Hands On! International
Association of Children in Museums

European Museum Academy
A European Museum Expertise Foundation

APPLICATION FOR
THE 2026 CHILDREN IN MUSEUMS AWARD

The closing date for applications is 31 March 2026

INFORMATION ON THE AWARD

The Children in Museums Award was established in 2011 by the European Museum Academy and Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums. It recognises excellence and innovation in programmes and exhibits designed for children up to the age of 14 years.

THE JURY

The Award is judged by a panel of experts experienced in many disciplines within the museum field who all contribute their time as volunteers. The judges are looking especially for museums, exhibitions, programmes and museum environments that show:

- a commitment to children, to encourage children's curiosity and to stimulate their imagination
- creativity and innovation
- quality learning experiences

The jury will be looking for what is understood as 'public quality'. In this specific case, the museum's commitment to improving children's experiences, growth, learning, well-being through the museum environment, atmosphere and programming.

ELIGIBILITY

Applications are welcomed from children's museums; from education, children's and youth departments in museums; science centres; and from other cultural institutions with a particular emphasis on children's programming. Museums may be long-established or recently opened. However, priority is given to programmes which display recent innovation. Candidates can compete as such or apply with a special (temporary) programme or exhibition. The project entered for the Award, however, must be current and open for viewing in the judging year, i.e. between 15 March and 30 June 2026.

CRITERIA:

Applications will be assessed against these criteria:

1. **INNOVATION**
   For instance, showing new pathways to enlarge subject matters, new ideas for using collections in children's programmes, new ways of using technologies to interact with the content, new forms of actively engaging young visitors, etc.

2. **QUALITY OF LEARNING**
   For instance, creating an overall environment and atmosphere which are conducive to learning, using interactivity to favour understanding, involving children in the conception and design, testing and evaluation of programmes and exhibitions, etc.

3. **INCLUSION AND SOCIAL IMPACT**
   For instance, showing evidence of programmes or initiatives that have a social impact and focus on inclusion and diversity, outreach activities, etc.

4. **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION**
   For instance, having an informative website, learning printed and/or digital materials for schools, teachers, parents, etc.

5. **STAFF**
   For instance, showing good management and well-trained and experienced staff.

PRE-SELECTION

There will be a pre-selection of shortlisted candidates published in advance of the Award meeting, details of which will follow later. The pre-selection will be made based on the information you provide in the questionnaire, in combination with the impressions we get from the accompanying material. All 10 jury members will judge and score every applicant on the criteria independently. The combined scores will lead to the pre-selection. So, make sure you enter all essential, differentiating information in your questionnaire.

INFORMATION ON THE EUROPEAN MUSEUM ACADEMY (EMA)

EMA is a non-profit Foundation established to reflect museums at the international level, to promote research on museography and museology as a high cultural activity, to provide constructive criticism and promote discussion on new exhibitions and museums, and to disseminate museological knowledge and ideas among members of the profession. It aims to promote the conception and development of new as well as of traditional museums as tools of social change. EMA co-operates with Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums for this Award. EMA members of the Jury of the Award are also members of the EMA Pool of Experts. www.europeanmuseumacademy.eu

INFORMATION ON HANDS ON! INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHILDREN IN MUSEUMS

Hands On! International Association of Children in Museums is an international professional organisation representing and advocating for its non-profit member institutions. It actively stimulates the creation and development of children's museums (including science centres, large collections-based institutions serving young visitors) and more space for cultural and educational activities for children and young people. Hands On! supports the important role of children's museums as centres where play inspires creativity, informal and lifelong learning. www.hands-on-international.net

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www.hands-on-international.net	www.europeanmuseumacademy.eu

ENTRY FEE

Please do not send your entry fee with your application. Following the acknowledgement of your application, we will send you an invoice. Please be sure on your Entry Data page to say whether you are a Hands On! member (paying 225 Euros) or are not a Hands On! member (paying 295 Euros). The invoice will be sent to the contact person and his/her email as stated on the Entry Data page and will be addressed to your museum. If the invoice should be addressed to someone other than the museum, please let us know when you send in your application.

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

Please send your file, preferably via WeTransfer, to Dr Emek Yilmaz-Sancar at emekyilmaz@gmail.com AND to Ann Nicholls, EMA Coordinator at ann.n1493@gmail.com. Please note that all future correspondence should be sent to Ann Nicholls. The other mail address is for this purpose only. Please let us know if for any reason you are not able to use WeTransfer (Ann Nicholls: tel: +44 117 9737965).

File name: please identify your file as follows: name of award_country_city_museum name, for example: CMA_ Belgium_ Liège_ City Museum

Your application should include the following:

- ☐ The Entry Data page (Word format) – see below
- ☐ The completed questionnaire attached to the application form (Word format).
- ☐ Up to 10 digital images in JPEG format, no larger than 2 MB each
    - one exterior view of the building with its name clearly displayed
    - with general views of the exhibitions and activities which illustrate your strong candidature for the Award.
    - Note: All individual images should be in landscape format and should not include text.
    - Should further visual documentation be necessary please copy photos on a Word file.
    - Films should not be more than five minutes in length and should also be sent via WeTransfer.
    - Note: All images must be free of copyright and accompanied by a declaration which enables EMA and HOI! to use them for non-commercial purposes in its printed materials, on the Internet as well as in training programmes.
- ☐ Scanned/digital copies of a brochure, leaflet or other publicity material you wish to include.
- ☐ A copy of the bank transfer instructions, which should include the name of the sender's organisation.

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ENTRY DATA PAGE

- Name of institution in English and in your original language
- Full postal address:
- Telephone numbers, with country and area code:
- Director:
  - E-mail
  - Telephone number
- Contact person
  - E-mail
  - Telephone number
- Website:
- Finance: Is there consistent funding for children's programmes? ◯ YES ◯ NO
- Number of staff dedicated to children's programmes:
- Opening times:
- **Entry fee category** (please tick): ◯ **A** General Entry Fee **295 Euros**

  ◯ **B** Hands On Member **225 Euros**

The Applicant is:

☐ a museum
(please mention which kind of museum, art, technology, natural science, etc.)
☐ a department within a museum
☐ a children's museum
☐ a science centre
☐ a special (temporary) programme or exhibition available for viewing between 15 March and 15 July 2026
(please mention the name of the programme or exhibition and its duration in weeks/months)
☐
☐ other (please specify)

☐ <u>Main target group</u>
☐ Pre-schools
☐ Schools
☐ Families
☐ Other (please specify)

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QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Please provide a short presentation of your organization: vision, mission and its commitment to children, target groups addressed, (pre-schools, school children, families), etc. (max. 2000 characters including spaces)

QUESTIONNAIRE

2. **INNOVATION**.
In what way is your museum/children's programme/exhibition contributing to introduce new ideas or innovative practices as far as children in museums are concerned (for example, by employing new ideas, methodologies or technologies, new forms engaging young visitors, etc.) (max. 2500 characters including spaces)

QUESTIONNAIRE

3. QUALITY OF LEARNING.

How do you ensure the quality of the learning experiences? How do you assess children's needs? Do you involve children in the conception and evaluation of programmes and exhibitions? (max. 2500 characters including spaces)

QUESTIONNAIRE

4. INCLUSION AND SOCIAL IMPACT.

Please describe your policies and programmes that aim at inclusion and have a social impact. (max. 2000 characters including spaces)

QUESTIONNAIRE

5. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION.

What is your communication strategy regarding children?Which tools are used? (max. 1500 characters including spaces)

QUESTIONNAIRE

6. STAFF. Please describe the management structure and the number of dedicated staff. Is the staff diverse, experienced and well trained? How are activities facilitated? (max. 500 characters including spaces)

7. Why do you think your museum should win the Children in Museums Award? (max. 800 characters including spaces)