



HELLENIC REPUBLIC

MINISTER OF CULTURE & SPORTS

Athens, 03.01.2019

**To: International Committee  
for Museums & Collections  
of Modern Art (CIMAM)**

**Subject: *Reply to announcement of the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art (CIMAM), dated of 21 December 2018***

The Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports has taken note of the unsigned announcement of the International Committee for Museums and Collections of Modern Art, Affiliated committee of ICOM (CIMAM), which was published on committee's website on 21 December 2018.

One would have expected that the authors of the text would have crosschecked the information contained therein to avoid being one-sided and to respond better to the actual facts.

In order to complete the record, we are obliged to state that the aim of the Greek National Museum of Contemporary Art (EMST), and the duty of the artistic director and the board of directors, is to open the museum to the public and make it fully accessible to visitors. This objective was not achieved by the previous director during her tenure, despite the support of the Ministry, and it was therefore considered necessary to advertise the post of artistic director.

It should be highlighted that this is the first time that the Ministry has not appointed someone to the position. Rather, it is committed and will proceed from now to appoint the artistic directors of all the public cultural organisations that it supervises after they have been selected by an independent expert committee.

The EMST is not the only case, and we believe that you would agree that this process offers guarantees of meritocracy and independence to cultural organisations.

In any event, where directors have achieved their programme objectives in concert with the board and have already prepared a new plan, they will be given the opportunity to renew their mandate once again, which the current political leadership of the Ministry has already done in some cases.

Since this has not been the tradition in museums and organisations, where in the past artistic directors were appointed directly upon an act of government, without a competition and selection by an independent committee, the Ministry would expect that this change would have been welcomed by the CIMAM, all the more, given that the former artistic director had the opportunity to apply for the position had she wanted to.

The Ministry has complied with all legal procedures and deadlines and has made a public announcement on the establishment of the Evaluation Committee, which comprises persons of recognised standing whose objectivity cannot be denied.

Regarding the grant from the Stavros Niarchos Foundation Cultural Centre (SNFCC), we would like to clarify that this concerns and presupposes the operation of the EMST and the opening of its collection to the public. This is exactly what the board of directors guarantees and what will be asked of the new artistic director, and that is why the entire staff is already working intensively on opening the museum's collection to the public in the coming months.

It is clear that the Greek state has secured the necessary budget for the EMST, which, in spite of the difficulties and austerity experienced by the country, has never failed to do.

We find ourselves at a time when the Greek state is emerging from the deep economic crisis of the past decade, renewing the functions of public cultural organisations and claiming its international cultural presence. Just a month ago, five museums in Thessaloniki merged to create MOMus, Thessaloniki's largest museum of visual arts, the directors of which will likewise be appointed through a public call for applications.

We hope that this note will set the record straight so that there are no misunderstandings about the EMST and its proper functioning in the future. Soon the museum will welcome Greek and foreign publics with its wonderful collection, which is something we all want and on which we work together.

**MINISTER OF CULTURE & SPORTS**

**MYRSINI ZORBA**