

Strategic Plan 2017 - 2020

The Challenging Optimist



European Cultural
Foundation

Our voice

The Challenging Optimist

Our proposition

Democracy Needs Imagination

Our foundation

The European Cultural Foundation is an independent, impact driven organization with more than 60 years of experience. We catalyse, connect and communicate civil society initiatives in arts and culture to work together for an open, democratic and inclusive Europe. We support cultural changemakers through grants, exchanges, and incubator programmes. Our annual ECF Princess Margriet Award for Culture highlights culture as a force for positive change. We connect people to people, the local to the European, and grassroots to policy.

Our purpose

Nurturing a socially engaged and culturally rooted civil society across Europe.

Our values

- » Democracy
- » Diversity
- » Trust
- » Solidarity
- » Interdependency
- » Freedom

Vision

Culture is an invaluable resource for a positive future in Europe. The space where we understand how we can live together, understand our identities, and make it our home. We want to re-think and build Europe as an open, inclusive and democratic space.

Mission

The foundation nurtures a socially engaged and culturally rooted civil society across Europe. We are committed to making a tangible impact on civil society, citizen initiatives, public opinion and policy proposals, and combat the fragmenting forces jeopardising peace and social progress in Europe.

Work

Advocacy is the groundwork for everything we do - creating a central position for culture and community participation at a local level and in EU policies. We support cultural changemakers and their projects through our grants, exchanges, online platforms and incubator programmes. We highlight stellar examples of culture as a force of positive change through the ECF Princess Margriet Award for Culture. We connect the local to the European, the grassroots to the policy, and facilitate collaboration.

Our culture

As a learning organisation we have an open flexible approach to achieving our mission. We like to do-it-with-others, based on mutual respect. We actively reach out to set up new strategic alliances and new models for funding. How we think and behave is developed through ongoing reflection and improvement. Diversity and equality are key drivers.

Our goals

- Strengthening civil society and citizens' initiatives that reinvigorate our democracies, based on the values of inclusion and solidarity
- Supporting and communicating content that inspires public opinion, challenges prevailing prejudices or offers concrete alternative solutions
- Advocating concrete policy proposals recognizing culture as a resource and including civil society in policy-making and decision-making processes from the local to European levels

Our personality

- » Accessible
- » Investigative
- » Inclusive
- » Innovative
- » Agile

Connected Action For Europe: Culture For Change 2017-2020

Why

The first decades of the 21st century have witnessed a fragmented and polarised world that has had an increasingly divisive impact on European communities and solidarity. Exclusionary practices have created deep divides in and between communities across Europe. Boldly rising to address these challenges and shift the tide from exclusion to inclusion are a myriad of visionaries, artists, creatives, thinkers, collectives and communities who are finding ways to make change and are offering a cultural alternative to divisiveness. This is the energy, inspiration and imagination that our foundation seeks out and that inspires all of our work.

The European Cultural Foundation is an advocate for the change-making power of culture. Our eye is on local change-makers whose imagination fuels democracy. We are convinced that, by connecting these practitioners across Europe and beyond, and through connected action with them, we can work towards changing the conditions that have bred extreme and destructive thought and practices.

What

The European Cultural Foundation is both a grant-maker and an operating foundation. Our actions, partnerships and network-building focus on the importance of bringing people together – across divides of all kinds and across Europe. We stand for connected action for Europe. Diversity, inclusion and equality will be a driver of all our work.

The European Cultural Foundation catalyses, connects and communicates the change-making actions of people in their communities. This cycle – ECF's process – pivots around the ECF Princess Margriet Award for Culture – an annual award that celebrate stellar examples of culture for change. Through the work that we support we advocate for an enabling framework for the work to continue – to ensure a robust and engaged society. We build a bridge between cultural practice and policy-making.

In everything we do we are determined to put culture and community practices at the heart of European public debate and decision-making. We amplify positive messages and ideas to a wider audience and advocate for policies that ensure an environment within which they can flourish.

How

To do this we need to think and act like an incubator – with change, agility and responsiveness in our DNA. We build development time into our work, including the development of a new hybrid business model and human resource plan to effectively and sustainably resource our work.

We will respond to opportunities and build partnerships with like-minded funders and practitioners. We will streamline and connect our work into a single focus pivoting around the ECF Princess Margriet Award for Culture and incorporating a variety of complementary tools (grants, online and offline platforms, events, publications and projects) that reflect our hybridity.

Effective advocacy requires critical mass, media attention and active engagement. For this reason we will bundle and develop our offline and online connecting activities over several days around the annual ECF Princess Margriet Award for Culture ceremony – facilitating a platform for intense and focused connected action.

Our aim is to ensure that this platform is keenly anticipated by participants – thought leaders in the worlds of culture, politics, economics and business, policy-makers and a wider public.

Together with the celebration of the ECF Princess Margriet Award for Culture, we will annually organize a connected action platform. We will convene a policy and practice encounter which will gather our laureates, grassroots examples from our network across Europe and the Netherlands with policy-makers who are seeking tangible and practical solutions to the shared challenge of fragmentation and disintegrating solidarity.

In the year between the annual connected action platform our grant-making, award selection, partnerships and advocacy will build towards the platform in the following year – inspired by and within a theme that has been set in direct response to what is happening on the ground across Europe.

Our process

We will annually set a specific target - a theme for our connected action. The criteria of our awards, grants, partnerships, actions will be headed in the same direction and guide our advocacy agenda.

We communicate one story – at multiple levels – whether it is through a travel grant for a few hundred Euros, a Research & Development grant for a few thousand Euros, or the annual laureates of the ECF Princess Margriet Award for Culture.

We catalyse: seeding and supporting local change through open grant schemes. We are committed to working with philanthropic partners to design and implement alternative and participatory grant-making processes.

We connect and convene changemakers: facilitating collective action for Europe.

We communicate: keeping culture at the heart of European public debate and decision-making through awards, celebration, advocacy actions.

We consolidate: evaluating, learning from our experiences, developing and building on our achievements.

Results (Outcomes 2020)

- ECF Princess Margriet Award for Culture recognised as THE European award for change through culture
- Creating, parallel to the Award, a much anticipated and high profile annual platform for connected (cultural) action for Europe
- Inspiring practices of living together in greater solidarity are enabled and visible
- A connected, engaged and well-informed online and offline civil society community of cultural changemakers across Europe
- Wider recognition of culture as a resource in combatting fragmentation embedded in policy-making agendas at local, national and European levels
- The European Cultural Foundation recognised as a thought leader in the Netherlands and across Europe
- Diversity and equality targets achieved in all areas
- Strong philanthropic partnerships with civil society actors
- A hybrid and sustainable business model
- A dynamic collaboration between the European Cultural Foundation and long-time partner Prince Bernhard Cultuurfonds

Towards A New Business Model

In pursuing our ambition and commitment to being a foundation fit for the 21st century, we will establish a mixed income and sustainable model, ready to grow over the coming years. Our organisation and our way of working will change and evolve accordingly, addressing other sources of income that complement and amplify our existing and expected lottery income and return on investment. Our model will include optimised, more long-term philanthropic partnerships; business tools for service provision; private and/or public partnerships and experimental or alternative tools like crowd- and match-funding. This mixed model of diverse sources of income reflects our hybrid identity of being an impact-driven foundation that combines grant-making with programme and advocacy work.

Find out more at www.culturalfoundation.eu

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