

Call for projects: CEE Special Fund 2026 (Central and Eastern Europe)

Questions about the democratic future of Europe continue to be raised. Recent elections show that populist and nationalist movements are gaining ground. Global power dynamics are being reassessed. With war still raging at the borders of the European Union, changes in transatlantic relations, and the increasingly fragile state of culture, civil society, and youth, Franco-German cooperation in and for Europe — along with work with its neighbouring countries — faces many challenges. But there are also opportunities to be seized! The content of international youth exchanges and the active participation they encourage within young people are more important than ever.

The year 2026 marks the 100th anniversary of the Nobel Peace Prize being awarded to Gustav Stresemann and Aristide Briand. The Franco-German Youth Office (FGYO) and its partners remain committed to strengthening Europe as a unique project of peace, democracy, and solidarity. The Weimar Triangle, which will celebrate its 35th anniversary in 2026, plays a key role in this effort. This is why, in addition to projects with other Central and Eastern European countries, special attention is given to cooperation with Poland. Issues of peace and security, as well as transformation and reconstruction, are particularly relevant — for example, in the context of the war in Ukraine. Combating disinformation and opposing populist and anti-democratic narratives, which also influence the European integration of the Eastern Partnership countries, is another key focus. At the same time, climate change and global warming remain major concerns. Young people across Europe need to be given opportunities to participate and get involved. Youth exchanges with partners in Central and Eastern Europe can help strengthen trust in Europe and in democratic institutions, while encouraging young people to engage with societal issues. Through its programs, the FGYO promotes equal dialogue, supports the exchange of knowledge and experience, and helps equip all young people with intercultural competencies and critical thinking skills within a diverse European context. Youth exchanges serve as civic education, a contribution to peace, and an investment in the future. They also foster successful educational and professional pathways while supporting personal development.

The Central and Eastern Europe Special Fund (CEE Special Fund) is financed in equal parts by the German and the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The [CEE regional advisors of the FGYO](#) assist in the search for new partners in the region and with cultural and content related questions.

1 Overall Framework

1.1 Objectives

In accordance with its Directives, the FGYO supports trilateral and multilateral youth exchange programs and training courses involving France, Germany and another country. These meetings must be **innovative** and relate to a **current**

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socio-political situation, reinforce European values, and contribute to cohesion or integration into the European Union. They should also support **new educational approaches and methods**, encourage the **active participation of young people**, include **new target groups**, and produce **tangible outcomes**.

1.2 Types of projects

Priority will be given to international youth exchanges with **face-to-face** meetings. In accordance with article 2.5 of the FGYO Directives (in [German](#) or in [French](#)), digital and hybrid encounters are also eligible¹.

1.3 Key topics

The projects must address at least one of the following points and deal with one of the priority themes. Please read the topics carefully before submitting an application:

A Youth engagement for democracy and peace in Europe

- Reinforce democracy and the rule of law in the face of right- and left-wing populist trends
- Explain security issues and the role of the EU in global affairs
- Highlight the importance of the Franco-German partnership for the EU and the potential for cooperation within the Weimar Triangle. To this end, a [label](#) dedicated to promoting trinational projects with Poland has been established by the FGYO and the German-Polish Youth Office (DPJW)
- Contribute to raising awareness about EU integration negotiations and cooperation with Eastern Partnership countries, as well as to European cohesion and identity

B Encouraging the participation of all young people and civil society

- Prepare for peace, reconstruction, and transformation in Ukraine
- Develop forms of engagement that protect against discrimination, strengthen human rights, contribute to gender equality, and promote the rights of LGBTQIA+, refugees, and other minorities
- Address the challenges of democratic participation, the loss of trust, and the lack of prospects for youth; and in this context, strengthen resilience and mental health
- Combat disinformation, learn to deal critically with media and AI, and protect freedom of opinion and the press

C Promoting peace education and remembrance work with young people

¹ The FGYO provides guidelines and educational material for [general project planning](#) and for [implementing](#) online exchange and training projects in French and German.

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- Teach peace education, mediation, and crisis prevention through history and memory work
- Counter misinformation and the instrumentalisation of the past in times of AI and populism
- Develop new and innovative methods of remembrance work to understand diverse perspectives across Europe and preserve testimonies and historical records
- Focus on the end of dictatorships in Central and Eastern Europe and the end of European division

D Mobilising young people to protect the environment and prevent global warming

- Strengthen civil society and promote new cooperation between partner countries as well as developing easy approaches for individual action, including also consumption habits
- Recognise and explain the links between war, history, or culture and the environment, considering different national realities
- Discuss issues related to energy transition, renewable energies, energy security, and energy dependence
- Raise youth awareness about fake news and disinformation related to climate change and environmental protection, while fostering critical thinking

E Support vocational training and sustainable young entrepreneurship

- Promote job-specific training and education opportunities to improve access to the labour market
- Share and compare new working methods and techniques in the context of emerging technologies, new professional sectors, and evolving job markets
- Explore paths toward professional independence and social entrepreneurship
- Organise trilateral exchanges in areas such as skilled trades, health and social care, digital transformation and new technologies, energy efficiency and saving, as well as for example the management and development of cultural enterprises.

In addition to various methods of non-formal education and international youth exchange, sport, art and culture are also suitable for conveying and presenting content on many topics. With the help of their own methodical approaches, topics can thus be better illustrated, give better access to all young people and new target groups can be won through interdisciplinarity.

2 Criteria for selection and financial support

2.1 Project sponsors and organising team

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Accordingly to the [FGYO Directives](#), project sponsors may be non-profit associations, twinning committees, local or regional authorities, organisations and associations in the sector of non-formal education for children and young adults, or stakeholders in culture, science, the media and sport. The project may also be sponsored by schools, universities and vocational training establishments.

Apart from the project sponsor from France or Germany, at least one organisation from another country must be involved on an equal footing in organising and carrying out the project. The involvement of young people in the application process, project development and project implementation is desirable.

For legal reasons, the application can only be submitted by a structure with a registered office based in Germany or France.

2.2 Target groups and participants

The target group consists of young people between the ages of 3 and 30, or 35 years for vocational training projects. Encounters are intended for young people actively involved in civil society. This means children, pupils, and young people doing an apprenticeship, in higher education, looking for a job or in employment, as well as stakeholders in the youth sector. The FGYO particularly encourages the participation of young people who previously had little or no access to exchange programs, such as young refugees or youth with disabilities.²

Gender parity, and the number of participants between the participating countries, should be balanced (preferably one-third each). No more than 70 people, supervisors included, may participate in the exchange. For further information, including the number of subsidised leaders, please refer to the FGYO Directives in [German](#) or in [French](#).

2.3 Project location and duration

In accordance with the FGYO's principle of reciprocity, a project consists of three encounter phases, one in each partner country, each lasting between 4 and 21 nights. The entire project, including all 3 phases, can last between 1 and 3 years. The aim is for participants to commit to the entire project duration with 3 encounter phases. Applications must be submitted for each encounter phase. They are only valid for those project phases that take place in the upcoming funding year from January to December 2026. A set start and finish date must be specified for the purpose of calculating the grant. The meetings may only be held in the participating organisations' countries.

² The FGYO is committed to making its programs as accessible as possible to a wide audience. This is why its guidelines define the concept of "young people with specific needs." This is an administrative term referring to young people who face disadvantages and/or discrimination that make their access to international mobility more difficult or more limited.

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Physical or digital preparatory meetings for purposes of planning the meeting phases for which an application has been submitted are also eligible under this call for projects.

2.4 Other Country

Projects involving all Central and Eastern European countries are eligible for funding. These include the EU Member States (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia) as well as some of the EU's Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine).

Multilateral projects involving more than three countries can only be funded in justified special cases. These include meetings with a regional-geographical and/or historical reference. Youth encounters with other regions and countries, e.g. in South-East Europe, can be funded if they fulfil the requirements for regional cooperation.

2.5 Educational criteria and obligations

Applicants are to present the project's **educational concept** by answering the questions on the application form. They have also to present a **provisional programme** for the face-to-face and/or the digital meeting.

The following aspects must be addressed and will be examined during the project selection process:

- **Intercultural learning:** The project promotes awareness of the topic, of intercultural work and knowledge transfer in trilateral groups;
- **Participation:** Young people should be actively involved in designing and carrying out the project and its outcomes;
- **Resonance:** The group should produce a common, concrete result³ and reach out to people beyond the circle of participants;
- **Environmental and climate protection:** As part of the effort to achieve climate neutrality and environmental protection in youth exchanges, environmentally friendly and climate-conscious meetings are encouraged. You are invited to consult the guidelines for greener international youth projects [in German](#) or [French](#) or refer to some of the United Nations' [17 UN Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). With the FGYO app [Dekarbo](#), you can calculate and reduce the carbon footprint of your project and sensitise young people to environmental and climate issues!
- **Raising awareness of languages:** Sufficient space should be given to the languages represented in the project. Language animation ([instructions in](#)

³ These are, for example, publications, blogs, videos, theatre plays or texts, radio contributions, exhibitions, presentations or discussion events as well as concrete follow-up projects or newly founded initiatives.

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[German and French, possibility to adapt](#)) and group interpreting can help in this regard. English can be used as a language of communication;

- **Communication and visibility:** The project should include a communication strategy for the press and social media; this should also be communicated to the embassies' and consulates' cooperation and cultural action departments as well as municipal and regional institutions. The support of the FGYO is mentioned in it, and the FGYO logo is shown on communication materials. The FGYO [communication kit](#) will also prove useful.

3 Financial support

The FGYO subsidises the projects selected in accordance with its Directives, with the help of funding from the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The grant may amount to a **maximum of € 25,000 per project phase**. The maximum allocation of the grant will be determined based on the duration of the project and the number of participants involved. **It is necessary to contribute to the grant and/or to seek additional third-party funding.**

Information on eligible costs for online encounters and hybrid projects can be found in the FGYO Directives in [German](#) or in [French](#).

Following approval of support, 60% of the grant will be transferred to the project sponsors 1 month before the project phase begins. The balance will be paid afterwards, once a breakdown of how the funds were used has been received and checked.

4 Submission of applications and selection of projects

For each project phase (preparatory meetings, phases 1 - 3), an application must be submitted by the project leader from Germany or France using the application form in [German](#) or [French](#). The deadline for submissions is **1 November 2025**. Project phases that will take place only in 2 years' time cannot be submitted until the year before they will be carried out.

The application must be sent **exclusively by e-mail to trilateral@dfjw.org**. The application form must be accompanied by a **preliminary draft of the programme**. This may be supplemented by additional information. Institutions that have never received a FGYO grant before are kindly requested to attach the legal statute of their association. **Incomplete application documents will not be included in the selection process.** The selection of the projects lies with a jury.

All project organisers who submit their application through a **central partner office of the FGYO** undertake to **inform this organisation of their participation in the call for projects beforehand and to abide by the current decentralised procedure.**

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The 'Regions, Europe and Neighbourhood' unit is organising a web café in French on 16 September 2025 and in German on 18 September 2025 about the content of the call for projects and the application procedure. Please register by 12 September 2025 for the web café in [French](#), and for the web café in [German](#).

5 Contact

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