



European Climate Foundation

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Position Specification



European
Climate
Foundation

R Russell
Reynolds
ASSOCIATES

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ABOUT THE ECF

OVERVIEW



The European Climate Foundation (ECF), established as a Public Benefit Organisation in the Netherlands, is a **major philanthropic initiative** working to help tackle the climate crisis by fostering the **transition to a net-zero emission society, primarily in Europe**, as well as through international cooperation. The ECF strives for a positive, people-centred and socially responsible climate transition, working to ensure a healthy, thriving planet for current and future generations.

The ECF is a field catalyst of organisations and part of a global network of regional and sectoral regranters. It believes in a whole-of-society approach to climate action, inviting everyone to be part of the discussion and ensuring no one gets left behind.

They work with **over 700 partners, including youth groups, trade associations, and university departments**, supporting a diverse network to carry out activities that drive urgent and ambitious policy and contribute to the public debate on climate action. They build dialogue with businesses, governments, and civil society, working to depolarise the climate debate and to forge connections between the climate community and those working in fields like human rights, health, education, social justice and the cultural sphere.

The ECF team comprises some 300 staff, with representation across Europe, and works together to build tailored local strategies aligned with eight interconnected priorities, known as the 'big bets', which together will help achieve a greener, more peaceful and democratic society. Their expert teams cover energy policy, strategic communications, philanthropy, and more, bringing together diverse perspectives and backgrounds to find the best innovative solutions to tackle climate change.

ABOUT THE ECF

ECF's impact

Together with their funders and partners who share their vision and believe in the value of their network, the ECF has helped Europe make critical progress and move closer to the goals of the Paris Agreement.

The ECF has supported as a:

- **Strategic grant-maker**, funding a diverse range of over 700 partners, collaborating with them to identify and support interventions that will get us closer to climate safety. In 2024, it disbursed €156.7m to its grantees.
- **Network enabler**, fostering a stronger, more resilient network by helping partners build their capacities and create new connections. The ECF also incubates and sustains new organisations, platforms, and coalitions to fill gaps in the climate ecosystem.
- **Narrative shaper**, using strategic communications to inform key decision-makers, foster discussion on climate, and strengthen broad-based support for climate action. With a network spanning the political spectrum in countries across Europe, the ECF drives objective dialogue with business, governments, and civil society.
- **Thought leader**, working with partners to set the agenda and co-develop impactful strategies for climate action. The ECF also convenes, coordinates, and connects diverse actors from across the climate community and beyond.

THE OPPORTUNITY

The appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer comes at a **pivotal moment** for climate action in Europe and globally.

Rising geopolitical tensions, economic pressures, and evolving political dynamics are reshaping the climate agenda. **Delivering a just, competitive and secure transition to net zero requires bold, strategic and highly collaborative leadership.**

The next CEO will lead the ECF through a period of increased geopolitical tension, fragmentation within the climate movement, and increasingly complex politics around climate action.

This will require expanding the ECF's reach beyond its traditional coalition – particularly into business, industry and a broader set of political actors – while maintaining its values and credibility as well as its objectivity.



POSITION SUMMARY

The Chief Executive Officer is responsible for the overall leadership, strategic direction and performance of the ECF.

Reporting to the Board, the CEO will define and deliver the organisation's vision and strategy, ensuring that the ECF maximises its impact as a philanthropic catalyst and partner across the climate ecosystem, driving meaningful change across Europe. The CEO will act not only as a leader of the organisation but as **a connector and integrator across a complex ecosystem, aligning funders, partners, policymakers and institutions** to drive collective impact.

The CEO will serve as the primary external representative of the ECF, building and maintaining relationships with governments, funders, civil society, and business leaders, while fostering a high-performing, values-driven organisational culture.

This role combines **strategic leadership, organisational stewardship, external influence, and partnership-building** at the highest levels – reflecting the complexity and urgency of the climate challenge.

Location: The Hague, Berlin, Brussels, Budapest, London, Madrid, Paris, or Warsaw



THE ROLE (1 of 2)

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Key Responsibilities

1. Strategic Leadership & Impact Delivery

- Define and lead the implementation of the ECF's strategy, ensuring alignment with its mission and evolving external context.
- Translate strategic priorities into measurable impact through effective programme and network execution.
- Ensure that the ECF remains at the forefront of climate thought leadership, innovation and systems change.
- Continuously assess global and European trends, adapting strategy to maximise relevance and effectiveness.

2. External Engagement & Advocacy

- Act as the ECF's primary ambassador, representing the organisation at the highest levels with policymakers, funders, and global partners.
- Shape climate narratives, contributing to public discourse and policy development.
- Build coalitions across sectors, including government, business, philanthropy and civil society.
- Build relationships across the full political spectrum.
- Deepen engagement with business and industry leaders, supporting the transition to a clean economy
- Strengthen the ECF's reputation as a trusted, objective and impactful actor in the climate ecosystem.

3. Resource Mobilisation & Stewardship

- Lead and align fundraising efforts, ensuring strong alignment between the ECF's strategy and the priorities of major philanthropic and institutional funders.
- Maintain strong relationships with existing funders, ensuring confidence in the ECF's impact and governance, while attracting new funders.
- Oversee financial stewardship, ensuring resources are deployed effectively and transparently.
- Explore innovative financing and partnership models to scale impact.
- Translate complex system-level opportunities into compelling funding propositions.

THE ROLE (2 of 2)

KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

Key Responsibilities

4. Partnership & Network Leadership

- Strengthen and expand the ECF's network of partners, fostering collaboration and alignment across diverse stakeholders.
- Support the development of new initiatives, platforms and coalitions to address gaps in the climate ecosystem.
- Promote a "whole-of-society" approach, connecting climate action with broader societal priorities such as health, equity and economic development.

5. Organisational Leadership & Culture

- Lead and inspire a diverse, international organisation, fostering a high-performing, inclusive and values-driven culture.
- Shape and develop a strong Executive Management Team, ensuring clarity of roles, accountability and collaboration.
- Champion the ECF's values of partnership, inclusion, agency and learning across all aspects of the organisation.
- Ensure organisational structures, capabilities and ways of working support long-term impact and sustainability.

6. Governance & Board Engagement

- Work closely with the Board to define strategy, ensure strong governance, and maintain alignment on priorities.
- Provide regular reporting on organisational performance, risks and opportunities.
- Support the Board in fulfilling its oversight responsibilities and strengthening governance practices.
- Ensure robust risk management, compliance and accountability frameworks are in place that are responsive to the requirements of all of the jurisdictions in which the ECF operates.

7. Operational & Institutional Effectiveness

- Ensure that the ECF's operational systems, processes and capabilities effectively support delivery of its strategy.
- Oversee organisational performance management, including impact measurement and learning systems.
- Drive continuous improvement and organisational agility in response to a rapidly evolving environment.

CANDIDATE PROFILE (1 of 2)

The Chief Executive will be a proven leader who will embody a mix of the following competencies and experience:

VISIONARY AND STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

The successful candidate will bring a proven track record as a CEO or senior executive leading complex, international and mission-driven organisations, with experience delivering strategy and impact in dynamic, highly regulated and politically sensitive environments. They will demonstrate exceptional strategic leadership and the ability to define a compelling organisational vision and translate it into clear priorities and measurable impact. A strong systems thinker, they will navigate complex, interconnected political, economic and societal dynamics shaping the climate transition, leading effectively through ambiguity and adapting strategy in a rapidly evolving global context.

EXTERNAL INFLUENCE, ADVOCACY & REPRESENTATION

The CEO will bring experience operating at the highest levels of government, multilateral institutions and philanthropy, with a proven ability to build relationships and influence outcomes across complex stakeholder environments. They will be a highly credible and compelling communicator, able to articulate complex issues with clarity to diverse audiences, and will demonstrate the gravitas, diplomacy and judgement required to represent the ECF globally and engage credibly across the political spectrum while maintaining objectivity.

ORGANISATIONAL LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT

The CEO will demonstrate significant experience leading large, international teams and organisations, with the ability to align people, structures and resources to deliver sustained impact. They will bring a strong track record of building and motivating high-performing executive teams, fostering accountability and driving results, while balancing long-term transformation with operational excellence and disciplined execution, including making and implementing difficult decisions in service of mission and performance.

PARTNERSHIP BUILDING & STAKEHOLDER LEADERSHIP

The successful candidate will possess outstanding relationship management skills and a proven ability to build, sustain and leverage diverse, cross-sector partnerships, including governments, philanthropy, NGOs and the private sector. They will bring experience working within complex, multi-stakeholder environments, aligning stakeholders behind shared goals while navigating differing priorities, and will demonstrate a strong appreciation for partnership-driven models that unlock collective impact at scale.

CANDIDATE PROFILE (2 of 2)

RESOURCEFUL MOBILISATION & FINANCIAL ACUMEN

The successful candidate will bring a strong track record in securing and stewarding significant financial resources, with experience engaging major donors and funding partners. They will demonstrate the ability to align funding with strategy, inspire confidence through clear articulation of impact and organisational effectiveness, and oversee the allocation of resources at scale. Sound financial and commercial judgement, alongside the ability to develop innovative funding and partnership models to support long-term sustainability, will be essential.

GOVERNANCE, RISK & ACCOUNTABILITY

The successful candidate will bring a deep understanding of governance frameworks and experience working effectively with Boards to shape strategy and ensure accountability. They will demonstrate strong judgement in managing organisational risk, reputation and compliance in complex and high-profile environments, including across multiple jurisdictions. A commitment to transparency, integrity and ethical leadership will be critical in setting the tone for organisational culture and behaviour.

PEOPLE LEADERSHIP & CULTURE

The CEO will be an inspirational and inclusive leader, with the ability to foster a culture of trust, collaboration, accountability and continuous learning across a diverse, internationally distributed organisation. They will bring strong emotional intelligence and intercultural sensitivity, alongside a clear commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. The ability to build organisational capability and leadership depth for long-term success, coupled with the resilience and energy to lead in a complex, high-intensity environment, will be essential.



PERSONAL QUALITIES



VALUES & MINDSET

The Chief Executive will demonstrate strong alignment with the ECF's philanthropic mission and a deep commitment to equity, inclusion and ethical practice.

They will be collaborative and service-oriented, with the confidence to provide constructive challenge in pursuit of impact.

The ECF's values guide how the organisation works with colleagues and partners:

Partnership. Building trusted relationships and leveraging diverse contributions to achieve greater collective impact.

Inclusion. Embracing diversity and ensuring all perspectives are actively included.

Agency. Enabling bold action and shared accountability across the network.

Learning. Continuously adapting, learning from success and failure, and seeking new perspectives.

HOW TO EXPRESS INTEREST

The ECF is being supported in this appointment by executive search and leadership advisory firm Russell Reynolds Associates. For an informal, confidential conversation about the role, please reach out to contacts listed below.

The closing date for applications is **5 June 2026**.

[Please click here to apply.](#)

You will be asked to register your details and upload your full CV and Statement of Suitability. All expressions of interest will be acknowledged.

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