

 **15 July 2020**

**Applications open for the EESC Civil Solidarity Prize dedicated to the fight against the coronavirus**

**The EESC will reward up to 29 solidarity initiatives undertaken in the EU and the United Kingdom to battle COVID-19 and cushion its devastating blows**

The **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)** is launching a **Civil Solidarity Prize**, a one-off award with the specific theme of "**Civil society against COVID-19**", which this year will be replacing its flagship annual Civil Society Prize.

The Civil Solidarity Prize will honour creative and effective initiatives by individuals, civil society organisations and privately owned companies that have made an outstanding contribution to tackling the COVID-19 emergency and its grave and manifold consequences, thereby strengthening European solidarity and helping to create a European identity based on common EU values.

Through the prize, the EESC aims to increase the visibility of these initiatives, raising awareness of their impact and thus paying tribute to all those people who fought against the coronavirus, displaying courage, commitment, solidarity and an unbelievable sense of responsibility.

To be eligible to apply, entrants must either reside in or be established in the EU. United Kingdom residents, established companies and civil society organisations are also eligible to submit an entry. Despite the fact that the majority of the British population voted for Brexit and that the country is now leaving the EU, the EESC wants to show that it does not intend to break the ties with civil society in this former Member State and that – on the contrary – it wishes to maintain close relations.

The EESC will be awarding up to 29 prizes, for the amount of **EUR 10 000 each**, to initiatives carried out **in the territory of the EU or the United Kingdom**. 27 prizes are available for projects implemented in Member States, one for a UK entry and one for a project with a cross-border or European focus.

All entries, including those submitted by profit-making companies, must be strictly **not-for-profit** and may not receive more than 50% of public funding.

The initiatives must be directly linked to COVID-19, specifically aiming at fighting against the virus or tackling its consequences. They must have already been implemented or be ongoing. Projects that were set up prior to the outbreak of the pandemic and were adapted to respond quickly to the new challenges are also eligible.

**The deadline for entries is 12 noon on** **30 September 2020**. The award ceremony will take place at the EESC plenary session in January 2021 in Brussels.

**MORE ABOUT THE THEME OF THE EESC CIVIL SOLIDARITY PRIZE**

The EESC – the EU body giving a voice to NGOs, trade unions and employers' organisations at EU level – has repeatedly stressed that European solidarity and concerted European action are key to solving a pandemic of such unprecedented proportions as COVID-19 and to surmounting the economic and social crisis awaiting Europe on a scale which has not been seen since the Second World War.

At the same time, the EESC has been pointing to the invaluable work carried out by Europe's civil society and many individuals during the crisis. Many have, through various actions, shown unprecedented solidarity with those most affected by the crisis. Others have made a huge effort to complement the measures introduced by the authorities of the Member States. Some have taken part in emergency and disaster prevention and management, proving crucial in the fight against the pandemic and in mitigating its effects.

 The initiatives proposed for the prize can cover a wide range of themes, such as:

* actions linked to health, health equipment, medical devices, assistance and care;
* temporary initiatives aimed at mitigating the immediate effects of the coronavirus crisis and at meeting the urgent needs of the target groups;
* specific measures to help the most deprived, disadvantaged or vulnerable people or groups (including refugees), protect them from the disease itself and alleviate the impact of the crisis;
* initiatives linked to the situation of specific target groups during the lockdown;
* initiatives aimed at tackling the economic and employment 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 the event of future comparable crises.

This list is not exhaustive.

The full description of requirements and the online application form are available on our webpage: [www.eesc.europa.eu/civilsolidarityprize](http://www.eesc.europa.eu/civilsolidarityprize)

In 2020, the Civil Solidarity Prize is being awarded instead of the EESC's trademark Civil Society Prize, which annually honours civil society organisations and/or individuals whose initiatives and projects have made a significant contribution to promoting the common values that bolster European cohesion and integration. Unlike the Civil Solidarity Prize, it does not reward projects by private companies.

In 2019, the EESC Civil Society Prize was held for the eleventh time and was dedicated to women's empowerment and the fight for gender equality.

We kindly invite you to encourage civil society organisations, individuals and private companies in your country to apply for the EESC Civil Solidarity Prize and thus help valuable projects gain recognition.

**For more information, please contact:**

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*The European Economic and Social Committee is an institutional consultative body established by the 1957 Treaty of Rome. The Committee has 326 members from across Europe, who are appointed by the Council of the European Union. It represents the various economic and social components of organised civil society. Its consultative role enables its members, and hence the organisations they represent, to participate in the EU decision-making process.*

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