
- the materials submitted must be copyright-free, for use by the Council of Europe in communications aimed at promoting the Award or any other publications or activities relating to the Convention. The Council of Europe undertakes to cite the authors' names;*
- files that are incomplete or fail to comply with the rules will not be taken into consideration.*

*For further information please visit the Landscape Award section of the Council of Europe website: www.coe.int/EuropeanLandscapeConvention
www.coe.int/en/web/landscape/landscape-award*

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I. STATE CONCERNED AND APPLICANT

1. State

Slovak Republic

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2. Applicant

*Name of the local,
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kRAJ Civic Association (NGO)

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II. PRESENTATION OF THE PROJET

3. Name of the Project

The Land of Bees / Včelí kRAJ

4. Location of the Project

Slovak Republic, Banská Bystrica Self-governing, Poltár District, The village of Kokava nad Rimavicou

5. Summary of the Project (10-12 lines)

The Land of Bees is a project focused on education in the field of beekeeping, which is one of the EU's priority topics. NGO built a unique education centre and operates educational apiaries for the general lay and professional public. It organizes experiential programs for all types of schools, day camps and other activities during which it systematically raises awareness of the importance of bees and natural pollinators for the environment. It implements beekeeping courses for beginners and free courses for the long-term unemployed, to whom it also provides material aid. It helps graduates of the courses with the sale of bee products. Engaged in social entrepreneurship as well, it founded a wax processing workshop and a carpentry workshop for the production of hives. It also engages people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds and educates people from marginalized groups (people with mild mental and physical disabilities, the long-term unemployed, the Roma) to process bee products. It educates the professional public in various forms, develops cooperation in the region, and supports community life. By expanding bee families in the landscape and gardens favourable to pollinators, it contributes to increasing the landscape biodiversity.

6. Photo representing the Project (high definition – JPEG 350 dpi) and name of the author of the photo please



Photo: The kRAJ CA archives

7. Website of the Project (if exists)

<https://kraj.sk>

III. CONTENT OF THE PROJECT

8. **Start of the Project** month year
The project must have been completed at least three years previously

9. **Partners**
- | |
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| Malohont Local Action Group
Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region
The village of Kokava nad Rimavicou
The village of Utekáč
The Social Services Home Slatinka in Lučenec
BiBy Oslo Norway |
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10. **Financing bodies**
- | |
|--|
| Active Citizen Fund EEA Grants
Foundations (Tatra Bank, Ekopolis, Tesco)
Malohont Local Action Group (grant)
Two percent of the assigned tax
Own activity - education
Donor schemes for individual donors |
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11. Central aims of the Project

The main goal of the project was to build a sustainable landscape by protecting pollinators and ensuring pollination by bees as well as natural pollinators and to set up prime examples for European countries in tackling the extinction of pollinators in the natural landscape.

The KRAJ NGO is focused on the emergent pan-European topic of landscape management through beekeeping and pollination, education on the importance of bees and pollinators, and increasing the landscape biodiversity. NGO by its activities presents the sustainable way of beekeeping, educates the lay and professional public about the importance of bees for both man, and the landscape. Operating a unique educational centre in Kokava nad Rimavicou, it also implements its program throughout the whole of Slovakia.

It is not only dealing with the acute problem associated with the environmental issue of pollinator decline in the environment but also develops the economic and social area in the region.

The NGO has been established in 2007 and started operating in Poltár district in 2013, at a time when there was a 25.6% unemployment rate. This is one of the districts with the permanent lowest number of jobs offers in the whole of Slovakia. The main reason for this situation is the disappearance of more than 200-year-old tradition of glass production in this region, which has made it famous in the past. In the past, job opportunities were provided by several glass factories, which gradually disappeared after 1989 (1998, 2003, 2008, 2011). From this point of view, the return to traditional beekeeping in this region is extremely important.

As part of social entrepreneurship, NGO involves people from the region in the processing of bee products and the production of hives, helps skilled beekeepers with the sale of their products, and at the same time, trains and materially supports the long-term unemployed in their beekeeping beginnings or bee product processing. It also cooperates with local farmers in the management of the traditional landscape.

The project thus solves not only the Slovak but also the global problem with the death of pollinators, such as bees, solitary bees, bumblebees, butterflies, etc.

The partial goals of the project can be defined as follows:

- to systematically address the matters of beekeeping and education in this region and thus build on the 65-year-old tradition of beekeeping in the family of the founder of NGO, and at the same time, on the long-term experience with environmental education,
- to build an education centre and to establish an educational apiary as an exemplary and replicable apiary model that is open all season and intended for the general public,
- to implement courses for beginners and thus develop the tradition of beekeeping. The aim is to educate future beekeepers from all over Slovakia. The graduate should be a responsible beekeeper, being aware of the risk of bee diseases, using ecological approaches friendly to the environment and having a sensitive approach to it,
- to implement free year-round training beekeeping courses for the unemployed and give them the opportunity to obtain a new way of subsistence in a region with a bad economic situation, to provide beginning beekeepers with the most necessary material help,
- to help the graduates of free courses with the sale of bee products,
- to systematically raise awareness about the importance of bees and natural pollinators for the environment and for the general public, to actively engage the general public in helping pollinators,
- to promote beekeeping among the local population,
- to implement the experience program "A Beekeeper for a day" in the educational apiaries, which is intended not only for schools in the region in the form of day camps but also for all those interested in beekeeping, whether from Slovakia or abroad. The participant becomes a beekeeper for at least one day,
- to implement experiential and research education about butterflies, bumblebees and solitary bees,
- to create a program for schools on the importance of traditional rural management in a sustainable way, to establish and run a beekeeping club in a primary school,
- to create a workshop for the processing of wax, intermediate goods for beekeepers (hive foundations), the production of candles and decorations, and to have social entrepreneurship in this area,
- to establish a carpentry workshop for the production of hives and beekeeping equipment, and to have social entrepreneurship in this area,
- to involve and train people from marginalized groups (people with mild mental and physical disabilities, the long-term unemployed, the Roma, etc.) to work with bee products, also in the cooperation with social services homes,
- to develop cooperation with the self-government, schools, professional public, social services homes and other partners,
- to support networking, partnership building, exchange of experience and information as well as sharing good practice on the subjects of bees and beekeeping,

- to involve companies on a volunteer basis and to help build green policy for companies,
- to educate the professional public, to have professional discussions and dialogue between different stakeholders,
- to spread awareness through the issue of publications, organizing professional events, participation and lectures at professional events,
- to become an example of good practice and motivate other organizations in social entrepreneurship, regional development, activities beneficial to the landscape,
- to support community life in the region.

12. Outcome

The project outputs can be defined as follows:

- 1. Establishment of two educational apiaries** (Kokava nad Rimavicou, Lučenec), which create the background for educational activities for all age groups. They offer the concept of an open apiary, where it is possible to hold workshops during the season. Part of the apiary also serves as a community apiary and provides space for people who do not have land and have nowhere to place their bee colonies. In addition to the programs for general public, the apiary also has programs for beginner, advanced and professional beekeepers with a focus on examples of ecological practice in beekeeping. Apiaries are used for awareness and education for visitors from all over Slovakia, but more and more often also from other European countries. We also implement the program in English language, or with the possibility of translation into Hungarian language.
- 2. Activities in the field of environmental education about the importance of pollinators for the environment:**
 - more than 6,000 pupils of all school levels completed the experiential education program. There, they learned about the importance of bees and pollinators in an experiential and exploratory way directly on open hive. For many pupils, it is their first contact with bees, so the project becomes for some time a program for overcoming the fear of the unknown. Its participants often become friends of bees and pollinators thanks to this experience. The program is attended by pupils and students of all levels of schools, from kindergartens to universities. Most often it is visited by the primary schools.
 - the implemented “Beekeeper for a day” program was attended by 2,500 people who got to know the work of the beekeeper closer and learned how the world of insects, our lives, and the sustainability of the landscape are connected. The program introduced the visitor to other important pollinators as well, such as solitary bees, bumblebees and butterflies.
 - the implementation of the beekeeping club for the pupils of primary school since 2013, which is focused on long-term and systemic education of pupils – future beekeepers,
 - the implementation of the “Beekeeping Sunday” event,
 - active involvement of the general public in helping pollinators (creation of insect hotels for beneficial insects and hives for bumblebees).

3. The Implementation of beekeeping courses:

- 32 people from marginalized groups or the long-term unemployed have graduated from a free year-round training beekeeping course. After completing the course, the graduates received a hive with a bee colony and basic beekeeping equipment with a free rental for 5 years, support from a lecturer, medicines and marketing support. The only condition for free rental is the continuation of beekeeping and the preservation of ecological principles. After five years, the hive and the beekeeping tools become the property of the new beekeeper.
- 630 graduates have completed beekeeping courses. Emphasis is placed in particular on making good and responsible beekeepers out of the beginners with an emphasis on organic farming, respect for land limits, and traditional farming. The area of invasive plants is also an important topic since beekeepers are often the spreaders of melliferous but expansively proliferating plants.
The project enabled course graduates to acquire a new skill, giving them the opportunity to gain a new source of financial income.

4. Active creation of conditions for improving the position of pollinators

Increasing the number of new apiaries in the region. The surrounding area improved the pollination activity and increased biodiversity on 26,394 hectares.

5. The Implementation of the "Fair Honey" project (Férový med):

The kRAJ NGO helps to sell the products of graduates of free beekeeping courses and beekeepers from the region. The sale of honey and other products from beekeeping is based on sale at fair prices, both for sellers and for the customer. To provide this aid, honey producers must commit to a sustainable method of beekeeping. Honey is sold under the regional brand Gemer-Malohont. The product label contains information about the beekeeper and his/her personal story.

6. Outputs in the field of social entrepreneurship with respect to the environment:

- establishment of two workplaces: carpentry and wax processing workshop.
The carpentry workplace produces top-bar hives, which enable cheap and less time-consuming beekeeping, which gives people with lower incomes the opportunity to start the profession. The workshop also produces wooden products, enabling the breeding of bumblebees and solitary bees by creating suitable conditions for their nests.
The wax workplace processes beeswax and produces candles and decorations. It offers beekeepers a custom manufacture of pure wax foundations. NGO employs three people in the wax processing workshop. For the production of candles, hand-cut utility glass made in defunct local glass factories is also used as a symbolic reminder of the region's fame.
- 50 people from marginalized groups (people with mild mental and physical disabilities, the long-term unemployed, the Roma) were trained to process the bee products. They learned how to produce hand rolled and poured wax candles and ornaments, natural medicines (balms, creams) from bee products during the course.

7. Publishing and educational professional activity - publications, conference

- the organization of the VĚELY.ČO conference, which introduced the participants to the topic of ecological treatment of bee colonies and alternative approaches to conventional beekeeping,
- the issue of 6 publications on the importance of bees and pollinators with original

texts, publication in English in cooperation with ByBi organization from Oslo on how can bees and pollinators be a way of education and social entrepreneurship,

- the modification of educational materials into the form of methodological sheets so that they are easily distributable to other organizations and interested people. In them, bees are presented as an important link between human life and the landscape,
- lectures and presentations at various professional events,
- helping to build green policy for companies.

8. Networking and development of cooperation in the region

An important aspect of the activities of the kRAJ NGO is its contribution to the development of cooperation in the region, both institutional and communal. Cooperation with local farmers in the management of the traditional landscape is important.

The activity of NGO has brought an important source of information, contacts and assistance to the area, thus contributing to the development of this rural region.

Together with public institutions, NGO implements awareness-raising events in the region and actively engages the public in helping pollinators. In providing the activity of the beekeeping workplace and the production of bee products, it cooperates with the Social Services Homes. It cooperates with local farmers in land management.

The NGO attracts more and more visitors and those interested in their work. This shows a secondary effect of its work, which is beneficial to other local residents and businesses providing accommodation, catering services or the sale of regional products.

Corporate volunteering is also important, as public events are attended by employees of various companies, and NGO also assists in building green policy for companies.

In cooperation with the Granvia company, they implemented a program to support bees and natural pollinators on a section of the R1 expressway near Nitra city.

IV. RESPECT OF THE CRITERIA OF THE ATTRIBUTION OF THE AWARD

13. Sustainable territorial development

Is the project part of a sustainable development policy?

Does it contribute to the enhancement of environmental, social, economic, cultural or aesthetic values of the landscape? How?

Has it successfully countered or posed a remedy to any pre-existing environmental damage or urban blight? How?

The project addresses the environmentally important topic of pollinator preservation, which is closely linked to the environmental sustainability of the landscape and human life in it.

The project is directly based on the concept of sustainable territorial development and strives for the sustainability of the territory by developing and maintaining pollination services and biodiversity of pollinators.

The implementation of the project increased the quality of the landscape. The project is based on the sustainable use of the landscape, maintaining the harmony of man and landscape, and preserving cultural traditions.

Proof of this approach is the preservation of the landscape characteristic features, functionality, and increasing the prosperity of the landscape.

Improving the environmental values of the landscape

Education and awareness about the environmental problem of pollinator loss is the basis of the project, which is an emerging problem not only in Europe but throughout the world.

The Včelí kRaj project increases the attention of the general lay and professional public on the given topic. It teaches people of all ages how relationships in the landscape are interconnected, how important bees are to the global ecosystem, the food chain, agricultural production, and how the extinction of pollinators can have far-reaching consequences for humans and their environment. The education of new beekeepers emphasizes the ecological approach to beekeeping and landscape management.

The project increases the biodiversity of the landscape through the traditional way of farming, maintaining flowering meadows, diverse plant communities and creating suitable conditions for pollinators.

In addition to education, NGO also actively creates conditions for improving the position of pollinators. It helps to build small (i.e., less than 10 bee colonies in the locality) and ecological apiaries in localities where there is a shortage of beekeepers and bee colonies. At the same time, however, it also creates conditions for natural pollinators, such as solitary bees, bumblebees and butterflies.

The NGO's vision of European beekeeping is in small local family beekeeping farms, whose advantage is less pressure on diseases, parasites, which causes (brings) less pressure on native pollinators.

Improving the social values of the landscape

One of the important features of the project is its social and human aspect.

The project connects the landscape and the people in it and brings many benefits to society in various ways, participates in the preservation and promotion of beekeeping, supports the biodiversity of the landscape, develops social economy, cooperation in the region, by engaging the general public it develops community life and deepens the identity of man and landscape.

From a social standpoint, the project also addresses groups from socially disadvantaged backgrounds. NGO provided free year-round training beekeeping courses for the long-term unemployed and marginalized groups. It not only provided them with knowledge and skills but also provided material help in the form of a beehive with bee colony and beekeeping equipment. It helped them gain a new source of financial income.

The NGO has established 2 workplaces and focuses on marginalized groups (people with mild mental and physical disabilities, the long-term unemployed, the Roma). This effort has led to economic sustainability, with graduates trained to sell their bee products, which is a significant financial aid to their family budget.

Beekeeping in Slovakia is very conservative and recently it was mainly the domain of older men. NGO has brought a new perspective on beekeeping as a job or a hobby and mobilized new groups of people for this activity that were not typical for the industry. Women were also enthusiastic about beekeeping; they taught the Roma and people with mild mental and physical disabilities how to process bee products.

Economic values

Beekeeping and pollinator care significantly increase the economic value of the landscape. Beekeeping significantly increases the harvest of agricultural crops, at the same time increases the biodiversity of the landscape and brings profits from sustainable tourism.

The project helps to keep a person in the landscape and to create conditions for their dignified life.

The economic aspect of the project lies in different levels:

- the construction of apiaries improves the pollination service in the landscape, which increases agricultural production,
- it educates new beekeepers to whom it brings a new way of subsistence
- it brings job offers, since the project creates green jobs in one of the poorest regions in Slovakia,
- it contributes to the development of rural sustainable tourism. Visitors of various activities, carried out by NGO, bring economic benefit to other subjects operating in the region (accommodation and catering services, sale of regional products, etc.), which has a positive effect on the development of agrotourism,
- the project supports and enhances the ecosystem services.

Cultural values

Beekeeping belongs to the traditional cultural landscape of Slovakia, as well as the whole of Europe.

In recent years, there has been a significant decline in beekeeping at the national level, but also significantly at the regional level, and a decrease in the number of beekeepers and bee colonies. The cause is economic demands, the outflow of young people from the countryside to cities and abroad, but also bee diseases and parasites. The Malohont and Gemer region has been affected by a plague of bee brood in the past, leading to a reduction in the number of bee colonies and beekeepers.

The project activities significantly contribute to the preservation and promotion of beekeeping as a traditional way of subsistence in Slovakia, by establishing new apiaries, training beekeepers, and creating favourable conditions for the development of other related activities.

The project contributes to the preservation of the cultural tradition of the beekeeping craft.

The NGO carried out a number of events intended for the general lay and professional public.

Aesthetic values

The project clearly contributes to the preservation of landscape values, characteristic features of the landscape, and at the same time the functionality of the landscape.

Beekeeping in the landscape is one of the characteristic features of it. It also brings certain genius loci to the landscape, especially in rural areas. The view of the apiary is very idyllic and brings harmony to the landscape.

The small apiaries, built by NGO, fulfil this very premise of traditional land management and preserving the authenticity of the environment. The constant land management by humans maintains the diversity of the landscape, its value and eliminates undesirable processes (succession, desolation, degradation).

14. Exemplary value

*Can the project be considered of exemplary value? Why?
Which are the good practices that it implemented?*

The project is exemplary in several aspects:

- in terms of complexity and systematic approach to the topic of bees and beekeeping. The project focuses not only on beekeeping, but also on training new beekeepers, environmental education at all levels of schools, raising awareness of the general public about bees and their importance, social entrepreneurship in bee and related products, maintaining the traditional way of subsistence in the landscape, and maintaining cooperation of the main project partners,
- the project is an example of an approach to land usage and its resources based on ecological principles,
- in terms of human and social aspect since it deals with marginalized groups.

Včelí kRaj is the first educational apiary in Slovakia open to the general public. It is a new, exemplary and replicable model of the open apiary for the general public. It is dedicated not only to professionals but also to the lay public. The apiary is open all season. The main advantage is the experiential education and getting to know the world of bees.

Based on the model of the educational apiary, other similar projects are being created. The social entrepreneurship program has also become an inspiration for other organizations even in other fields where this NGO project is given as a model. Programs created for schools, the public and future beekeepers have been also implemented in other parts of Slovakia.

By issuing publications, they spread their know-how for schools, enviro centres, social companies and other beekeeping organizations.

15. Public participation

Does the project actively encourage the public's participation in the decision-making process? How?

Is the project in line with the wider policies implemented by national, regional or local authorities?

Public involvement

By operating in a region where very few non-governmental organisations work, the NGO Včelí kRAJ fills in the space for involving people in civic activities.

The public is involved in the project in various forms. NGO mainly uses volunteering as a way of spreading information about the importance of bees for the landscape.

The main way of involving the public is the education of new beekeepers, thanks to whom it was possible to actively increase pollination activity in various parts of Slovakia. So far, a total of more than 660 applicants have completed beekeeping courses.

The NGO carried out a number of educational and training activities intended for pupils and students of all levels of schools and the general lay public. More than 6,000 pupils and 2,500 participants from the general public have taken part in them.

It actively involves the public in helping pollinators in the form of the production of insect hotels for beneficial insects or hives for bumblebees.

It also involves private companies in corporate volunteering, helping to build green policies

for companies.

The corporate volunteering also brought good experience when employees of DM drugstore, Tatra Bank and the Pontis Foundation took part in public events.

Compliance with concepts

The need to protect pollinators and ensure pollination by bees and natural pollinators is grounded in strategies and concepts at all levels.

The project is in accordance with national, regional and local policies. The project Včelí kRaj is part of the document Sectorial Concept of Environmental Education, Training and Awareness until 2025. NGO activity is in line with and supports the programs: Agenda 21, National Strategy for Biodiversity Protection until 2020, as well as documents at the regional and local level: Economic and Social Development Plan of the Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region, Economic and Social Development Plan of the municipality of Kokava nad Rimavicou, etc.

16. Awareness-raising

Is the project effectively increasing public awareness of the importance of landscape in terms of human development, consolidation of European identity, or individual and collective well-being? How?

Through its various activities, the project raises the awareness of the general public about the environment, its values and the importance of the environment in terms of human development. This concerns not only raising awareness of the importance of bees and beekeeping for the landscape but also provides new information and insights into the perception of consistency in the landscape, the interconnectedness of elements and functional relationships in the landscape, the need for a sensitive and ecological approach to the landscape to increase its prosperity, the necessity of sustainable farming in the landscape.

The project directly points to the irreplaceable importance of bees and natural pollinators in the functioning of relations in the environment. It transmits the current issue of pollinator extinction to all age groups in an acceptable form. It draws attention to the fragile relations in the environment and makes suggestions on how each individual can actively help to make a positive difference. The goal which the organization pursues in its activities is, in particular, to contribute to increasing the number of natural pollinators in the environment.

NGO operates in a region where civic engagement has been low for a long time and thus fills in an otherwise empty space with its activities. As a regional actor, the organization is actively involved in national activities for civil society. It operates in a region with a significant share of the Roma minority. It has become an important task to combine practically comprehensible and useful activities (beekeeping) with the broader mission of breaking down prejudices and strengthening the position of the Roma in the region where the economic situation is difficult in terms of employment opportunities and living standards. Their model social workshop is often given as an example to other emerging similar initiatives in this area.

The implementation of the project is beneficial for the public good. It maintains the tradition of beekeeping in the landscape, maintains the biodiversity of the landscape, brings benefit to the people of the region, deepens the identity of man and landscape.

V. ADDITIONAL MATERIAL

Together with the printed version of the Application form, additional material in digital format should be included in one CD-Rom, DVD or USB key, and returned by post or courier to:

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- Text (20 pages max.): *PDF format*
- Photos (10 max.): *JPEG 350 dpi high definition*
- Posters (2 max.): *PDF format high definition or JPEG 350 dpi high definition*
- Video (15 min max.): *mpeg 2 format - It is recommended to present a video (even of amateur quality).*

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