

Press release under embargo until 5 September

The Europe Challenge launches new Open Call

On **5 September 2023**, the European Cultural Foundation and partners Fondazione Cariplo and Scottish Library & Information Council launch the **Europe Challenge 2024: Libraries, Communities and Democracy**. This new edition of the programme addresses various challenges facing Europe, such as social isolation, inequality, disinformation and climate crisis, through community-led local change.

The programme enables libraries and their communities to develop and implement creative solutions to local challenges with their community members through:

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

Starting in January 2024 and running until September 2024, this is an opportunity for libraries and their communities to work on ideas and creative solutions that enhance democratic participation and social and environmental wellbeing. The deadline to submit the proposal is **16 October 2023, 9:00 CEST**. Details on the open call can be found on the [website](#).

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



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

About the Europe Challenge:

The Europe Challenge is an annual programme that kicks off with an open call and brings together teams from libraries and communities across Europe. Each library and community group focuses on a local concern, which is often a common concern shared by many other groups across Europe.

Seven libraries from Latvia to Spain took part in the pilot programme from May 2021 to May 2022, working on a range of innovative solutions, from installing urban beehives at libraries as a practical teaching tool for championing biodiversity to tapping into virtual reality as a way to tackle digital exclusion. The 2022 edition, launched in May 2022, brought together 32 libraries and communities from 14 countries and 29 different locations (from the Outer Hebrides of Scotland to one of the most easterly islands in Greece) that in addition to public libraries included school, prison, university, volunteer and special issue libraries.

These 39 initiatives are showcased through in the publication [*Sense of Belonging*](#) which highlights the initiatives ignited by the Europe Challenge between 2021 and 2023, and tells the story of why and how the programme was conceived.

About the European Cultural Foundation:

The European Cultural Foundation (ECF) 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.

André Wilkens, Director of ECF:

“Libraries are safe, diverse, democratic spaces. They are trusted spaces. They are human spaces in an age of Artificial Intelligence.”

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