



Civic Europe Idea Challenge

Call for ideas 2021

Civic Europe is an incubator for locally rooted civic initiatives, organizations and individuals in Central, Eastern and Southern Europe¹ realized by MitOst and Sofia Platform Foundation, funded by Stiftung Mercator.

The Civic Europe Idea Challenge supports civil society organizations to strengthen active citizenship at the local level. We provide not only a funding opportunity, but more importantly the collaborative environment in which civil society actors can develop their idea into a sustainable solution to tackle local societal challenges and achieve long-term change.

We believe that citizens' participation, starting at the local level, is a precondition for inclusive, open and functioning civic spaces. By participating and becoming active together in local communities, people advocate for solutions to their societal challenges and make their voices heard by decision makers in order to change their lives for the better.

We aim at supporting project ideas especially in places characterized by the lack of or malfunctioning community spaces, little or no civil society infrastructure – places where people lack the understanding that they can be active members of their communities, as well as the needed competences to participate in social and civic life.

Apply for the Idea Challenge 2021:

This is where the Civic Europe Idea Challenge 2021 starts:

We are looking for up to 20 ideas from Central, Eastern and Southern Europe that strengthen civic engagement as well as social and political participation to tackle societal challenges at the local level. You can submit your project idea **from March 15 until April 26, 2021, 12:00 noon (CET)** online in our idea space: <https://civic-europe.eu/ideas/>.

Why is applying for the Idea Challenge worthwhile?

We give the winning ideas a funding opportunity and non-monetary support from the end of 2021 until the end of 2022:

¹ Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain



- The Civic Europe Idea Challenge supports up to 20 ideas with grants of up to €35,000 each.
- Moreover, and more importantly, following the idea of systems thinking, the CE Idea Challenge doesn't merely support its winning ideas through funding. It leverages their potential impact through a combination of interconnected interventions in three different areas: community, capacity development and visibility, which we identified as relevant for sustainable change. We call this support system Circles of Change. For more information on the Circles of Change, the networking events and learning labs that are also part of our support system please click [here](#).

Who can apply?

Project ideas will be considered that fulfil our selection criteria:

1. Strengthen active citizenship on the local level

Project ideas should strengthen civic engagement and social and political participation on the local level, ideally by means of civic education.

Project ideas should foster collective action to address local issues and improve the quality of life of the community. They should help community members to be heard and become actively involved in the decision-making and implementation process of communal projects or local policies that affect them. Community members should be empowered to engage within their communities but also with political authorities and institutions. Project proposals should help citizens develop the knowledge, skills, values and motivation to participate actively in community, social and civic life.

Active citizenship can have various forms and shapes: voluntary activities and social projects, community engagement, active involvement in initiatives or organizations, electoral participation, awareness-raising activities (educational, communication or advocacy campaigns and work), direct participation in policy-making processes, etc.

Read through the 2020 winning projects [on our website](#) to find examples for thematically suitable project ideas.

2. Engage in dialogue

We are looking for ideas that engage the community in dialogue around a locally relevant topic. The aim should be to bring people together who are usually not in contact and who bring differing or conflicting perspectives on a topic to the table. Ideally, our funded initiatives (try to) engage community members with profound disagreements in dialogue, such as

- those who are convinced and those who are doubtful of the value of civic actions;



- those who trust in democratic institutions and those who are dissatisfied with them;
- those who still strongly believe in democracy, those who question it, those who don't (yet) have an opinion as well as those who retreat from politics

Project ideas should also strive for a multi-stakeholder dialogue and, in addition to community members and civil society actors, include local municipalities and administrations, politicians, governing parties, schools, local businesses or other interest groups affected by the issue.

Only by bringing different perspectives, opinions and experiences to one table and starting a dialogue among peers we can fight segregation and polarization and promote inclusion and civic cohesion.

3. Location in a region with low civic cohesion

We aim to support initiatives active in communities and regions that are lacking civic cohesion. Low civic cohesion is often a phenomenon observed outside of large urban centers, in smaller cities and rural areas and characterized by:

- few to no possibilities for social and political engagement,
- few to no possibilities for civic education and lack of knowledge on civil rights, duties and political participation
- lack of trust, acceptance, solidarity and connectedness among groups and individuals in the community
- little civic infrastructure, like community centers, libraries, museums, public spaces to meet, civil society organizations, access to policy-making processes

4. Lead to impact

We are looking for project ideas that aim to impact the development of the community positively for the long-term. We are looking for people and projects that really want to understand the target group, the societal local challenge, the stakeholders involved in it and want to approach its solution in its entirety in order to see underlying patterns and ways to leverage the system. We think a systemic approach can bring impacts that are more than islands of success. Thus, project ideas should create a basis for sustainable change to foster civic cohesion, for example by engaging in a multi-stakeholder dialogue, by building bridges between conflicting groups in the community or by empowering members of the community to speak aloud, advocate for their interests and actively participate in policy-making processes on local, national or even European level.



Furthermore, the applicants must fit the following **eligibility criteria** in order to apply:

1. Non-profit legal status

Applicants must be a non-profit organization, which, as a corporate body (“registered organization”), fulfils all the requirements of German law on non-profit organizations. According to German law an organization is only non-profit if it exclusively and directly pursues charitable purposes. Possible organizational forms, depending on national legal regulations concerning charitable/non-profit legal status, include NGOs, cooperatives, collectives, associations, clubs, a non-profit private limited company, non-profit public limited company, non-for-profit corporations, etc.

More specific information on the legal and documentation requirements can be found [here](#).

2. Eligible Countries

We fund non-profit organizations from: Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Spain.

Please note, that **we do not fund**:

- Technical, digital, artistic or other end products (e.g., films, teaching materials, apps, artworks) without co-creative processes and community building aspects
- Events with a pure event or festival character, sports and entertainment events as well as one-time connecting events that do not have a measurable direct impact on the local community and lack sustainability characteristics
- Pure research
- Construction
- Commercially oriented project ideas / products that are intended for later commercial use
- Individuals or groups of individuals

Selection of ideas and timeline:

In a nutshell, we will conduct five actions before we announce the winners:

1. The Community Award and the selection of the Community Award winner, who then become part of the shortlisted candidates. Read more about the Community Award [here](#).
2. Reading phase, reduction of the applications to a shortlist.
3. Interviews with all shortlisted candidates in preparation for the jury meeting.



4. An inclusive and intensive jury process that is concluded by a jury meeting where the winning projects will be selected.
5. Legal check to verify the non-profit status of selected ideas.

To find out more about how we select the winners please click [here](#).

The timeline for 2021 is the following²:

- Submitting the project proposal: March 15 - April 26 2021, 12:00 noon (CET),
- Community Award vote: May 10 - May 31, 2021
- Announcing the Community Award winner: Beginning of June 2021
- Shortlist publication: Beginning of July 2021
- Submitting the detailed financial plans: Beginning of July 2021
- Shortlist (online) interviews: July 12 - August 6, 2021
- Jury (online) meeting: Beginning of September 2021
- Announcing the winners: End of September 2021
- Kick-off (online) meeting: October 2021
- Project implementation: October 2021 - November 2022
- Reporting: Until November 30, 2022

How to apply

The Idea Challenge is an online challenge: When you submit an idea, a short version of it will be published on our online platform, the so-called idea space. Please [register here](#) on our platform to submit an idea. Once you are a registered user, you will find the button “create your idea” in the [idea space](#).

You can edit submitted ideas throughout the entire application period from March 15 until April 26, 12:00 noon (CET). You can also invite up to four co-workers to work together on your idea by adding their e-mail addresses to the application form.

How to reach us

Civic Europe Idea Challenge

MitOst e.V. | Herzbergstr. 82-84 | 10365 Berlin

Tel: +49 176 7324 5953

E-mail: civiceurope@mitost.org

URL: www.civic-europe.eu

² Please note: We reserve the right to make adjustments if necessary.