

## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

# UNDERSTANDING EUROPE FELLOWSHIPS 2026

### **Security and transnational solidarity and digital resilience amidst multiple crises**

Across Europe and beyond, democracy is increasingly under threat. Young people are coming of age in an era shaped by overlapping emergencies: War on and beyond our borders, climate disasters that displace entire communities, the erosion of fundamental rights, and the rapid rise of anti-democratic forces. At the same time, digital transformation and artificial intelligence are rapidly reshaping how power is exercised, how information circulates, and how democratic participation is enabled or undermined.

In this context, resilience and security are no longer only matters for institutions or experts. Defending democracy today depends on informed, prepared, and connected societies. It requires digital resilience, strong communities, and the ability to respond collectively to disinformation, manipulation, cyber risks, and democratic backsliding.

How do we equip young Europeans to respond? How do we create spaces where they can confront these challenges together, strengthen democratic resilience, and build cross-border solidarity that can withstand political and social fractures?

We are looking for bold ideas that turn urgency into action. If you envision workshops and learning spaces where young people critically engage, organize across borders, and experiment with new educational approaches on shared security, digital resilience and transnational solidarity and resilience in times of crisis – this call is for you.

Apply to become a **2026 Fellow** and help shape the democratic response to the crises of our time.

Funded by the European Union, the Hertie Foundation, the “Demokratie Leben!” program and SPIEGEL Ed. the [Schwarzkopf-Foundation](#) awards up to three fellowships to young European educators for 2026 as part of the Educational Network [Understanding Europe](#).

### **What is the aim of the fellowship 2026?**

The aim of the fellowship is to support young European educators in developing new workshops on topics related to shared security, transnational solidarity and digital resilience amidst multiple crises. These workshops should be designed for students aged 13 and older, ensuring they are

accessible, diversity-oriented, and responsive to the interests and lived experiences of young people. By introducing these new formats into both formal and non-formal educational settings, the programme aims to strengthen the democratic competences of students and young adults. It creates spaces for reflection and exchange around urgent questions: How can security be rethought to protect democracy and serve societies in an age of war, digital disruption, and AI-driven threats? How can transnational solidarity and digital resilience be strengthened in the face of disinformation, manipulation, and multiple overlapping crises? For fellows, the programme offers a unique opportunity to professionalise their social commitment, activism, and passion for educational work.

### **Fellowship: Digital and transnational resilience in times of crises**

In today's interconnected world, crises cross borders and take many forms: From climate emergencies and political upheavals to digital disruption and AI-driven threats. Disinformation, online manipulation, and rapid technological change make it essential for young people and educators to strengthen digital resilience and reinforce transnational solidarity.

This fellowship supports innovators who want to create learning experiences that tackle these challenges head-on. Fellows design workshops with interactive formats and educational resources that help communities critically engage with AI, digital technologies, and online information, while strengthening connections across Europe and beyond.

By becoming a fellow, you will turn ideas into action and help our educators and young people respond to complex crises, build networks of support, and use digital tools to empower democratic participation and collective resilience.

### **Fellowship: Understanding and rethinking security in Europe**

Security today is a multifaceted challenge. It goes beyond traditional defence to include societal resilience, civil preparedness, cyber threats, and the protection of democratic systems. As a Fellow, you will design a peer-to-peer workshop that allows young people to explore a specific aspect of security in depth, understand its impact on communities, and reflect on how collective action can strengthen democratic resilience.

Your workshop might, for example, focus on digital security, crisis preparedness, hybrid threats, or the effects on the discourse around defence on public debate, social cohesion or identity. Through discussion, hands-on activities, and collaborative learning, participants will develop a deeper understanding of these challenges and be empowered to contribute to solutions in their communities.

As a fellow there is a possibility for you to participate at the **Young European Security Conference 2026** in Berlin on 26–27 February.

### **Who can apply?**

- You are between 18 and 27 years old
- You have substantial experience in peer-to-peer education and civic education
- You have first experiences in developing educational content for young people
- You have expertise and interest in one of the three topics mentioned above in order to bring your passion and knowledge to the Fellowship programme
- You are willing to design new workshop materials in a diversity-oriented way and based on the needs of the network
- You speak, write and read English at least at B2-level
- First hands-on experience in the usage of audio-visual media and digital tools is a plus

### **What are the conditions that the fellowship offers?**

- Your fellowship is compatible with your vocational training/apprenticeship, studies or work (approximated 20- 25 hours per month)
- All travel, accommodation and food costs for in-person events are covered.
- You are provided with collaborative software for innovative educational material development.
- You receive a financial support of 2.100,00 Euros for the work during seven months, (3 March-September), so 300 euro/month.

### **What are your personal outcomes?**

- You will strengthen your skills in developing educational materials and formats
- You'll receive support through pedagogical training, coaching, and mentoring, along with input from network members to help identify and address the network's needs.
- You gain hands-on experience by testing your formats in different learning settings.
- You get the opportunity to publish your work as an Open Educational Resource.

### **What are your obligations as a fellow?<sup>1</sup>**

- You are required to develop a new peer-to-peer workshop (~90mins) for the educational network Understanding Europe.
- You are committed to approximately 20-25 hours of work on the fellowship per month between March and September 2026

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<sup>1</sup> If for any reason, whether personal or professional, your continuity in the project is affected, it is expected that the compensation for work not performed or completed ahead of schedule will be refunded.

- You will have to test your workshop at schools or in non-formal learning settings and with the network. Afterwards a re-evaluation will take place (approx. 10 hours).
- You are required to participate in the three main events:
  - The digital kick-off seminar (two days in March)
  - The digital reflection seminar at the end of June/beginning of July (two days)
  - The European Summer School (August/September)
- You are in regular contact with other fellows and the project manager, and you receive counselling by mentors.
- You produce monthly short videos or social media posts (including 5-7 interviews with selected experts and civil society) about your fellowship and your focus topic for the communication channels of the Schwarzkopf Foundation.
- You will support the publishing process of your educational material in English in September/October.

## Voices from fellows

Have an insight and read personal statements of fellows from the previous cycles and get an impression about their motivation and work – click here: [2025](#) and [2023](#)

## How do I apply?

Please apply **until February 17, 2026 (23:59 CET)**, using this [online form](#) and attaching the following documents:

- A sketch that introduces your ideas for a workshop centring one of the three focus topics (Transnational Solidarity and Resilience, Fundamental Rights and Security). Please write approx. half a page or make a 3-4min video statement. You can find a current overview of our materials and some inspiration [here](#).
- Curriculum Vitae/Resume and proof of experience related to the abovementioned topics and/or educational work (e.g. certificates, letter of reference, your own educational material, social media links)

We welcome applications from all interested persons, regardless of their origin, religious affiliation, sexual identity or disability. As a positive measure against socially existing disadvantages (§5 Allgemeines Gleichbehandlungsgesetz), we particularly welcome applications from Black people, people of colour, people with experience of racism or antisemitism and/or applicants with a history of flight or family migration.

We are deeply committed to fostering diversity and inclusion within our fellowship cohorts. We endeavour to assemble groups that reflect the multifaceted realities of European society, ensuring that our materials and methodologies are informed by a broad spectrum of perspectives. By

embracing this diversity, we aim to cultivate a collaborative and inclusive environment where every voice is valued and heard.

After reviewing all the applications, we will get back to the applicants with a decision by the end of February / beginning of March.

If you have any further questions regarding the fellowship, application process, accessibility, diversity and inclusion, please do not hesitate to contact Nora Korte – Project Manager Understanding Europe ([n.korte@schwarzkopf-stiftung.de](mailto:n.korte@schwarzkopf-stiftung.de)).

We look forward to getting to know you!

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