



The Europe Challenge

PROGRAMME OUTLINE

The Europe Challenge is an annual Europe-wide programme for libraries and communities to develop creative solutions in response to urgent social challenges. Become a local partner and help us expand the programme in Greece!

WHY IS THIS PROGRAMME NEEDED?

Europe faces huge challenges: **war, inequality, polarisation, disinformation, climate change, mental health crisis, economic & cultural crisis**. To overcome them, the people of Europe must unite in solidarity. The Europe Challenge taps into the power of public libraries as safe, open and democratic spaces to support citizen-led change. But overstretched budgets and a lack of tools/skills/resources often limit their potential. That is where the Europe Challenge comes in. It provides libraries and communities across wider Europe with the **funding and knowledge** they need to develop creative solutions to urgent community issues while connecting with European peers.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

STEP 1	Through an open call in autumn 2023, libraries and local communities across wider Europe apply to receive up to €10.000 in project funding and €3.500 in travel, accommodation, and subsistence costs to participate in the international programme as Challenge teams.
STEP 2	Successful applicants work together from January 2024 to October 2024 to address a pressing challenge they have encountered in their local community (e.g. food waste, community well-being, refugee inclusion, social isolation) . During this time, they take part in an international learning programme delivered by the European Cultural Foundation and Europe-wide partners.
STEP 3	Recognising that local problems are often shared by others, Challenge teams share their solutions and learn from one another at learning summits across Europe. The project culminates with the final Europe Challenge Marketplace and publication.

HELP US BRING THE PROGRAMME TO GREECE!

To date, 39 libraries and communities from 18 countries participated in the programme with the help of local partners. In 2023/24, we want to scale the programme's impact by expanding it to Greece for the first time. However, we want ensure our expansion is sustainable and actively involves important local stakeholders. It costs €22.000 per library¹ to participate in the programme. The **contributions of local partners, big or small, will be matched by the European Cultural Foundation** to support a selected number of Challenge teams in Greece. By partnering with us, you will:

- Provide libraries and communities in Greece with an opportunity to develop their skills in an international learning programme.
- Allow libraries and communities in Greece to exchange and connect with their peers from across Europe.
- Connect with an international community of Europe Challenge partners (e.g. Public Libraries 2030, Amsterdam Public Library, Aarhus Dokk1).
- Attend Europe Challenge learning summits across Europe.
- Actively tackle urgent social issues within Greece's diverse communities.
- Participate in the selection process of Greek libraries and witness the project's impact first-hand.
- Reinforce the important social role of Greek libraries in a national and international context.

Long-term, the Europe Challenge will be presented to the EU as a blueprint example for the future '*Erasmus for libraries*'. All partners will have the opportunity to join the Europe-wide consortium negotiating this opportunity with the EU for the benefit of Greek libraries in 2026 and beyond.

¹ The total cost of EUR 22.000 per library includes: EUR 10.000 project grant that goes directly to a library to work with a local community on a pressing social issue; EUR 3.500 travel/accommodation costs for library and community representatives to attend learning summits across Europe; EUR 8.500 cost of a 9-month international learning and mentoring programme for libraries and communities to develop their skills and knowledge.



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“Being part of this programme makes us feel to be part of a greater transformation: the community of libraries across Europe working towards a Europe built on collective action, trust and solidarity, a Europe that fights individualism, competition, fragmentation and inequalities.”

Biblioteca da Penha de França (Portugal)

PROGRAMME’S TRACK RECORD TO DATE

The Europe Challenge was piloted by the European Cultural Foundation in 2021/22. Since then:

<p>2 successful Europe Challenge editions have been delivered and evaluated</p>	<p>39 Challenge teams from 18 European countries and 36 locations participated</p> 	<p>€ 514,000 in grants has been distributed to libraries and their local communities</p>	<p>3,300 km distance between two furthest Challenge teams: a community library in Scotland’s remote Outer Hebrides and a primary school library in the Greek island of Chios</p> 
<p>15,000 number of direct project beneficiaries</p>	<p>100% of participants said the project strengthened their library’s role as a relevant, safe and open public space within their local community</p>		<p>100% of participants said that the project provided them with an opportunity for international exchange that they wouldn’t normally get</p>
	<p>91% of participants said that the project had a significant positive impact on their local community</p>	<p>Equal rights & inclusion; Active citizenship & participation; Circular economy & environmental wellbeing; Digital literacy; Social cohesion & mental wellbeing Problems addressed through the first two editions</p>	
<p>500,000 approximate number of indirect project beneficiaries</p>			

“Taking part in the Europe Challenge is for us like opening a window and realising that the small light from our Busto lighthouse is now part of a Europe-wide net of cultural lighthouses shining for communities across rough seas.”

Biblioteca Eduardo Pérez de la Fanosa de Busto, Valdés (Spain)

“The project has allowed us to shed light on the problem, gather people around the table and discuss possible solutions. Moreover, we brought together people and places that do not usually communicate with one another: having people travel for kilometres in bad weather conditions to discuss libraries and librarians is a big success for us, and we are determined to build on this momentum.”

Bibliomediateca G. Racioppi, Moliterno (Italy)

Initiated by:

European Cultural Foundation

In collaboration with Europe-wide partners (e.g. Democratic Society, Amsterdam Public Library, Public Libraries 2030, EuroCities, EBLIDA – European Bureau of Library, Information and Documentation Associations) and co-funders (e.g. Fondazione Cariplo, Scottish Library & Information Council).

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Learn more:

<https://theuropechallenge.eu/>