



invites students and early career professionals, i.e., people in their 20s and 30s, who represent civil society or academia from the EU, EEA, Eastern Partnership Countries, Russia, the Balkans, and Central Asia to the 10th Europe Lab in Weimar, Germany. Europe Lab is a social laboratory and networking programme with a broad alumni network that is organised in a different European country each year.

Call for participants “Hyperpolarisation in Europe: looking back, thinking ahead”

Europe Lab 11 – 15 August 2025
Application deadline: 15 May 2025

PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION

For our tenth anniversary edition of Europe Lab, we are looking for early-career changemakers who are passionate about civil society, international dialogue and managing their own projects with like-minded peers. But what is Europe Lab? At its heart, Europe Lab is an experimental space for learning and connection. Participants are diverse and represent various facets of wider European society, and our programme applies a critical lens to modern issues while providing space for the investigation of local European sites of memory. Investigating local history brings an additional dimension to our conversations and reflection on key topics.

The programme serves as a space for young professionals to reflect on and rethink the cross-cutting issues that shape our daily lives, as well as the broader social and political landscapes in Europe and around the globe. Participants will learn more about local history, discuss how it relates to current issues that wider Europe faces and exchange with other participants on relevant topics. The objective of the Lab is to build bridges, establish new connections and create an inclusive, open and stimulating environment, in which fresh ideas and partnerships may blossom.

Balancing expert insights with participant involvement will be at the core of our 10th anniversary Lab. We are committed to fostering an intellectually stimulating and safe environment where participants feel safe to question, discuss and explore new ways of thinking and working together.

This year’s Europe Lab is titled “Hyperpolarisation in Europe: looking back, thinking ahead.” The overall topic of hyperpolarisation in Europe will be divided among three thematic “streams” which address pressing societal issues with a more specific focus. The topical streams are as follows:

➔ Stream 1: Pluralist democracy amid the rise of the far right

This stream investigates the way policy makers, activists, social movements, media organisations and civil society deal with old and new social issues in the context of the rise of the far-right as well as the implications of a hyperpolarised political climate on interpersonal interactions across the divide. What happens when elected leaders begin to reject the very same democratic mechanisms through which they gained power? How can governments and civil societies protect democracy while engaging voters who feel represented by the far-right? What does it mean to defend democracy in this climate – and what role can youth play?



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➔ Stream 2: Climate change: policies and backlash

This stream examines historical cases of international and European climate policy, highlighting how and why policy can provoke significant backlash. Climate policies must be feasible, effective and fair. Resistance arises not only from powerful, antagonistic stakeholders throughout the economy but also from activist movements that emerge in response to policies perceived as neglecting societal needs, for example the “gilets jaunes.” How can we learn from these examples to ensure future climate policies remain both effective and equitable?

➔ Stream 3: Persecution, prejudice and genocide – how can we prevent tragedy?

This stream deals with examples of persecution, prejudice and genocide over history aiming to provide theoretical and practical understanding. Participants will discuss the foundations of persecution in both past and present contexts. In an increasingly polarised world where civic spaces are systematically being dismantled, how can bridges be built across borders, movements, racial and ethnic groups? How can identity politics mobilise movements while not dividing larger, aligned groups that are otherwise unified for broader, more universal goals? Special consideration will be given to applicants with unique personal experiences relevant to the topic.

Participants of Europe Lab will have the possibility to attend **one of the above streams**.

Each stream will be developed and led by an experienced facilitator in the relevant field. Participants will attend one of the three streams, with each stream having 12 participants in attendance. During Europe Lab, participants will work towards developing project ideas in groups; **participants may then submit a proposal for a small grant to fund projects to be implemented from October until December 2025**. All participants will become a part of the Europe Lab alumni community.

PROJECT LOCATION – WEIMAR, GERMANY

Each year, Europe Lab takes place at a site of significance to the local culture of remembrance. This year, Europe Lab comes to Germany for the first time. For the tenth anniversary of the social laboratory and networking event, Europe Lab will bring participants to Weimar, a city that hosts twelve UNESCO World Heritage sites and visible reminders of historical memory relevant for this year’s theme.

Weimar has been a focal point for several significant movements that have a strong connection to German history: the Enlightenment, the Bauhaus movement and the rise of National Socialism. It was the home of influential German writers Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Friedrich Schiller, whose ideas helped shape German culture in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the aftermath of World War I and the Treaty of Versailles, the Weimar Republic was established in Weimar, marking the beginning of Germany’s first experiment with democracy, as Berlin was considered too unstable to serve as the seat of government for the newly established republic.

However, the progressive ideals of the Weimar Republic faced significant opposition and ultimately gave way to authoritarianism, which bears its mark on the region just minutes from the city centre: near Weimar lies Buchenwald, one of Nazi Germany’s most notorious concentration camps which was later used as a Soviet internment camp after World War II.



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PARTICIPANTS' PROFILE

To apply for Europe Lab 2025, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- Be under 40 years old at time of application
- Be a resident of wider Europe, including the EU, EEA, Eastern Partnership Countries, Russia, the Balkans and Central Asia
- Be at the early stage of their professional career—this includes students, recent graduates, or those with initial work experience in civil society, academia or related fields
- Be able to communicate effectively in English, the working language of the Lab
- Have experience in activism, community engagement or professional work in relevant fields
- Show strong critical thinking, social awareness and a clear desire to bring about social change
- Be already active in their communities or networks and demonstrate a willingness to carry out follow up activities or local projects after the Lab
- Be able to bring unique perspectives and be open to collaborative, cross-cultural exchange

We strongly welcome applicants from diverse backgrounds, including ethnicity, sexuality, gender and beyond. As part of our inclusion policy, we are committed to creating a safe space where everyone feels welcome. If you have specific access needs, personal circumstances or requests that would help you participate fully, please provide this information in your application. Participants are selected according to the relevance of their professional and academic background and the quality of their statements of interest. **Each participant may apply for a maximum of two streams.**

EUROPE LAB DURATION

Europe Lab 2024 will start on Monday 11 August in the evening and last until Thursday 14 August in the afternoon, though participants will be provided accommodation until the morning of 15 August for departure from Weimar. Participants are expected to arrive by at least Monday 11 August in the early afternoon.

Additionally, there will be a special Europe Lab networking event and ten-year anniversary celebration on 14 August in the evening, to which all alumni and current participants are invited. More information on the event will be shared separately.

PARTICIPATION COSTS

Participation is **free of charge** for accepted participants. Accommodation (twin or triple rooms), event and food costs from 11 August until 15 August 2025 will be covered by the Civil Society Forum. Travel costs for participants within the European Union are covered up to 200 Euros, while participants coming from beyond the EU will have travel costs reimbursed upon special consideration. In addition, visa applications will be supported by the Europe Lab team for those that need visas to enter the Schengen area.

APPLICATIONS

Please apply by filling out the **APPLICATION FORM** in English by 15 May 2025. Should you have any questions please contact info@europe-lab.net.



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