



## **RULES GOVERNING THE EESC CIVIL SOLIDARITY PRIZE "Civil society against Covid-19"**

### ***Rewarding solidarity initiatives to tackle the Covid-19 emergency and its consequences in Europe***

#### **1. Aim and overall objective of the EESC Civil Solidarity Prize**

For the European Economic and Social Committee (the "EESC" or the "Committee"), the aim of this prize, which is launched in 2020 as a one-off edition instead of the annual EESC Civil Society Prize, is to reward not-for-profit initiatives by natural persons and/or private law bodies that have made a significant contribution to tackling the emergency situation created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The overall objective of the prize is thus to raise awareness and increase visibility of the contribution that natural persons and/or private law bodies have made or are making to creating a European identity and solidarity in a way that underpins the common values that are the foundation of European integration.

#### **2. Theme of the EESC Civil Solidarity Prize: Civil Society against Covid-19**

The Covid-19 outbreak and the resulting crisis constitute a grave emergency affecting all levels of society. They represent an unprecedented challenge to the Member States and a significant burden for public authorities, health institutions, civil society organisations, enterprises and European citizens.

Never, since the end of the Second World War, has the global community faced such a dramatic crisis in terms of health-related, human, social, psychological and economic impact. The pandemic has caused a very large number of people to suffer from serious symptoms, with dozens of thousands of deaths. Isolation and social distancing measures, though necessary to contain the spread of the virus, have made it even more difficult to cope with this human tragedy.

Health and social systems have come under pressure. Business operations have been disrupted due to the lockdown measures introduced in several countries, leading to liquidity constraints as many businesses struggle to pay their suppliers and employees. As a consequence, the solvency of

businesses has become a very important issue, also in light of the uncertain economic outlook. Small and medium-sized enterprises, start-ups and the self-employed are particularly vulnerable in this respect.

Many firms have laid off employees, leading to a sharp decline in economic activity and an increase in unemployment. There is a serious risk that millions of jobs will be lost in the coming months, with an increase of underemployment, substantial fall in the incomes of many households and in-work poverty. The situation of people with precarious jobs and persons in material deprivation is likely to worsen.

The scale and the evident cross-border dimension of the coronavirus crisis and of the challenges ahead prevent any unilateral, national action from being truly effective. No government can possibly think to solve such a pandemic and tackle its consequences alone. A piecemeal approach by the individual Member States is not only a sure recipe for disaster, but plays also into the hands of populist, Eurosceptic and nationalist forces, thus putting the whole European construction at stake. 70 years after the Schuman declaration, Europe still needs more than ever "concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity". The treatment of critically ill patients in other EU countries and the many healthcare professionals volunteering to help in the most struck regions are only two of the many examples of this de facto solidarity of the last few months.

The EU Member States must come together, support each other and coordinate a concerted action, in the respect of the Charter of Fundamental Rights and in compliance with the Rule of Law and with the principle of subsidiarity. A fast, coherent and coordinated collective response is vital not only to guarantee a functioning single market, but also to deploy effective measures to support economic activity and to prepare the ground for the recovery. Coordination is important also to deal with health emergency needs and provide efficient help to people who are suffering.

In the current situation, it is more important than ever that the EU shows that it is not only a community of financial and economic interests but also – and above all – a community of common destiny<sup>1</sup>. This principle, together with the principle of promoting the well-being of the European people set out in the Treaty on European Union (TEU)<sup>2</sup>, must govern European, national and regional/local policies and should be the leading principle of the response of European civil society to the current crisis.

The EESC is thankful to all those who have worked in the frontline or to guarantee access to public services and essential goods and it is impressed by the huge effort made by organised civil society, NGOs and social and economic partners, as well as by many anonymous citizens to complement the measures carried out by the authorities of the Member States to provide support to those most affected by the crisis.

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<sup>1</sup> Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on *The future of European Union Solidarity Fund*, CO/319-EESC-2012-817 of 28 March 2012 ([OJ C 181, 21.6.2012, p. 52](#)).

<sup>2</sup> Treaty on European Union, Article 3(1).

Not for profit social enterprises and civil society organisations, which in many Member States are an important part of the social and health systems and/or provide social services, experts, networks and voluntary engagement for emergency and catastrophe prevention and management, are playing a crucial role in the fight against the Covid-19 outbreak and in mitigating the effects of the epidemic.

While the thoughts of the EESC go out to those who have been directly affected by the pandemic, with this prize the Committee wants to pay tribute to the many civil society organisations, economic operators and individuals who have carried out, on the territory of the EU or in the UK, effective and creative actions aimed at fighting against Covid-19 and its consequences, displaying courage, engagement, solidarity and an unbelievable sense of responsibility.

### 3. Eligibility

#### 3.1 Eligible candidates

The EESC Civil Solidarity Prize is open on equal terms to all natural persons and private law bodies under the conditions set out below. Public authorities, governmental organisations and other public bodies are not eligible.

**For UK candidates:** Following the entry into force of the EU-UK Withdrawal Agreement on 1 February 2020<sup>3</sup> and in particular Articles 127(6), 137 and 138, the references here below to natural or legal persons residing or established in a Member State of the EU are to be understood as including natural or legal persons residing or established in the United Kingdom. UK residents and entities are therefore eligible to submit an entry.

#### 1) Natural persons

For the purposes of this prize, natural persons are individuals or groups of individuals acting jointly without contractual ties. 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. Groups of individuals must designate one of the natural persons as a point of contact (the leader) for the administrative and financial aspects of the prize.

EESC members, CCMI delegates, staff of EU institutions and other EU bodies, members of the evaluation committee and their relatives are not eligible to submit an entry.

#### 2) Private law bodies

Civil society organisations (hereafter: "CSOs") officially registered within the European Union and acting at local, national, regional or European level are eligible. For the purposes of this prize, CSOs as defined in the EESC opinion on *The role and contribution of civil society organisations in the building of Europe* are "organisational structures whose members have objectives and responsibilities

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<sup>3</sup> Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community ([OJ L 29, 31.1.2020, p. 7](#)).

that are of general interest and who also act as mediators between the public authorities and citizens"<sup>4</sup>. They 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, non-governmental organisations which bring people together in a common cause, such as environmental organisations, human rights organisations, consumer associations, charitable organisations, cultural organisations, and 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. CSOs set up by a legislative or regulatory act and/or to which affiliation is partially or totally mandatory (e.g. professional associations)<sup>5</sup> are also eligible.

Companies or firms: For the purposes of this prize, "companies or firms" means profit-making entities constituted under civil or commercial law, including cooperative societies, and other legal persons governed by private law. Companies or firms are eligible if they are formed in accordance with the law of a Member State and have their registered office, central administration or principal place of business on the territory of the EU.

### 3.2 Eligible initiatives

The specific objective of the Civil Solidarity Prize is to reward **effective and creative initiatives carried out on the territory of the EU or in the UK which aim to tackle the Covid-19 crisis and its manifold consequences.**

To be eligible, initiatives must fulfil the three criteria listed hereafter:

- They must be **not-for-profit**, such as for example selfless initiatives, charity projects, individual or corporate volunteering etc.;
- They must have **already been implemented** or be **still ongoing on 30 September 2020 (closing date for submission of applications)**;
- They must be **directly linked to the crisis**, i.e. **specifically** aimed at fighting against Covid-19 and/or tackling its manifold consequences.

The following initiatives are excluded:

- Commercial (i.e. for-profit) initiatives;
- Initiatives which receive more than 50% public funding;
- Initiatives which are planned but have not begun implementation by 30 September 2020 (closing date for submission of applications);
- Initiatives already carried out by the candidates before the outbreak of Covid-19 and are not directly linked to the coronavirus and its consequences. However, existing initiatives which

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<sup>4</sup> Opinion of the Economic and Social Committee on *The role and contribution of civil society organisations in the building of Europe* – CESE 851/1999 of 22 September 1999 ([OJ C 329, 17.11.1999, p. 30](#)).

<sup>5</sup> This applies for instance to Austrian labour-market players.

were adapted to react swiftly to the additional needs of their target groups and to properly address the new or increased challenges faced as a consequence of the coronavirus pandemic are eligible;

- Documentation and/or information and/or awareness raising activities, journalistic, literary or scientific publications of any kind and on any support, audiovisual products and any kind of artworks.

Upon request, the candidate shall provide evidence of the eligibility of the proposed initiative. The EESC may reject the application if the supporting evidence is not provided in due time.

The initiatives proposed for the prize can cover a wide range of themes, such as, for example (non-exhaustive list):

- actions linked to health, health equipment, medical devices, assistance and care;
- temporary initiatives aimed at mitigating the immediate effects of the coronavirus crisis and to meet the urgent needs of the target groups;
- specific measures to help the most deprived, disadvantaged or vulnerable people or groups (incl. refugees), protect them from the disease itself and alleviate the impact of the crisis;
- initiatives linked to the situation of specific target groups in the time of confinement;
- initiatives aimed at tackling the economic and occupational consequences of the health crisis;
- initiatives to support the recovery of the European economy or of specific sectors in the aftermath of the pandemic;
- initiatives aimed at increasing the reaction capacity in case of future comparable crisis.

#### **4. Application procedure and deadline**

Applications are to be made by filling in the online application form ([www.eesc.europa.eu/civilsocietyprize](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/civilsocietyprize)). In duly justified cases linked to documented technical problems, the EESC may allow candidates to apply by email, fax or post.

The application must contain all the information the evaluation committee requires in order to:

- ascertain that the candidate fulfils the formal entry criteria;
- ascertain that the candidate complies with the exclusion criteria;
- ascertain that the candidate accepts 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 must include the duly filled in and signed Declaration on honour on exclusion criteria and eligibility criteria (Appendix 1).

Before the prize is awarded, the EESC will ask candidates to return 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:

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/legal-entities\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/legal-entities_en)

and at

[https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/financial-identification\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/financial-identification_en).

Applications can be drafted in any official EU 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 final deadline for sending applications is **30 September 2020, at 12 noon (Brussels time)**.

The EESC will disregard any application received after this date and time. **Candidates are strongly advised not to wait until the last day to submit their applications**, since heavy internet traffic or a faulty internet connection could lead to difficulties in sending in the application. The EESC cannot be held responsible for any delay due to such difficulties.

Candidates can submit only one entry. In the application form, candidates have to choose one of the 29 categories, depending on the geographic focus of their project and regardless of their Member State of residence or establishment. Categories 1 to 27 are for projects whose implementation focus is in a Member State, category 28 is for projects whose implementation focus is in the United Kingdom and category 29 is for projects with a cross-border or European focus.

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

After they have submitted their application, candidates will see a message on the screen thanking them for the application and offering them the possibility of printing it or saving it in PDF format.

## 5. Evaluation and award

### 5.1 Evaluation steps

The evaluation will be carried out by a panel of experts (the "evaluation committee"), who are subject to the requirements on conflict of interests laid down in the Financial Regulation<sup>6</sup>.

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

Participants should not contact the members of the evaluation committee for any reason related to the prize throughout the whole procedure. Any such attempt will result in disqualification.

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<sup>6</sup> Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 ([OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1](#)).

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

The evaluation will be based solely on the information provided in the submitted application form.

Each of the 29 categories will be evaluated independently from the other categories.

For each category, 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.

The EESC will assess eligibility, non-exclusion and quality in no particular order. 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), provisionally by January 2021.

#### **5.1.1 Verification of eligibility of candidates**

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

All candidates must provide a declaration on honour (Appendix 1), duly signed and dated (by an authorised representative in the case of private law bodies), 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, the EESC 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 this 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 online application form and possible additional clarifying questions asked by the EESC. To be eligible, the initiatives proposed for the prize must 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 must provide a declaration on honour (Appendix 1), duly signed and dated (by an authorised representative in the case of private law bodies), stating that they are not in one of the situations of exclusion referred to in Articles 136 and 141 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 must 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 the document in question can be accessed on a public database free of charge. The candidate must inform the EESC accordingly.

### 5.1.4 Evaluation of quality

For each of the 29 categories, the evaluation committee 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 candidate's other activities. There is no minimum threshold for each individual criterion. However, candidates that fail to obtain at least 50% of the maximum total score will be eliminated.

<b>Prize award criteria</b>	<b>Points</b>
<b>Criterion 1 – Impact and efficiency</b> This criterion will assess both the short-term and long-term impact of the proposed initiative, as well as its potential 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. In this context, initiative will be evaluated in the light of how the human and financial resources employed relate to the impact on the target group. The ability of the initiative to share good practice will also be taken into consideration.	<b>70 points</b>
<b>Criterion 2 – Innovation and creativity</b> 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 to mean both new ideas and new or improved ways to implement an existing solution or approach or to adapt it to a different context or target group.	<b>30 points</b>
<b>Total points</b>	<b>100 points (minimum 50 points)</b>

### 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 committee, who will be free to decide whether to recommend that prizes be awarded, depending on their appraisal of the quality of the entries.

The EESC may award a maximum of 29 prizes (one for each category) to the top ranked candidate (i.e. the candidate obtaining the best total score) for the respective category.

## 6. Prize money

The Committee plans to award a maximum of 29 prizes. Each prize has a value of EUR 10 000. The Committee is not bound to award all 29 prizes. The EESC may decide not to award the Civil Solidarity Prize.

The prize award ceremony will take place during the EESC plenary session **in January 2021**. One representative 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 of 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 and address) will be processed pursuant to Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data<sup>7</sup>. 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 Directorate for Communication and Interinstitutional Relations. Details concerning the processing of personal data are attached (Appendix 2).

The candidate's personal data may be registered in the Early Detection and Exclusion System (EDES) if the candidate is in one of the situations mentioned in Article 136 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](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/explained/management/protecting/protect_en.cfm)

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<sup>7</sup>

Regulation (EU) 2018/1725 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 October 2018 on the protection of natural persons with regard to the processing of personal data by the Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and on the free movement of such data, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 and Decision No 1247/2002/EC ([OJ L 295, 21.11.2018, p. 93](https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/reg/2018/1725/oj)).

## 8. Disclosure requirements

Without prejudice to 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 prizes awarded to the winners.

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

## 9. Liability

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

## 10. Checks and audits

The winners must accept the checks and audits by the EESC, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and the Court of Auditors referred to in Article 129 of the Financial Regulation 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 Solidarity Prize is governed by EU law, complemented, where necessary, by the national law of Belgium.

Observations concerning the prize award procedure may be submitted to the authority awarding the prize using the contact details indicated in point 13 below.

If candidates believe that maladministration has occurred, they may lodge a complaint with the European Ombudsman within two years of the date when they become aware of the facts which form the basis for the complaint (see <http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu>).

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

General Court of the European Union  
Rue du Fort Niedergrünwald  
L-2925 Luxembourg  
Tel.: +352 43031      Fax.: +352 4303 2100  
Email: [GeneralCourt.Registry@curia.europa.eu](mailto: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 1), or committed irregularities or fraud, in accordance with the conditions laid down in Article 136 of the Financial Regulation.

## 13. Further information

For more information, please contact: [EESCprize@eesc.europa.eu](mailto:EESCprize@eesc.europa.eu).

If relevant to other potential candidates, questions and answers will be published on the Civil Solidarity Prize page of the EESC website ([www.eesc.europa.eu/civilsolidarityprize](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/civilsolidarityprize)). The EESC recommends that candidates check the prize website regularly in order to get the most up-to-date information.

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