



# Connecting Europe - A guide

## WHAT IS CONNECTING EUROPE?

- ▶ Connecting Europe is a project implemented at the European Policy Centre, established in 2017. In 2022, Connecting Europe has started its 3rd project phase, which will run until mid-2024.
- ▶ Connecting Europe is a network of 45+ civil society organisations from 13 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 improve the links between the national capitals and Brussels to discuss EU policy in a European fashion.

## THE PARTNER ORGANISATIONS



The Connecting Europe team is based at the European Policy Centre (EPC) in Brussels, an independent think tank that focuses on EU affairs. The EPC's 30+ 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.



Connecting Europe is funded by Stiftung Mercator. 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. To achieve these objectives, 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 drive forward climate change mitigation. Stiftung Mercator pursues activities in Germany, Europe and worldwide.

## 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 established in several European countries; others focus on a topic wherein the EU plays an important role, such as the digital transformation or climate change.

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
- Youth and education
- EU foreign policy, including EU-China and EU-Turkey relations
- Climate change
- Digital transformation

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



## 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 this brings to the table.

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 more diverse and inclusive back-and-forth between Brussels and EU member states.

## HOW WE WORK

Connecting Europe can be used in various ways depending on the needs and specificities of the partner organisations. For instance, partners can get feedback on their research findings from EU decision-makers; other organisations can use Connecting Europe to increase their visibility in Brussels.

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. 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.

# What does Connecting Europe offer?

## EVENTS

- We organise joint events with our partners, to: gather feedback for research projects; disseminate project results; exchange with EU decision-makers on a particular policy field
- We support the organisation of study trips to Brussels
- We organise annual network meetings with partner organisations to exchange ideas and experiences from their projects & developments in the field

## PUBLICATIONS

- Partner organisations can use the EPC as a platform to publish policy briefs or commentaries
- Connecting Europe provides a review process for publications, enabling partner organisations to learn how to write for an EU policy audience

## RESOURCES

- Partner organisations get access to Connecting Europe resources, such as: the regular newsletter with news from the network; tailor-made research briefs; EU advocacy guides

## ADVICE & ACCESS

- We give advice on everything EU-related; for instance research in policy fields or contacts to EU decision-makers and further stakeholders
- We provide access to an extensive EU network through the EPC
- Through the Connecting Europe CSO network, partner organisations can team up to advocate specific causes
- We organise policy updates to inform partner organisations about the latest news in EU policy

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

## GET IN TOUCH!

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