



ADVOCATE
EUROPE



CHANGE STARTS WITH US

SUPPORTING CIVIL SOCIETY IN EUROPE 2014-2019

WHAT IF HOPE WERE A MUSCLE?

In times when solutions for societal challenges have to be continuously re-thought and newly invented, pragmatic visionaries, shapers and creators come together from the midst of an engaged European and global civil society to effect social change. People who in doing chose to see what's wrong in the world and decide to build liveable futures.

Found and supported by the Advocate Europe idea challenge, a combined digital open innovation process and civil society project incubator, these people co-create a "Europe of possibility": Spaces and approaches that allow us to listen to each other, celebrate and live through the messiness of our diversity, as well as to experience dialogue and cooperation in the midst of this volatile, often harsh world. Handmade and crafted by a passionate civil society, this is the combined work of dozens of heads, hearts and hands.

Tracing the journey of the Advocate Europe idea challenge and community of project makers from 2014 to 2019, the pages capture the impact we created, the learning we gained and the design behind our approach.

Words and images are not big enough to express the human connections made and life realities changed over several years. So you may look at this, dear reader, as a journal in which you can glimpse parts of our work. Hoping that it inspires and supports you in standing up for a connected Europe.

*Don't put it down.
Your hope, that is.
Practice it.*

The Advocate Europe Team

ADVOCATE EUROPE

Advocate Europe is an idea challenge and civic incubator for European initiatives realised by MitOst and Liquid Democracy, funded by Stiftung Mercator. We support unconventional and transnational ideas that respond to Europe's present challenges.

Advocate Europe assists civil society actors by providing them with kick-start funding and mentoring to implement their project ideas in fields such as civic education, arts and culture, social innovation and advocacy. We fund up to 12 pioneering projects per round with grants of up to €50,000 each.

From centre to periphery, Advocate Europe brings project-makers together. Since 2014, we have collected more than 1,500 ideas from 45 European countries, connected 54,070 people on our online platform and invested in 32 winning initiatives that pilot new answers for a common European future. Behind each of these ideas are people: our European change-makers. Together, we connect Europe.



INCUBATING SOLUTIONS FOR EUROPE

Europe belongs to us – citizens, families, migrants, newcomers and policy-makers alike. We can determine its direction. But we need to put our heads, hearts and hands together and turn ideas into actions.

And we need to do it beyond established disciplines and conventional schools of thought. We know that we exist, from Reykjavik to Ankara, from Porto to Helsinki, in cities and in rural areas: individuals and groups who want to effect change and who want to pursue innovative work on Europe. As the initiators of Advocate Europe, we are convinced that a unified Europe is the best option for our continent. Only together can we find solutions to our challenges.

We strive for a Europe that is co-created by diverse voices, one that is based on open-mindedness and tolerance, that offers justice and equal opportunities, that protects individual rights, that guarantees democracy and the rule of law and that ensures freedom.



CREATED

Advocate Europe supports initiatives and people that are on their way to becoming European game-changers. We recognise and build on the drive of Europe's civil society to push for new responses to our challenges. Dive with us into the story of the organisation "kitev" who won the idea challenge with their project "Refugees for co-creative cities" and who continue to build spaces for cultural exchange and personal encounters in Oberhausen, Germany. Through this example, get a glimpse into the depth of the work and passion invested by each of the 32 initiatives we have supported over the years.

“...BECAUSE IN EUROPE WE ALL HAVE TO GET INVOLVED.”

By Elise Landschek

A LANDMARK FOR OBERHAUSEN

If you take the train to Oberhausen in the dark, you will see a message from afar: “Vielfalt ist unsere Heimat – Glück auf!” (“Diversity is our home – Glück auf!”) shines through the night in bright, large illuminated letters. Over a metre high, the lettering stands on a high-rise in a rather gloomy and inhospitable area near the railway station. It’s a strong symbol for the region struggling with many problems and the words “Glück auf!” also are a reminder of the Ruhr region’s past as the most important energy supplier and the cradle of the German economic miracle. Newspapers even bore the headline “Oberhausen has a new landmark” after the illuminated letters were turned on at the end of 2018.

“This is a symbol of a real community feeling that has been missing here,” says Agnieszka Wnuczak of the kitev Cultural Association, who planned and put up the illuminated letters together with her partner Christoph Stark. The two artists know a lot about symbols and new landmarks. When they came to Oberhausen by train from Berlin in 2006 for an art event, they saw the obviously empty station tower when they entered the city. “Such a great building, unused for years and

left to decay, we couldn’t accept it,” says Agnieszka Wnuczak. They explored the tower, a spacious square brick building from the 1930s with four floors, two huge empty water tanks and a dilapidated station hall reminiscent of a festival hall with high, curved windows in the basement. The two artists asked representatives of (the city and) the Deutsche Bahn for permission to use the tower and received it. Kultur im Turm e.V., in short: “kitev” was born. The first official act of the new users in 2010, even before they had extensively renovated the building, was to repair the large station clock on the tower. Idle for far too long, they added multiple neon lights to the clocks that change colours. The citizens of Oberhausen were thrilled; time didn’t seem to be standing still anymore in Oberhausen. That was the first symbol by kitev and also a cornerstone for all subsequent projects, such as Refugees for Co-Creative Cities sponsored by Advocate Europe. But more about that later...

LIKE A BEEHIVE

If you want to meet with Christoph Stark and Agnieszka Wnuczak, you have to be flexible and adapt to their bubbling energy and busy daily routine. The door to the Oberhausen train station tower is opened by one of the club’s employees. She’s a little out of breath because of the many stairs. There is no doorbell. Four floors up the stone stairs, past the association’s beautifully renovated project rooms, up to the last floor you enter the studio and office of the two artists. The view from the old, large windows of kitev’s office spans the entire city.

“They don’t want to leave the city to its fate but to rebuild and tackle it themselves together with others.”

The artists’ mobile phones keep ringing; new guests keep coming into the office all day long. Often one of the two has to go to their different project locations in Oberhausen to help with the bureaucracy or repair a broken water pipe. Almost every week, new ideas and project proposals are on the table that have to be financed, applications have to be written, important calls to the authorities have to be made. Their nine-month-old daughter also demands attention. The rule at kitev is if you’re cooking, you always cook a little more, because guests are fed at the same time. Of course, everyone knows one another; the association sees itself more like a large family than a hierarchical structure. Today Hakim, Raymond and Ahmad are visiting; all three were part of the Refugees for Co-Creative Cities project.

URBAN DEVELOPMENT AS A LEITMOTIF

In addition to its strong focus on artistic projects, the association stands for urban development from the bottom up; the two founders also like to speak of “vertical urban development.” They don’t want to leave the city to its fate and the slowly grinding mills of politics, but to rebuild and tackle it themselves together with others, to plan together, to combine strengths, not to trust that others will eventually fix it. These are the basic rules of the association. “Oberhausen is a

perfect place for us, there is so much to do here that it really makes sense,” says Christoph Stark. It is this sense of purpose that drives him in his work and in his life. Unlike big cities like Berlin and Hamburg, art or social projects have to be searched for in Oberhausen with a magnifying glass. The city has long been a blank spot on the map when it comes to self-organisation and urban development. There is plenty of need: the vacancy rate in the inner city is visibly high, many shops and offices in the pedestrian zones have empty windows. There are too few jobs; unemployment is just under ten percent. At the same time, many refugees who came to Oberhausen in 2015 lived in mass housing, were not allowed to work and were urgently looking for something to do, says Christoph Stark. This is when Wnuczak and Stark applied for support from Advocate Europe with their project by the name of Refugees for Co-Creative Cities. Advocate Europe is an idea challenge for European initiatives realised by MitOst and Liquid Democracy, funded by Stiftung Mercator. After submitting an initial idea sketch, kitev was placed on the shortlist by the Advocate jury and invited to the Idea Challenge Camp. After an intense weekend, the ten winners were chosen and kitev was among them.

“To plan together, to combine strengths, not to trust that others will eventually fix it.”

The basic idea behind the application for Advocate Europe was to bring together the vacancies and the desire to work, to let people decide and shape their own lives, and to involve them instead of deciding their fates for them, says Christoph Stark. “Everything revolved around the idea that there is a need here in a medium-sized, shrinking city that doesn’t get attention like it does in a metropolis. This results in reciprocity, solidarity. Together with the locals and new arrivals we tried to find out: How can we bring our needs together? And how can we create a project with charisma for other countries? Because our challenges are typical for cities all over Europe.”



THE ADVOCATE IDEA CHALLENGE KICKS OFF THE PROJECT

Christoph Stark explains that the idea givers and consultants were partners from Slovenia and Finland who had already implemented similar projects. They had given extremely good input on how collaborative urban development works – and what it costs. Of course, money is also needed for such a project, for working time, materials, conversion and operating costs. The reference to the call for proposals at Advocate Europe also came from the European project partners. The project and its European orientation perfectly matched the requirements. The partners from Slovenia and Finland initially took over the consulting, website support and communication in 2016 and are still on board today, albeit on a smaller scale. After Advocate had agreed to support the implementation of concrete ideas and the selection of actual locations, some time passed. Agnieszka Wnuczak says that the network meetings through Advocate Europe helped a lot and that getting to know many interesting project representatives from other countries has been very important. This exchange helped turn vague ideas into realities. The support for the strategic approach was just as important, for example through working aids such as the Theory of Change, Agnieszka says.

RAYMOND

Raymond came to Oberhausen from Guinea in 2015. He converted an old truck into a modern food truck – working as a mechanic, electrician, painter and carpenter. These were completely new skills for him, but he learned a lot under professional guidance during the conversion. Today Raymond is training in construction and has just extended his right to stay. He absolutely wants to live in Oberhausen and not go to any other German city, says Raymond. “The people here are like my family,” says Raymond.

EATING AND WORKING TOGETHER

Specifically, one of the ideas that emerged from Refugees for Co-Creative Cities is a mobile food truck, the Refugees’ Kitchen. Here refugees from different nations like Syria, Afghanistan, Eritrea, Guinea or Turkey cook specialities from their homeland together and sell it from the mobile food truck for a small charge. People from different cultural backgrounds start to talk to each other and get to know each other. The truck itself is also a joint project: the car was converted into a mobile kitchen by refugees and professionals.

A second cornerstone of the project is the “Oberhaus” (“upper house”), the high-rise with the neon sign that says, “Diversity is our home.”

“We looked out of our window in the station tower and saw this high-rise every day; it was in disrepute and was always in the newspaper. There was a flat on fire, or there were fistcuffs. And we thought we had to be able to do something with it,” Agnieszka says. The building was called the “junkie high-rise” by the people of Oberhausen. Many long-term unemployed, low-income and underprivileged people live here in small apartments; a maximum of 33 to 39 square metres. Almost a quarter of the living space was not used at that time. The façade and the interiors are dilapidated – the shops on the ground floor were empty for years. Kitev moved in down there in 2016 and renovated the rooms together with refugees – a new cultural centre for Oberhausen was created and thus another milestone in the Refugees for Co-Creative Cities project.

AHMAD

Ahmad came to Bochum from Syria in 2015. He often commutes to Oberhausen and calls Kitev his new home. Ahmad had to drop out of law school in Syria when he escaped. He would like to study medicine here, but hasn’t gotten a place yet. The collaboration in the renovation of the Oberhaus and the Refugees’ Kitchen was his salvation, Ahmad says. He felt very alone and depressed after his arrival in Germany. His wartime experiences traumatised him; there were many problems among refugees in the mass accommodation. The Refugees for Co-Creative Cities project gave him back the feeling he has a future. “This is a tangible opportunity for me,” says Ahmad. “You can try everything. Everyone is completely non-bureaucratic and open to you; this is incredibly important.” In addition, Ahmad learned German while working in the kitchen and has just passed his German exam at university level.

HAKIM

Hakim came to Germany from Afghanistan in 2015. He didn’t know anybody. He didn’t speak German. For a long time Hakim cooked Iranian, Afghan and Turkish food in the Refugees’ Kitchen. He learned German and a lot about other cultures, he says. In addition, the trained tailor has sewn covers for all the upholstered furniture from old jeans: every chair, every armchair in the “Oberhaus” and in the station tower now has a blue jeans cover. “I think it’s great that everyone contributes what they can,” says Hakim.



The “Unterhaus” (“lower house”) as the users call the ground floor of the high-rise is painted in friendly colours, orange, red and light green. There is a small kitchen, a counter, cosy sofas and a large dining table in the middle of the main room, which is sometimes converted into a workbench. Posters and pictures by the painting course members hang on the walls. Every now and then residents of the flats come down to build something or have repairs done, but most of the users come from outside.

“We were looking for rooms for our ideas, for our workshops. And we wanted to bring European themes and culture where they would otherwise never be. Because in Europe we all have to get involved,” says Christoph Stark. With all these ideas, one leitmotif is “Work against fear – the Oberhauseners’ fear of the foreign, the unknown. Each side has its fears; that’s what we are trying to fight.” At some point, they hope, the whole house will be a place of community.

WORKSHOPS EVERY DAY

Interested people can attend courses in the Unterhaus several times a week, from painting courses to dance and singing classes to film screenings and discussion rounds. Refugees meet Oberhausen locals; the workshops are mixed. From time to time, international network and citizens’ meetings are held there dealing with the further development of the Oberhaus. For example, the entrance to the residential building is not easily accessible for the disabled, there are no bicycle racks (although most residents depend on bicycles), a caretaker wouldn’t be a bad idea. These new ideas can gradually be implemented through a mixture of self-direction and subsidy financing. The renovated, empty flats are occupied by refugees escaping mass housing. In addition, more and more small apartments are being renovated and enlarged, and families should also be able to find a place here. The Vonovia housing association supports the association’s projects, which is unusual considering the tense real estate situation. But everyone benefits from the cooperation. The house can become a successful example of urban community development in the long term.

But it would be too easy if that were all. At the beginning of the year, Agnieszka and Christoph founded the Free University Oberhausen with faculties mostly oriented towards urban policy (with titles like “Life and Ownership – Who owns the city?”), courses and seminars, attendance certificates and certificates of

completion, all self-organised and free of charge. The seminars can be given by anyone who is particularly good at something or is particularly familiar with a topic. It’s in great demand; the courses have already received several hundred registrations from refugees and original Oberhauseners. “Oberhausen is becoming a university town – that increases the value of the region again,” says Christoph Stark.

KATRIN

Katrin was born in Oberhausen and attends the painting course for women on Mondays and the culture café on Tuesdays. As an administrative worker she has hardly any contact with other cultures, and she especially enjoys the exchange with refugee women. “Even if it sounds hackneyed, I particularly appreciate the way this broadens my horizons,” says Katrin. “I learn a great deal about other cultures and am amazed by the life stories some people here have had.” She is now also taking part in the new university’s debating club and wants to attend the seminar on how to build a 3D printer.

The university is the most recent project by the association since Advocate Europe’s sponsorship of Refugees for Co-Creative Cities. Of course, it has new funding and generous support from the city. The kitev makers also tour neighbouring European countries to tell other initiatives and associations their success story. It’s a charismatic project – an example for all of Europe.

“And we wanted to bring European themes and culture where they would otherwise never be. Because in Europe we all have to get involved.”

FACTS & FIGURES

ADVOCATE EUROPE
2015 - 2019

A EUROPEAN
DIGITAL COMMUNITY
CONSISTING OF

54,070 USERS

contributed 3,262 comments

A PORTFOLIO OF
**32 CIVIC
INITIATIVES**
FUNDED

in the thematic fields of migration, democracy and participation,
arts and culture, as well as urban development
with each project reaching on average 1,550 people offline
and each project with an online focus reaching
on average 76,786 people, excluding social media

MORE THAN
**1,600
IDEAS
COLLECTED**

coming from 45 countries spanning a distance of 8,397 km between
the easternmost applicant (Krasnoyarsk, Russia)
and the westernmost applicant (Maspalomas, Gran Canaria, Spain)

**150
PROJECT
MAKERS**
GATHERED

in 11 network meetings and hosted workshops on theory of change,
impact measurement or communication

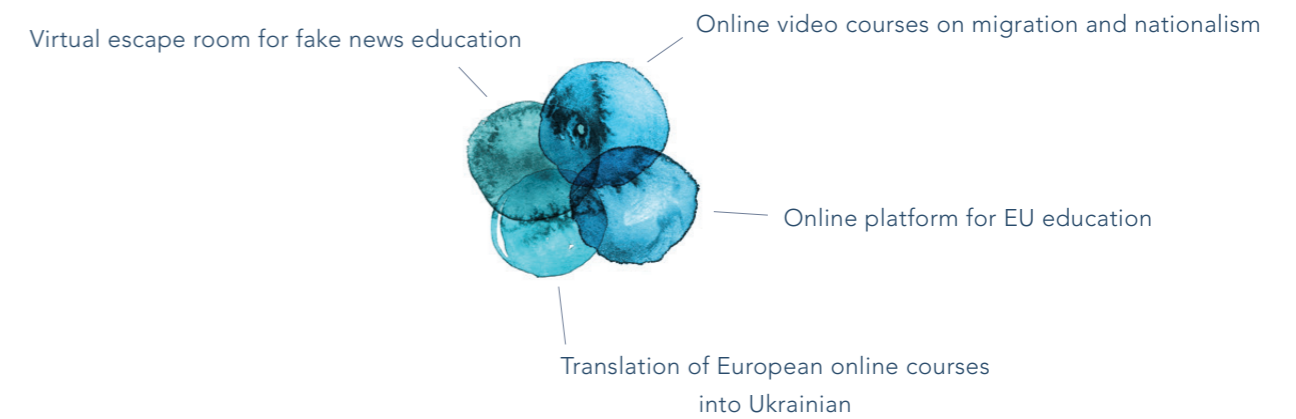
32 CIVIC INITIATIVES

were funded through Advocate Europe, each of which created its own kind of tangible output and value. They form a living collection of project-like molecules, impacting cohesion in Europe, both alone and together. Dive into the overview of all the "creations" of these five years, which

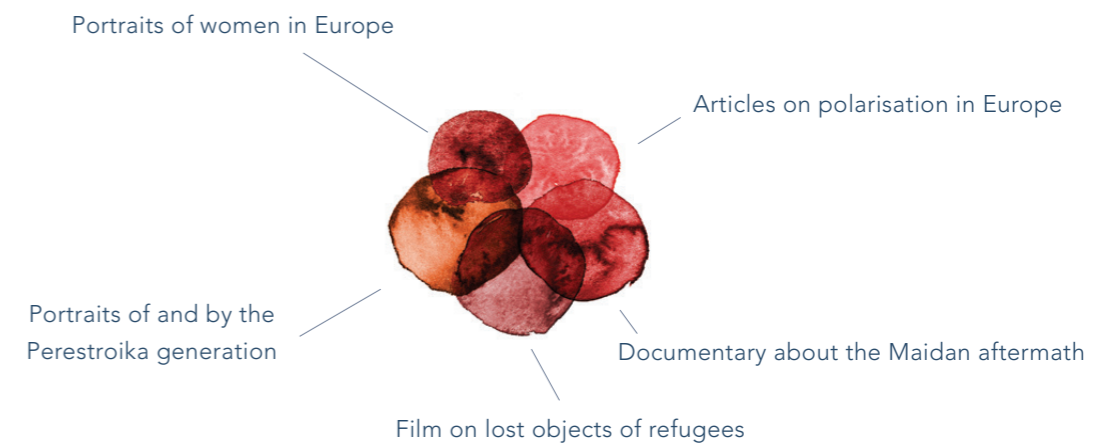


- > developed new capacity-building approaches for people and groups at the margins of the mainstream
- > ran digital education pilots on hot topics like nationalism or fake news
- > told yet unheard stories to give voice to those who are easily unheard
- > hosted meaningful encounters that fuel awareness and new forms of social connections
- > built an array of toolkits that feed forward our ways of living together in difficult situations, like making connections in a new home after displacement or finding one's way through political complexities, and
- > strengthened new forms of advocacy by promoting participatory approaches, building cross-sectoral coalitions and promoting climate justice.

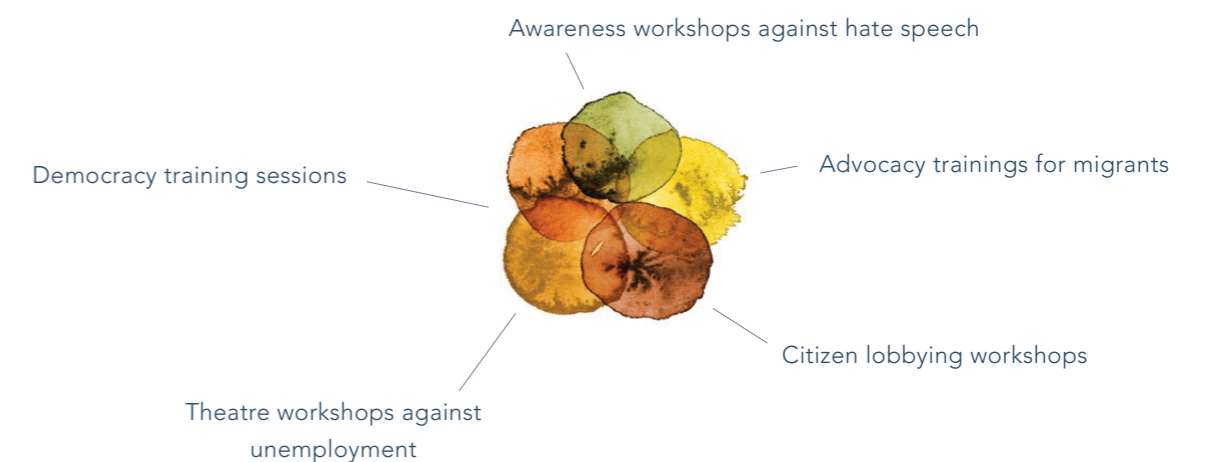
DIGITAL EDUCATION ENABLED



STORIES TOLD

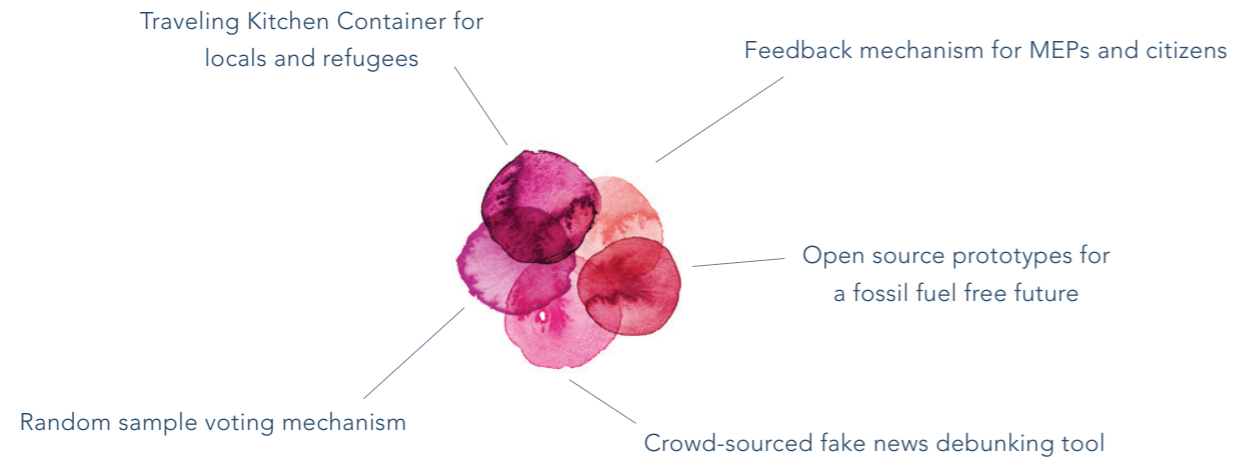


CAPACITY BUILDING FACILITATED

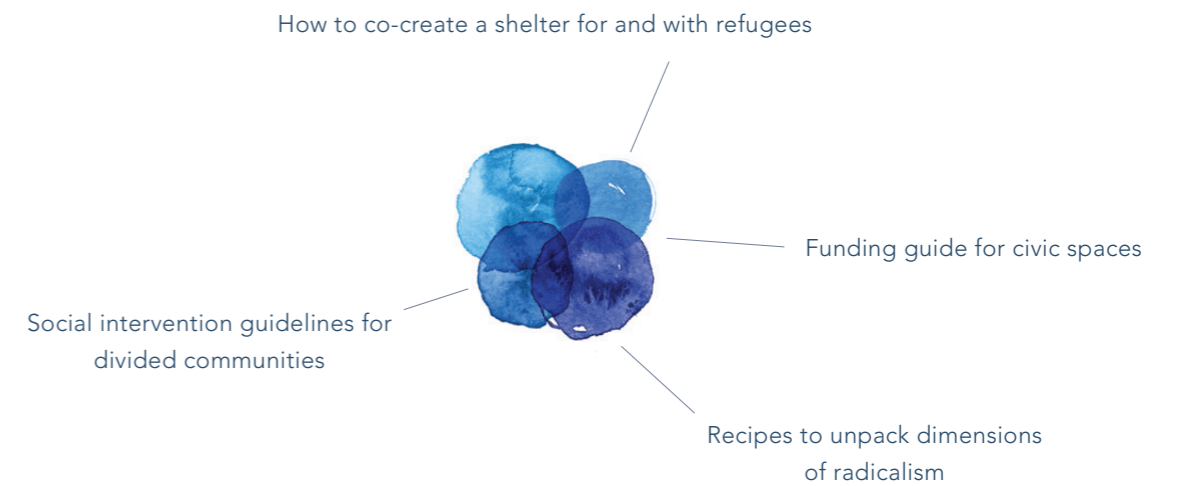


3 2 CIVIC INITIATIVES

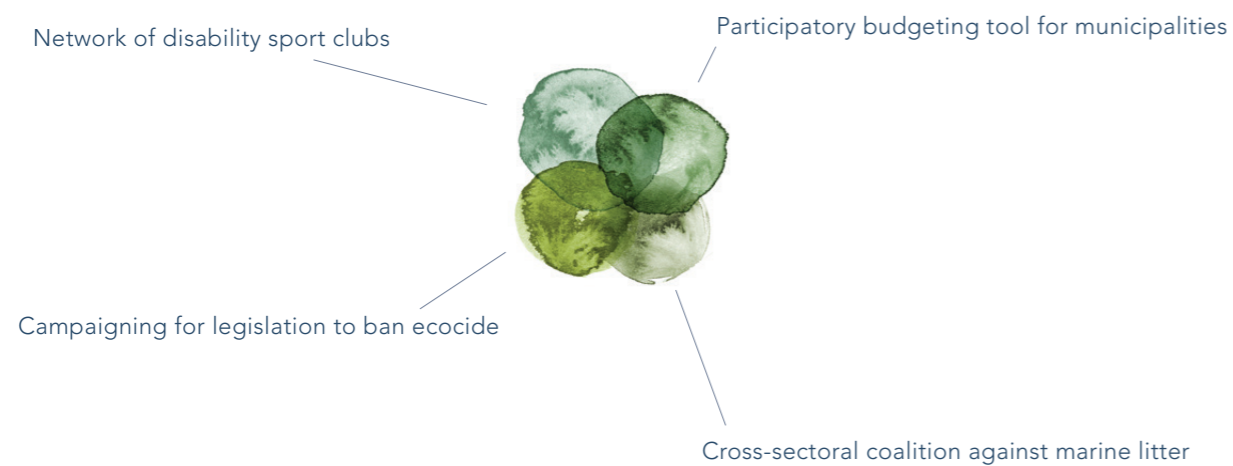
PROTOTYPES DESIGNED



TOOLKITS DEVELOPED



ADVOCACY STRENGTHENED



ENCOUNTERS HOSTED



Connections between Ukrainians and Europeans through art



CHANGEMAKERS

People are at the core of creating change – people who decide to invest their time, voluntarily or professionally, in projects that improve our societies. Advocate Europe recognises and builds on the passion and drive of civil society actors to enable new responses to challenges that affect us all.



JULIA-LENA SCHRÖDER

is a professional design thinker, workshop facilitator and idea maker. She navigates the world, advocating basic income and supporting the communities and initiatives she believes in in the cultural and activist scenes.

“ My best friend Rabea and I always wanted to do a project together. So when we saw the Advocate Europe call, we decided our time had come. It was 2015, and many refugees were arriving in Europe. So we started thinking: Well, when the refugees arrive, they are put into shelters, they have access to medical care – but how do they get to know the locals? And how do the locals get to know their new neighbours? So we thought: We’ll just do it like we do with our friends: invite everyone to cook and eat together.

From March until August 2016, we travelled from the South (Bari) to the North (Göteborg) of Europe with our mobile kitchen container, cooking with refugees and locals 79 times.

We didn’t encounter big issues while putting the project into practice: Everything went very smoothly. Our biggest challenge arose after we came back from our tour. What we had planned as a project with a fixed end had become so successful that we had to find a way to keep it going. But there was no money, no time, no energy left on our side. This was the biggest challenge: to try to make the right decisions in order for the project to continue.

We used the final months of 2016 to write our report and submit funding applications. We turned the European into a German project and were able to convince the German Federal Office for Migration and Refugees to fund us for another year. So at the beginning of 2017, we had a project to hand over to a new team, we gave them the container keys... and that was it! Now the Kitchen Container is travelling through German municipalities without us.

For me it was the first big project that I set up and led myself, with few people but with a big output and impact. I gained a lot of confidence in our ideas and in our capacities to organise things – because, somehow everything just worked according to plan. This is a very satisfying feeling. What I definitely learned is that when you have an idea – like travelling through Europe for a good cause – that most people think is crazy, that you should just do it. That we should try and put more of those ‘impossible’ ideas into practice. ”

THE TOPIC

MIGRATION

As the number of people seeking protection in Europe has grown substantially in recent years, we are challenged with questions like: How can we create a culture of welcoming and inclusion? How can we engage the potentials that every newcomer brings with them? How can we learn to embrace diversity together? Here civil society affirmed its role in organising and hosting spaces where we can listen to each other, share a little bit of our lived experience – a recipe, a game, a story – and, ultimately, recognise our shared humanity.

THE PROJECT

KITCHEN ON THE RUN

is a mobile integration incubator. The project travels through Germany and Europe with a kitchen built in a shipping container. In a homelike atmosphere, cooking evenings are organised that bring together refugees and locals at the kitchen table to reveal their favourite recipes, tell personal stories and start friendships. In the last three years, more than 3,500 people experienced personal encounters in this safe space in 200 events in 12 towns and cities.



MACIEJ NOWICKI

is the vice-president of the board of the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, Poland. He is also the co-founder and director of the International Film Festival WATCH DOCS, Human Rights in Film in Warsaw. Since 2016, he has been the coordinator of the FUTURE DOCS European platform for creative encounters of human rights defenders and documentary filmmakers. He is also the co-founder of the Social Institute of Film foundation and its board president.

“ For many years I have been working for the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, one of the biggest Human Rights NGOs in Poland. In 2001, we started a Human Rights Film Festival, which is for me a combination of two very important areas of activism: arts and human rights activism. During these years, my colleagues and I have observed that the activists who are struggling with human rights protection and the artists tackling those issues in cinema very rarely cooperate, while we were working with both. Hence the idea of FUTURE DOCS, a platform for creative encounters between those two groups. Because on one hand, documentary filmmakers are constantly looking for stories, for subjects, for inspiration and on the other, human rights defenders are sitting, metaphorically speaking, on stories that are important, that are compelling and very often are not heard.

So we brought those two groups together and created a formula that is well known for the filmmakers – the pitching formula – but reversed. The filmmakers

are not presenting film ideas to potential funders or partners, but they are the audience to whom the Human Rights defenders pitch topics, ideas and potential protagonists.

The motivation behind FUTURE DOCS was partly frustration. In our part of Europe, the tradition of the protest documentary was very strong under communism but didn't translate into contemporary practice. After 1989, the filmmakers didn't see the need to make such films anymore – they went more into fiction and into artistic filmmaking – while the topics of social justice or human rights were left to journalists and the media. We are noticing this very much in Poland right now, because of the crisis of democracy and the rule of law – there is a big need to tell these stories, it is obvious that not everything went well after the transition. Fortunately, there is now a new generation that is willing and trying to make these films, but it is very hard to fund them.”

THE TOPIC

ARTS AND CULTURE

Opening new horizons, inviting imagination and practising empathy when engaging with other people is at the core of how we approach civil society work in arts and culture. At a time when people easily drift apart due to polarisation, while fake news and black-and-white thinking take root in societies, art and culture can build bridges to get the know “the other”: people, their experiences and beliefs. When accessible to all – our neighbours, newcomers and school kids – cultural activities foster dialogue, cooperation and community building: The glue that holds democratic societies together.

THE PROJECT

FUTURE DOCS

The project FUTURE DOCS brings together documentary filmmakers and human rights activists to create new films about human rights issues. The specificity of the format lies in the pitch: The human rights activists pitch their stories, protagonists and locations in order to gain the filmmakers' interest. The numerous outcomes of the two editions of FUTURE DOCS entail five documentary films in the making, cooperation with prestigious documentary film festivals, similar local fora for cooperation created in Ukraine, Romania and Georgia, renewed funding and an upcoming third edition.



IRINA PARASCHIVOIU

is a researcher and a practitioner in technology and city development with a background in urban planning and is an advocate and activist at heart. She is the co-founder of Urban INC, a non-profit based in Bucharest, which develops educational and cultural projects to transform the way cities facing transition solve their problems.

“ I was involved in non-profits for many years, since I was 18. I feel most at ease working with different organisations and bringing people together that would have otherwise probably never met or worked together: bridging the gaps between businesses, non-profits, academia and research institutions.

The idea of EscapeFake came about a few years back when I first met Robert Praxmarer from POLY-CULAR, an interactive design and technology studio based in Salzburg. We decided to initiate a project about fake news because of everyone being desperate in their own countries, as many rounds of elections were happening at the same time with very disappointing results. For me, it was becoming very clear that this trend of spreading fake news in different countries was also reaching Romania and Austria. On the other hand, we noticed it was a very emotional debate to try and think about what it means to live in a post-truth world and what role technology plays in that. Because it relates to the work that POLY-CULAR does in a very intrinsic manner. When you work with technology and try to use it in a way that produces added value in the world, you really get to see the downside of it. And I think nobody expected the downside to look the way it did over the last three years. There is just not enough critical thinking around technology.

We see this especially from young people between 14 and 18, who have very different patterns of behaviour when it comes to social media than people who are even ten years older. This is why we thought: Ok, this is really the type of topic that needs to be put there on the table and that needs a form that is engaging for an audience that otherwise doesn't engage in politics or activism. Basically for people who are used to the way technology dictates daily life – the digital natives.

Augmented and virtual reality are very good for drawing attention; they're also very good for putting content out there. But in our opinion, it is not complete without a discussion. It is a very promising instrument, but not an endpoint. That's why we are seeking to work with as many interested educators, activists and NGOs as possible.”

THE TOPIC

CITIZENSHIP EDUCATION

Our work supports societies on the basis of openness, empathy and tolerance through the means of citizenship education. Given the decisive role technology plays in our daily lives and our democracies, it is essential for young people to grow up with a life-long learning mindset so they become active and responsible citizens and critical thinkers. Citizenship education needs to take up the challenges our times confront it with.

THE PROJECT

ESCAPEFAKE

The project EscapeFake is an interactive augmented reality escape room for school kids between 14 and 18 to learn about fake news. The free app is designed and developed together with them, which is crucial for ensuring that it is used. It can be downloaded on phones and tablets and used for democracy education in- or outside of school.

RADOMIR LAZOVIĆ

is an activist and analyst with a background in graphic design who is passionate about the urban transformations of cities. He has been an active member of the independent cultural and activist scene of Serbia as a cofounder of the Institute for Urban Policies in 2010, promoting civic participation and the right to the city.

“ Before this project I was involved in the artistic, urbanist activist scene in Belgrade, working on ideas, initiatives and projects on how to reinvent some spaces like closed factories or abandoned streets – in the so-called ‘urban deserts’– the parts of town that have been left behind. We transformed them into community or cultural centres or street galleries. By trying to make these spaces available to citizens and using them, I’ve learned a lot about how the city works, how it is planned and developed. Later on, all of this led to political activism in the group Let’s Not Drown Belgrade, which proposed a programme for a sustainable city and protested against a megalomaniac development project of the Belgrade waterfront.

The WeBudget project is connected to the idea that citizens should know how their money is being spent and have an influence on how the city is being developed through the budget. In the end, it doesn’t matter if a project is about the budgets or if it’s about the decision making, the fact is that citizens are left out of the making of the urban concepts. The political and economic elite are working together on making the city a place for their profits – especially in Eastern parts of Europe. So for us, to advocate for participatory budgeting is already a very concrete way of helping civil society influence the development of the city.

One of our biggest challenges lies in the engagement of the citizens. Is there going to be enough interest for people to get involved? We are just providing the tool, and it is up to people to use it. We can only provide the possibility, some motivation and some knowledge on how to use the tool through our schools of budgeting. We really hope we can manage to create an empowered community that will get involved in budget monitoring and further exist without us.”



THE TOPIC

URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Democracy begins at our doorsteps and in our neighbourhoods when we engage to shape our public spaces and local realities. How can citizens’ voices take their rightful place in co-creating the processes and policies that determine the future of our cities? For us, it begins with embracing three main principles: being collaborative, inclusive and participatory in our social interactions.

THE PROJECT

WEBUDGET

The project WeBudget focuses on monitoring and analysing local budgets, working both digitally and with three cities: Messina, Budapest and Belgrade. The project’s open-source app is an easy-to-use desktop and mobile application that can be filled out by anyone, for free. To support the use of the app and advocacy around budget literacy, WeBudget has hosted three schools of budgeting, enabling citizens to understand better how their city budgets are made and influenced.



THE TOPIC

MIGRATION

Seeking to ensure that migration policies, practices and debates take into account the voices of those most affected by them, our civil society interventions empower migrants and refugees to take the stage and share their needs, insight and expertise. Such actions open spaces for public conversations and policy-making that invite us all to live forward together.

THE PROJECT

REFUGEES IDEAS AND SOLUTIONS FOR EUROPE

The project RISE – Refugees Ideas and Solutions for Europe – is a network led by Refugee-led Organisations (RLOs), refugee communities, organisations and individuals in different European countries. Established in 2016, today RISE has approximately 50 network members from 20 different countries. RISE is regularly consulted in policy discussions about matters affecting refugees in Europe by European institutions, think tanks or international organisations such as UN-HCR and European refugee organisations.

MASOOMA TORFA

is a PhD candidate in migration and refugee studies at the University of Hohenheim, currently conducting comparative research between Greece and Germany about Afghan and Syrian refugees, integration opportunities and challenges. She is the cofounder Female Fellows, a Stuttgart-based NGO bringing together local and migrant women to create tandems and the coordinator of different integration projects.

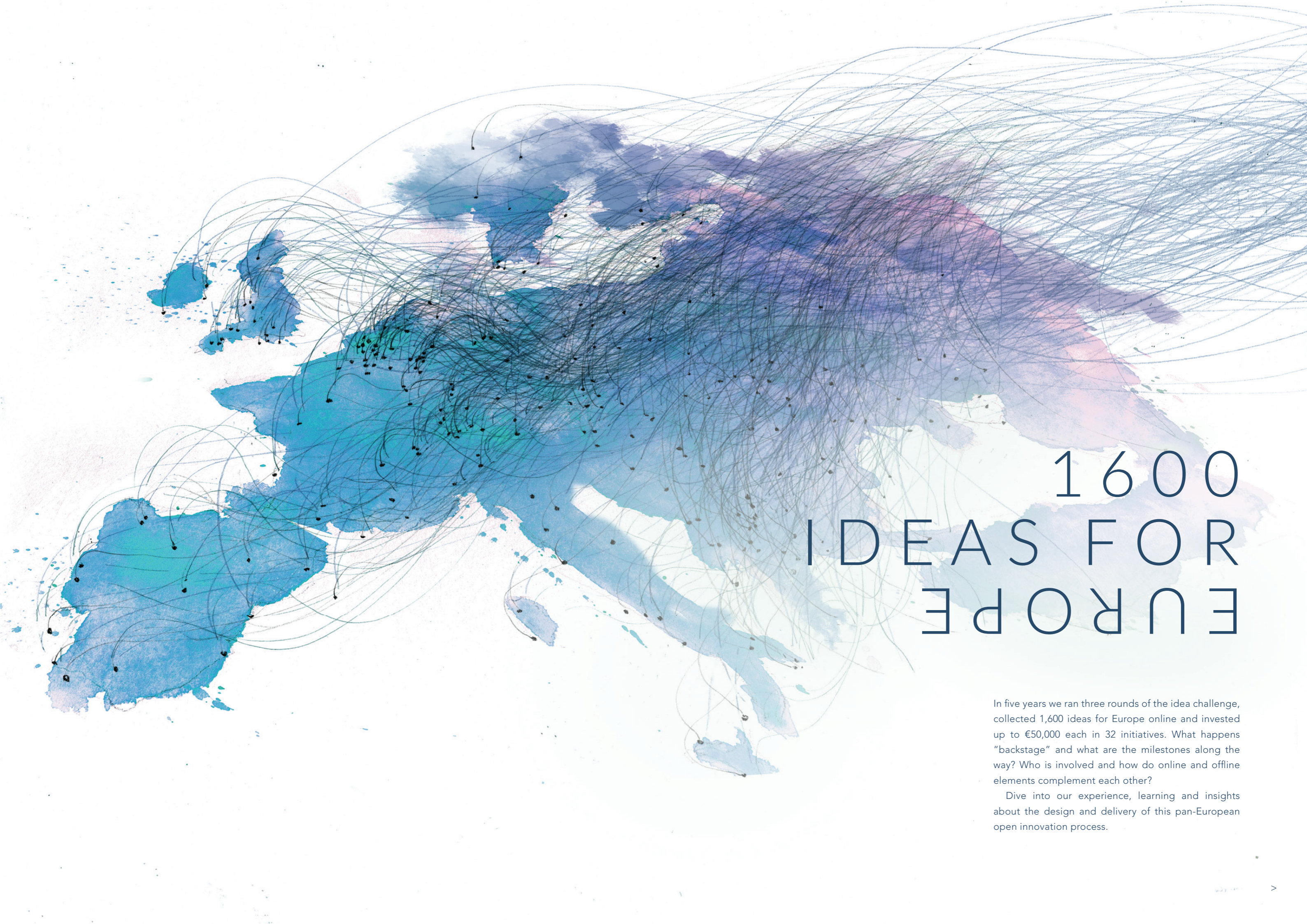
“ During my Master studies at university in Stuttgart I was volunteering for several refugee support initiatives and I was approached by members of the RISE network. It was the beginning of the creation of the network and they were searching for national contact points and someone who is already active in the refugee supporting area and is interested in joining the network from Germany. The aim of RISE was to bring refugee-led organisations together to build a network, get active in the decision making, policy and practical integration of refugees in Europe, learn and exchange about the different contexts and how to support and empower each other in order to help refugees better all over Europe. At the first meeting, five organisations came together. After that, it exploded. More and more joined.

When RISE started, one of the big challenges lay in the roles and responsibilities: Who does what? How do we shape this project? I was the coordinator of one of the four committees: the one about the labour market integration of the refugees. It was a big puzzle: to somehow bring people around the table to talk about the same topics but coming from very different realities. Although it's all Europe, you can hardly compare the access to the labour market for refugees in Spain and Germany, for instance.

In this one year, there was a huge improvement. Some of the people were already active but didn't

have registered organisations. I was one of those. I stepped up from being an individual supporting member to co-founding my own organisation. But much more happened. Before RISE, there were only a few refugee-led organisations active in Europe. Now, several new refugee and migrant supporting organisations have been established in different countries such as Sweden, France, Germany, Spain and Norway that were established by individual supporters that got empowered and connected through the RISE network. Simply by knowing what and how others do it in other countries. Beyond skill-sharing, I think all of the RISE members dramatically increased their knowledge in refugee and asylum law and policies.

If it weren't for RISE I think I would have stayed on the very local level here in Stuttgart. I now have a very vast perspective on the topic: that we need to understand and compare the local practical integration activities and integration policies of refugees at the local level, on the city level, to the national level for Germany for example. When you go to Brussels at the European level it's more the asylum, migration and integration policies and the comparative cases of EU member states at the interplay with the EU and UN supranational levels - they are not talking about Stuttgart anymore. That's the point. You need to grasp all these levels”



1600 IDEAS FOR EUROPE

In five years we ran three rounds of the idea challenge, collected 1,600 ideas for Europe online and invested up to €50,000 each in 32 initiatives. What happens “backstage” and what are the milestones along the way? Who is involved and how do online and offline elements complement each other?

Dive into our experience, learning and insights about the design and delivery of this pan-European open innovation process.



1 RATIONALE OF THE IDEA CHALLENGE

Advocate Europe is an idea challenge and civic incubator for European initiatives realised by MitOst and Liquid Democracy, funded by Stiftung Mercator. We support unconventional and transnational ideas from civil society actors that respond to present societal challenges.

The idea challenge combines both online and off-line elements. One "round" begins with the call for proposals and closes with the end of the funding period of the chosen winning initiatives, lasting 18 months overall.



2 ELIGIBILITY AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Advocate Europe has three core criteria: We funded initiatives and projects that

- > strengthen connection and cohesion in Europe. We welcome proposals that support the exchange of people and ideas, and promote international and intercultural understanding. Our goal is to identify critical topics for the further development of a unified Europe and to bring together key groups such as stakeholders, activists, administrators, young people and change-makers. In 2018 our call for ideas had a focus on strengthening democracy in Europe.
- > are surprising and unconventional. We support original approaches and courageous ideas that are oriented towards the current and future needs of Europe's civil society and citizens. We are looking for ideas that help to design the future, not just manage the status quo.
- > are based on everyday life. We are looking for project ideas that have practical relevance and a clear relationship to the everyday life of people in Europe.

Non-profit organisations and initiatives from countries across Europe are eligible to apply: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and Vatican City.

3 INCENTIVES

Advocate Europe assists civil society actors by providing them with kick-start funding, mentoring and access to a network of peers to implement their project ideas. We fund up to 12 pioneering projects per round with grants of up to €50,000 each. Often, though not exclusively, we provide the first funding for a promising initiative.

// **BEING PART OF ADVOCATE EUROPE MEANS:**

We had our idea for some time, but could not find a supporter willing to help us make it reality. Once the pilot project was implemented successfully, it really is much easier to seek further support among potential donors. Indeed, Advocate Europe transformed an innovative idea into reality."

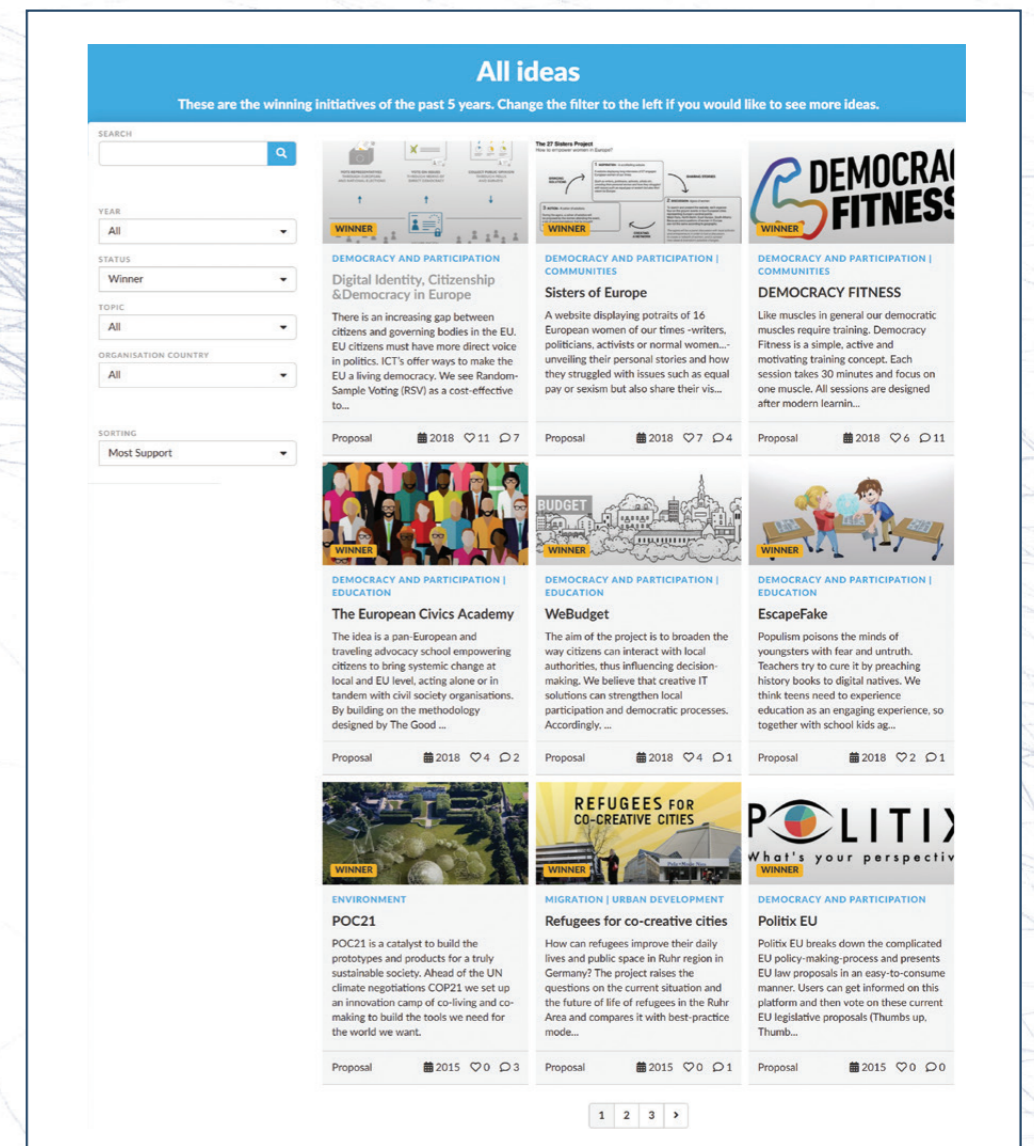
Maciej Nowicki, FUTUREDOCS

4 ONLINE PLATFORM DESIGN

In 2014, we started building our online platform with a particular focus: Openness, transparency and creativity. In partnering with Liquid Democracy, we teamed up with one of the leading non-profits in Europe working towards digital tools that enable participation. Our open innovation approach resulted in high numbers of applications and showcased the enormous number of ideas existing in civil society, of which some 1,600 have made their way to us. All of the ideas are compiled in our open idea space, the digital heart of our website,

for every reader to follow, comment on and debate.

Through outside eyes: According to two external sociological evaluations conducted in 2016, more than two-thirds of people using our online platform reported that reading our digital 'idea space' had inspired them for their future work. 75 percent of them got to know new organisations working on similar issues and 65 percent found out about new initiatives in their neighbourhoods. This is how we connect and inspire people and ideas that can change Europe.



Open and accessible: In our digital idea space anyone can read, filter and comment on all of the 1,600 ideas contributed by the community.



Gereon Rahnfeld is a board member and project manager at Liquid Democracy. With a background in legal and cultural studies his work focuses on building digital spaces that allow people to co-decide in an online discourse largely free of moderation.

What are the core principles Liquid Democracy's work is based on?

We firmly believe in the benefits of participatory structures that are not hollow and superficially realised but that permeate every part of society – be it the political, societal, economic or cultural sphere and so on. We aim to adhere to a discursive culture in which everyone is able to take part in the decision-making process affecting them.

What is specific about your approach?

Giving people a voice doesn't just mean allowing them to participate in a voting process. What's much more important is letting them discuss what's on the agenda. Therefore, our focus lies especially on the part of the process that pre-

pares people for the actual act of making a decision (e.g. brainstorming, idea challenge, text discussion, etc.).

What model of motivation lies behind the Advocate Europe process?

The idea challenge enables funds to be allocated in a different way than is often done in the civil society realm, which is extremely helpful. It democratises the process itself by giving the community a say in who should be funded. Due to its transparency, the platform also helps people to connect with others and to build alliances between different sectors, approaches or countries. The combination of these two aspects is what makes Advocate Europe so interesting and special.

5 OUTREACH

Our calls spread across Europe, through the established networks of MitOst, Liquid Democracy and Stiftung Mercator as well as through connecting to individuals and fellows from our previous work with civil society who "snowballed" the call through a myriad of mailing lists, Facebook groups, personal contacts, on Twitter and beyond.

In 2015, we laid the groundwork in terms of outreach and ended up with an astounding 668 applications from 42 European countries for the first call. In the two following editions, we kept up this volume of outreach, receiving 575 applications in 2016 and 474 in 2018.

The applicants range from citizen movements, schools and cultural networks to social enterprises, think tanks and research institutions. Thank you once again to all the project makers for sharing your idea for Europe.

> YOU CAN STILL READ, FILTER AND COMMENT ON ALL OF THE 1,600 IDEAS IN OUR IDEA SPACE.

6

IDEA ASSESSMENT AND SELECTION PROCESS

In three rounds of our challenge we ran two types of selection processes, which mainly differ in duration and depth of personal contact and interaction with applications in the process. Here's a step-by-step guide:

> Online: Answering our call for ideas by submitting an idea sketch on our platform is the first stage in the challenge. We ask for a rough but comprehensive pitch of the project idea and for a 'guesstimate' of the general categories of expenses. Applicants determine the amount of funding themselves, the limit being €50,000.

> Offline: The second stage is for our reading team to read all idea sketches. This means eight practitioners from civil society in different parts of Europe with experience in the fields of social innovation, community development, civic education, human rights or systems change take a detailed look at all applications, resulting in a longlist of 60 to 90 ideas.

> Offline and online: In the third stage MitOst and Stiftung Mercator together curate the shortlist, which contains 30 to 50 ideas. Meanwhile the online community votes for the 'Community Award' given to the idea with the highest number of votes. The winning idea is included in the shortlist and receives start-up funding of between 1,000 and 5,000.

Learning: The original idea was to enable the online community to co-shape the selection process. As we encountered cases of abuse of this voting mechanism, we revisited our understanding of "community" and decided to limit the voting rights to past and current applicants. Once only people with a stronger stake or past experience were allowed to vote, it worked much better.



Offline and /or online: Idea Challenge Camp or Personal Contact with Applicants:

In all three challenge rounds we kept close contact with applicants on the shortlist, asking them to provide further information before the jury meeting, prepare a video pitch and share a detailed financial plan. In the 2018 edition, we even gathered the project makers behind all shortlisted ideas at the Idea Challenge Camp for four days. During this meeting we worked together on the idea sketches and explored the project design as well as Theory of Change.

Bringing all shortlisted organisations together resulted not only in more clear project ideas, which were then forwarded to the jury. The meeting also evolved our sense of "network" and allowed us to grow the community of change-makers as we took a collaborative approach to the meeting.

Through outside eyes: The fact that participants loved giving and receiving feedback on each other's project ideas was noted as "outstanding" in our external evaluation in 2019 which enabled the ideas to grow further.

// BEING PART OF ADVOCATE EUROPE MEANS:

One key discussion with Anthony about one key risk we're worried about (the topic, migration, being too divisive) felt like a real "phew!" moment. This will definitely impact the final submission greatly. The feedback sessions made it obvious what we should communicate more clearly in the application. Also, we extended our network profoundly – I think we will now submit the application with 5 -10 partner organisations (before we were 4)."

> Offline: Jury deliberation and selection of winning ideas

In the final selection stage, our interdisciplinary jury meets for one day to select up to twelve winning ideas. The jury consists of think tank members, curators, scientists, former winners and foundation representatives from a diversity of backgrounds and experience. Experts and practitioners such as Dr Sylwia Spurek (Former Deputy Commissioner for Human Rights, Poland), Josef Janning (Senior Policy Fellow European Council of Foreign Relations) or Mareike Geiling (Founder of Refugees Welcome) have selected our 32 winning ideas.

A catalogue of decisive perspectives

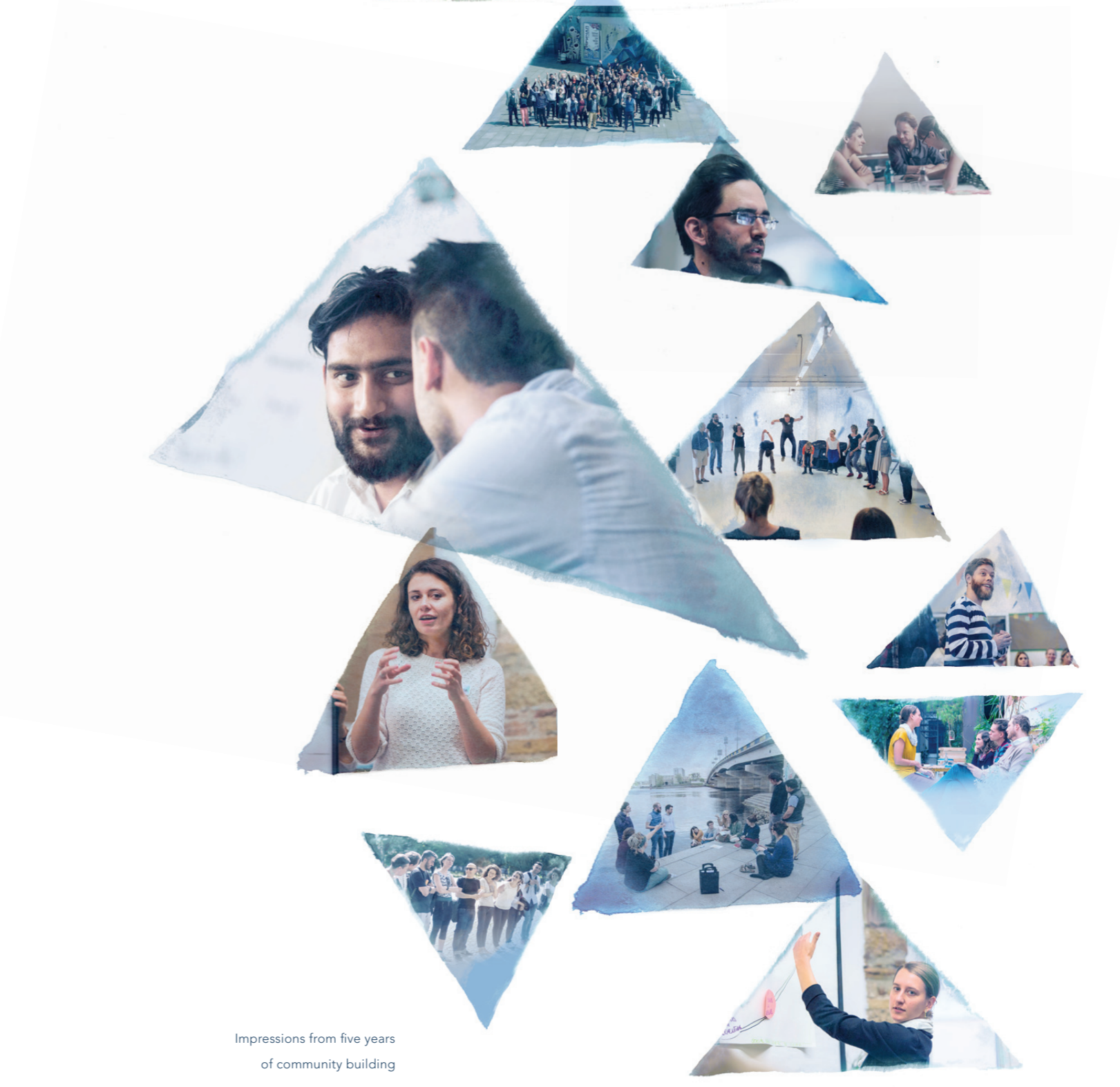
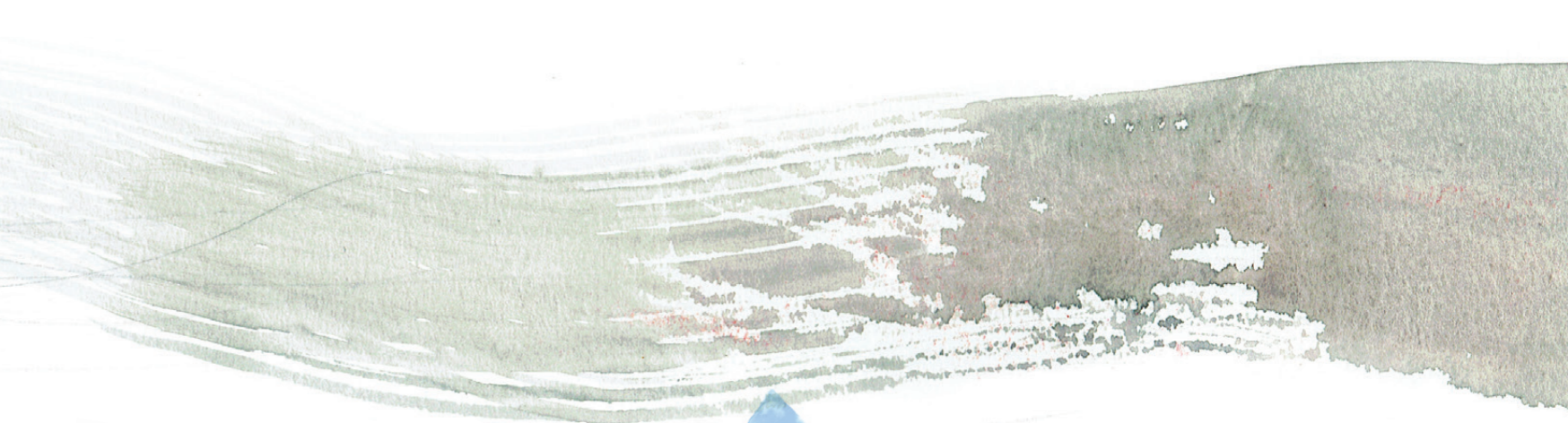
Tracing the lines of discussion at the meetings of our jurors, reading team and shortlist curators, here is a collection of pivotal questions that were asked:

> On change: What makes people shift their reality? What activates the world to change? What is the real desire to change?

> On feasibility: How do the intended impact and challenges addressed by the idea fit together? How are the relevant stakeholders involved? How sustainable is the idea?

> On people and places in Europe: How does the idea take into account what is going on in its specific "corner of Europe" while keeping the bigger European picture in mind? How are vulnerable groups treated and included? What are the bridging spaces between Eastern and Western Europe?

> On the connections between the ideas: Could these initiatives connect to a wider movement? How could the projects strengthen the ecosystem behind them? Are there ideas that connect to the larger policy discourse on democracy for Europe?



Impressions from five years
of community building

7

SUPPORTING IDEAS AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

For us, supporting a project means far more than funding. We mentor all project makers on their way to implementing their idea. To furnish them with tools, we host workshops on topics ranging from measuring impact to communication. And we foster an atmosphere of collaboration so that in the end, peers are working together.

TAILORED SUPPORT.

"All projects and people are different and need different kinds of support at different times" is one of the basic assumptions we work on. Supporting a portfolio of 32 initiatives overall, around eight to eleven during each round, means being able to grasp and engage with diverse issues and problems, both cheer-leading and questioning project teams along the way. Some organisations need support when setting up a non-profit or tips on how to administer €50,000 properly. Others, even with years of experience in the field, benefit both from advice and a listening ear on their communications material. Clarifying key messages or thinking together about the channels through which target groups might be reached with an outsider to the project is essential.

THEORY OF CHANGE

One key tool in our arsenal is the "Theory of Change" approach. Early on in the Advocate Europe journey, each winning initiative is asked to clarify and deepen their project design through this model – one of many approaches that allows project makers to find blind spots in their approach and think strategically about their work with impact orientation in mind.

//

BEING PART OF ADVOCATE EUROPE MEANS:

Theory of Change was helpful: When you have a project, it is always good to think it through a second time and consider it from another perspective: you find mistakes or gaps or aspects you forgot and which you can discover anew."

Through outside eyes: According to an external sociological evaluation conducted in 2016, the Theory of Change approach was continuously used by our winning teams, also for other projects.

PEER-TO-PEER COMMUNITY

"There are no silver bullet solutions for Europe's problems": This embodies our belief that all projects we support, and many, many, many others' work might eventually add up to solutions through which societal challenges in Europe can be tackled. Hence, we work towards building a community from amongst the people behind winning initiatives and shortlisted projects that works together and stays connected: for example through learning together and keeping each other up to date on insight in respective fields. We share news and announce funding opportunities from the civil society realm and open doors to relevant conferences, events and trainings that might not be on everyone's agenda.

NETWORK MEETINGS

Much of our work manifests itself during network or community meetings: During these three to four-day events, we gather our winning teams and/or applicants from shortlisted projects to exchange and offer a reflection as well as rejuvenation space for their work. Since 2014, we invited project makers to eleven gatherings.

//

BEING PART OF ADVOCATE EUROPE MEANS:

They don't just sit in a 'funders' chair.' It was a truly empathetic feeling of 'We want to understand the project and help make it better. We want it to happen.'"

//

BEING PART OF ADVOCATE EUROPE MEANS:

To be honest, I left the first network meeting with fireworks in my head. It was great, they did incredible work."

Project | Organisation | Country | Partner organisation | Country

Beyond 91 | Babel Deutschland e.V. | Germany | cafebabel.com | France
DeCiDe | Alexander von Humboldt Institute for Internet and Society (HIIG) | Germany | Berlin Social Science Center (WZB) | Germany | The Humanized Internet | Switzerland
DeFence | Photography Department - MOME University of Arts and Design Budapest | Hungary | Institut Für Rechts und Kriminalsoziologie | Austria | Royal Academy of Fine Arts | Netherlands
Democracy Fitness | Demokratisccenen | Denmark
DeRadika | Akademie Solitude | Germany | DeRadika | Germany
End Ecocide on Earth | End Ecocide | Belgium
EscapeFake | Urban INC | Romania | Polycular | Austria
Establishment of marine litter recycling stations | Aegean Rebreath | Greece
EU Civics Academy | The Good Lobby | Spain
Euro Education | Social Unity | Ukraine
Flüchtlinge Willkommen - Refugees Welcome | Mensch Mensch Mensch e.V. | Germany
Funding the co-operative city | Eutropan | Italy
Future Docs | Social Institute of Film | Poland
GaliciaKult | Ukrainian Charity Foundation "The Depths of Art" | Ukraine | The Center for Urban History of East Central Europe | Ukraine | Yermilov Centre | Ukraine
Growth Initiative | HUMBOLDT-VIADRINA Governance Platform | Germany
Hate-free Cities | Nesehnutí | Czechia | Youth Association DRONI | Georgia | Omladinski kulturni centar Herceg Novi | Montenegro
Into Society through Sport | Embarquement Immédiat | Belgium
JobActEurope | Projektfabrik | Germany
Kitchen on the run | Verein Containerküche Refugium | Germany | Über den Tellerrand | Germany
Localisation of the best European MOOCs for Ukrainians | Prometheus | Ukraine
Lost and Found | Associazione 21 luglio | Italy
Maidan the Aftermath | THINKYOUNG | Belgium
Migration Matters | Migration Matters | Germany Global Affairs Institute, LSE | United Kingdom | Give Something Back to Berlin | Germany
POC21 | OpenState | Germany | Ouishare | France
Politix | PolitixEU | Belgium
Refugees for cocreative Cities | Kitev | Germany | IPOP | Slovenia | Aalto University | Finland
RISE | The Greek Forum For Refugees | Greece | European Council on Refugees & Exiles | Belgium
ROC21 | Open State | Germany | Switxboard | Austria | Refugee Open Ware | Turkey
Sisters of Europe | Oikomedia | Greece | Cafebabel Berlin | Germany | Babel International Association | France
The Agora Project | Hostwriter | Germany | Oikomedia | Greece | Correlations | Netherlands
TraceMap | TraceMap | Germany | iRights Lab | Germany
WeBudget | Ministry of Space | Serbia | Parliament Watch Italy | Italy | K-Monitor | Hungary

WINNING INITIATIVES

ADVOCATE EUROPE
2015 - 2019

FEATURED

Winning initiatives funded by Advocate Europe were featured in national and international online media and print such as

Al Jazeera, arte, bbc.com, Berliner Zeitung, BILD.DE, Dagens Nyheter, De Correspondent, Deutschlandradio Kultur, Deutsche Welle, El País, Enorm, The Guardian, heute, Huffington Post Greece, irishtimes.com, Les Courier des Balkans, Libération, Lonely Planet, New York Times Magazine, npr, POLITICO, Radio Praha, reuters.com, Süddeutsche Zeitung, welt.de or DIE ZEIT.

AWARDED

Recognised for their potential and inspiration, winning initiatives were presented with these awards:

Big Beautiful Building Award
Content Award Vienna
Journalism Competition: Belarus in Focus Award
Migration Media Award
N.I.C.E. Award
Schwarzkopf-Europa Award
Smart Hero Award

FUNDED

Enabling them to continue their work, winning initiatives secured financial resources through further funding sources.

Amongst these are:

Ashoka, anstiftung, BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt, Der Partitatische, Engagement Global, Erasmus+, European Cultural Foundation, Federal Agency for Civic Education Germany, Federal Office for Migration and Refugees Germany, Fondazione Virgilio Sieni, Google Impact Challenge, Hamburg Pride e.V., Nordic Development Fund, UNO-Flüchtlingshilfe e. V.



CHANGE STARTS SŊ HLIIM

Why we engage and shape our democracies
Voices from the community over the years

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

"Nobody says that democracy is bad. I think we all agree on that. The question is rather: How efficient is democracy nowadays? Do we have the same standards for all the issues? Do we have the same criteria? I think that should be the main question even for involving civil society."

"Human rights NGOs, from their practice know not only crucial socio-political problems, but also powerful human stories behind them that can inspire ideas for new influential documentaries."

"The only way to improve political solutions is to have a better-informed public, capable of demanding better solutions."

"The cases of Trump and Brexit allow us to stand up for the world. And stand up doesn't necessarily mean to talk – but to be proud of what you believe in, try to connect to solve societal problems. Democracy is bargaining; it is a compromise, a place we are being proud and loud about what we believe in."

"What are we consulted about? What is included in the democratic mechanisms we get to decide about? Why aren't environmental issues more part of the debate?"

"We believe that Europe needs much stronger cooperation between bottom-up and top-down urban development models, it needs actors that are able to communicate with all the stakeholders of urban transformation."

"We are different – we have different views on what is a sustainable way to go, the future. But our future is made in democratic dialogue. I think we have to be discussing – even when we don't agree."

"We seek to help people learn more about our European neighbours, their culture, their societies, and their daily challenges."

"Everybody is an ARTIST! What happens if you experience that you are the creator of your future? You will take on responsibility and develop perspectives for yourself and others."

"During the previous year, due to the social tension, political conflicts, migration and religious fundamentalism, it became more than urgent to combat the phenomenon of 'hate speech' all around Europe and in the local communities as well. We are doing this project to connect our powers and think globally and act locally."

"I asked myself, what are the values of democracy? ... I'll keep on searching for the answer."

PRACTISE HOPE,
GET ENGAGED AND
DON'T FORGET THAT
CHANGE BEGINS
WITH US ALL.

Some ideas for everyday activism

>

ASK YOURSELF WHAT SOCIAL CHANGE YOU WANT.
BE CURIOUS.
CONNECT WITH YOUR NEIGHBOURS.
DECIDE ABOUT THE VALUES MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU.
ENJOY COMPLEXITY AND EXPLORING GRAY AREAS.
FIND ALLIES.
GET TOGETHER WITH LIKE-MINDED AND LIKE-HEARTED PEOPLE AND THOSE
WITH VERY DIFFERENT IDEAS.
ALSO, GROW VEGETABLES.
HELP OTHERS.
INQUIRE ABOUT ALL ASPECTS OF A TOPIC. THERE IS USUALLY MORE THAN
CATCHES THE EYE.
JOIN A CHOIR, A GARDEN CLUB, A PARENTS' ORGANISATION, WHICH
MAKES YOUR HEART LEAP?
KEEP LEARNING.
LOVE.
MAKE DONATIONS TO ORGANISATIONS THAT WORK ON CAUSES CLOSE TO YOU.
NAME THE BOUNDARIES OF YOUR VALUES.
ORGANISE IN YOUR LOCAL COMMUNITY, ONLINE AND INTERNATIONALLY.
PRACTISE CIVILITY, SELF-CARE AND HUMILITY.
QUESTION IMBALANCES OF POWER.
REFLECT YOUR PRIVILEGES.
SIGN A PETITION YOU STAND FOR, WHETHER IT IS ABOUT AIR POLLUTION OR
LOCAL KEWTS.
SPEAK UP AGAINST INJUSTICE. STAND UP FOR YOUR VALUES. SLOW DOWN.
TRANSULATE & FLYER FOR AN ORGANISATION CLOSE TO YOUR BELIEFS.
USE YOUR VOTE. AND KNOW FOR WHOM YOU ARE VOTING.
VALUE OTHERS.
WELCOME CHANGE. IT IS THE ONLY CONSTANT.
XEROX THOSE RECEIPTS FOR YOUR FINANCIAL REPORTS.
YEGAN FOR DEMOCRACY.
ZOOM IN AND ZOOM OUT, ALTER YOUR PERSPECTIVES.

PARTNERS

Advocate Europe is an idea challenge implemented by MitOst, in cooperation with Liquid Democracy, funded by Stiftung Mercator.

MITOST connects motivated people in a diverse and open network in Europe and its neighbouring regions. MitOst supports cultural exchange and civil society engagement through its projects. The goal of the association is a lively civil society that goes beyond cultural, linguistic and political borders. More information can be found at mitost.org.

LIQUID DEMOCRACY is a non-profit organisation, working on the development and implementation of innovative concepts for democratic participation. Since 2009 the organisation develops the open source software Adhocracy with which it focuses on the potentials of the internet to create more accessible ways of decision-making. More information can be found on liqd.net.

STIFTUNG MERCATOR is a private and independent foundation. Through its work it strives for a society characterized by openness to the world, solidarity and equal opportunities. In this context it concentrates on strengthening Europe; increasing the educational success of disadvantaged children and young people, especially those of migrant origin; driving forward climate change mitigation and promoting science and the humanities. Stiftung Mercator symbolizes the connection between academic expertise and practical project experience. One of Germany's leading foundations, it is active both nationally and internationally. Stiftung Mercator feels a strong sense of loyalty to the Ruhr region, the home of the founding family and the foundation's headquarters. More information can be found at stiftung-mercator.de



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C O N T E N T S

P 03	WHAT IF HOPE WAS A MUSCLE? - INTRODUCTION
P 04	ADVOCATE EUROPE - ABOUT US
P 06	CREATED - OUTCOMES AND RESULTS 2014-2019
P 22	CHANGE MAKERS - THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE PROJECTS
P 34	1600 IDEAS FOR EUROPE - DESIGN AND DELIVERY OF THE IDEA CHALLENGE
P 52	CHANGE STARTS WITH US - VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY
P 58	PARTNERS
P 60	IMPRINT

“What civil society does to us is highly significant: It makes us stand up for our beliefs and create a society we like and want to live in.”

LJILJANA ŠOTRA, 1ST CHAIRPERSON, MITOST

“eParticipation allows for more transparency and new ways to take part in decision-making processes and to collaborate. We should use it in order to strengthen our democracies.”

*KATHARINA ALBERS, MAGDALENA NOFFKE &
GEREON RAHNFELD BOARD MEMBERS, LIQUID DEMOCRACY*

“With polarisation and distrust on the rise, we work towards a cohesive Europe by bringing people together and enabling them to experience what Europe is.”

*MICHAEL SCHWARZ, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
STIFTUNG MERCATOR*