



**The
Europe
Challenge**

**The Europe Challenge 2025/26:
Libraries, Communities,
and Democracy**

**Frequently
Asked
Questions**



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About the Call

What is the call about?

The Europe Challenge is a programme initiated by the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) to address the various social, digital, and climate challenges faced by Europe. From social isolation to inclusion of marginalised communities, disinformation, decreasing literacy, AI advancements, and environmental concerns, the programme supports citizen-led local change. The Europe Challenge equips library and community workers across Europe with funding, skills, resources, and networks to develop creative solutions that enhance democratic, social, and environmental wellbeing, all while placing community librarianship - librarianship focusing on the unique needs of local communities - at its heart.

What does The Europe Challenge offer to participants?

The programme offers selected Challenge teams* the following opportunities:

- Funding of up to EUR 10,000 to implement their proposed project (optional).
- A series of online and in-person workshops and mentoring sessions.
- Additional peer-to-peer exchange opportunities, networking, and travel.

**A Challenge team is made up of one library and one community representative.*

How long is the call open for? When is the deadline?

The call is open for 8 weeks, from 3 April to 29 May 2025.

The deadline for applications is **Thursday 29 May 2025 at 12.00 (noon) CEST.**

Where can I find further information about the call and the application?

If you have questions that are not covered on our website, the open call document, or this FAQ file, follow these steps:

- **Check the [Q&A Sheet](#)** – Before submitting a question, review [this Q&A sheet](#) to see if your question has already been answered.
- **Submit Your Question** – If you don't find an answer, use the [Q&A form](#) to submit your question.
 - The form is open from **Thursday 10 April at 9.00 CEST to Thursday 15 May 2025 at 12.00 (noon) CEST**.
 - Responses will be added to the Q&A sheet within **3 working days**.
- **Bookmark the Q&A Sheet** – Keep the link handy to stay updated on new responses.

If your question is very specific and requires more attention than a simple Q&A response, you can contact The Europe Challenge team at theuropechallenge@culturalfoundation.eu. Please note that due to a high volume of emails, we may not be able to reply immediately.

Will there be another call next year?

Updates regarding future opportunities will be shared once the 2025/26 programme concludes.



About the Eligibility Criteria

Who can apply?

The application must be submitted by two co-applicants: a representative from a library and a representative from a community group from an eligible country with a shared vision of how to change their community for the better. The library and community group have identified a local social, digital, or environmental challenge, and are ready to turn their idea into a practical solution that can be shared across their own locality and internationally.

Do both the library and the community group need to be registered as a legal entity to apply?

No, not both co-applicants need to be registered as a legal entity. However, 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.

What if our community group includes children or vulnerable individuals? Who should represent them in the application and learning programme?

If your community group concerns children or vulnerable individuals, we recommend appointing a trusted adult who works closely with the group to serve as the representative. This could be a teacher, caregiver, social worker, community leader, or any responsible individual who understands the group's needs and can effectively communicate on their behalf. The representative will participate in the application process and the learning programme, ensuring that the perspectives and interests of the community are accurately reflected and supported throughout the project.

What types of libraries and community groups are eligible to apply?

The Europe Challenge aims to connect different kinds of libraries across Europe by welcoming applications from all types of libraries, such as public, volunteer-run, school, university, community, prison, research, and special interest libraries—to name just a few examples. All kinds of community groups are also welcome to apply.

What are the eligibility criteria?

- » The application form must be completed in English, with no question left unanswered.
- » Applicants must indicate one main partner to receive any funding. This is normally the library, but if this is not feasible, the community group can be designated as the main partner.
- » The library and the community are based in an eligible country.
- » 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.
- » Proposals involving political parties or organisations affiliated with political parties (unions, lobby groups, campaign funders etc.) as associate partners are not eligible.
- » Applicants are expected to implement fair and sociable working conditions and transparent governance in relation to project staff, freelancers, volunteers, and service providers.
- » 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.
- » Neither the library nor the community of choice has participated in previous editions of The Europe Challenge programme.

Which countries are eligible?

- Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan
- Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria
- Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland, France
- Georgia, Germany, Greece
- Hungary
- Iceland, Ireland, Italy
- Kosovo
- Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg
- Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro
- The Netherlands, Northern Macedonia, Norway
- Poland, Portugal
- Romania
- San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland
- Turkey
- Ukraine, the United Kingdom

We have previously participated in The Europe Challenge. Can we re-apply?

No, the programme is only open to library and community groups that have not participated in any past editions of the programme, either as a team or individually with another partner.

Can we apply with more than one project?

No. Each co-applicant can only submit one application.



About the Proposed Projects

What are the priority topics in The Europe Challenge 2025/26?

The Europe Challenge 2025/26 is seeking projects that address one or more of Europe's key transitions: social, digital, and green. We are looking for creative ideas from libraries and community groups that contribute to building a more inclusive, connected, and sustainable Europe.

- » **Social:** Initiatives that strengthen social inclusion, equality, active citizenship, and community wellbeing. This includes initiatives that support vulnerable or underrepresented groups, address low voter turnout, promote civic engagement and democratic participation, tackle issues such as inequality and polarisation, or focus on issues such as social isolation, mental health challenges, declining literacy skills and reading habits, or intergenerational divides.
- » **Digital:** Initiatives that enhance European digital citizenship by promoting tactics, skills, and behaviors that enable individuals to engage with digital content critically and democratically. These initiatives should foster more meaningful interaction and proactive democratic engagement in the digital space. This includes efforts to combat misinformation and disinformation, bridge digital divides, and encourage safe and responsible use of technology and social media. We are especially interested in initiatives that foster digital literacy among young people, tackle issues like fake news, and address challenges arising from rapid AI developments.
- » **Green:** Initiatives that promote environmental sustainability, climate awareness, and resilience within libraries and communities. This includes initiatives focused on environmental education, sustainable practices, and community-led climate action. We particularly welcome creative green/climate projects implemented on the ground, from community gardens to installing beehives around library spaces.

What are the selection 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 encouraged 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 workers and community members.

- » **Scalability** – the proposal is implemented locally but with the potential to be scaled elsewhere.
- » **Climate sustainability** – the proposal embodies a convincing understanding of fair and green (“just”) transition in Europe.
- » **European relevance** – the proposal complies with European values of democracy, transparency, and inclusivity. It contributes to a positive European sentiment and solidarity regarding shared social, digital, and green challenges.
- » **Impact** - the proposal is able to explain (and quantify) how it will have a positive impact on people and/or the environment (trans)locally.

What type of activities can be proposed in the application?

Any type of practical, solutions-oriented activities can be proposed (e.g., workshops, events, campaigns, games, spatial interventions, publications, new library services). It is important that you are able to demonstrate how your activity actively tackles a specific local social, digital, or environmental challenge.

When does our proposed project need to be implemented?

Your proposed project needs to be implemented in 12 months between September 2025 and September 2026. If successful, you will have to submit a final narrative and financial report to us by 5 October 2026.

Where can I find the information about the previously successful projects?

You can browse all 96 successful projects from the first three editions of The Europe Challenge [here](#). You can filter the projects by theme, country, year, and Sustainable Development Goals. You can also browse all past initiatives and learn more about our wider libraries work in our free publication, [How Libraries Thrive](#), or watch Challenge case study videos [in the Resources library on our website](#).

How should we call our project?

From past programme editions, we’ve seen that project titles can sometimes get a bit long, complicated, or packed with buzzwords. This is your chance to stand out! We encourage you to choose a title that’s short, catchy, and creative. A clear, memorable name will grab attention and make it easier to promote your project in your community.

Do we need to secure additional funding in order to be eligible?

No, this is not a requirement.

About the Selection Process

What does the selection process look like?

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 and pre-selection process by ECF staff.
- Second reading and scoring process by external advisors (including regional funding partners and library and community representatives across Europe from the alumni network of the programme).
- Final selection meeting with all external advisors.

In addition to ECF's own funding which can support libraries in all eligible countries, we are delighted to be working with funding partners representing different regional areas of Europe. Advisors representing these Europe Challenge partners will be involved in the selection process of libraries in their respective priority locations. For example, [Fondazione Cariplo](#) will be involved in the selection process of applicants from Italy, [Scottish Library and Information Council](#) in the selection process of applications from Scotland, and [Arts Council England](#) in the selection process of applications from England, with specific focus on [54 Priority Places in England](#).

Can I apply in my native language?

All applications should be written in English, the mandatory working language for participating in The Europe Challenge.

What is the composition of the jury?

The selection is undertaken by a committee consisting of representatives from the European Cultural Foundation, regional funding partners, and representatives of libraries and communities who participated in previous editions of the Europe Challenge.

When will the results of the proposal selection be communicated?

The results of the selection process will be communicated **from 3 July 2025 onwards**. All contracts will be signed during the summer months to allow for the programme to commence in September 2025.

Is personal feedback available for unselected proposals?

We understand how valuable feedback can be for your growth and future projects. Unfortunately, due to the expected high volume of applications, the ECF is unable to provide personalised feedback for unselected proposals. We encourage you to continue refining your ideas and remain open to future opportunities that may arise.



About the Learning Programme

Is the learning programme obligatory?

Yes. Participation in the learning programme is an obligatory part of The Europe Challenge 2025/26 for both the library and the community representative.

What is the time commitment needed to participate in the learning programme?

Understanding that library and community workers often juggle heavy workloads and tight schedules, the learning programme is designed to provide practical support and meaningful opportunities for pan-European exchange, without placing a significant additional strain on participants' time. To participate in the learning programme, both the library and the community representative need to set aside:

- A total of approximately **12 hours** to participate in online summits between September 2025 and September 2026.
- **2 days** for attendance at an in-person Regional Summit in Autumn 2025.
- **2 days** for attendance at the in-person European Summit in June 2026.

Please keep in mind that **the above time commitments do not include the time needed to implement your proposed Challenge project in your local setting.**

A regular and ongoing commitment of both library and the community is required to be able to work effectively on your Challenge initiative locally (weekly/monthly, depending on your working methods).

Can I apply for a mentor to guide us on this journey?

Yes! As part of the application form, we encourage you to indicate your interest in requesting a mentor, who will provide coaching and guidance throughout your project journey. Mentors are alumni of the programme and will be carefully matched with participating teams based on the focus and needs of their project. Teams who apply for a mentor will benefit from personalised advice and insights tailored to their library's and community's specific challenges. Acting as critical friends and buddies, mentors will help participating teams strengthen their international network and deepen their engagement with The Europe Challenge programme.

This is an optional part of the programme, and spaces are limited based on the number of available mentors.

When and where will the 2025/26 learning summits take place?

Exact dates, times, and locations of all the sessions will be shared with you at the start of the programme. The following table gives you an indication of time commitments between September 2025 and September 2026:

When	What	Where	Time commitment	Obligatory or Optional/Elective
September 2025	Kick-Off Summit	Online	2 hours	Obligatory
October/ November/ December 2025	Regional Summit	In person (accessible location in Europe tbc) & online	2 days	Obligatory
January 2026	Online Summit	Online	2 hours	Optional/elective
February 2026	Online Summit	Online	2 hours	Obligatory
March 2026	Online Summit	Online	2 hours	Optional/elective
April 2026	Online Summit	Online	2 hours	Obligatory
May 2026	Online Summit	Online	2 hours	Optional/elective
June 2026	European Summit - <i>showcase of projects</i>	In person, accessible location in Europe tbc	2 days	Obligatory
August 2026	Online Summit	Online	2 hours	Optional/elective
September 2026	Final Webinars - <i>showcase of projects</i>	Online	2 hours	Obligatory

Please note the above schedule is subject to change. Participants will be informed of the final schedule in summer 2025.

Is travel and accommodation to attend in-person summits fully covered?

Yes. ECF will cover your hotel, travel, and subsistence costs to attend the in-person summits. In case you require a visa in order to travel, ECF will cover that as well. You will receive more information about the practicalities of these arrangements at the start of the programme.

What if I can't travel to the live, in-person summits?

We understand that factors such as accessibility needs, illness, or other personal circumstances may prevent some from attending in person. For those unable to travel, we will offer online and hybrid options to ensure everyone can participate and engage fully.

Do the library and the community representative need to speak English to participate in the learning programme?

A working proficiency in English is essential for full participation in the programme, as all meetings will be conducted in English due to limitations relating to translation costs and practicalities. While some assistance may be offered upon request to help with live meetings, Challenge teams are expected to arrange their own interpretive services for the online learning exchanges.

What types of topics and modules will be covered in the learning programme?

The learning programme is centred around the needs of community librarianship, considering the roles of both library workers working with communities and community organisers working with libraries. It is designed to be relevant and practical for their work, helping with the development and implementation of their projects on the ground. The sessions will be co-created by the growing community of both past and incoming Challenge participants, ensuring that the content is tailored to real-world experiences and challenges. The full curriculum will be shared with successful applicants at the start of the programme.

About the Funding

How much funding can the library and community apply for?

There is a maximum amount of 10,000 EUR available for each library and community. Given our limited budget, applicants are encouraged to consider how much funding they actually need to complete their project. We want as many libraries across Europe as possible to take part in the programme.

Can I take part in The Europe Challenge without requesting any funding?

Yes, requesting funding as part of joining the programme is optional. Applicants can also apply to take part in the learning programme only. However, in order to complete the programme, all participants are required to design and implement a practical solution to a local social, digital, or environmental challenge.

What can I spend the funding on? Are there any budgetary restrictions?

The budget must clearly reflect the project plan and all proposed activities. A maximum of 30% of the grant awarded can be spent on material goods, with the remainder expected to be spent on costs relating to delivering the proposed activities (e.g., production, communication, evaluation, volunteers).

Do we need to set aside funding in the budget to cover the travel and accommodation costs of joining the obligatory live summits?

No. Your budget template in the application form should only include the costs of implementing your proposed project. All travel and accommodation costs to join the live summits will be administered separately.

Who will receive the grant payment if our application is successful – the library or the community partner?

Normally, the library is listed as the '*main partner*' in the application form, and the grant payment will be transferred to the library. However, if this is not practical due to administrative reasons, the community group can be designated as the '*main partner*' instead and receive the funding.

In short, either the library or the community group can receive the grant, depending on what works best for both partners. The only requirement is that the '*main partner*' must be registered as a legal entity.

In how many installments will the grant be paid?

The grant will be administered in two installments:

- » The first installment of 80% upon signing the grant agreement (summer 2025).
- » The second installment of 20% upon completing the project and submitting the final narrative and financial report (October 2026).

What kind of reporting and financial administration is involved? What are the conditions of the grant?

Grant recipients are expected to meet the following conditions:

- Successfully implement the proposed project.
- Actively participate in the learning programme, including presenting your project during the final summit and webinars.
- Submit an interim report in the form of a short questionnaire.
- Submit a final report (due October 2026), consisting of:
 - A short narrative report outlining project outcomes and exchange experience.
 - A financial report detailing how the grant was used.
 - Photos and visuals documenting the implementation of your project.
- Participate in regular (anonymous) surveys and questionnaires to help evaluate and improve the learning programme.

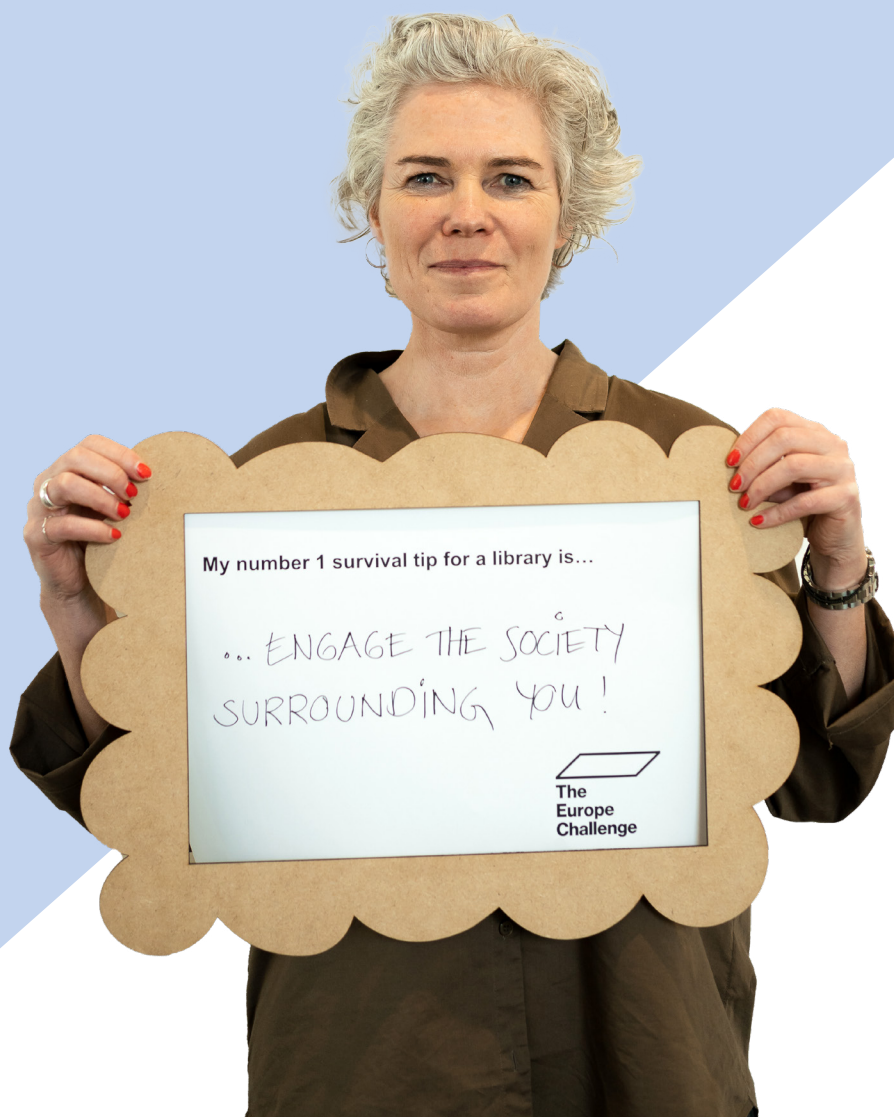
These requirements ensure accountability and support the continuous improvement of the programme.

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The Europe Challenge

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