



The Europe Challenge

PRESS RELEASE: The Europe Challenge announces 55 libraries and communities from 24 countries for its 2024 edition

20 December 2023

The Europe Challenge, initiated by the [European Cultural Foundation \(ECF\)](#) and supported by [Fondazione Cariplo](#), the [Scottish Library and Information Council](#) and by public funding through [Arts Council England](#), is proud to announce that 55 libraries and communities from 24 countries have been selected for its 2024 edition: *Libraries, Communities and Democracy*. This new edition of the programme addresses various challenges facing Europe, such as social isolation, inequality, disinformation, and the climate crisis, through community-led local change facilitated by libraries all over Europe. The programme will run from January to September 2024.

The Europe Challenge open call invited libraries and their communities to propose creative solutions that enhance democratic participation and social and environmental well-being. 126 applications were received from 28 countries, making it the most extensive application round since the programme's inception in 2020. The 2024 edition marks the programme's expansion to 10 new countries, including Ireland, Georgia, Romania, Sweden, and Croatia.

The selected initiatives of the 2024 cohort of the Europe Challenge tackle a wide range of issues that rethink the roles of libraries as beacons of European democracy. Examples of selected projects include ending the stigma around accessing mental health services, supporting women victims of violence, providing resources for marginalised communities with the issue of debt, revamping libraries as climate gardens during heatwaves, addressing low voter turnout amongst young people, supporting Ukrainian families experiencing trauma during the war, inclusion of refugees, and much more.

"Libraries are more than just houses for books; they are the lifeblood of European communities. They provide safe spaces, foster education, combat social inequalities, and build resilient societies. Recently, libraries across Europe are facing closure, attacks from extremists, and censorship. The Europe Challenge is on the frontline of breathing new life into European libraries. I am excited to see so many communities and libraries across Europe taking creative action to solve challenges and improve social and environmental well-being," said André Wilkens, Director of the European Cultural Foundation.

Next Steps

The libraries and communities we have selected for 2024 will commence their projects in January 2024 and run them until September 2024. During that period, they will participate in a series of online and offline skills development and mentoring sessions, as well as peer-to-peer exchanges facilitated by the programme delivery partners: [Including Society](#), [Changency](#), [DOKK1 Aarhus Public Libraries](#), [Public Libraries 2030](#) and [OBA Public Libraries Amsterdam](#).

Media links:

- [Infographic – Europe Challenge 2024](#)
- [Overview of 55 successful library projects](#)

The Europe Challenge is initiated by:

**European
Cultural
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CHANØENCY

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About The Europe Challenge

The Europe Challenge is an annual programme that brings together libraries and communities across Europe to address social isolation, inequality, disinformation, climate crisis, and other local and European challenges by developing, sharing, and implementing creative solutions with support from the European Cultural Foundation and its partners. The initiative is a unique growing network of European libraries that work together to enhance democratic participation and social and environmental well-being through citizen-led local change. In addition to funding, representatives from libraries and communities across Europe participate in a series of online skills development and mentoring sessions. They also exchange knowledge and solutions at live summits across Europe.

About the Europe Challenge funding partners

European Cultural Foundation (NL) 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. It has succeeded in putting culture and cultural policies on the European agenda. <https://culturalfoundation.eu>

Arts Council England (UK) is the national development agency for creativity and culture. In Let's Create, they have set out their strategic vision that by 2030, England will be a country where the creativity of each individual is valued and given the chance to flourish, and everyone has access to a remarkable range of high-quality cultural experiences. From 2023 to 2026, Arts Council England will invest over £467 million of public money from the Government and an estimated £250 million from The National Lottery each year to help support the sector and to deliver this vision.

www.artscouncil.org.uk

Fondazione Cariplo (IT) is dedicated to philanthropy through its economic, planning and professional resources to encourage and support the implementation of projects that focus on the common good, the growth of people and collective interest. Established in 1991, the foundation's mission is to counteract inequalities, especially by supporting the most fragile sections of the population, and to promote the economic and social growth of the territory. Every year, more than 1000 projects are carried out thanks to the non-repayable contributions granted to non-profit organisations in the amount of around 150 million euros.

<https://www.fondazionecariplo.it/>

Scottish Library and Information Council (UK) is the independent advisory body on library and information-related matters to the Scottish Government. Formed in 1991, it provides a leadership focus for Scottish library and information services. SLIC leads development in the library sector, monitors standards of provision and promotes development. The organisation also regularly undertake research, promoting innovation and a greater understanding of the library and information sector in Scotland. SLIC aims to support Scottish library and information services through service innovation, funding provision and informative research.

<https://scottishlibraries.org/>