



European Economic and Social Committee

RULES GOVERNING THE 2017 EESC CIVIL SOCIETY PRIZE

Rewarding excellence in civil society initiatives

1. Aim and overall objective of the Civil Society Prize

For the European Economic and Social Committee (the "EESC" or the "Committee"), the **aim** of the prize, which is awarded annually, is to reward and encourage initiatives of civil society organisations and/or individuals that have made a significant contribution to promoting European identity and integration.

The **overall objective** of the prize is to raise awareness of the contribution that civil society organisations and/or individuals can make to the creation of a European identity and citizenship in a way that underpins the common values that shore up European integration.

2. Theme of the 2017 EESC Civil Society Prize: "Innovative projects to promote quality employment and entrepreneurship for the future of work "

Years after the peak of the economic and social crisis, and despite recent improvements, the European Union continues to struggle with high levels of unemployment: 8.5% of the active population - almost 21 million people - were officially unemployed in 2016¹. Yet, wide divergence exists among Member States, and national unemployment figures vary between 4% and 23.5%.

Several particularly worrying forms of unemployment persist and the most striking ones need to be addressed with priority. Firstly, long-term unemployment still accounts for almost 50% of total unemployment. Increasing duration of unemployment implies depreciation of skills, lower attachment to the labour market and ultimately higher risk of social exclusion. Secondly, despite positive EU-level initiatives such as the Youth Guarantee and the Employment Initiative, the numbers of unemployed youth and NEETs (young people neither in education or training nor in employment) remain very high in some Member States (e.g. 47.2%)². Thirdly, women – in particular mothers and other women with

¹ Eurostat 2017, data for EU 28
(http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/People_at_risk_of_poverty_or_social_exclusion).

² 18.7% of young people of less than 25 years old were unemployed in the EU-28 in 2016.

caring responsibilities – continue to be underrepresented in the labour market. They have lower salaries (16% gap) and shorter careers, which often turns into lower pensions (39% gap).

The number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion is now several million higher than before the crisis³. Unemployment is not only one of the main causes of poor living standards but is also in itself a central dimension of social exclusion, since a job is a key determinant of people's ability to fully participate in society, build a social network and realise their potential. Work plays a central role in our lives and in our social identity. It not only represents a means to achieve economic independence; it is also a source of personal fulfilment and integration into society.

Furthermore, the world of work is transforming and is moving away from "employment" as we knew it – the standard employment relationship of permanent, full-time and socially secure employment. Rapid development of technologies, demographic change, further globalisation, new production patterns and other economic and societal developments have seen an increase in new forms of work and employment relationships that are transforming and creating an ever more complex labour market landscape. These new forms of employment are characterised by unconventional work patterns and places of work, or by the irregular provision of work. New employment forms enable more flexible organisations of work and have the potential to aid labour market integration of specific groups of workers, but their job creation potential seems to be still rather limited⁴. On one side, new forms of work can offer more flexibility, autonomy and empowerment to workers and a better work-life balance. On the other side, they also incur the danger of work intensification, increased stress levels and working time and raise concerns regarding income security, working conditions, blurring of work and free time, health and safety protection and social security coverage, unclear rules on responsibility for insurance, certification and professional liability, grey zones linked to employment status in relation to employment protections and taxation.

Many Member States have carried out important reforms in recent years, with some positive effects on job creation. Further efforts, innovation and creativity are needed to promote the creation of high quality jobs and increase the inclusiveness of labour markets, by removing barriers to labour market participation and encouraging transitions into employment and entrepreneurship for the people of all ages, gender and origins. This is in line with the requirements of the Treaty⁵, which states that in defining and implementing its policies and activities, the Union shall aim to eliminate inequalities and take into account requirements linked to the promotion of a high level of employment and the fight against social exclusion.

The involvement of social partners and other organised civil society organisations, in line with national practices, is key to ensure fair and efficient reforms.

3 From 116 million people in 2008 to 122 million in 2014, or 24.4% of the population (EU-28) ("Poverty in the European Union" - PE 579.099 ISBN 978-92-823-8856-3).

4 Eurofound (2015), New forms of employment, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg.

5 Art 8 and 9 of the TFEU.

3. Eligibility

3.1 Eligible candidates

The EESC Civil Society Prize is open to all civil society organisations (the "CSOs") officially registered within the European Union and acting at local, national, regional or European level. It is also open to individuals.

CSOs are organisations which are actively involved in shaping public affairs on the basis of their own concerns, drawing on their own specific knowledge, abilities and scope for action. They act autonomously and membership entails a commitment by members of the general public to take part in the work and activities of those organisations.

This definition includes the so-called labour-market players, i.e. the social partners; organisations representing social and economic players, which are not social partners in the strict sense of the term; non-governmental organisations which bring people together in a common cause, such as environmental organisations, human rights organisations, consumer associations, charitable organisations, educational and training organisations, etc.; community-based organisations i.e. organisations set up within society at grassroots level which pursue member-oriented objectives, e.g. youth organisations, family associations and all organisations through which citizens participate in local and municipal life; religious communities.

Bodies and structures set up by a legislative or regulatory act and/or to which affiliation is partially or totally mandatory (e.g. professional associations) are also eligible.

Individuals are natural persons. EU citizens are eligible, regardless of their country of residence. Third-country nationals are also eligible, provided they are legally resident in the territory of the EU. EESC members, CCMI delegates, staff of the EESC, members of the evaluation panel and their relatives are not eligible to submit an entry.

3.2 Eligible initiatives

Organised civil society - the social partners and other organisations - play an important role in the identification of opportunities for the creation of rewarding, sustainable jobs and the encouragement of entrepreneurship, in particular for underrepresented and disadvantaged population groups. They often adopt people-to-people responses that are crucial for addressing the needs of the people furthest away from the labour market.

Against this background, the specific objective of the 2017 Civil Society Prize is to reward innovative initiatives carried out on the territory of the EU and which aim at the labour market integration of newcomers (such as young people, particularly those not in education, employment or training (NEET), people with migrant background) and all the people who are distant from the labour market and require specific support (such as the long-term unemployed, women detached from the labour market, people with disabilities or from ethnic minority groups and people living in poverty). These initiatives shall have already been implemented or still be ongoing. Initiatives which are planned but have not yet started on 8 September 2017 (closing date for submission of applications) are excluded. To be eligible, activities shall cover at least one of the following areas:

- favour the effective implementation and enforcement of the principle of non-discrimination as regards labour market integration;
- enable the effective inclusion of newcomers and disadvantaged people on the labour market – in quality jobs or as entrepreneurs or self-employed;
- develop innovative forms of work integration for disadvantaged and vulnerable people – for example in the social economy, including through specifically the Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs);
- provide disadvantaged and vulnerable people with a regular job or with a sheltered job in a protected, enabling environment, ensuring an effective transition into regular employment;
- provide individualised advice and guidance services for unemployed people with regards to labour market integration (e.g. job coaching, job counselling, information and advice);
- provide tailor-made, individualised learning and training to upskill / reskill vulnerable people, enhance their employability and empower them (for example in a protected environment or a real work environment)
- raise awareness, promote mutual learning and disseminate good practices regarding alternative, innovative approaches to work integration of the people, including those furthest away from the labour market.

4. **Application procedure and deadline**

Applications are to be made by filling in the attached application form (Appendix 1).

The application must contain all the information the selection board requires in order to:

- ascertain that the civil society organisations or the individuals concerned fulfil the formal entry criteria;
- ascertain that the civil society organisations or the individuals concerned comply with the exclusion criteria;
- ascertain that the civil society organisations or the individuals concerned accept the provisions concerning liability, checks, audits and applicable law;
- evaluate the substantive merits of each entry in relation to the award criteria.

To this end, each application shall include the duly filled in and signed Declaration on honour on exclusion criteria and eligibility criteria (Appendix 2).

Before the prize is awarded, candidates will be asked to send back the duly completed and signed Legal Entity Form and Financial Identification Form as well as the relevant supporting documents.

The forms are available respectively at:

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/legal_entities/legal_entities_en.cfm

and

http://ec.europa.eu/budget/contracts_grants/info_contracts/financial_id/financial_id_en.cfm.

Applications can be drafted in any EU official language. However, to speed up the evaluation process, the EESC would appreciate receiving the application form in English or French.

Submission of an application implies acceptance of all the terms and conditions set out in the contest documents and, where appropriate, waiver of the candidate's own general or specific terms and conditions.

The duly completed and signed application form and declaration on honour shall be sent to the EESC secretariat by e-mail to the following address:

civilsocietyprize@eesc.europa.eu

The final deadline for sending applications is **8 September 2017, at 23:59 (CET)**.

Candidates can submit only one entry. Entering the competition is free of charge. If preparing and sending the application entails costs for a specific candidate, these will not be reimbursed.

Candidates will receive confirmation by e-mail that the application has been received.

5. Evaluation and award

5.1 Evaluation steps

The evaluation will be carried out by a panel of experts composed of 10 members (the "evaluation panel"), who are subject to the requirements on conflict of interests laid down in the Financial Regulation⁶. The evaluation will be based solely on the information provided in the submitted application form.

The EESC reserves the right not to disclose the identity of the members of the evaluation panel; however, this may be disclosed post award.

Participants should not contact the members of the evaluation panel for any reason related with the prize throughout the whole procedure. Any such attempts will result in disqualification.

The decisions of the evaluation panel are final, binding and not subject to challenge.

The procedure will take place in five steps:

- (1) verification of eligibility of candidates;
- (2) verification of eligibility of the initiatives proposed for the prize;
- (3) verification of non-exclusion of candidates;
- (4) evaluation of the quality of the initiatives proposed for the prize on the basis of the award criteria;
- (5) award of the prize.

⁶ Regulation (EU, EURATOM) N° 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) N° 1605/2002 (OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1) as amended. The last consolidated version was published on 01.01.2017.

The applicants must pass all steps to be awarded the prize. No feedback will be provided to candidates until the end of the procedure. Results will be notified to all candidates as soon as possible and in any case within 15 calendar days after the award decision has been taken by the authorising officer (step 5), indicatively at the end of November 2017.

5.1.1 Verification of eligibility of candidates

To be eligible, candidates shall fulfil the requirements of point 3.1 above.

All candidates shall provide a declaration on honour (Appendix 2), duly signed and dated (by an authorised representative in the case of CSOs), stating that they are eligible for the prize. This declaration is part of the declaration used for the exclusion criteria (see point 5.1.3 below). Therefore, only one declaration covering both aspects should be provided by each candidate.

The EESC will evaluate the eligibility of candidates on the basis of the declaration on honour. Before awarding the prize it will ask the candidates to provide a duly completed and signed Legal Entity Form with its supporting evidence (see point 4 above).

The EESC reserves the right to require the above mentioned form and supporting evidence from any candidate at any time during the evaluation procedure. In such case, the candidate must provide the form and the supporting evidence without delay. The EESC may reject the application if the form and the supporting evidence are not provided in due time.

5.1.2 Verification of eligibility of initiatives

Eligibility of the initiatives proposed for the prize will be checked on the basis of the application form (Appendix 1). To be eligible, the initiatives proposed for the prize shall fulfil the requirements of point 3.2 above. Other activities carried out by the candidate will not be taken into consideration.

5.1.3 Verification of non-exclusion

All candidates shall provide a declaration on honour (Appendix 2), duly signed and dated (by an authorised representative in the case of CSOs), stating that they are not in one of the situations of exclusion referred to in Articles 106 and 107 of the Financial Regulation and listed in that declaration on honour.

The EESC reserves the right to verify whether the candidates are in one of the situations of exclusion by requiring the supporting documents listed in the declaration on honour. In this case, the candidate shall provide the documents required within the deadline given by the EESC. The EESC may reject the application if the requested documents are not provided in due time.

A candidate is not required to submit a specific document if he/she/it informs the EESC that the document in question can be accessed on a public database free of charge.

5.1.4 Evaluation of quality

The evaluation panel will assess the quality of the applications on the basis of the award criteria set out below. The evaluators will consider only the initiatives proposed for the prize, not the other activities of the candidate. There is no minimum threshold for each individual criterion. However, candidates that fail to obtain at least 50% of the maximum total score shall be eliminated.

Prize award criteria	Points
Criterion 1 – Sustainability This criterion will assess the potential of the proposed initiative to have a long-term impact and to inspire others in Europe, i.e. to be applied or adapted to the same category of beneficiaries or to another category of beneficiaries elsewhere in the same or in another Member State of the EU.	35 points
Criterion 2 – Participation and collaboration This criterion will assess, on the one hand, how far the proposed initiative actively involves beneficiaries and, on the other hand, its ability to share good practice and raise awareness on issues related to the theme for which the civil society prize is awarded. The collaborative approach with other relevant actors and its potential to ensure long term effects will also be taken into consideration.	35 points
Criterion 3 – Innovation This criterion will assess the creativity of the proposed initiative, its uniqueness and degree of innovation in its specific context. To this end, innovation is understood both as new ideas and as new or improved ways to implement an existing solution or approach or to adapt it to a different context or target group.	30 points
Total points	100 points (minimum 50 points)

5.1.5 Award of the prize

The prize will be awarded by the Committee, on the basis of the evaluation provided by the evaluation panel, who shall be free to decide whether to recommend the award of prizes, depending on their appraisal of the quality of the entries.

The EESC may award a maximum of 5 prizes to the 5 best ranked candidates.

6. Prize money

The Committee plans to award a maximum of 5 prizes. The first prize has a value of EUR 14 000. The amount of the other prizes is EUR 9 000. If place one is shared among more than one winner *ex aequo*, the amount of each of the first prizes is respectively EUR 11 500 for two first prizes, EUR 10 600 for three first prizes and EUR 10 250 for four first prizes and EUR 10 000 for five first prizes. The

Committee is not bound to award all five prizes. The EESC may decide not to award the Civil Society Prize.

The prize award ceremony will take place on **7 December 2017**, during the EESC plenary session. Two representatives per winner will be invited to the ceremony, with travel and accommodation organised by the EESC according to the rules which will be notified to winners in due time.

Prizes will be paid by bank transfer within 30 days after the award ceremony, provided the winners have submitted all the requested documents. Winners are responsible for the payment of taxes and charges applicable when using the prize money.

7. Personal data

Personal data contained in the application documents (such as name, address) will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data. Unless indicated otherwise, the replies to the questions and any personal data requested to evaluate the application in accordance with the contest rules will be processed solely for that purpose by the Communication Department. Details concerning the processing of personal data are attached (Appendix 3).

Personal data of candidates may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) if they are in one of the situations mentioned in Article 106 of the Financial Regulation and indicated in the declaration on honour. For more information, see the Privacy Statement on http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm#BDCE.

8. Publicity obligations

Without prejudice of point 7 above, the candidates grant the EESC the right to communicate to the public in any language and by any medium and any kind of technique the name of the candidates, their activities and the amount of the prize awarded.

Any communication or publication by the winners about the activity for which the prize was awarded shall indicate that the activity has been awarded the EESC Civil Society Prize. This obligation applies for one year from the date of the prize award.

9. Liability

Candidates have sole liability in case of a claim relating to the activities carried out in the framework of the prize.

10. Check and audits

The winners shall accept checks and audits by the EESC, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and the Court of Auditors and the publicity obligations in relation to the contest and the received prize, as detailed in point 8 above.

11. Law applicable, complaints and competent court

The Civil Society Prize shall be governed by EU law, complemented, where necessary, by the national law of Belgium.

Observation concerning the prize award procedure may be submitted to the authority awarding the prize.

Complaints for maladministration may be lodged to the European Ombudsman within two years of the date when the complainant became aware of the facts on which the complaint is based (see <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu>) and after having first contacted the EESC to try to resolve the matter.

The court responsible for matters relating to this prize is the General Court of the European Union:

General Court
Rue du Fort Niedergrünwald
L-2925 Luxembourg
tel.: (+352) 4303 1 fax: (+352) 4303 2100
e-mail: GeneralCourt.Registry@curia.europa.eu
URL: <http://curia.europa.eu>

Information about the lodging of appeals may be obtained at the address indicated above.

12. Penalties

Financial penalties of 2 to 10% of the value of the prize and exclusion decisions from all contracts, grants and contests financed by the Union budget may be imposed on participants who have made false declarations (Declaration on honour, Appendix 2), or committed irregularities or fraud, in accordance with the conditions laid down in Article 106 of the Financial Regulation.

13. Further information

For further information, please contact:

Mr Peter Lindvald Nielsen, Head of the EESC Communication Department

Tel.: + 32 (0)2 546 92 99

or

Mr Claus Bergman, Communication officer, Secretariat of the EESC Communication Department, Tel.: + 32 (0)2 546 98 72

or

Ms Anna Comi, Communication officer, Secretariat of the EESC Communication Department

Tel.: + 32 (0)2 546 93 67

You may also send an email to civilsocietyprize@eesc.europa.eu.

If relevant for other potential candidates, questions and answers will be published on the Civil Society Prize page of the EESC website (www.eesc.europa.eu/civilsocietyprize). The EESC kindly recommends candidates to check the prize website regularly in order to get the most up-to-date information.
