

DECORATOR

Call for research and artistic residencies

The DECORATOR partnership is pleased to announce a call for Artistic Residencies to take place between October 2025 and January 2026 in different locations of the Danube Region, with a focus on Slovenia, Croatia, Austria and Germany.

The Danube Region constitutes a sensitive ecosystem with rivers, basins and snowless mountains providing the daunting imagery of a worsening climate crisis. Challenged by its landscape, the inhabitants of the Danube Region have developed a unique repertoire of knowledge, skills, competences, experiences and problem-solving strategies manifested in their architecture and other cultural artefacts/practices. Moreover, this landscape has been shaped by centuries of architectures and infrastructures that, as most of urbanised spaces in Europe and worldwide, have demonstrated to be often unsustainable, especially if we look at the last century of fast developments. The need to provide shelters to a growing population after the destruction of the Second World War and the migrations of people to urban areas caused by different pushes, had led to often inefficient and informal constructions that do not contextualise or contribute to a harmonious urban landscape.

DECORATOR Project

DECORATOR aspires to catalyse the circular transformation of the built environment in the Danube Region by conceiving the region as a real life-laboratory for inquiring into the transformational practices promoted by the project. It addresses circularity as a holistic challenge, encompassing the ecological as well the technical, socio-cultural and the economic domains. The project ties in with the New European Bauhaus initiative in that it pursues circularity and the transitioning towards a sustainable future as an aesthetic rather than exclusively technological project. It approaches advanced technologies as enablers to achieve the transformation of the sector.

The DECORATOR project involves 13 different partners from 6 different countries of the Danube Region, who are investigating the opportunities and challenges of the implementation of the circular economy principles in the construction sector by involving the artistic perspective, with the aim to boost the New European Bauhaus principles for a more inclusive, sustainable and beautiful built environment.

1. Research and artistic residencies themes

Looking at the main challenges of the Danube Regions in the DECORATOR perspective, such as the quality of the built environment, the loss of traditional knowledge, the migrations towards northern European Countries and towards cities, as well as the aging of the population and the need to provide better shelters and new living models, the artistic residence call is welcoming contribution by artists that tackle both the tangible transformations of the built environment, and the social and economic forms of co-inhabiting the space.

Considering the territorial extension of the DANUBE Region, as well as the need to focus on concrete actions, the DECORATOR partnerships has decided to focus their intervention on 4 main areas, located in Slovenia, Austria, Germany and Croatia, where the managing partners are located. The themes have been

Theme 1: Material, aesthetic and functional improvement of the UNG premises in Rožna Dolina, Nova Gorica.

The headquarters and first building of the University of Nova Gorica since its establishment in 1995 are a modernist eclectic building that was built in the late 70's as an office space. The building, which will also be the object of another activity of the DECORATOR project, is in need of interventions from several perspectives: both structural and material updates are expected, functional advancements are necessary as well, thus requiring ideas that range from facades and windows upscaling to adaptive functional reuse. In particular, UNG would like to transform this building into a new multifunctional artistic campus, open to the community, but able to host art students and researchers, provide workshop facilities and lecture rooms. The challenge invites artists, architects, and interdisciplinary creators to develop site-specific, research-based interventions that:

- Reimagine the University of Nova Gorica's first campus building as a living model of aesthetic, sustainable, and inclusive transformation, where architecture merges with artistic vision and ecological awareness.
- Explore and reinterpret the building's material, social, and symbolic layers, connecting its modernist heritage with contemporary needs through creative, interdisciplinary, and community-driven approaches.
- Propose modular and replicable façade and spatial solutions that embody New European Bauhaus values — beauty, sustainability, and participation — while engaging local communities, students, and researchers in co-creating new meanings and functions for the space.

The Artist Challenge is open to both emerging and established practitioners interested in **adaptive reuse, environmental design, and participatory art**, contributing to a broader European dialogue on how creative practice can transform and revitalize the built environment. In this respect, the “aesthetic and sustainable” (in the NEB - New European Bauhaus perspective) upgrade of the building and its surroundings will be considered a focus. UNG expects to receive ideas for modular solutions to especially enhance the facades of the building, looking at sustainable techniques, technologies and materials, as well as their replicability in a medium-large scale, to become a possible reference for the built environment transformation of the Danube and beyond.



Theme 2: The sustainable re-use of the Ebensee former Railway Station

Ebensee, once defined by its Saline (saltworks) as the industrial and social core of the community, underwent profound change when this historical nucleus was dismantled. What remains is a town without an “Ortskern”, a fragmented geography in which centrality, gathering, and belonging must be renegotiated. This absence resonates not only in the physical layout of the town but also in its collective memory, marked by traditions of labor, resilience, and cultural self-organization. In this perspective, the former railway station may play a role. Creative Region Linz and Upper Austria plans to invite artists and interdisciplinary creatives to engage with the question: “Where does the ‘heart’ of Ebensee beat today?”

The Landungsplatz, situated at the threshold between lake, mountains, and settlement, becomes a symbolic and literal landing point. Historically a site of arrival and departure, it embodies Ebensee’s in-between character: between industry and nature, past and future, periphery and imagined center.

The challenge invites artists from all disciplines to develop site-specific, cross-disciplinary interventions that:

- Question the idea of the town center in a community whose traditional heart has vanished.
- Reflect on the social fabric of Ebensee, from industrial heritage to grassroots cultural initiatives, including its active role in the European Capital of Culture Salzburg 2024.
- Propose new forms of arrival, gathering, and collective identity in a decentralized urban setting.

The Artist Challenge is open to both emerging and established artists who wish to contribute to a broader European discourse on small-town transformation, memory, and placemaking, while co-creating with the community of Ebensee a temporary heartbeat for a town in search of its center



Theme 3: The Students' Sawmill of the University Campus in Rosenheim

In the Rosenheim Technical University of Applied Sciences there is an iconic building, the sawmill, constructed by students in the 1970s as a self-made laboratory for their own learning and experimentation. Its modest structure, wooden floors, concrete walls, and a thin roof, though carrying the traces of collective use and decades of student projects. While a new laboratory will be built elsewhere, the sawmill will remain preserved as a site of past memories and future ideas. In the spirit of the New European Bauhaus, the building should be re-imagined as a participatory space where sustainability, aesthetics, and language itself become tools of construction.

The artistic residences should give the sawmill, seen as an aging student-built structure from the 1970s, a renewed voice and presence on campus. By engaging with its history, materiality, and participatory origins, the artistic outcome should highlight the building not as obsolete, but as a living resource for collective imagination. The work should show how sustainability and aesthetics can be understood through language and performance, positioning the sawmill as a site where the principles of the New European Bauhaus are made tangible. In fact, Bayern Innovativ GmbH and the Rosenheim Technical University of Applied Sciences expect the residence to be carried out by students and users of the sawmill.



Theme 4: Hack the Wall - Reimagining Boundaries of Living and Building

The Croatian part of the **Decorator Project** invites artists, architects, designers, makers, and interdisciplinary teams based in the Danube to re-imagine and “hack” a prefabricated wall system made of timber and compressed straw, treating it as an open element for experimentation with aesthetics, sustainability, and circularity. Collaboration with local partners, suppliers, and stakeholders engaged in the project’s activities is desirable. Participants are invited to rethink and redesign the wall element with attention to:

- **Aesthetic and experiential qualities** – how materiality can remain visible, beautiful, and desirable.
- **Sustainability and circularity** – full alignment with Cradle-to-Cradle principles, NEB values, and affordability/DIY potential.
- **Innovative adaptations** – inner and outer layers, finishes, joints, or material passports that enhance usability, disassembly, and reusability.
- **Hacking spirit** – imaginative transformations that challenge the “white box” of conventional building, highlighting tactility, atmosphere, and life in/with nature.

A selected team will receive a budget to develop up to two **portable prototypes** and a **video documenting the process**, working within *Cradle-to-Cradle* principles, *New European Bauhaus* values, and DIY affordability. Size and composition of application teams is open. At least one of the team members should be professional; students are welcome. Deliverables include prototypes, BOM, assembly manual, and disassembly study with all results shared under an open licence.

2. The partners involved who will commit the artistic residences

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOVA GORICA (UNG) is a research-oriented, internationally recognized institution committed to driving social development both regionally and beyond. Through its innovative teaching approaches in Slovene and English, UNG strives for teaching excellence across its modern study programs, ensuring high employability for both local and international students. UNG collaborates with numerous institutions worldwide, actively encouraging students to participate in international exchanges to gain valuable experience. The university also fosters multidisciplinary research and develops programs that strengthen industry-academia partnerships, aiming to contribute to a better society on both local and global scales. Moreover, the activity will be carried out with the support of the Technology Park of Ljubljana, that holds experience in networking technological partners, including those who may affect the residence in the building sector.

CREATIVE REGION LINZ & UPPER AUSTRIA is a joint initiative of the City of Linz and the Regional Government of Upper Austria, aiming to support the growth and success of the creative sector, being is a hub that bundles the power of creative industries in Upper Austria. It develops and implements support programmes based on ideas rising from the creative scene. Creative Region is closely linked in many ways to the "tobacco factory Linz", THE creative hotspot and home for talents as well as location for capacity building and entrepreneurship development. Open-minded thinkers can meet there, exchange information, get support, develop ideas and network, while Creative Region can take over the output of these processes in its programmes and carry it to other subregions of Upper Austria. With its support programmes, Creative Region is the one-stop-shop for the creative sector. Linz is part of the UNESCO City of Media Arts Network and former Cultural Capital of Europe.

BAYERN INNOVATIV GMBH is an organisation for the promotion of innovation and knowledge transfer. It fulfils the role of an intermediate between different stakeholders, connecting companies with universities and research institutes, organisations funded by the Federal State and many other technology and knowledge networks to form a strong think tank. Furthermore, Bayern Innovativ seeks to find and support innovations. In DECORATOR, Bayern Innovativ GmbH would like to emphasise the focus on NEB initiative, given it is part of the European Commission. Moreover, the Rosenheim Technical university of Applied Sciences will be a local supporting partner and will offer its premises as a pilot case for the residence, thus guaranteeing scientific assistance to the selected candidates.

CROATIAN WOOD CLUSTER

Croatian Wood Cluster, in short CWC, is an organization connecting companies and other entities involved in activities in the field of using forest resources, i.e., wood, to produce different wooden products, mostly related to the construction and furnishing sector (flooring, construction elements, doors, windows, furniture, etc.). Their mission is to create long-term sustainable business models for strengthening the competitiveness of the wood processing sector by encouraging activities in the field of research, development of technology, applying and commercialization of innovative solutions, and encouraging investments.

Being a member of the European Confederation of Woodworking Industries (CEI-Bois), CWC is already actively engaged in topics related to the smart use of wood within the construction sector via European initiatives such as wood4bauhaus and is one of the co-creators of the Wood Manifesto. Moreover, the residence will be carried out in coordination with the Croatian Chamber of Economy based in Zagreb, which will take its experience in connecting companies also in the building sector.

3. Schedule of Activities

The selected candidates for the **Artistic Residencies** will be required to be physically present in the area at least twice: first, at the beginning of the residency to introduce their conceptual idea and collaborate with local stakeholders, launching the residence in a so-called “Pitching Event”, and later, at the end, to present their final work. Time spent locally will be up to the artist necessities and based on the nature of the residency and the allocated budget. Along their residence, artists are requested to record or be available to be recorded in the main steps of their activities, this being a requirement of the DECORATOR project application form.

The expected schedule of activities will be as follows:

1. Selection of the artists, from 31 of October 2025 to 7 November 2025. In case of numerous applications, the selection may take some more days.
2. Online Pitch presentation by all artists, presenting their proposals and ideas, between 24 and 28 November 2025;
3. Visit of the locations by the artist by end November, early December 2025 for an on-site pitch event and interaction with local stakeholders;
4. Development of the artistic residency concept on-site or at home, depending on the budget allocated and agreement taken with the local DECORATOR partners, in cooperation with the local DECORATOR partners and in consultation with the DECORATOR partnership until early February 2026;
5. Conclusion of the artistic residence and presentation of the final work in mid-to-late February 2026

The final **outputs will** be featured in one report at the conclusion of the project. Therefore, active participation in the **video** and **editorial process** by selected candidates will be expected, particularly in **January and February 2026**.

Artistic works will remain in the area they were developed, as a concrete legacy of the DECORATOR project for the region. Local partners (and the contracting authorities) will be considered the custodians of the works.

4. Duties of the artist

Selected artists will be required to spend at least 10 days of their residence on site, to get familiar with the context and necessities of the DECORATOR partners and its stakeholders;

During their residency the artist will have to:

- Report their activities constantly, in collaboration with the local DECORATOR partners;
- Facilitate the video recording their activity and social interactions moments, by the local DECORATOR partner;
- Produce a prototype of their work, if a tangible one has been approved, in cooperation with local companies and stakeholders if necessary.

The production of the art work or installation may be carried out in cooperation with the DECORATOR local partner if so agreed.

5. Number of residencies and available funds

The DECORATOR project has allocated the following funds:

The amount of the residencies will range from 5.000 to 9.000 according to the proposals and locations. These amounts will be defined upon the selection of artists by the different contracting authorities and the four countries that will be hosting the residencies. A preliminary figure of the funds distribution has been made to give a general financial framework, as follows.

For the pilots in Slovenia and Austria, the funds are managed by the University of Nova Gorica who will act as contracting authority. Funds will be preferably divided into 3 artistic residencies of 5000 euros each, to be implemented in Slovenia (at least 1 residency), Austria (1 residency) and crossborder residency. Nevertheless, the allocated amounts and number of residencies will depend on the received proposals and preliminary conversations with the shortlisted or selected candidates (thus being potentially reduced to 2 or increased to more).

In Germany, the funds are managed by Bayern Innovativ GmbH who will act as contracting authority. Funds will be allocated to one or two artistic residences, according to the proposals received.

In Croatia the funds are managed by the Croatian Wood Cluster who will act as contracting authority. Funds will be allocated to one or more artistic residences, according to the proposals received.

According to the amounts allocated and the agreements taken by artists with the contracting authorities, the artistic work will have to be guaranteed in its entirety and completeness by the artists themselves.

The selected candidates are expected to accomplish and present their work by mid-February 2026.

6. Selection Criteria

The call for applications is open to **highly motivated candidates** who have completed their studies in **art, culture, heritage studies, architecture and planning**, or any other **comparable discipline**, or those who have gained experiences in applied arts but coming from other fields (i.e. engineering, crafts, etc.) are encouraged to apply. Ideal candidates should have a distinct interest in **pursuing advanced art- and design-led research** while adhering to the **highest standards of visual representation in research or artistic investigation**, with a focus on producing **meaningful, representable, and publishable outcomes**.

Basic prerequisites:

- Given the cross-border nature of the initiative and the short time available, knowledge of **English is a pre-requisite and knowledge of local languages will be considered an advantage**

The selection will be based on the evaluation of the following submitted documents:

- **Portfolio**, which holds key importance, highlighting the most significant works of the candidate (may include group works) that address the selection criteria and the topic
- **Brief CV** indicating the relevant information as connected to the DECORATOR call;
- **Research Proposal**, specifying research interests and proposed topic and preferred pilot where to carry out the residence.

Based on the application received, the DECORATOR Artistic Residencies Committee may carry out brief online interviews.

7. Application procedure and deadline for submission

Applicants can apply via email to andrej.sitar@ung.si specifying “DECORATOR_Artistic_Residencies” in the subject of the email.

The deadline for applications is 31 October 2025 until 12:00 a.m.

The DECORATOR project invites all candidates to an online presentation of the artistic residence, to be held through the ZOOM, clarifying all the details of the call. The presentation is scheduled on 21 October 2025 at 9 a.m. CET. Registration to the zoom is required. The link to be used is <https://ungsi.zoom.us/meeting/register/LNbUi7dSSWWJ3mVEQA8AmA>.

Reviewing applications

The application documents are reviewed and evaluated by a five-member Committee from the DECORATOR consortium representing the 4 partners involved in the residences and the Lead Partner. Other members of the DECORATOR Project will act as observers.

The applications that are not received on time and/or are incorrectly labelled will be rejected via Email.

8. Notification of selection

All candidates, both selected and non-selected, will be notified by **November 7, 2025**.

Candidates will be contacted to discuss the financial framework of the residence.

If a selected candidate **does not respond to the email within eight days** or declines the residence funding, his/her application will be considered **withdrawn**.

The decision of the Committee is **final** and **cannot be appealed**.

9. Additional information and notification

For any inquiries regarding the Call for Applications, please contact andrej.sitar@ung.si by email.