

MediaFutures 1st Open Call: over 100 ideas to tackle misinformation around the world

Late last year, we launched the first MediaFutures Open Call. We asked startups, SMEs and artists to join us to create a transnational, European data hub to tackle challenges in the media industry. We were seeking novel, unconventional products, services and artworks that engage people with quality journalism, science education and democratic processes.

Our 1st Open Call focused on tackling misinformation, particularly in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. We were blown away by the response, with **over 350 people** registering to attend our webinars about the Open Call, which led to **over 100 applications**.

The high level of interest and engagement in the Open Call highlights not only how misinformation is a pressing and global issue, but also the important role data, technology and the arts have to play to create healthy and prosperous societies.

About the Open Call

For the first Open Call, we identified four Challenges that we wanted startups, SMEs and artists to propose solutions for.

- *Viral Complexity - the coronavirus pandemic brought data into mainstream conversations, and exposed existing inequalities around data access and skills. This Challenge sought ideas that could empower citizens with data literacy.*
- *Building Bridges - most forms of media encourage quick reactions and snap judgements. This Challenge sought ideas to build bridges between opposing views around coronavirus, to encourage connections rather than divides.*
- *The New Media-tors - traditional and new forms of media thrive on conflict, and encourage polarisation and extremism. This Challenge sought to strengthen the role of trustworthy mediators to reduce misinformation, and to help citizens not to be overwhelmed by the amount of information about the pandemic.*
- *Open Challenge - the Open Challenge sought creative and impactful ideas to tackle misinformation that didn't quite fit into the above three Challenges.*

Anyone with an innovative idea to address one of the above Challenges could apply to join one of the three tracks:

- *Artists for Media - an artist residency programme;*
- *Startup for Citizens - a startup accelerator programme;*
- *Startup meets Artist - a collaborative programme that invited startups and artists to propose a joint project.*

Response to the Open Call



We invited startups and SMEs from across the European Union and H2020 Associated Countries, and artists from around the world, to share their ideas with us. When launching an Open Call for the first time, there can be a lot of unknowns, but we were delighted by the interest and the quality of applications we received.

In total, we received **133** complete applications. These applications hailed from **32** countries, ranging from Armenia to Italy to the United States of America.

61 applied for the Startups for Citizens track, **46** for the Artists for Media track, and **26** for the Startup meets Artist track.

Of the four Challenges, the Open Challenge was the most popular, with **57** proposed solutions. The second was the Building Bridges Challenge, for which we received **44** proposals. Viral Complexity received **19** proposals, and the New Media-tors received **13**.

What next?

Since the Open Call closed at the end of January 2021, we've brought together experts in art, business and technology from within the MediaFutures consortium and beyond to select the most promising applicants.

Following a thorough application review, a jury panel per track met to discuss a shortlist of the highest scoring. The scoring criteria varied per track, but looked at the impact, implementation plan, innovativeness and use of data for each idea.

During the jury panels, reviewers debated the strengths and weaknesses of each application, to select which would progress to the next round:

For the Startup for Citizens and Startup meets Artists track, the jury panels selected which would join the START phase of the programme, where they will receive €5,000 and one month to develop the idea, before pitching to continue on the MediaFutures programme to receive further funding and support.

The Artists for Media track doesn't include the one-month START phase, and artists instead receive up to €25,000 of grant funding and up to 6 months to create their artwork. Because of this, following the jury panel, we held additional interviews to help decide who should progress. We hope to announce the successful proposals, and their ideas, in April.

Our next Open Call will open later this year in **October 2021**. The Challenges may change, but what won't is the overarching mission of MediaFutures: to support startups, SMEs and artists to nurture and grow responsible and innovative uses of data in the media industry.

If you want to know when the next call opens, follow us on our social media ([Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#)), or the [project website](#).

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