

Incubator 2025: Istanbul, Türkiye

Call for applications

The training that helps your cultural project go European

Incubator is an innovative capacity-building programme designed by ENCC with a view to supporting mid- to senior-level cultural professionals that aspire to start a European cultural cooperation project under funding schemes such as Creative Europe, Erasmus+, Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs, Interreg, and CERV. Since its inception, the programme has supported the development of 41 project ideas.

Currently one of the most accessible and best-funded European programmes in the field, Incubator aims at empowering socio-cultural centres by encouraging them to consider 'going European'. It is also a laboratory for innovation and transversal cooperation, and aims at building a learning community within the ENCC network. Based on each participant's specific needs and competencies, Incubator offers hands-on, tailored feedback and training from experts in European project writing.

ENCC

Incubator is a programme offered by the European Network of Cultural Centres (ENCC). Founded in 1994 to promote dialogue and cooperation between socio-cultural centres throughout Europe, today ENCC unites 150+ members in 38 countries, reaching over 6000 cultural organisations with very diverse structures, practices, and audiences. The ENCC community aligns on values such as cultural equality, active citizenship, diversity, and environmental sustainability. The work of the ENCC office mainly consist in offering members and the broader European socio-cultural sector opportunities for training, networking and, advocacy. Since 2014, the network is mainly funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.

Incubator 2025: what to expect

This year, Incubator continues to follow the methodology successfully applied in previous editions, providing participants a fertile ground for learning, experimentation, and growth. The selected project bearers will be invited to attend a 4-day intensive training retreat in the heart of Istanbul, Türkiye, where they will get a chance to refine their project ideas under the guidance of a team of high-level local and international experts. The event will also be an opportunity to connect, exchange experiences and ideas, and develop joint proposals with socio-cultural workers from all over Europe and beyond.

The 2025 edition will dedicate a special focus to the **inclusion and cultural participation of marginalised groups**, from an intersectional and inter-generational perspective. The programme foresees a variety of different activities, including study visits to projects contributing to the rich cultural life of Istanbul and surroundings, presentations, consulting sessions with experts on EU projects, as well as a number of informal moments of networking, sharing, and fun. Participants will return to their organisations with:

- A project proposal fine-tuned by experts, with clear feedback and recommendations on how to implement it successfully;
- Tailored skills and competencies on European funding and project-writing;
- The project incubated in 5D: all elements reviewed through the lens of high-level experts and peers.
- An insider understanding of the EU project evaluation process and criteria;
- New connections with experts in European cultural cooperation and peers from a diverse range of organisations from all over Europe;
- Inspiring examples of the use of European funds for international cultural and artistic cooperation and how this cooperation can benefit local communities and territories.

Sanatatak: the 2025 host

The 2025 edition will be hosted by ENCC member [Sanatatak](#). Located in Istanbul, Sanatatak is an independent platform for arts and culture that started off as an arts journal 12 years ago and then became a hub for arts education and thought-provoking exhibitions promoting dialogue and reflection on contemporary topics. Deeply rooted in the Istanbul cultural scene, the organisation will contribute to a stimulating 2025 edition of the programme, providing a space for discussion, reflection and exchange.

Programme cycle

Incubator will be articulated in 5 phases:

Phase 1: Application (March - April 2025): The call for applications opens on March 4th, 2025 and closes on April 4th, 2025. You can find the application form [here](#).

Phase 2: Selection of project bearers and preparation (April - September 2025): Among the candidacies received, a jury selects the 24 projects that have the greater potential to result in successful applications. Selected applicants receive feedback from the ENCC advising team, with results announced by May 30th, 2025. Participants then have four months to refine their project proposals before the intensive training retreat in October.

Phase 3: Kick-off meeting (September 2025): A mandatory online preparatory meeting is held for all selected project bearers in September 2025.

Phase 4: Training retreat (October 2025): The retreat takes place from October 7th until October 10th, 2025 in Istanbul, Turkey. Selected project bearers must join in person, with a detailed draft of their project's content, including a timeline and objectives.

Phase 5: Project development (October - December 2025): After the training retreat, project bearers have 1 to 2 months to identify the funding scheme they want to apply for, and 5 to 9 months, depending on the type of project, for the further development of their proposal. This phase allows them to be prepared for writing and submitting their application.

Phase 6: Evaluation (November 2025- February 2026): At the end of the programme, participants are expected to participate in an online follow-up meeting in November 2025 and fill in an evaluation form.

Application

How to apply

Applications for Incubator 2025 must be submitted online using the [dedicated application form](#). Before applying, please read this call in full as well as the Incubator FAQ at the bottom of [this](#) page. Are you thinking of applying, but still have some questions? Would you like to better understand whether the programme fits your needs? Then join the online **info session** on **Thursday, March 13th** at 13:00 CET. You can register [here](#).

Who can apply

Incubator is open to any socio-cultural organisation based in a country currently covered by one of the following funding schemes: [Creative Europe](#), [Erasmus+](#), [Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs](#), [Interreg](#), [CERV](#), or [NEB](#).

Eligibility criteria

In order to be eligible for selection, candidates should:

- Submit an abstract for a project that fits within one of the following funding schemes: [Creative Europe](#), [Erasmus+](#), [Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs](#), [Interreg](#), [CERV](#), or [NEB](#);
- Clearly describe the added value their project would bring to European societies, and the added value the European dimension would bring to the project;
- Outline their project's objectives and outputs, the impact it aims to achieve, and its European dimension;
- Have already identified at least 2 potential project partners and know their expertise in European project writing.

NB: Projects that have already applied for EU funding but have not been selected, or are awaiting a response, are not eligible.

Successful applicants' obligations

By submitting their application to Incubator 2025, applicants commit to respecting all conditions mentioned in this call, and to **taking part in all programme activities** (or to identifying a person from their organisation who will represent them). This includes participating in person to the training retreat in October 2025.

Selection criteria

For the 2025 edition of Incubator, ENCC will select 24 projects. ENCC members have priority in the selection process, but non-members are welcome to apply too. Priority will also be given to socio-cultural organisations working on the topic of **inclusion** and fostering the cultural **participation of marginalised groups**. One place will be reserved for socio-cultural workers from Ukraine. The goal is to select the most diverse and balanced pool of projects.

Participation costs

Selected project bearers will have to purchase one of the following tickets to join the event:

- **Ticket A:** for ENCC members, including members of national, regional or local networks who are ENCC members. Price: 100€;
- **Ticket B:** for ENCC members with financial constraints and high motivation to participate. Price: 50€;
- **Ticket C:** for non-ENCC members. Price: 200€;
- **Ticket D:** for local organisations in Turkey. Price: 50€.

Tickets A, B, and C cover:

- Access to all programme activities;
- Personalised training and mentoring;
- Training materials;
- Accommodation at the [Catch Sultanahmet Hotel](#) and meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) during the programme days (starting with dinner on October 7th and ending with lunch on October 10th).

Ticket D does **not** cover accommodation costs and breakfast.

Transport to and from the training retreat

Participants are expected to arrange and pay for their own travel to and from Istanbul. A small travel fund is available to support up to a maximum of 5 participants whose organisation cannot afford the full travel costs. Requests for travel support will be assessed by the selection committee and should be submitted by filling in the [travel support request form](#). ENCC encourages all participants to travel in the most environmentally sustainable way. We strongly recommend following the guidelines outlined in our [sustainable travel policy](#).

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