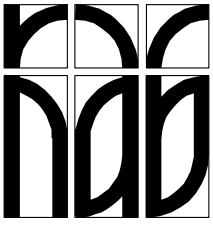
OPEN COMPETITION FOR A CONCEPTUAL ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

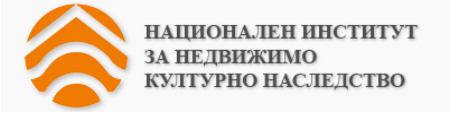
LIMINAL TRIMONTIUM

ON THE THRESHOLD BETWEEN TWO ERAS

COMPETITION RULES

The present brief, competition rules and analysis have been coordinated with the Municipality of Plovdiv, the Chamber of Architects in Bulgaria, the Union of Architects in Bulgaria, the National Institute of Immovable Cultural Heritage, the Regional Archaeological Museum Plovdiv, ViK Plovdiv, EVN, and other operators of the technical infrastructure.





REGULATIONS

1. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

1.1 TYPE OF COMPETITION

The competition is an open, international, single-stage, anonymous architectural competition for a conceptual design.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The competition is conducted pursuant to the Public Procurement Act (PPA), in compliance with the principles of publicity, transparency, free competition, equal treatment and anonymity, with competition rules aligned with the professional standards and recommendations of the Chamber of Architects in Bulgaria (CAB). Given that the site falls within the boundaries of the historic zone "Philippopolis – Trimontium – Plovdiv", which forms part of a group immovable cultural heritage asset of national significance, all project proposals must comply with the heritage protection regime under the Cultural Heritage Act (CHA).

Implementation of the project is subject to mandatory coordination with the competent authorities under the Cultural Heritage Act (CHA), including the National Institute of Immovable Cultural Heritage (NIICH).

Submission of competition entries is carried out through the Centralised Automated Information System "Electronic Public Procurement" (CAIS EPP).

1.2 LANGUAGE

The official languages of the competition are Bulgarian and English.

1.3 ELIGIBILITY

Foreign and multidisciplinary design teams comprising architects, engineers and landscape architects are eligible to participate. The team must include at least one architect holding full design qualification within the meaning of the Spatial Planning Act (SPA), or an equivalent qualification under the legislation of the country in which the participant is established.

The investment project shall be prepared by designers under Art. 230, para. 1 of the Spatial Planning Act, who meet the requirements of Art. 164, hold rights in accordance with their acquired qualification under the Act on the Chambers of Architects, and at least one of whom is entered in the public register of the Ministry of Culture under Art. 165 of the Cultural Heritage Act.

The following are not eligible to participate:

persons who have been directly or indirectly involved in the preparation of the competition documentation, as well as their related persons within the meaning of § 2, item 45 of the Supplementary Provisions of the Public Procurement Act;

- members of the jury and reserve members;
- persons related to the contracting authority, the jury members or the reserve members within the meaning of § 2, item 45 of the Supplementary Provisions of the Public Procurement Act;
- persons who are in a conflict of interest with the contracting authority within the meaning of Art. 54, para. 1, item 7 and Art. 56 of the PPA.
- Each participant may submit only one project proposal. Variants are not permitted.

1.4 PRIZES

- 1st Prize: €15,000 (fifteen thousand euros), with a provided option for subsequent assignment of the preparation of a technical and working investment project through a negotiated procedure without prior publication under Art. 79, para. 1, item 13 of the Public Procurement Act, subject to applicable Bulgarian legislation and the availability of secured funding.
- 2nd Prize: €8,000 (eight thousand euros).
- 3rd Prize: €5,000 (five thousand euros).
- Two commendation prizes at the jury's discretion of €1,000 (one thousand euros) each.

1.5 ANONYMITY

The competition is conducted with mandatory observance of participant anonymity until the jury has fully completed its work and the final ranking of competition entries has been announced.

The identity of participants who have submitted competition entries is not disclosed to the jury at any stage of the evaluation procedure.

After the deadline for submitting competition entries, the contracting authority designates officials who carry out preliminary actions to ensure and monitor the anonymity of the entries before they are submitted to the

jury.

The designated officials verify compliance with anonymity requirements. If violations are identified that lead to, or allow for, the identification of the author, the relevant competition entry is referred to the contracting authority, accompanied by a report on the identified non-conformities and a proposal for exclusion from the jury evaluation process, or for the participant's disqualification from the competition.

Each admitted competition entry is assigned a unique identification number, which is placed on all submitted competition materials. The designated officials compile a list of assigned numbers and their corresponding participants, which is placed in an opaque sealed envelope and kept until the jury makes its decision on the final ranking of competition entries.

Officials engaged in ensuring anonymity are obliged to keep confidential all circumstances that come to their knowledge in connection with the performance of their assigned duties, for which they sign written declarations.

The jury is provided only with competition entries identified by their unique identification number. Disqualification from the competition is permitted solely in the event of a breach of anonymity requirements. All admitted competition entries are presented to the jury and are subject to review and evaluation.

The use of logos, QR codes, PDF metadata and distinctive fonts is strictly prohibited.
Breach of anonymity results in automatic disqualification.

1.6 COPYRIGHT

The copyright in the conceptual competition project belongs to the author as a work created on commission within the meaning of Art. 42 of the Copyright and Related Rights Act.

The moral (inalienable) rights in the project remain entirely the property of the author. In every use of the project, regardless of its form and scope, the name of the author must be indicated.

By submitting the project, the participant grants the contracting authority a non-exclusive right to use the project for the purposes of public exhibitions; publications in print and electronic media; archiving; presentation and promotion of the competition; and publication on the official website of the competition or the contracting authority, with the author being credited in each use.

The use of the project for the development of subsequent design phases, its reworking, adaptation or implementation shall be carried out only on the basis of a separate contract concluded between the contracting authority and the author(s) of the project, or with the author's written consent in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright and Related Rights Act.

By submitting the application for participation and delivering the competition project, each participant declares that they accept these terms regarding copyright, and that the submitted project is an original work of authorship and does not infringe the rights of third parties.
The use of the project for the development of subsequent design phases shall be carried out on the basis of a separate contract.

1.7 SUBSEQUENT ASSIGNMENT

The contracting authority declares its intention to use the first-prize project as the basis for the next stage of design, under conditions established by a separate contract, in compliance with applicable legislation.

In the event that negotiations with the author of the first-prize project do not result in the conclusion of a contract due to objective reasons — including non-compliance with regulatory requirements, a significant discrepancy between the stated budgetary and economic parameters, or the inability to reach agreement on key contractual terms — the contracting authority has the right to invite the second-placed participant for negotiations, and if necessary, the third-placed participant.

2. PARTICIPATION DOCUMENTS

2.1 Application for Participation

The application for participation contains the identification details of the participant(s) in the competition, as well as information about the persons who prepared the competition proposal and their professional qualifications.
The application shall indicate the names of the authors of the conceptual design and their role within the team.

Participants declare that they have settled the copyright and related rights in the competition proposal in a manner that allows them to participate in the competition and, upon ranking, to conclude a contract for subsequent assignment. The competition proposal is submitted anonymously, under the conditions and in accordance with the procedure set out in the documentation.
Documents containing the identification details of participants are submitted separately from the competition proposal, in order to ensureanonymity.

2.2 European Single Procurement Document (ESPD)

The participant declares the absence of grounds for exclusion by submitting a European Single Procurement Document (ESPD).
Where the participant is a consortium that is not a legal entity, an ESPD shall be submitted by each member of the consortium.

Where the participant relies on the capacity of third parties, an ESPD shall also be submitted for those parties, in accordance with the requirements of the PPA.

Where the participation documents are submitted through an authorised representative, the ESPD shall include information on the scope of the representative's authority.

2.3 Documents for the formation of a consortium (if applicable)

In the event that the participant is a consortium that is not registered as an independent legal entity, a copy of the document establishing the consortium shall be attached to the application for participation.
The document shall contain at least:

- details of the members of the consortium;
- identification of the person/lead partner representing the consortium;
- the distribution of rights, obligations and responsibilities among the members of the consortium;
- assumption of joint and several liability in the event of an assignment.

2.4 Power of Attorney

In cases where the participant is represented by an authorised person, an explicit written power of attorney shall be submitted, certifying the scope of the representative's authority to participate in the competition and submit documents through the CAIS EPP.

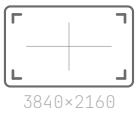
3. COMPETITION MATERIALS

To guarantee anonymity and equal treatment during evaluation, all projects must be submitted in digital format in accordance with the following requirements:

3.1 GRAPHIC PRESENTATION:

4 boards; format A1 – 594×841 mm; landscape orientation
File format: PDF; <20 MB per file; colour model RGB
(file names –***1.pdf; 2.pdf; 3.pdf; 4.pdf***)

Participants are free to use, at their own discretion, images, drawings, diagrams and schematics at an appropriate scale that best illustrate their concept.



3.2 KEY IMAGE

1 image in jpg/jpeg format at a resolution of 3840×2160 (4K); size <10 MB
(file names – ***press.jpg or press.jpeg***)

3.3 EXPLANATORY NOTES:

1 document; A4 – 210×297 mm; portrait orientation
Font: Arial, 12pt
File format: PDF; size <3 MB
(file names –***notes.pdf***)
Free text of up to 1,500 words, submitted as a separate document describing the conceptual design solution.

3.4 ECONOMIC JUSTIFICATION:

1 document; A4 – 210×297 mm; portrait orientation
Font: Arial, 12pt
File format: PDF; size <3 MB
(file names –***budget.xls***)
Participants are required to use the template provided in the competition documentation.

3.5 ANONYMITY

No markings or identifying information that could compromise anonymity shall be placed on the competition materials. See section 1.6 ANONYMITY.

3.6 SUBMISSION

Projects are submitted through the Centralised Automated Information System "Electronic Public Procurement" (CAIS EPP) in Bulgaria.

4. PROCEDURES

4.1 JURY

Projects are evaluated by an independent jury composed of an odd number of members, appointed by the contracting authority. The jury reviews and evaluates the projects under conditions of anonymity, ranks them in accordance with the pre-announced criteria and prepares a reasoned report for the contracting authority. On the basis of the report, the contracting authority issues a ranking decision.

The jury includes specialists with the required professional qualifications and experience in the fields of architecture, spatial planning, landscape architecture and engineering. At least one third of the members shall hold qualifications equivalent to those required of the participants.

The jury is independent and autonomous in its decision-making and in forming its assessments and opinions. No instructions, directives or influence on the jury in connection with the evaluation and ranking of competition projects shall be permitted.

Jury members sign declarations regarding:

- impartiality and independence;
- maintaining the confidentiality of information that came to their knowledge in connection with their participation in the jury proceedings;
- absence of any direct or indirect material interest in the ranking of a specific participant or project;
- absence of conflict of interest within the meaning of the PPA with respect to the participants in the competition.

The composition of the jury is determined by order of the contracting authority and is announced publicly through the CAIS EPP.

Within three days of the announcement of the jury's composition, any interested party may submit a reasoned objection against a nominated member or reserve member of the jury where circumstances giving rise to a conflict of interest exist. If the objection is found to be substantiated, the contracting authority may replace the relevant member or reserve member.

The jury is appointed by the contracting authority by order, which specifies the named composition of the jury and its chairperson; the timeframes for the jury's activities; and the location and conditions for storing the documentation related to the design competition until the jury completes its work.

The jury reviews and evaluates the submitted competition projects at closed sessions on the basis of the pre-announced evaluation criteria.

The jury sessions are held in a building designated by the contracting authority.

Minimum composition of the jury:

- Chairperson: Representative of the contracting authority
- Member: Representative of the Chamber of Architects in Bulgaria (CAB)
- Member: Representative of the Union of Architects in Bulgaria (UAB)
- Member: Architect with full design qualification, registered in the list under Art. 165 of the Cultural Heritage Act
- Member: Landscape Architect
- Member: Guest architect with experience in judging urban environment competitions
- Member: Representative of the Chamber of Engineers in Investment Design (CEID)

Two reserve members, of whom at least one must be an architect.

No instructions to the jury regarding the evaluation of competition projects shall be permitted. The jury's decisions regarding the assigned scores and ranking are independent and final.

4.2 EVALUATION CRITERIA

The jury will evaluate the projects on the basis of a comprehensive analysis, with priority given to the quality of the architectural environment and the approach to architectural heritage.

CRITERION	WEIGHT	DESCRIPTION
K1. Urban planning and architectural concept	**40 points**	■ the quality and clarity of the urban planning and spatial solution within the competition area; ■ the functional organisation and spatial solution of the Tourist Information Centre (TIC); ■ the architectural solution and aesthetics of the entrances, approaches and connections to the underpass and its adjacent spaces; ■ the degree of connectivity of the site with the surrounding urban fabric, pedestrian and public spaces, and its role as an element within the overall urban structure.
K2. Preservation and socialisation of cultural heritage	**30 points**	■ the manner of exhibition, interpretation and presentation of the archaeological structures; ■ the degree of integration and visual, functional and semantic connection with the archaeological ensemble of the Ancient Forum; ■ respect for the historical context, cultural layers and authenticity of the site; ■ the balance between contemporary architectural intervention and the existing cultural heritage.
K3. Landscape and urban design	**20 points**	■ the quality of the solutions for the urban environment, public spaces and pedestrian zones; ■ the landscape concept, including solutions for greenery and microclimate; ■ the application of principles of energy efficiency and sustainable development; ■ the choice and durability of materials, and their compatibility with the historical and urban context.
K4. Economic and technical feasibility	**10 points**	■ the realism and technical feasibility of the project proposal; ■ the sustainability of the solutions in an operational context, including maintenance and management; ■ the correspondence of the proposed budget framework with the scope and complexity of the project solution.

4.3 METHODOLOGY

Each jury member independently and individually evaluates each admitted competition project by awarding points according to the pre-announced criteria.

Evaluation is carried out by completing an assessment table for each project.

For each criterion, points are awarded in the range from 0 to the specified maximum number of points. A score of zero may be awarded.

The score for each criterion is calculated as the arithmetic mean of the individual scores awarded by jury members.

The composite score (CS) of each competition project is calculated as the sum of the scores across all criteria.

Ranking is carried out in descending order according to the composite score received.

When determining the number of points for each criterion, jury members apply the following indicative scale:

- 0–25% of the maximum – minimal compliance, substantial shortcomings;
- 26–50% – partial compliance with significant weaknesses;
- 51–75% – good compliance with minor shortcomings;
- 76–100% – high quality and full compliance with the requirements.

The scale serves to standardise expert judgment when determining the specific number of points within the maximum points for the relevant criterion.

Criterion K4 "Economic and technical feasibility" is assessed through expert judgment based on the soundness, realism and feasibility of the proposal, applying the following mathematical formula.

$$K4 = 10 \times (Pmax - P) / (Pmax - Pmin)$$

where:
P is the estimated value proposed in the competition project being evaluated;
Pmin is the lowest estimated value among all competition projects admitted for evaluation;
Pmax is the highest estimated value among all competition projects admitted for evaluation;

The value of the indicator is calculated to two decimal places.

The composite score (CS) of each competition project is calculated using the following formula:

CS = K1 + K2 + K3 + K4

The maximum possible number of points for the composite score is 100 and this figure cannot be exceeded.

The project receiving the highest composite score is ranked first. The remaining projects are ranked in descendingorder according to their composite scores.

The jury may propose that the first prize not be awarded when no competition project sufficiently meets the requirements of the competition.

The contracting authority has the right to terminate the competition and award no prizes when only one competition project has received a composite score exceeding 65 points, in accordance with the pre-announced criteria and evaluation methodology.

4.4 CONCLUSION OF THE PROCEDURE

4.4.1 RESULTS

Upon completion of its work, the jury prepares a reasoned report which, together with the complete competition documentation, is submitted to the contracting authority.

The report contains:

- the composition of the jury, including any changes that occurred during the course of its work;
- information on the number of competition projects submitted;
- the ranked competition projects;
- proposals for the award of prizes;
- proposals for disqualification or exclusion and the grounds therefor.

The report is signed by all jury members and submitted to the contracting authority together with the complete competition documentation, including all documents prepared during the jury's work — minutes, assessment tables, dissenting opinions and others.

Upon completion of the evaluation and under conditions of anonymity, the identification details of the participants corresponding to the ranked projects are disclosed.

The competition procedure concludes with a decision by the contracting authority on:
ranking of participants and award of prizes;
termination of the procedure.

The decision is issued and published through the CAIS EPP within the timeframes prescribed by the PPA.

4.4.2 TERMINATION OF THE PROCEDURE

The termination decision is published and communicated through the CAIS EPP.

The contracting authority terminates the competition procedure with a reasoned decision in the cases provided for in the Public Procurement Act, including when:

- no competition project has been submitted;
- none of the submitted competition projects meets the pre-announced conditions;
- substantial violations were committed when opening or conducting the competition, which cannot be remedied without changing the conditions under which the competition was announced;
- the need to conduct the competition has ceased due to a material change in circumstances, including where it is objectively impossible to secure funding for the execution of the contract for reasons that the contracting authority could not have foreseen.
- The contracting authority may terminate the procedure in other cases provided for in the Public Procurement Act.

5. SCHEDULE

- Announcement of the competition: 21 August 2026
- Deadline for submitting questions: 21 September 2026 at 17:00 (GMT+3)
- **DEADLINE**for submission of projects: 21 October 2026, 17:00 (GMT+3)

- Technical Commission review: 22 – 27 October 2026
- Entries made available to the jury: 28 October 2026
- Jury session (evaluation): 2 – 6 November 2026
- Official announcement of winners: 9 November 2026 (Monday)
- Exhibition of all projects and Public discussion with the finalists: 10 – 15 December 2026

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