



**The  
Europe  
Challenge**

# **Open Call The Europe Challenge 2024**

## **Libraries, Communities and Democracy**

**Social isolation, disinformation, climate crises and other challenges facing Europe have grave consequences for our social and environmental wellbeing. Democracy itself is at stake as Europeans become increasingly polarised. If we are to make a better future for ourselves, we must work in solidarity and listen to the ideas and creative solutions being explored at the local-level in European communities.**

Libraries provide equal access to trustworthy information and knowledge to their communities. They are free and safe public spaces where residents can voice their concerns and effectively address local challenges in democratic and creative ways. Libraries are increasingly expanding their traditional mandate to respond and facilitate the growing societal demand for community engagement and democratic participation. Today's libraries are spaces where deep-rooted connections among citizens, communities and institutions can be built.



# What is the Europe Challenge?

The Europe Challenge programme supports community-led local change by equipping libraries across Europe with the resources to develop creative solutions that enhance the democratic participation and the social and environmental wellbeing of the community. The programme supports libraries and their communities by offering support to implement their project and the opportunity to take part in a mentoring programme with alumni of the Europe Challenge. By taking part, your library and community of choice will benefit from all the learning, network building, and recognition this pan-European programme can provide.

## Outline of the programme

Running from January to September 2024, the programme offers selected challenge teams\* the following opportunities:

- a series of online and in-person workshop and mentoring sessions
- funding of up to EUR 10.000 (optional) to implement the creative solutions
- additional peer-to-peer exchange opportunities, networking and travel

*\*a challenge team is made up of one library and one community representative, as explained further in the eligibility section.*

Selected challenge teams are expected to be available and take part in the entire programme.

From **January to August 2024** the selected challenge teams will attend three facilitated online workshops where they assist each other with the design and implementation of their proposals. They may also attend one or more optional masterclasses that offer advice on such topics as fundraising, advocating for your library space or capacity building in the community.

Challenge teams are also encouraged to engage in online peer-to-peer exchanges with a mentor to address any issues that might arise over the programme period. During these personal online sessions, an experienced alumni member of the programme will guide you through the development stage and any problems you might have along the way.

The Europe Challenge 2024 kicks off with a mandatory online meeting on **24 January 2024 11.00 – 14.00 CET**, which all challenge teams and facilitators are obliged to attend. The first live meeting is held in **March 2024 (2nd and 3rd week)**, giving challenge teams the chance to meet in person, share their experiences with peers, discuss their projects, and attend workshops that support the solution-building process. The meeting is held over two days and will take place in Europe. The costs of attending this meeting are covered as part of the programme.

In **late September 2024**, one library member from each challenge team is invited to present their solution at the “Marketplace” in Amsterdam. This is an opportunity to meet with peers, potential funders and key stakeholders in the library world and to widen your organisation’s scope of activity.

For inspirational examples, explore what happened in the first two editions of the Europe Challenge programme by downloading our publication [Sense of Belonging](#).

To apply, visit the [application webpage](#)

create an account and, when ready, submit your application.

**The deadline for submitting your proposal is Monday, 16 October 2023, 09:00 CEST**

*“Being part of a European project with like-minded libraries and communities gives us hope for the future of libraries in Europe.”  
as said by a previous participant.*



# Eligibility Criteria

1. The application form must be complete, with no question left unanswered, and in English
2. Applicants must indicate one main partner to receive any funding that was applied for and awarded. This is normally the library, but if this is not feasible, the community group can be designated as the main partner.
3. Only applications from libraries based in the following countries can apply:
  - A** Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan
  - B** Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria
  - C** Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic
  - D** Denmark
  - E** Estonia
  - F** Finland, France
  - G** Georgia, Germany, Greece
  - H** Hungary
  - I** Iceland, Ireland, Italy
  - K** Kosovo
  - L** Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg
  - M** Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro,
  - N** The Netherlands, Northern Macedonia, Norway
  - P** Poland, Portugal
  - R** Romania
  - S** San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland
  - T** Turkey
  - U** Ukraine, the United Kingdom
4. At least one of the co-applicants must be registered as a legal entity. Both co-applicants must be represented by individuals who are at least 18 years old.
5. Proposals involving political parties or organisations affiliated to political parties (unions, lobby groups, campaign funders etc) as associate partners are not eligible.
6. Applicants are also expected to implement fair and sociable working conditions and transparent governance in relation to project staff, freelancers, volunteers and service providers.
7. A working proficiency in English is required to fully participate in the programme. Some assistance can be provided upon request to facilitate attendance at live meetings. For the online learning exchanges, however, challenge teams are expected to arrange interpretive services themselves, if needed.
8. Neither the library nor the community of choice has participated in previous editions of the Europe Challenge programme.





# Selection Criteria

Proposals from challenge teams will be selected according to the following criteria:

- **Local relevance** – the proposal addresses an urgent challenge for both the library and the local community. Additional involvement of local government or other local institutions is recommended but not mandatory.
- **Creativity** – the proposal presents fresh, creative and innovative ways to address a local challenge.
- **Inclusivity** – the proposal reflects the shared ambitions of the library staff and community members.
- **Scalability** – the proposal is implemented locally but with the potential to be scaled elsewhere.
- **Sustainability** – the proposal embodies a convincing understanding of fair and green (“just”) transition in Europe and its implementation is feasible
- **European values** – The proposal complies with European values of democracy, transparency and openness;
- **Impact** - The proposal is able to explain (and quantify) how it will have a positive impact on people and/or the environment.

The selection process is undertaken by ECF, external advisers from partner foundations and alumni of the programme. Results are communicated during the week of **20 November 2023**. Regrettably, we are unable to provide feedback to applicants who have not been selected.

## Selection Process

A three-stage selection process allows a review which considers regional interests, thematic focuses and priorities regarding diversity, inclusion, environmental awareness and the available funds. Technical eligibility check by ECF staff is followed by a second reading by external advisers (including library and community representatives across Europe, regional funders, programme alumni and ECF staff) and the final selection meeting with all external advisers. In addition to ECF’s own funding which can support libraries in all eligible countries, we are delighted to have funders representing different regional areas of Europe supporting the Europe Challenge 2024: Fondazione Cariplo, Scottish Library and Information Council and Arts Council England. Representatives of these funding bodies will be closely involved in the selection process and will support libraries in their respective priority locations. These are: [Scotland](#) (for Scottish Library and Information Council), [Italy](#) (for Fondazione Cariplo) and [54 Priority Places in England](#) (for Arts Council England). All funders will use the location of libraries as a balancing criterion in their decision-making by preferring to fund libraries in their priority locations.



# Where can I find answers to my questions?

For further information, consult the Frequently Asked Questions and consider attending the online Q&A session on the [Facebook discussion thread](#) on 19 September at 15.00 CEST to have your questions about the call and application answered. All the relevant information about the Europe Challenge is also available on our [website](#).

## Partners

The Europe Challenge is initiated by the [European Cultural Foundation](#), and supported by [Fondazione Cariplo](#), the [Scottish Libraries and Information Council](#) and public funding by [Arts Council England](#). The programme delivery partners are [Changency](#), [OBA](#) and [Public Libraries 2030](#).



[Watch the video on the Europe Challenge](#)

## About the European Cultural Foundation

The European Cultural Foundation was founded in 1954 to help construct a united Europe where we can live, work, play, dream and express ourselves freely, share a sense of belonging based on solidarity and mutual respect, and collaborate across borders of all kinds, in harmony and in the fullness of our diversity. Since then, the European Cultural Foundation has initiated and supported projects in culture, civil society, environment and education throughout Europe to promote this sense of belonging. In its nearly 70 years of existence, the foundation has supported thousands of Europeans and organisations with grants and exchanges and has succeeded in putting culture and cultural policies on the European agenda.

Contact: [theeuropechallenge@culturalfoundation.eu](mailto:theeuropechallenge@culturalfoundation.eu)

Initiated by

**European  
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Foundation**

Main partners

Fondazione  
**CARIPLO** 

**SLiC**  
Scottish Library &  
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