



VAHA II: Common Ground Through Culture in Times of Crises

Transnational Exchanges Phase

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General Questions About the Programme

1. What is VAHA?

VAHA (meaning "oasis" in Turkish) is a programme made with and for the empowered voices of independent arts and culture spaces, advocating for public discussion and dialogue in cities across Turkey, Europe, and their neighbouring countries. Bringing together the diversity of hybrid spaces and contextual responses to the crises of democracy the regions are currently facing, VAHA explores the power of learning from local practices to develop tailor-made support for platforms of free expression and cultural programming. VAHA brings together the initiatives that create public discussions through their cultural and artistic activities under challenging and oppressive conditions, to multiply spaces of encounter and critical thinking, and to support transnational solidarity. With this approach, VAHA hopes to provide a framework that allows local cultural venues to form a socially prominent ecosystem of interconnected oases, expanding as fertile landscapes for open discussions and creative actions.

In VAHA Round II (2023-2024), the programme flows in parallel currents. Firstly, the local activities of the hubs selected from Turkey started, and now the transnational partners from other Council of Europe member countries are invited to join in the ongoing cultural programming of Turkey hubs.

For more details on the programme, you may visit the [VAHA website](#) and see the [VAHA Round II - Open Call for Turkey](#).

2. What happened so far at VAHA Round II? Who are the current participants from Turkey?

10 new hubs with a total of 23 participating organisations from 11 different cities in Turkey have been selected for the second round of the VAHA programme to implement their cultural programming ideas between October 2023 and October 2024. VAHA hubs work on topics including cultural heritage, cultural rights of ethnic groups, cultural relief, women's rights, cultural heritage and rights of migrants, ecology and urbanism. Please visit the hubs page on our website and select Round II from the filter on the right below the map, to get to know the hubs, their interest areas and activities, involved organisations and their expectations from the transnational phase of the programme: <https://vahahubs.org/hubs>

3. What is the Transnational Network Meeting?

At the Transnational Networking Meeting in Berlin, VAHA will host civil society and cultural organisations from Turkey and other Council of Europe countries. 23 organisations (10 hubs) from Turkey and 20 organisations from other CoE countries will attend the networking meeting. The meeting is aimed to open up space to connect with like-minded organisations, enhance solidarity networks, and discuss transnational alliances within and beyond VAHA. We encourage the selected organisations to develop transnational exchanges within VAHA through reciprocal study visits or joint activities with the 10 hubs in Turkey.

4. Who are the implementing partners and funders consortium of VAHA?

VAHA is an initiative of [Anadolu Kültür](#) and [zusa](#), funded by [Stiftung Mercator](#), [European Cultural Foundation](#) and [Chrest Foundation](#). VAHA partner consortium is in collaboration with [iac Berlin](#).

Anadolu Kültür was founded as a not-for-profit cultural institution in 2002 when individuals from various fields of the art world, the business world and civil society came together to support the production and sharing of culture and art in cities across Turkey and abroad. Anadolu Kültür continues its activities with the belief that cultural and artistic exchange will help develop mutual understanding and dialogue and overcome regional differences and prejudices, and that a broader cultural life will elicit a discussion of concepts such as citizenship, identity and belonging. Anadolu Kültür's vision is the dream of a society that has managed to shed its prejudices, that finds nourishment and enrichment through differences and where cultural diversity is not perceived as a source of conflict but wealth. Anadolu Kültür aims to build bridges between different ethnic, religious and regional groups by sharing culture and art, supporting regional initiatives, emphasizing cultural diversity and cultural rights and consolidating interregional collaboration. www.anadolukultur.org

zusa is an organisation born out of MitOst e.V. It aims to work with cultural and civil society actors to create and support positive change in their contexts. It practices and promotes what it calls 'The Art of Collaboration' to build partnerships and alliances across physical and social boundaries. It creates spaces for and contributes to processes, dialogues, and experiments. It does this together with people and organisations from different

backgrounds, regions, sectors and disciplines. Based in Berlin, zusa works in Europe, West Asia, North Africa and beyond. Its work and values are centred on a 'Doing Together' approach. It designs and implements programmes based on the principles of cooperation with its partners. Its core role is to provide cooperation tools, support, and further alliances to help civil society actors develop their work.

<https://zusaculture.org>

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. www.stiftung-mercator.de

European Cultural Foundation (ECF) was set up in Geneva in 1954. Its founding figures included the Swiss philosopher Denis de Rougemont, the architect of the European Community Robert Schuman, and HRH Prince Bernhard of the Netherlands, under whose presidency the foundation moved to Amsterdam in 1960. They all believed passionately in culture as a vital ingredient for Europe's post-war rebuilding and healing. They envisioned a united Europe where citizens feel proudly European, a place where they can live, express themselves, work and dream freely, in diversity and harmony. They created the ECF "for the stimulation of the European sentiment, to promote the development and preservation of a feeling of mutual comprehension and democratic solidarity between the peoples of Europe by encouraging cultural and educational activities of common interest". The foundation has always focused on programmes and grants enabling mobility and the exchange of ideas, education through culture, and capacity-building. In its 65 years of existence the foundation has initiated and developed more than twenty of programmes, supported thousands of Europeans with grants and exchanges and helped put culture and cultural policies on the European agenda. www.culturalfoundation.eu

Chrest Foundation is a private foundation based in Irving, Texas. The Foundation was established by Jeff Jensen and Lou Anne King Jensen in 1999 to share with others some of the financial resources they had been fortunate enough to receive through health insurance, telecommunications, and other family related business investments. The word "Chrest" was chosen as the name of the Foundation due to its general meaning of "goodwill." The Foundation works on the principles of goodwill and mutual respect in its relations with domestic and international communities. The Foundation exclusively supported civil society endeavours related to Turkey and the surrounding region from 2001 until 2016. In 2017, the Foundation's endowment increased as well as the founders' three adult children became more heavily involved in the Foundation's activities. The combination of increased resources

and succeeding generation engagement resulted in the addition of two new programme areas focused on efforts in the United States: criminal justice reform and the environment. At present, the Foundation also continues its support of civic life in Turkey and the surrounding region. <https://chrestfoundation.org>

The International Alumni Center - iac Berlin was established on December 14, 2016 with Robert Bosch Stiftung as sole shareholder. The iac Berlin was founded to support the development of networks in the non-profit field, to serve as an open platform for new forms of cooperation in philanthropy, and to develop and disseminate an approach to alumni work that encourages positive social impact. The iac Berlin now coordinates the Bosch Alumni Network, which brings together former and current fellows, grantees, and staff members of the Robert Bosch Stiftung and its partners, to support their activities and foster cross-sectoral exchange and international collaboration. It also coordinates the Global Diplomacy Lab. The services of the International Alumni Center are also open to employees of foundations and other non-profit organisations. www.iac-berlin.org

About the Application to Transnational Network Meeting

5. Who can apply to the VAHA Transnational Networking Meeting?

All types of non-profit organisations that operate within the arts and cultural fields in [Council of Europe member states](#) (CoE) -except Turkey- and organize public cultural activities are welcome to apply. We invite cultural actors from the listed countries to check out the cultural activities VAHA hubs have been working on and join us at the Transnational Networking Meeting in Berlin for networking and further exchanges.

6. Which organisational statuses are eligible for application?

Civil society organisations, collectives, initiatives, cooperatives, companies and public institutions are eligible for application. In case your organisation does NOT have an officially registered non-profit status (initiative, collective etc.) or has a profit making status (such as café&bookstore, theatre, cinema, social entrepreneurship etc.), you can still apply but the Transnational Exchange Grant can only be transferred to the Turkey hub that you will partner up. Due to the funding rules that we are obliged to follow, only registered non-profit organisations can be granted in VAHA programme.

7. I would like to apply; however, I don't work for an institution or organisation anymore (I'm a freelancer). Do you accept individual applications?

No. In order to be accepted to the programme, you should be working for an institution/ NGO/association/initiative or collective. If you are not associated with any organisations we cannot accept your application.

8. How do you select the participants? What are your selection criteria?

The VAHA coordination team will review all applications based on the eligibility criteria. The shortlisted applicants will be evaluated by a jury consisting of VAHA consortium members. The final selection will be done according to the coherence with the call, compatibility to VAHA network, potential cross-border impact, exchange capacity with Turkey hubs, and sustainability of the exchange.

9. Should we contact VAHA hubs in Turkey prior to the application?

It is not necessary for the application. The main purpose of this meeting is to get to know each other through several sessions and activities over three days. However, you may check [the hub pages on our website](#) to have initial ideas on the hubs' organisations, their fields, and cultural programmes supported by the VAHA Local Activity Grants since October 2023.

10. Should we submit any additional documents during the application?

To be invited to the Transnational Networking Meeting in Berlin, all you have to do is fill out [the application form](#). In case you decide to form a partnership with a hub at the meeting, the application procedure for the Transnational Exchange Grant will be explained during the meeting.

11. What is offered to the selected applicants? Which expenses are covered?

VAHA programme will cover all participants' travel expenses such as accommodation, meals, and transportation for the events we expect you to attend during the programme (e.g. Transnational Networking Meeting). Participants are expected to agree with the programme coordination team in advance on the expenses and submit documents such as invoices and tickets after the trip to receive the reimbursement.

12. What language skills are generally needed?

A good command of English is needed to follow programme documents, joint meetings, and workshops. However, the working language is determined based on your shared language skills with your partners and the supporting teams in your organisations.

Information about the VAHA Transnational Network Meeting

13. What can applicants expect from attending the Transnational Networking Meeting?

The meeting brings together all participants to develop ideas for the transnational exchanges which will last until the end of October 2024.

The first getting-to-know-each-other and exchanges will take place through the Transnational Networking Meeting in Berlin. You will have the opportunity to meet with the Turkey hubs and other invited organisations to focus on your potential partnership(s), depending on the needs, interests, motivations and capacity of your organisation. It is totally

up to you and your motivations as a participant to find a partnering hub within the VAHA programme. Feel free to take the initiative, approach the Turkey hubs, and communicate your interests and ideas during the meeting.

14. What is the Transnational Exchange Grant?

It is a grant of 7,500 EUR for activities and events to be carried out within transnational partnerships that will be formed after the Transnational Networking Meeting. The grant aims to enable the Turkey hubs and transnational participants to visit each other, participate in each other's activities, or collaborate on joint cultural programming.

15. Will all the attending organisations partner with a VAHA hub from Turkey?

No. There will be 10 hubs from Turkey and 20 selected organisations from CoE countries at the meeting. It is expected that some organisations will leave the meeting without being matched with any of the hubs.

16. What will happen if we can't find a partner at the Transnational Networking Meeting?

You and your organisation will become part of the VAHA community and can benefit from the opportunities provided by the implementing partners and funders consortium of VAHA.

VAHA Transnational Exchanges After the Meeting

17. What is offered to the VAHA participant organisations from the CoE countries after the meeting?

All participant organisations that attended the VAHA Transnational Network Meeting in Berlin will have a chance to take part in the larger VAHA network. Invited organisations can further collaborate with other network members on their own initiatives.

Several grants and platform membership opportunities are available to the participant organisations from CoE countries that will form a partnership with one of the VAHA hubs in Turkey.

Transnational Exchange Grant: The grant will be provided for the engagement of an organisation from outside Turkey after May 2024 in the hubs' activities that have already started to be implemented in Turkey. Up to 7,500€ will be awarded to organisations from outside Turkey either to join in the ongoing programme via additional activities or to develop parallel programming to the hub activities. Organisations from outside Turkey are not expected to be hubs. The partnership process will take place during the Transnational Networking Meeting in Berlin

Learning and Mobility Grant: Participants can apply for a Learning and Mobility Grant of up to €2,000 to make study visits to each other during the programme period or to attend conferences, workshops, and other professional development activities.

[Stiftung Mercator Alumni Network](#) and [Bosch Alumni Network \(BAN\)](#): VAHA participants are welcome to become a member of Mercator Globe, the alumni platform of the Stiftung Mercator, and the Bosch Alumni Network, the alumni platform of the International Alumni Center. VAHA participants can benefit from the opportunities provided by these two networks during and after the programme and establish new transnational partnerships. For detailed information, please visit the websites of these two platforms.

18. What is expected from participants? What is the workload?

In case you will continue for the transnational exchanges supported within the VAHA programme such as the Transnational Exchange Grant, the workload varies according to the activities that partners want to implement and how you plan to share the workload among themselves. All participants are responsible for maintaining regular communication with the VAHA coordination team and fulfilling the reporting tasks for your travels and activities within the programme.

19. How do we apply for the Transnational Exchange Grant with our partner organisations from Turkey after the meeting?

You will be able to submit applications with your Turkey hub partner within two weeks after the Transnational Networking Meeting. It will be a simple application procedure to explain the planned activities and the budget.

20. How do we apply for the Learning and Mobility Grant?

Learning and Mobility Grants could be applied ideally for training and networking trips that can contribute to knowledge and experience sharing among transnational partners. However, the grant can be used for short residency trips aimed at taking breaks and recovering for individuals working in challenging conditions as well as professional development occasions with prior approval of the VAHA coordination team.

To apply, we request you to send us an email including the following information:

- Host institution, place and dates: Where and when do you want to visit?
- Aim & planned activities: Why do you want to make this trip? What do you plan to do in the place you visit?
- Expected contribution: How will this trip contribute to you?
- Budget: A list of the foreseen travel expenses (2,000 EUR in total).

21. What is the timeline in which the exchanges should take place?

Open call for transnational participants: 1 February - 10 March 2024

Jury selection: 11 - 22 March 2024

Announcement of selected participants: 25 - 29 March 2024

Transnational Networking Meeting: 22 - 26 May 2024

Transnational Exchange Grants: June - October 2024

Learning and Mobility Grants: June - October 2024
Online Thematic Workshops (optional): June - November 2024
Financial and narrative reporting: 31 October 2024

22. Can we apply for the Transnational Exchange Grant if we don't find a partner during the Transnational Networking Meeting?

No. The purpose of this grant is to develop transnational exchanges between civil society and cultural organisations from Turkey and other Council of Europe countries. You should partner with a Turkey hub to apply for the Transnational Exchange Grant.

23. Do I need to apply for the Transnational Exchange Grant in partnership with a VAHA hub from Turkey? Can I apply for an exchange grant with other organisations?

VAHA aims to support cultural organisations in Turkey for networking and developing ideas for transnational cultural programming activities that engage with the public. Therefore you are required to apply for the Transnational Exchange Grant in partnership with one of the existing VAHA hubs from Turkey.

24. How many participants may join the programme from one organisation?

Only one participant from each organisation will be invited to the Transnational Networking Meeting. You can involve other colleagues from your teams to the extent you wish during the implementation of transnational activities and possible study visits.

25. What happens after I take part in a partnership?

First of all, you and your partner hub will apply for the Transnational Exchange Grant and will be responsible for the implementation of the proposed activities and reporting until the end of October. Then, VAHA participants are welcome to become members of Mercator Globe, the alumni platform of the Stiftung Mercator, and the Bosch Alumni Network, the alumni platform of the International Alumni Center. VAHA participants can benefit from the opportunities provided by these two networks during and after the programme and establish new transnational partnerships. For detailed information, please visit the websites of these two platforms.

26. For any other concerns who can I get in touch with?

For application requirements and other questions, you can refer to our website and social media accounts and reach us via [contact\[at\]vahahubs.org](mailto:contact[at]vahahubs.org).



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