

Call for Proposals

Deadline: 29 January 2027

The European Spaces of Culture programme is looking for new exciting and collaborative cultural relations projects across the world. EUNIC – EU National Institutes for Culture – invites its members, cultural and civil society actors, and EU Delegations to come together to develop innovative and locally rooted projects that explore new approaches to international cultural relations.

European Spaces of Culture

Started off as a European Parliament Preparatory Action from 2019 until 2023 and continuing since, European Spaces of Culture has established itself as one of the frontrunning actions dedicated to the European Union's international cultural relations.

The programme, managed by EUNIC, has created a collaboration model of exchange and cooperation that is based on equity, inclusion and reciprocity. European Spaces of Culture explores cultural relations practice by supporting relatively small-scale and short-term projects, with a deeply rooted local relevance. These projects are implemented by a triangular partnership of local cultural and civil society actors, EUNIC members, and Delegations of the EU worldwide. Benefiting from the existing global network of EUNIC members, the invitation to all is to innovate and explore avenues of new initiatives and partnerships.

This collaborative and innovative approach stands out in today's international relations and is what is expected of the EU's role and relations with partners across the globe. In current turbulent times, such honest conversations and connections are much needed.

During the period 2026-2028 the programme, through two calls open to all non-EU countries, with the exception of countries in Sub-Saharan Africa,¹ aims to support an indicative eighteen projects developed and implemented by triangular partnerships of EUNIC members, local cultural and civil society stakeholders, and EU Delegations.

The programme places a partial focus on the South Mediterranean region, in line with the *Pact for the Mediterranean*², the EU's renewed commitment to strengthening relations with the South Mediterranean. European Spaces of Culture can complement this initiative and strengthen cultural dialogue, mutual understanding and sustainable partnerships between the two regions. The programme will therefore in particular support projects contributing to cultural dialogue, mutual understanding and sustainable partnerships across the Mediterranean.

¹ EUNIC is implementing [Africa-Europe Spaces of Culture](#) as part of the larger Africa-Europe Partnerships for Culture programme. Countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are therefore excluded from this call.

² The [Pact for the Mediterranean](#) is a flagship initiative launched by the European Commission in 2025 to deepen cooperation with the South Mediterranean region.

About this Call for Proposals

This first Call for Proposals aims to identify and support an estimate of nine concrete cultural relations projects, with a financial envelope of **EUR 405,000**. Projects can be implemented all around the world (excluding Sub-Saharan Africa). The specific focus on the South Mediterranean will result in an estimated three of the supported projects taking place in this region. Countries considered to be part of the South Mediterranean region are defined in the *Pact for the Mediterranean*. Concretely these are: **Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine, Syria, and Tunisia**.

The call seeks projects that are dedicated to go beyond the promotion and showcasing of the diversity of European culture(s). Initiatives should be built on mutual listening and learning and open the room for dialogue with local partners and artists, with a long-term aim of impact on local cultural sectors and civil society. Proposals will demonstrate deep understanding of the international cultural relations principles by co-creation, joint capacity building and an **active involvement of all partners within the triangular partnership**.

Projects can take different formats and are expected to go **beyond a single event or activity**, allowing for a broader scope of collaboration and exchange between partners. They could for instance focus on cultural rights and democracy, artistic freedom, empowerment of cultural professionals, youth participation, resilience and peacebuilding, cultural heritage protection and promotion, innovation, digital and green transformation of the cultural and creative sectors and industries.

Contemporary and innovative formats are explicitly encouraged, preferably implemented as in-person events, but where needed also flexible to come as hybrid or digital formats. As preparatory activities for the project, research, feasibility studies, and capacity building initiatives are possible. Projects should also have the potential to be upscaled and translated to a different context.

Where relevant, projects are encouraged to **create spaces for free expression, open dialogue and artistic freedom**, particularly in fragile or illiberal contexts. The call particularly welcomes proposals from countries facing political, societal, security or environmental challenges, including contexts where freedom of expression or artistic practice may be restricted. EUNIC recognises that developing and proposing cultural relations projects in such environments can be challenging, and these circumstances will be taken into account by the juries when assessing proposals.

Supported projects should take place **between 1 March 2027 and 31 March 2028** in one or more eligible countries. Applicants are encouraged to explore a cross-border dimension in their proposal.

Culture has an important role to play in advancing the **UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. Applicants are therefore expected to clearly demonstrate how their proposed project contributes to specific SDGs and explain the relevance of the goals they have selected to their local context.

Extra attention should be given to widening access to culture and cultural collaborations, especially amongst:

- youth;
- people with disabilities;
- communities outside urban areas;
- communities living in fragile contexts, including environmental and security fragility.

Partnership requirements

Projects are expected to form **a triangular partnership consisting of at least three local partners, three EUNIC members and the local EU Delegation**. All partners must be actively engaged in the design and implementation of the project. Submitted proposals will only be considered eligible when the criterion of the triangular partnership is fulfilled.

To fulfil the partnership requirements, proposed projects must have:

- A minimum of **three key local cultural and/or civil society partners**. Partners may be public bodies. Specific attention should be given to widening access to the partnership to actors who have been less involved in such intercontinental projects.
- A minimum of **three EUNIC members**. EUNIC members are national institutes for culture or other organisations acting for or on behalf of an EU national entity – these could be branches of national cultural institutes or embassies of EU Member States. A list of EUNIC members can be found [here](#). EUNIC collaboration is formalised in so-called clusters – all existing clusters can be found [here](#).

Note that EUNIC members are also present in countries where no cluster is established. These countries are still eligible, and in such cases, the minimum threshold of EUNIC members is **two**. Both EUNIC members' headquarters and their local branches are eligible.

- The **EU Delegation(s)** in the concerned country(ies) must endorse the project and engage in the project in a concrete and meaningful way. EU Delegations are diplomatic missions in non-EU countries. They are located [across the globe](#). They could get involved in project design, support with drafting the application, public outreach, facilitation of meetings and contacts including with EU Member States in the country concerned, or otherwise. For how to get engaged in projects, EU Delegations or partners are welcome to inquire with the EUNIC office in Brussels.

When in doubt about whether a potential partner can count as eligible in a proposal, do not hesitate to contact the EUNIC office in Brussels.

Shaping these partnerships from the start is crucial for the success of co-creating the proposal and, if selected, co-implementing the project. To ensure **inclusive and shared ownership among the project partners from the start**, interested organisations are strongly recommended to approach desired collaboration partners as soon as possible with a concept note (which is not a full application only for sign-off by the partners), and from there in partnership work on the application.

Partnerships are encouraged to be as inclusive as possible and **involve local partners beyond already existing networks**. Furthermore, in the spirit of widening access to EU Member States, these projects are a suitable opportunity for Member States that are starting or reinforcing cultural relations activity in a specific country.

All partners are required to submit **written support letters** with the application, stating their commitment to the project as well as foreseeing their specific role in the project if selected. A template for such letters is provided in the application package. EU Delegations may submit an email stating their support to the project, in case submitting a signed letter is not possible.

Organisations are allowed to be involved in multiple applications at the same time and multiple applications from the same country are allowed. However, it is recommended to focus on one solid and well-elaborated proposal, rather than spreading too thin.

The project teams are required to form a shared **coordination team** consisting of one key local partner, one EUNIC member, and the EU Delegation. This coordination team will together form the first contact point for the EUNIC office concerning the project.

When submitting the application, one of the partners should be designated to sign a **grant agreement with the EUNIC office in Brussels** and receive the awarded grant, if selected. This needs to be one of the EUNIC members. It is this partner's responsibility to receive the grant from the EUNIC office and allocate the funds to other partners, in all transparency and according to the project budget and activities, and to coordinate the financial reporting back to the EUNIC office.

Attention points

- Allow enough time to exchange on the initial project idea – make sure all partners are fully aware and understanding of the project's aims to avoid confusion afterwards.
- Consult EUNIC's [project design toolkit](#) for tips and to help guide the conversation with your potential partners.
- Interested organisations are also invited to have a look at [EUNIC's resources on Fair Collaboration in cultural relations](#), a set of resources authored by an independent group of experts in cultural relations.

Financing

Applicants can request **up to EUR 45,000** per project.

Co-funding from partners or other third parties is required and should at least be 5% of the requested grant amount. For example, for a requested grant of EUR 45,000, co-funding needs to be at least EUR 2,250, making a total budget of at least EUR 47,250. This co-funding may come from any of the partners or other source, except for the EU Delegations, as that would not comply with double funding rules of the EU. In-kind contributions can be considered as part of the co-funding.

Applicants must submit a **standardised budget form** with their application, estimating the costs of implementation of the proposed project and a narrative justification of the estimated costs. All costs must be presented in EUR. The budget form provides space to additionally include costs in local currency.

Eligible costs are those related to the project and its actions (fees for artists and experts, travel and accommodation, catering, rental of venues or equipment, production of material, communication, etc.), including the hiring of external coordinators/consultants to facilitate certain parts of the project (studies, mapping of resources, etc.). In-kind contributions are considered eligible and can be included as part of the co-funding in the budget.

Not eligible costs are those related to purchase of equipment (unless it is demonstrated these are directly related to project activities), overhead costs (organisational costs unrelated to the

project), the partners' permanent staff costs, as well as costs related to the development of infrastructure.

For selected projects, a **grant agreement** will be signed between the EUNIC office and a local branch of a EUNIC member, as payments can only be made to entities from EU Member States which are Creative Europe-associated. Local branches of EUNIC members qualify as such entities.

After signing the grant agreement and upon receipt of a payment request, a pre-payment of 80 percent of the awarded grant amount will be made. The final payment of the remaining 20 percent will be made once the **final financial and narrative reports** are received. All receipts related to project costs should be kept and made available for a possible audit.

The EUNIC member signing the agreement will receive the payments on behalf of the project team and is responsible for the correct **financial administration** in accordance with the agreed budget of the project. Unless otherwise agreed with the EUNIC office, this partner is also responsible of the final financial and narrative reporting of the project.

Attention points

- All costs must be presented in EUR. The budget form provides space to additionally include costs in local currency.
- The budget form requires justification of each expense line presented.
- Please use the calculation of units times unit costs where applicable.
- Cost estimates should reflect realistic rates for your country or region and must be necessary for the activities presented.
- Ensure all partners get the chance to reflect on and approve the budget before submission.

Selection criteria

All applications will be evaluated along the lines of the same selection criteria below. These reflect – alongside questions such as on objectives, target groups, and proposed activities – the questions in the application form. The maximum points that can be scored per criterion are also included in the application form.

Relevance to local context (max. 25 points)

The proposal describes the local context, including challenges and opportunities, and the proposal's relevance to that context. The needs of the local target audiences, civil society, and/or cultural sector(s) to be addressed are clearly identified. The project description is convincing and target groups that are identified fit the objectives that are outlined. In conversation with the EU Delegation, the strategic importance of the project to wider EU priorities is made clear.

Partnership set-up (max. 25 points)

An inclusive approach is at the core of the design and implementation of the project. The proposal includes active inclusion, participation, and governance of all partners: EUNIC members, EU Delegation, local partners, and other stakeholders, and proposes measures to ensure ownership

by all. The proposal clearly and concretely describes the added value and involvement of each partner.

Innovation (max. 20 points)

The proposed project brings new perspectives and processes to collaboration through culture and goes beyond traditional one-off events:

- New concepts or ways of working with local cultural sectors, including digital cultural relations, based on local contexts and needs of local communities;
- The proposal actively seeks participation of (local and European) actors that are new in this field;
- New ideas on sustainability, accessibility and inclusion, or entrepreneurship in culture;
- New ways of strengthening culture as a vector to promote values such as artistic freedom (of expression), social cohesion, equality, climate action, and accessibility and inclusion.

Impact foreseen (max. 20 points)

The proposal states concrete, realistic, and sustainable foreseen results and includes activities and expected results that will last beyond the timeframe of the project that clearly link back to the context and challenges described. Mid- or long-term impact on societies, local cultural scenes, and other target groups are foreseen. The proposal includes concrete mechanisms and indicators to monitor and evaluate the project. The proposal demonstrates how the objectives, activities, and impact foreseen contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. Individual SDG(s) is/are clearly specified and concretely elaborated on. The proposal also considers its environmental impact and sustainability of the project, including a strategy for sustainable use of resources.

Feasibility and cost-effectiveness (max. 10 points)

The project's activities are realistic within the timeframe and budget provided and within the local context. Possible risks are considered, and mitigation is foreseen. Activities are appropriately reflected in the budget and proposed costs are reasonable in relation to the activities mentioned and fair remuneration to artists and experts is indicated.

Selection process

Following an initial eligibility check by the EUNIC office, the applications will be handed over to the **independent juries of experts**.

The teams of independent jury members will be evaluating incoming project proposals. To ensure fair and profound evaluation with a regional expertise, a separate jury will be established to evaluate projects from the Southern Mediterranean. The juries will collectively select proposals on the basis of the selection criteria.

The independent nature of the juries ensures concentration on quality and relevance to the overall objectives of the programme, but also relevance to local contexts. Jury members are selected based on the following set of criteria:

- Deep knowledge and expertise of international cultural relations work globally;
- Experience in evaluations of grant programmes;
- Diversity of professional roles and profiles and lived experiences with different regions in the world;
- Extensive knowledge of the South Mediterranean region for those on this jury.

All applicants will be informed about the decision directly after selection and will receive feedback on their application.

Selected projects will receive feedback from the jury and possible conditions to their selection. They will then have the time to review and deepen their project plans to comply with the feedback received. Possible elements to investigate in more detail are, if needed:

- Making activities and timelines more concrete;
- Making more concrete the approach to actively involve all partners in different facets of implementation (programming, decision making, evaluation, etc.);
- Elaborating on strategies for evaluation;
- Adding more detail in the budget;
- Elaborating potential future plans beyond the scope of the proposed project.

Timeline

October 2026

Launch of the Call for Proposals

October 2026 – January 2027

Series of webinars

- 29 October, Webinar 1: Introducing the call
- 26 November, Webinar 2: Partnership and project support
- 12 January, Webinar 3: Application clinic

29 January 2027

Deadline for submission of proposals

February 2027

Selection of the proposals

February-March 2027

Contracting of beneficiaries and onboarding

1 March 2027

Start of the eligible implementation period

31 March 2028

End of the eligible implementation period

April – May 2028

Reporting of projects

Implementation

The eligible implementation period for supported projects is between **1 March 2027 and 31 March 2028**.

The EUNIC office must be informed of any major changes in the implementation and timeline of project activities, as well as of any changes in the approved budget.

All partners of selected projects are expected to **communicate about the project and its results**. In doing so, involved parties are obliged to follow the communication requirements set out in the signed agreement. Specific communication guidelines will be designed and shared with project teams for this purpose.

The EUNIC office will accompany applicants through the different stages of their projects, providing **guidance and support** whenever needed. All project teams will be asked to use a dedicated Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) methodology to support their reporting. This will enable both the project partners and the EUNIC office to collect and consolidate relevant data, information, and results. It is therefore also important to keep the EUNIC office regularly informed about project activities, progress, and all other developments related to partnerships.

In addition, the EUNIC office will organise **regular exchanges with all project partners**. These will include both collective sessions, held online through Spaces Labs, which will support community building and provide opportunities to explore shared topics and developments, and individual meetings focused on the progress, challenges, and needs of specific projects and partnerships. Participation in these exchanges is expected from all project partners.

How to apply

The following documents need to be submitted:

- **Application form**, completed in English (see template)
- Estimated balanced **budget**, completed in English and drawn up in EUR (see template)
- **Support letters** from all identified project partners (see template)

[Find all these application documents on the European Spaces of Culture website.](#)

All documents need to be submitted in English. Submissions in other languages will not be accepted. Please note that evaluators will not penalise grammatical or language errors. The assessment will focus on the substance, ideas, and relevance of the proposal rather than language accuracy.

Please submit the complete application package **by Friday, 29 January 2027 at 23:59 CET** to spacesofculture@eunicglobal.eu.

Note that only complete applications using the provided templates and sent to the email address above before the deadline will be considered. All applicants will receive confirmation when the application has been received.

Support from the EUNIC office

Please do not hesitate to reach out the team at the EUNIC office in Brussels if you have any questions about the call or the application process, by contacting spacesofculture@eunicglobal.eu.

We encourage you to start working on your application as early as possible to be able to resolve any potential issues in time. Please also consult the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for any question you may have about the call, criteria, or the application process.

Webinars will be organised to inform interested parties about the call and application process. These webinars will be hosted at different times to allow for global participation. You can sign up for the webinars [on the EUNIC website](#).