

# European Cultural Foundation

## Work Plan 2020

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### 1. EDITORIAL

On 2 October 2019 the European Cultural Foundation (ECF) celebrated its 65th anniversary and announced its new 5-year strategy 'Challenge 2025'. This confirms the vision and mission of the Foundation, spells out our values and operating principles, and sets three focus areas for our work: Share, Experience, Imagine. The Work Plan 2020 is the first within the new strategy.

In 2020 we will further develop and expand our Experience programme with a focus on citizens and cultural professionals. We will develop a new initiative for a European public space to enable Europeans across national borders to share ideas, experiences, artistic expression or news of European relevance.

In 2020 we will develop a new Europe Challenge as a follow up to the ECF Princess Margriet Award for Culture. We will also launch a Vision Fund for experimental ideas with potential.

In 2020 we will experiment with new advocacy formats in Brussels and initiate a debate on the crucial role of culture in European affairs today. We will upgrade our digital and analogue communication capacity and improve our voice and language.

Operationally we will modernise our human resources strategy and make our internal processes and IT infrastructure more efficient. We will invest in diversity and sustainability throughout the organisation. We will upgrade our facilities and explore options for a new office space.

In 2020 we will establish a Culture for Climate Action Initiative to implement cross-border mobility initiatives in a climate neutral way therefore making a very practical contribution for tackling the climate challenge.

We aim to increase the diversity of our funding and increase our impact through fundraising, partner raising and leverage. 50% of our expenditures will go to our partners.

## **2. PROGRAMMES**

Based on our strategy 'Challenge 2025' we work in three programmatic clusters: Share, Experience and Imagine. We believe Europe as a cultural community needs to be connected through spaces (Share Europe), through people (Experience Europe) and through stories (Imagine Europe), across borders, backgrounds and identities. We initiate and develop initiatives in-house (operational) and we support and scale initiatives of others (grant-making). A minimum of 50% of our funding goes to external partners. Whether operational or grant-making, all foundation resources are invested for the European public purpose.

In addition to content development we will review all grant making processes and digital tools in order to improve consistency and efficiency.

### **2.1. Share Europe**

Programme Goals:

- Contributing to a European public space as a cultural sphere and an alternative to seeing the world solely through national lenses
- Providing online and physical spaces where Europeans across national borders share ideas, experiences, artistic expression or news of European relevance.

#### **Initiative for a European Public Space (IEPS)**

Working together with other foundation partners ECF has initiated and is developing the Initiative for a European Public Space (IEPS). The IEPS includes different sub-initiatives and pilots, in media, the physical as well as digital spaces. A strong focus will be the promotion of a safe European digital space/platform that offers multinational and multilingual perspectives of Europe to a wide range of European citizens. Another focus will be the support for cultural spaces that are permitting safe citizens encounters and free expression for citizens in countries and regions that are particularly vulnerable to restrictions, in particular Turkey.

ECF is supporting and scaling the development of Europe Talks, an online matching and debating platform which aims to address the issue of growing polarisation by bringing together people of different political opinions across Europe.

## **Cities of Change**

ECF is the coordinator and co-funder of three multi-annual funded EU programmes that connect dozens of European cities and actors in culture and media, and with their citizen's communities. European cities are frontrunners of positive change, being at the intersection of the most pressing crises of our times. Sharing stellar cultural examples taking place in 'cities of change' contributes to more European solidarity. Culture for Solidarity (3 local partners) is exploring the role of culture in shaping inclusive cities. MediActivism (10 local media partners) develops a public sphere in which media makers express their opinions on pressing issues, such as affordable housing, 'touristification', gentrification and social fragmentation. Cultural and Creative Spaces in Cities (CCSC) aims to increase citizen participation in co-creating cultural policies.

## **2.2. Experience Europe**

Programme Goals:

- Creating a European sense of belonging through cultural and educational exchange of people and common practice
- Providing sustainable exchange tools for European experiences between citizens and between cultural professionals beyond borders and sectors

### **Citizens Experience**

ECF supports citizens' exchanges across borders, through experience in safe and cultural environments in order to promote understanding and learning beyond national, regional and sectoral borders.

**Libraries 4 Europe:** Libraries are curated, public, safe spaces where people of all kinds of national, cultural backgrounds and ages can meet. ECF supports a network of European libraries to organise encounters between European citizens in various ways and together we aim to scale their work as a different type of European Social Network.

**Democracy Festivals:** Democracy Festivals are a ground for bringing people together in a European experience and debate around European themes and values. ECF supports a network of European democracy festivals to develop and strengthen a specific European dimension in their existing local democracy festivals and scale their work overall.

## **Cultural Professional Experience**

ECF supports a variety of exchanges between cultural professionals in order to promote understanding and learning beyond national, regional and sectoral borders.

Tandems: The collaboration methodology of Tandem has proven to be a successful and valued tool, engaging many different individuals, partners and foundations across Europe. ECF will support Tandems (multiyear collaborations) between European Capitals of Culture, European Regions, in the Western Balkans as well as a new initiative growing out of the existing community of Tandem fellows.

Cultural Mobility Houses (i-Portunus platform): ECF co-funds and implements an EU project (decision tbc) that links existing cultural centres in 41 countries into a platform that can host artists and other cultural professionals who engage with citizens on local issues but with a European dimension.

EU Cultural Relations Platform: European cultural professionals and multipliers need to engage with critical contemporary issues and peers from around the world. ECF contributes to an EU exchange and learning platform of cultural professionals from around Europe and the world.

## **Culture for Climate Action**

Cross-border cultural initiatives, mobility and exchange involve a fair amount of travel and CO2. Some of this can be reduced by planning consciously and by the use of technology. But face-to-face experience between citizens and professionals remains essential for building a European sentiment. Therefore, ECF will initiate and develop a pilot in the cultural philanthropic field: Culture for Climate Action. Starting with ECF's own programmes the initiative will explore, implement, share and advocate cross-border cultural initiatives in a climate neutral way and in this way make a very practical contribution for tackling the climate challenge and meeting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Climate change is also a cultural challenge.

## **2.3. Imagine Europe**

Programme Goals:

- Telling the stories of Europe, its heritage and its future, in the most compelling way using all forms of cultural expression
- Supporting compelling ideas that are outside of the box but have the potential to be Europe's next ERASMUS programme

### **The Europe Challenge**

Europe today faces challenges which cannot be solved through business as usual. We need fresh ideas that capture the imagination of Europeans and can unite large parts of the population behind a joint vision. But we also need determination to put ideas into practice. ECF wants to support those people and organisations with big ideas and in making them actually happen. Taking inspiration from our most successful initiative, the ERASMUS Exchange Programme, and on the basis of our experience with the ECF Princess Margriet Award for Culture we will explore how a Challenge for Europe can make 'the next Erasmus' happen. The 'Next Erasmus' is not necessarily another exchange programme but rather a culturally-rooted initiative with the potential of a similarly positive and transformative impact on creating a European sentiment. The ultimate investment in Europe's imaginative power. The Challenge is initiated by ECF and will be developed and co-funded with partners across Europe. It should be big in ambition and money and touching many people. A jury with recognisable names from various fields and backgrounds will be established. The initiative will be developed over the year based on a review of best practice, benchmarking, success criteria, brand positioning, media planning, alliance building and solid project management. Subject to the result of this development phase the Europe Challenge should be launched at the end of the 2020 or early 2021.

### **Stories of Europe**

Storytelling is essential for developing a sentiment. Culture can tell the story of Europe. This is not the story of Brussels, but the story of people. The story of Europe consists of many stories. This is its beauty. Artists are storytellers and influencers. But telling only the story of the European past is not enough. The story of Europe is only as good as it is relevant to the world of today. Therefore, ECF will invest in telling the stories of Europe, its heritage and its future, in the most compelling way using all forms of cultural expression, and in all its complexity and variety of cultures, languages, beliefs.

Biennials, festivals, museums, debate centres are spaces of curated imagination. They are excellent platforms for European storytelling. ECF will support and scale a number of those platforms if and when they offer a European dimension including film, exhibitions, debates, performances.

The concept of national pavilions at European and world events seems increasingly out of touch and outdated in today's world. Intentionally or not it reinforces national attitudes and sentiments if not complimented by European alternatives or indeed other regional or global approaches. It needs a European art platform to continuously think and challenge what Europe means today and what it can be tomorrow. ECF is initiating and developing together with philanthropic and other partners the concept of a European Pavilion at one or more of the most recognised art events.

### **Vision Fund**

There are many ideas and organisations that do not find support because they are too challenging, experimental or daring. But often these are exactly the ideas which can make a difference. ECF is open to experimental ideas and unsolicited proposals and provides short-term and flexible support for ideas that are outside of the box but correspond broadly to our vision and values.

## **3. PUBLIC POLICY**

Public Policy is an essential part of the ECF tool kit. Our Public Policy initiatives serve our missions and support our programmatic goals.

### **Leverage EU Policy and Funding**

The EU is an important actor for promoting European cultural policies and provides funding for transnational cultural cooperation initiatives. With a new EU budget at the horizon (Multi-annual Financial Framework 2021-2027), and new EU programmes in the making, ECF will advocate for culture to be more centrally placed on the EU agenda, and more substantially funded (including Creative Europe programme).

We will work with innovative advocacy formats involving popular artists and design thinkers, influencers on social media and media to raise awareness of the EU's slim investment in culture while it determines our values and our way of living together as a community.

ECF will advocate both at the policy and funding level to increase the impact of our programmatic initiatives and to secure multi-annual structural funding from the EU.

We will continue advocating for the swift implementation of the EU's New Agenda for Culture and inform the development of new EU programmes and initiatives, especially with regard to our three programmatic areas: Experience (mobility & exchange), Share (European Public Space) and Imagine (Stories of Europe).

### **Philanthropy with a European Purpose**

The foundation sector in Europe amounts to a €60 billion budget annually. We will advocate for at least 1 per cent of those combined annual philanthropic resources to be invested in a flagship initiative of European purpose.

### **Amsterdam Connection**

We are a European foundation based in Amsterdam. Within our three programmes we support strategic initiatives in Amsterdam with a European purpose. We are also making a concerted effort to make the City of Amsterdam a proud host of the European Cultural Foundation and its European strategy. We want to make the City of Amsterdam a partner in developing a physical public space where the Foundation works with other like-minded European and cultural organisations.

### **Strategic Memberships**

ECF is a member of several foundation and civil society platforms that share ECF's vision and values and advocate on shared goals and objectives. This includes the European Foundation Centre (EFC) and participation in several of its thematic networks (eg. Arts and Culture), European Policy Centre, Civitates, Edge Funders network, Culture Action Europe, On the Move.

## **Evaluation & Impact Assessment**

Our in-house expert coordinates the evaluations of our initiatives and designs a framework for assessing their impact. We will carry out regular anonymous external and internal surveys to assess the relevance and impact of our initiatives.

## **4. COMMUNICATION**

Communication is an essential part of the ECF tool kit. It creates awareness, recognition and trust, and supports our programmatic goals.

### **Voice & Language**

ECF will review and refresh external messaging with the aim to tell a clear and coherent story on what we do and be an understandable voice in the discourse on culture in building a better Europe. We will work towards a language that is accessible for a wider audience across all our communication tools and platforms, avoiding jargon and buzzwords. To improve accessibility and reach out to new audiences we will explore (digital) possibilities for multilingual texts.

We will develop and use more storytelling techniques, such as video, infographics, animation and podcast. We will produce a corporate video on the organisation and its strategy for the next five years. New social media platforms and sharing possibilities will be explored as well.

We will produce a digital Annual Report which continues a long line of annual reports of the ECF which together make up our impressive archive. We will also publish an annual Magazine which tells stories of Europe through the lens of our initiatives and our many partners.

We will make more use of the existing content-potential among staff, grantees and partners. There will be trainings and the development of manuals on writing and other forms of content producing. In order to position our voice in the discourse, we will develop long-term partnerships with Europe-focussed media platforms to share each other's stories.

### **Website**

We will build a new website that showcases what we do, share and curate content of grantees and partners and contribute to the discourse on the role of culture in Europe.



## **Events**

In 2020 ECF will use relevant events of grantees and partners for advancing our programmatic goals, showcasing our work and increasing awareness of the ECF overall. Examples are the EDGE conference, Europe Day on 9 May, Idea Camp Rijeka, We Make the City, the Forum on European Culture, Cultural and Creative Spaces and Cities conference, Force of Art conference, Eurovision.

## **5. OPERATIONS**

Our Operations ensure that the Foundation has the appropriate structures, human resources as well as technical and office facilities to function professionally and be able to achieve our vision.

### **Human Resources**

In 2020 ECF will consolidate and further professionalise our HR tools and policies. We will focus on transparency, sustainability and consistency of our HR processes. Next to reviewing a number of HR tools, such as job descriptions, salary system, and performance management, we will focus on strengthening leadership and management skills.

In forming and developing our teams, a mix of competences will be taken into account for the best results. Our staff is composed of three job clusters:

- Support and administrative staff who keep the organisation on track in view of planning, compliance, rules & regulations;
- Project managers and specialists at the heart of the organisation who drive our activities and objectives;
- Management (= Director and Heads of Departments) who lead our people for success.

Diversity of staff, related to cultural background, age, gender, education and professional contribution to ECF, remains a high priority. For new positions candidates from underrepresented groups will be given priority.

## **IT & Data Security**

Having invested in new hardware throughout 2019, we will now improve the functioning of our helpdesk and support services. When sourcing new technology and hosting we will look out for European solutions. We will review best practice of philanthropic peers on digital grantmaking and process management.

Data protection and privacy are critical for the Foundation. We have put an Information Security Policy in place to guarantee the availability, integrity and confidentiality of critical information systems. All relevant processes and databases are regularly updated to make sure that the Foundation is in full compliance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

## **Office Maintenance & Future Premises**

In maintaining our building and running the office, we will continue making 'green' choices. We will carry on making some necessary adjustments to our facilities and ensure healthy and safe working conditions. We continue to explore opportunities to move our office to a more public, visible and accessible space, ideally as part of a community with like-minded organisations.

## **6. FINANCE**

The 2020 budget follows the Work Plan 2020. Each department has its annual budget and decides how to use it in terms of own operational costs, staff costs and/or grants.

### **Income**

An organisational priority for ECF is to ensure appropriate and sustainable income. ECF has drawn up a plan for sustainable finance which is based on four income sources: Dutch lottery funding via Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds (PBCF); EU core finance; partner-raising; private finance. The goal is to diversify and increase the current funding substantially and sustainably. For 2020 the part of income from external funders is foreseen to represent 25% of the total income. During 2018 and 2019 this represented 12%, for both years, of the total income.

The income from the Lotteries, coming through PBCF, is budgeted to be EUR 4.630.000 for 2020. Since 2015 a modest upward trend in its annual contributions can be seen. There has been an increase of 9% from 2015 till 2019.

The relationship with the PBCF will be further developed in an open and transparent manner including on strategy, programme development, operational development and finance. ECF and PBCF Executive Management meet quarterly to inform about ongoing developments and to discuss common challenges. The respective Boards include a designated Board Member from the other foundation. Relevant strategy papers are shared.

ECF estimates a return of 3% on its securities' portfolio in 2020, which equals a result of EUR 375.000. In the investment policy, a defensive character and a careful assessment of risk and yield are paramount. The investment policy standards maintained for environment, society and corporate governance (ESG) are compliant with standards indicated by United Nations Global Compact (UNGC), Goede Doelen Nederland (GDN) and take into account ESG-analyses provided by Dow Jones, EIRIS, MSCI and RobecoSAM.

## **Expenditure**

We are an operational and grant-making foundation. A minimum of 50 per cent of our budget will be spent via external partners. This share may vary from programme to programme, depending on how best to achieve our programmatic goals. Whether internal or external, all foundation resources will be invested for public European benefit.

As a matter of sound planning and clarity, we work on the basis of a multi-annual budget framework. In this way we will be able to make multi-annual commitments and attract respective co-funding. The 2020 work plan and budget are in line with our multi-annual strategic and budget framework.

Our base budget for 2020 is €6.6 million. We aim to leverage this budget further for our purpose and programmes. This could be directly via our own budget (co-funding) or indirectly through other organisations (counterpart-funding). The criteria for measuring leverage and its impact will be annually assessed by an independent accounting body.

## **Auditing**

ECF follows guideline 650 for the reporting of their annual accounts. These are guidelines for fundraising organizations. The annual audit is performed by ECF's external auditor Dubois & Co. The Supervisory Board approves the Annual Audit Report.

## **7. GOVERNANCE**

The ECF Director ('Directeur/Bestuurder') is end responsible for the organisation and reports directly to the Supervisory Board (SB). Role and responsibilities of the SB are laid out in the ECF Articles of Association and the by-laws.

The SB is comprised of a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 12 voting members. The SB will recruit two new members in 2020, bringing the total of voting members to eight. Recruitment will focus on filling gaps in expertise and perspective in the SB and will reflect the diversity and equality objectives of the Foundation.

The SB will review the implementation plan for the Risk Inventory and Analysis undertaken in 2017 and will undertake an annual self-assessment process. Three in-person meetings, prepared by the Executive Committee will be held, of which at least one will be held in another European city than Amsterdam. Final liquidation of the 'Voorzieningsfondsen' is anticipated. An Audit Committee meets with the auditor to review the annual financial audit.

Amsterdam, 02 December 2019, last Update 13 January 2020