



CONNECTING
europe

Connecting Europe - A guide

WHAT IS CONNECTING EUROPE?

- ▶ Connecting Europe is a project implemented at the European Policy Centre, established in 2017. In 2024, Connecting Europe has started its **4th project phase**, which will run until mid-2027. The project is funded by the German Stiftung Mercator.
- ▶ Connecting Europe is a network of **65+ civil society organisations** from **16 European countries**.
- ▶ The objective is to **connect civil society organisations with EU decision-makers** and to give those organisations more visibility in Brussels.
- ▶ Connecting Europe actively works to **transnationalise EU policy debates in Brussels** by stimulating cross-border engagement.

WHY WORK WITH US?

Many civil society organisations do not necessarily have the capacity and resources to engage at the EU level, despite the benefits that this could bring to their projects. Some organisations lack the knowledge, expertise or networks to influence the EU's policy-making processes; others do not have the time and resources to build up their visibility in Brussels. At the same time, the EU does not always provide an adequate institutional framework for constructive dialogue with civil society, despite the important perspectives they can provide.

This is where Connecting Europe comes in: **We provide a platform for dialogue, a space in which civil society organisations can showcase and advocate their ideas.** Our objective is to foster an open, constructive dialogue between civil society and EU decision-makers. By doing so, we work towards transnationalising EU debates to ensure a and inclusive back-and-forth between Brussels and EU member states.

If you wish to explore becoming a member of the network, please do not hesitate to reach out to us.

THE NETWORK

The Connecting Europe network is constantly growing and adapting, depending on the needs and projects of our partners.

All projects and partners in the network have one thing in common: a **European dimension** to their work. Some organisations are European by nature, like the European youth programmes; others focus on a topic wherein the EU plays an important role, such as the digital transformation or climate change. There are no obligations that come with joining and being part of the Connecting Europe network.

The Connecting Europe network comprises different **types of organisations**:

- ▶ Think tanks
- ▶ Academic research projects
- ▶ Fellowship programmes (e.g. for journalists, academics, etc.)
- ▶ NGOs or advocacy organisations
- ▶ Network-building and peer-dialogue projects

These partner organisations cover a broad range of **policy issues**:

- ▶ Democracy and the rule of law
- ▶ EU foreign policy, including EU-China and EU-Turkey relations
- ▶ EU enlargement
- ▶ Climate change
- ▶ Digital transformation
- ▶ Youth and education



HOW WE WORK

Connecting Europe can be used in various ways depending on the needs and specificities of the partner organisations. **The framework of Connecting Europe is flexible and adaptable to the needs and resources of the partner organisations.** The objective is not to create more work for our partners, but rather to give them the opportunity to improve their projects in one way or another or to further disseminate their project outputs.

Connecting Europe comes in at different stages of the projects depending on the partner's needs. This means that partners decide their engagement pathway with Connecting Europe. We can give advice in the conceptualisation phase, present EU policy fields or advocacy methods during the project implementation, or we support the partners in the dissemination phase of the project.

Overall, Connecting Europe works with a central intention in mind: to **amplify the voices of civil society**, giving local, national and transnational civil society more visibility in Brussels.

WHAT WE DO

COMMUNITY BUILDING

- ▶ Connecting Europe organises regular **Network and Community events** to bring together CSO's operating in the same field. They are an opportunity to explore synergies, strategise on challenges and increase impact.
- ▶ We support the organisation of **study trips** and other exchange activities to Brussels.

SUPPORTING RESEARCH

- ▶ Organisations can use the **EPC as platform to publish policy briefs** or commentaries. We publish our **own analysis**, consolidating knowledge and contributing to transnational policy debates, and connect you to our policy analysts for input and advice.
- ▶ **We contribute to research processes through roundtables** to gather feedback for research and exchange with policymakers. **We organise Policy Dialogues** to disseminate research results with EU policy makers and other stakeholders.

THE PARTNERS

The **European Policy Centre** (EPC) is an independent think tank based in Brussels that focuses on EU affairs. The EPC's 45+ analysts provide in-depth expertise on several EU policy fields, working in seven different programmes: European Politics and Institutions, European Migration and Diversity, European Political Economy, Sustainable Prosperity for Europe, Europe in the World, Social Europe and Well-Being, and Transnationalisation.

Stiftung Mercator is a private, independent foundation that acts on the basis of scientific expertise and practical project experience. Through its work, it strives for a society characterised by openness to the world, solidarity and equal opportunities. It supports and develops projects that improve participation and cohesion in an increasingly diverse society. Stiftung Mercator wants to strengthen democracy and the rule of law in Europe, address the impact of digitization on democracy and society, and fight climate change.



PROVIDING ADVICE

- ▶ In **1-on-1 meetings** we provide **advice** on EU issues, e.g. on policy developments in Brussels, research in policy fields or contacts to EU decision-makers and other stakeholders.
- ▶ To discuss a certain topic, we can organise **focus group meetings** with experts at the EPC, our network or Brussels.

OUTREACH AND BRIDGE BUILDING

- ▶ Connecting Europe provides a platform for dissemination via our regular newsletters, social media channels and events.
- ▶ As **connector and bridge builder** we enable partners to experience EU policy processes, connect with policymakers, and provide a platform for a wider transnational exchange.
- ▶ The EPC offers access to its event space with 2 separate and fully equipped rooms, with a maximum capacity of 90 people, in the heart of the EU district.

No additional costs are incurred for partner organisations in the framework of a cooperation with Connecting Europe.

GET IN TOUCH!

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