The Europe Challenge

2022

What are the Europe Challenge teams solving?

Each library and community group we are working with is looking at a local concern, which turns out is often one shared by many others. We are working together as a group to learn, test and ultimately solve how we can better live.

European Cultural Foundation

Equal rights and inclusion

Challenge team: Lesia Ukrainka Public Library of Kyiv with young people on probation
Place: Kyiv, Ukraine
Population: 2.9 million

The Lesia Ukrainka Public Library, in Ukraine's capital, Kyiv, wants to explore how it can support prisoners so they can begin their rehabilitation while they are serving their sentences. As a public library, free and open to all, and home to trusted knowledge, the library wants to test and develop the support it offers prisoners and those on probation, many of whom need help to develop important life skills on the return to their free life.

Challenge team: Bibioteka Azyl and Independant Queer students
Place: Lubin, Poland
Population: 72,581

In the current context of a shrinking space for civil society in Poland, the LGBTQ+ community in Lublin, needs safe spaces where they can gather and access LGBTQ+ literature. Biblioteka Azyl is already home to meetings with LGBTQ+ authors, a queer book club, open discussions, and workshops but the library and community want to find new ways to encourage young queer people to find their voice, providing tools for learning the process of organizing cultural events – and reach out to communities facing oppression across Europe.

Challenge team: Biblioteca Canova and Carcere di Sollicciano
Place: Florence, Italy
Population: 383,083

Sollicciano Prison's small library is separated from the outside world, with minimal opening hours, and with a mission to help prisoners to develop the skills they will need to reintegrate upon release from prison. The library wants to address some of the challenges faced by a large, diverse prisoner population by connecting with local volunteers outside the prison, developing a greater range of services, including Italian language learning. They hope to create a publication with prisoners, and develop partnerships elsewhere in Europe too.

Challenge team: Biblioteki bez granic and Libraries without borders
Place: Warsaw, Poland
Population: 1.8 million

Libraries Without Borders provides books and educational materials to asylum seekers and refugees in Poland, now including many Ukrainian refugees. Refugee facilities in Poland are overcrowded, dangerous and depressing environments without cultural access in different languages. Books provide a lifeline to many refugees, who according to Amnesty International face a mental health crisis. In collaboration with the community they serve, the Libraries Without Border plan to broaden the scope of their work: establishing additional refugee centres and addressing specific needs, including books and educational materials in the Ukrainian language.

Challenge team: We Need Books and Greek Forum of Migrants
Place: Athens, Greece
Population: 3.1 million

We Need Books is a multilingual library and a multicultural centre in Kypseli, Athens. The neighbourhood welcomed people from Eastern Europe in the early 2000s, and is now welcoming people from countries, including Syria, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Congo, Iraq, and Somalia. We Need Books has identified that it still needs to do more to reflect the vibrant, diverse community it serves. The challenge team plans to use participatory methods, in particular the inclusion of community migrant representatives in decision making for the library, so it can develop activities to reach communities they are not yet serving.

Challenge team : Pencho Slaveykov Regional Library and Bookfan.tasy
Place: Varna, Bulgaria
Population: 335,177

Pencho Slaveykov Regional Library in Varna, a city on Bulgaria's Black Sea coast, has always supported social inclusion and community cohesion - and has extensive experience providing services and spaces for migrants. At the moment Varna is hosting many Ukrainian refugees, mainly women and children, who are insecure, feel isolated and abandoned. The library hopes to re-imagine how to be a supporting and accessible centre for refugees, especially for children, by developing activities for art and culture with a creative art hub.

Challenge team: Bernardini library and TdF Mediterranea APS
Place: Lecce, Italy
Population: 94,989

The Bernardini library and TdF Mediterranea association are situated in Lecce, a city in southern Italy, a country where, sadly, racial and gender discrimination remains relatively common. By working together with a group of young people, the library will develop workshops for children and awareness-raising activities on discrimination and inequality open to all, develop a new section dedicated to LGBT+ issues and add more literature about other cultures to the library.

Challenge team: Feminist Library, Feminist Autonomous Centre and MiQ
Place: Athens, Greece
Population: 3.1 million

In the early 2000s, the Athens neighbourhood Agios Panteleimonas was the focus of attention for the Greek far-right party, Golden Dawn. Residents were attacked on its streets, and to this day many people of of different backgrounds and identities, amongst whom LGTBQ and non-binary people, still avoid the area. Now, the FAC's Feminist Library wants to counter the stereotypes with real life stories with the square at the heart of a new public life. Through acts of reclamation of public space, the public space will be made safer for women, children, and LGBTQI+ people.

Challenge team: Culture Perth and Kinross Libraries and Her Majesty's Prison, Perth
Place: Perth, Scotland
Population: 47,350
Her Majesty's Prison, Perth, is a category-A (maximum security) prison in Perth, central Scotland. Along with the library, its librarian also supports the HMP Perth rehabilitation hub - which helps prisoners to address addiction and deprivation issues. With Culture Perth and Kinross, a charitable trust managing libraries and Perth Museum and Art Gallery, the library hopes to develop a new pilot programme to support the hub. By providing resources and workshops from educators, facilitators and creatives, they will improve prisoners' wellbeing and help them to reintegrate into society.

Challenge team: Ternopil Regional Universal Scientific Library and the Ternopil branch of the Ukrainian Library Association
Place: Ternopil, Ukraine
Population: 225,238
As of May 2022, there are more than 100,000 internally displaced people in the region of Ternopil, Ukraine. For many of these people, learning a foreign language, in particular Polish, is vital, for education, employment and further opportunity. But the infrastructure to support foreign language learning was severely affected by the war. Ternopil Regional Universal Scientific Library will work together with local partners to organize hybrid classes (offline and online) for people to learn Polish. These intensive classes will be aimed at different ages and available to internally displaced people and local residents

Challenge team: Storyhouse and Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Race Equality Centre
Place: Cheshire West and Chester, England
Population: 343,071
Storyhouse in Chester is a library and charity creating experiences, places and platforms to give communities the opportunity to tell their story. Hundreds of Ukrainian families have recently arrived in the area. By partnering with Cheshire, Halton and Warrington Race Equality Centre, they hope to support the families and also develop supporting materials, including translated guides, dual language keyboards, and books that are chosen by refugees as something that they want or need in their own language.

Challenge team: The Franc Ksaver Meško Library, Ljudska Univerza Ormož, and the Ormož Adult Education Centre
Place: Ormož, Slovenia
Population: 2,102
The Franc Ksaver Meško Library, in Ormož serves three municipalities with a combined population of more than 15,000 that have been affected by the migration of many thousands of people fleeing poverty and war, including Ukrainian women and children. These newly arrived families need education and leisure activities for adults and children, and a place to meet so they can socialise. In cooperation with its partners, the library wants to enable inclusion, reduce inequality and raise awareness and local acceptance of new arrivals.

Active citizenship and participation

Challenge team: Quarto Oggiaro public library and Milan condominium libraries network
Place: Milan, Italy
Population: 1.4 million
The bustling city of Milan in northern Italy has 26 public libraries across the city, and a Unesco designation as a Creative City of Literature. But many communities in remote areas of Milan do not benefit from social exchange and their local libraries. The pandemic has further worsened social isolation in these communities. As a solution to this problem, the challenge team wants to expand a network of shared spaces where books and reading are available and that offer people the chance to build civic literacy, positively shape and share their needs and aspirations.

Challenge team: Torras i Bages Public Library and the local educational community
Place: Alt Penedès and Garraf, Spain
Population: 300,000
Torras i Bages Public Library in Vilafranca del Penedès is the main library for the mostly rural Alt Penedès and Garraf area, serving around 300,000 people, a high percentage of whom have come from elsewhere looking for jobs. Users of all ages report serious struggles to discern the trustworthiness of online information. In partnership with libraries across the area, and with the University of Barcelona and other local institutions, the library and community develop a programme for students and library users' online information skills.

Challenge team: Learning Centre ARhus and #HACK
Place: Roeselare, Belgium
Population: 62,301
ARhus is an open-knowledge centre library in the city of Roeselare and while widely used, the library believes more needs to be done to attract younger residents to use its services. ARhus's youth services are branded '#HACK'; the next phase in the development is for young people who use #HACK to shape its future, with involvement in every aspect of decision making, budget management, space, communications and activities. The challenge team hopes to learn from this participatory practice for the benefit of the whole library, and from other challenge teams across Europe facing similar challenges.

Challenge team: Luigi Einaudi Library and Cooperativa Caracol
Place: Dogliani, Italy
Population: 4,810
Dogliani is a small town in rural Piedmont. Its library, the Luigi Einaudi, serves the town and offers community services, mostly aimed at older people. Both the library and its partner for youth engagement, Cooperativa Caracol, share two sides of the same problem: young people do not have much opportunity in Dogliani, and, in turn, this means the library is losing patrons. The lack of cultural

offer for the youth has implications for their development as adults and also for the local area development. Working together, the library and the community partner will create a space for debate and mutual understanding, and directly engage teenagers in co-designing activities for themselves.

Challenge team: Agorateca Community Library and Agorateca Community
Place: Altamura, Italy
Population: 70,539

The Agorateca Community Library started in a disused building in 2019, in a suburban district of Altamura (in Apulia) - an area with a high risk of social and educational deprivation and early school leave. Co-managed by the non-profit Link, it provides a range of library services to residents in the area and supports other activities, including books presentations, concerts, conferences, and exhibitions. Together with their community, the library plans to explore how they can support sustainable urban regeneration through the development of specific new concepts of the library, including a 'library of things' and an open-source material archive.

Challenge team: Biblioteca da Penha de França and Making the Neighbourhood Our Home
Place: Lisbon, Portugal
Population: 544,851

Making the Neighbourhood Our Home is a community organisation started in 2022 by a group of mothers, activists and researchers who reconnect the inhabitants of Penha de França. The neighbourhood is home to a mix of older inhabitants, who often have little support, and relatively new arrivals who lack much connection to the area. Both groups often face socio-economic isolation and lack of opportunities for participation in societal development. Working with Biblioteca da Penha de França, Making the Neighbourhood Our Home, will further its work creating 'citizen labs' and creative intergenerational workshops, to enhance intergenerational solidarity.

Challenge team: Novi Sad City Library and Kulturis
Place: Novi Sad, Serbia
Population: 341,625

In Novi Sad, a traditionally low participation of people in democratic and institutional decision-making hampers the renewal of European democracy. The Novi Sad Library, working with a local community partner, Kulturis, wants to change that by making public libraries in the city spaces where people can discuss important local issues in the format of civic participation labs. The challenge team believes they may be able to reach less-favoured and disadvantaged communities and promote the idea of civic participation.

Challenge teams: Multiplo centro cultura Cavriago and Cooperativa Accento
Place: Cavriago, Italy
Population: 9,500

The biggest challenge Cavriago, a small town in northern Italy, faces is integrating the many people who have come from elsewhere to work. Multiplo, its library, already helps residents to meet, socialise and work together, but it wants to address a new and important issue: collectively trusted information. Cooperativa Accento and Multiplo want to test how involving people of all ages and skills in gaming activities can help make people more digitally aware of fake news and misinformation and bridge the digital gap between citizens.

Circular economy and environmental wellbeing

Challenge team: Western Isles Libraries and Na h-Eileanan Siar
Place: Western Isles, Scotland
Population: 25,500

The Western Isles, a group of islands off the west coast of Scotland, faces one of the worst fuel-poverty problems in the UK. An ageing population, low incomes, extreme weather and poor insulation mean many islanders are already finding they cannot afford to pay their fuel bills. Western Isles Libraries and community group, Na h-Eileanan Siar, wants to play a role in helping to address this problem - by working with islanders to explore potential solutions to the high cost of cooking, e.g. sustainable and low-cost cooking bags.

Challenge team: School Library of the 3rd Primary School of Chios and Parent Association of the 3rd Primary School of Chios
Place: Chios, Greece
Population: 56,500

Chios is a Greek island in the northeast Aegean sea. The 3rd Primary School of Chios is home to more than 130 students, many from diverse backgrounds in ethnicity, religion and language. Situated close to the island's coast, the school's pupils are witnesses, too, to the damage climate change is bringing to the island. The library and parent association will develop new knowledge resources on both diversity and climate change so it can become an agent of change for the future, in an area that is a gateway to Europe for many.

Challenge team: Klaipeda City Municipality Immanuel Kant Public Library (LT) and the local green community
Place: Klaipeda, Lithuania
Population: 154,332

Following the pandemic, and the invasion of Ukraine, many residents of Klaipeda in Lithuania are feeling multiple pressures: social isolation from lockdowns, rising cost of living, and the need to find a more sustainable way to live as a result of climate change. The Immanuel Kant Public Library hopes to address these different challenges by creating a free community lunch culture and fostering food planning skills. This idea rests on the knowledge that food brings people together, but also that in many European countries we urgently need to address the issue of food waste.

Challenge team: Biblioteca Comunale di Concesio and Utenti della Biblioteca
Place: Concesio, Brescia, Italy
Population: 15,000

Concesio's library wants to address a need they see as commonplace all over the world: learning repairing skills. We live in times of careless over-consumption and as a result, we are losing the ability to examine, understand and repair the tools and things we use. Concesio Library, together with its users, will address this by establishing a 'repair cafe', where people can bring broken electronics and machines to find out how they can be fixed.

Social cohesion and wellbeing

Challenge team: Finchley Church End Library and Community Network Group CIC
Place: London, England
Population: 8.9 million

Community Network Group CIC (CNG) is a community-driven, non-profit organisation that aims to ensure disadvantaged migrants are able to participate fully in society. Following Brexit, Covid-19 and economic turmoil, CNG identified that many people from migrant and European backgrounds faced an increase in racism and xenophobia, resulting in social exclusion and loneliness. Working with Finchley Church End Library, CNG wants to bring community leaders and decision makers together with people from non-UK backgrounds in a safe space of the library to re-establish common values and cater for the social needs of a diverse community.

Challenge team: Athens Comics Library and Refugee Week Greece
Place: Athens, Greece
Population: 3.1 million

More than two years of continued economic crisis have had a huge impact on the estimated 20,000 refugees living in Athens, resulting in psycho-social stress, loneliness and mental health problems; at the same time, the city's cultural and arts sector has been affected heavily. The Athens Comics Library is exploring how it can address both these deficits with 'bibliotherapy'. They want to unlock the healing power of stories and creativity, working in partnership with Refugee Week Greece - and become part of a network well beyond Greece as well.

Challenge team: Vaidava Parish Library and Vaidava Parish community
Place: Valmiera municipality, Latvia
Population: 51,370

Three libraries - Vaidava Parish Library, Vecate Parish Library and Rencēni Parish Library 2 - from three different administrative rural territories of Valmiera municipality, are working together to address a huge increase in depression, fear and loneliness following the Covid-19 pandemic. The libraries and communities are interested in

developing a well-being therapy programme to address the most significant issues in the community. The residents of the three communities will work together with experts and share their newly acquired skills.

Challenge team: Biblioteca Eduardo Pérez de la Fanosa de Busto and Asociación Busto de Valdés and AAVV Santiago de Castañedo
Place: Valdés municipality, Spain
Population: 11,734

In early 2020, the community of Busto, a tiny village in Asturias, on the north coast of Spain, came together to create a library, in a disused school. But while Busto's library is home to thriving community action, the surrounding small hamlets tell a story of a region's depopulation, decline and loneliness amongst mainly eldery population. The team of volunteers and library now want to tackle isolation and promote wellbeing by turning their attention to preserving, collecting and restoring the cultural history of this rural part of northern Spain.

Challenge team: Bibliomediateca G. Racioppi and Patto Locale per la Lettura del Lagonegrese
Place: Moliterno, Basilicata, Italy
Population: 4,345

In the sparsely populated Basilicata region around 70 per cent of its population have not read a book in their free time in the last year. The Bibliomediateca, 'G. Racioppi', sees reading and literacy as key to participation in democracy. The library hopes to target non-readers and stimulate reading through activities created in collaboration with the readers who use the library, e.g. reading out loud, book swapping, media library expansion and more - and linking with other libraries across the municipality.

Challenge team:International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property Library and Istituto Comprensorio Regina Margherita
Place: Rome, Italy
Population: 4.3 million

Based in Rome, the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property is dedicated to promoting the preservation of all cultural heritage and the library is the leading conservation library of its kind. Close by, the Istituto Comprensorio Regina Margherita - a public school - is home to a mix of children from very different backgrounds, and cultures. The school and library want to explore how they both can benefit from making the library more welcoming, by opening access to knowledge to children from diverse backgrounds and needs, sparking their interest in cultural heritage.

Challenge team: City of Glasgow College Library Service and City of Glasgow College students
Place: Glasgow, UK
Population: 632,350

With 27,000 students, City of Glasgow College is the largest tertiary educational institution in Scotland. When its library opened up following the pandemic – before many other support departments at the college – students told staff that the library was a haven for them - one of a small

number of welcoming spaces. Working with students, the library will explore how they can build on this experience to be a safe and welcoming place for all its students through a co-creation project: a zine library.

Challenge team: Biblioteca Municipal Miguel Arguisjuela Paterna Del Campo and Talyata
Place: Paterna Del Campo, Spain
Population: 3,484

Paterna Del Campo in the province of Huelva, Andalusia, is a small rural town dominated by agriculture with an ageing population – many of whom have limited access to books, theatre and film. The Biblioteca Municipal, working with the community group, Talyata, wants to change this by developing activities – from storytelling to audiobook clubs – that can provide cultural opportunities for the people of Paterna for the first time. They hope their journey can be instructive to other small rural communities elsewhere in Europe.

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Get in touch with us to discuss opportunities for collaboration at:
theeuropechallenge@culturalfoundation.eu

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