

# 2018 EESC CIVIL SOCIETY PRIZE

Rewarding excellence in civil society initiatives

Social inclusion      Artistic freedom  
Diversity      Cultural Heritage      Europe  
**European Values**      Dialogue  
Freedom of expression      Identities  
Organised Civil Society  
Integration

## Identities, European Values and Cultural Heritage in Europe

#CivSocPrize @EU\_EESC



European Economic and Social Committee

## The 2018 EESC Civil Society Prize

# Identities, European Values and Cultural Heritage in Europe

### President's introduction

Culture in particular can help Europe surmount its problems by fostering dialogue, trust and cohesion.

Europe's cultural heritage and values have huge untapped potential as a force for unity, while the multiplicity of identities within Europe imbues us with an openness to diversity. These elements will be vital in healing our divisions and overcoming the disaffection that provides fertile ground for nationalism.

Culture in particular can help Europe surmount its problems by fostering dialogue, trust and cohesion. Renewed emphasis on our cultural heritage can bring about what, in my view, Europe needs – a second Renaissance.

The original Renaissance re-established the importance of culture in terms of its relationships with science, government and economic and social life, laying the foundations for modern civilisation.

Thus, when we speak of cultural heritage, we are not talking solely about past achievements. Rather, fundamental ideas underpinning our Union – the social market economy, Europe's social model, the subsidiarity and sustainability principles – constitute elements of this heritage that remain as relevant as ever.

By designating 2018 as the European Year of Cultural Heritage, the EU recognised engagement with this heritage as a means of reinforcing a sense of belonging to our common European space.

Personally, on taking up my mandate as European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) President in April 2018, I announced that one of my priorities would be to strengthen the role of culture within European political discourse.

In this spirit, the 2018 EESC Civil Society Prize recognises organisations and individuals whose civic engagement has facilitated access to Europe's cultural heritage, raised awareness of the richness of European identities and promoted European values.

My warmest congratulations go to the winners of this landmark 10<sup>th</sup> edition of the prize. I would also like to thank everyone else who has worked over the past year to promote and reflect on Europe's identities, values and cultural heritage, driving forward a sustainable cultural narrative for us all.



**Luca Jahier**  
President of the EESC

## Europe's values, identities and culture to reinforce solidarity

Europe finds itself in the midst of developments which have led many to question the course of globalisation. This has taken its toll on our continent's political and social life, leading to the emergence of internal divisions and feelings of disaffection, and putting civil society and the European project itself under considerable strain.

Furthermore, a lack of preparedness amongst host populations and at all levels of government for the dramatic rise in migration in recent years has compromised feelings of mutual solidarity and opened the door to nationalist rhetoric. An increase in acts of violence, including terrorist and racially motivated attacks, and feelings of insecurity whipped up by sections of the media have served to amplify isolationist voices.

In this context, European values must be defended and understanding promoted between people of varying cultural backgrounds. By fostering an appreciation of the richness of different cultures, intercultural exchange has an important part to play in this.

Civil society organisations have made big contributions to bringing Europe's values, identities and cultural heritage to the fore in order to strengthen social cohesion and highlight the vast potential of diversity – the basis of our shared European history. It is now vital to continue to harness the power of civil society to counter fear-based narratives.

### EESC Civil Society Prize

The EESC represents the interests of all sectors of organised civil society at EU level. Launched in 2006, its Civil Society Prize rewards creative and innovative initiatives – ongoing or completed – carried out by EU-based civil society organisations and individuals at European, national, regional or local level which promote and have a long-lasting impact on European identity and integration.

The prize highlights the role that civil society can play in the creation of a European identity and citizenship that embodies the values underpinning the EU.

Each edition has a specific theme. In recent years, these have included support for labour market integration, improvements to the lives of refugees and migrants, and combatting poverty and social exclusion.

## The 2018 edition

Within the framework of the European Year of Cultural Heritage, the theme for the 2018 Civil Society Prize is identities, European values and cultural heritage in Europe. In this instance, cultural heritage should be understood in its broadest sense, encompassing things like industrial heritage, crafts, gastronomic heritage and the culture of work.

The intention is to raise awareness of the multiple layers and richness of Europe's diverse identities, increase understanding of how arts and culture promote inclusive and cohesive societies, and foster a sustainable future for the European project. The eligible initiatives cover areas such as:

- Use of culture to promote European values, such as respect for human dignity and human rights, freedom, democracy, equality and the rule of law;
- Increasing understanding and combatting populism and prejudice by promoting European values and a multi-layered European identity;
- Encouraging respect for cultural, religious and linguistic diversity, and artistic freedom;
- Promoting the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association;
- Highlighting the wealth of Europe's tangible and intangible cultural heritage;
- Facilitating wider access to European cultural heritage;
- Showcasing the importance of Europe's cultural heritage to foster a sense of a multi-layered European identity, social inclusion and integration;
- Preventing the misuse of culture for the promotion of racism or nationalism;
- Raising awareness of all cultures that have contributed to the creation of a multi-layered European identity;
- Exploiting the capacity of culture and intercultural and interreligious dialogue to prevent conflict and bring about reconciliation.

In all, 150 applications were submitted from 28 countries. The applications were evaluated by a 10-member expert panel based on criteria including the potential to have a long-term impact and inspire others, active beneficiary involvement, creativity and innovation, promotion of European values and strengthening a common sense of belonging through and with diversity.

The winners received their prizes at a ceremony in Brussels on 13 December 2018. A total of EUR 50 000 was shared between five projects, with EUR 14 000 for the first prize and EUR 9 000 each for the others.

## Further information

2018 EESC Civil Society Prize:

<https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/2018-eesc-civil-society-prize>

The European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018:

[https://europa.eu/cultural-heritage/about\\_en](https://europa.eu/cultural-heritage/about_en)

# 1

1<sup>st</sup> prize:

## Tastes of Danube Bread connects

Danube-Networkers for Europe (DANET) is a non-profit association promoting education and research, and providing access to learning for people of all ages based on innovative approaches. It also supports cross-cultural and intergenerational dialogue, and helps senior citizens, women, and people with few qualifications to play a more active role in society. DANET's project "Tastes of Danube – Bread Connects" uses the topic of bread to enhance appreciation of national cultural heritage and identify transnational similarities.

*"For many centuries, bread has been a symbol for community and sharing in almost every culture and religion in Europe. This intangible cultural heritage unites the European people in their diversity. We therefore called our project 'Bread Connects'", explains DANET president, Carmen Stadelhofer. "The project's central aim is to foster awareness of our common cultural roots in the Danube area and in Europe by cooperating and initiating joint low-threshold activities for people of all ages, ethnicities and social backgrounds based on the motto 'United in Diversity'."*



In October 2017 in Sofia, Bread Connects trained 16 people from different countries in the "Baking as a social event" method, which brings diverse groups together to bake, eat and talk. Participants organised further events in their own countries through which other people were trained in and encouraged to disseminate the method.

During the same month, a bread baking week in all Danube countries emphasised similarities and differences between baking traditions.

The International Danube Festival held in Ulm, Germany in July 2018 brought the project partners together for a conference on intangible cultural heritage, which was attended by 150 people and at which the project was presented. Intercultural groups baked for a Danube breakfast on the big Danube bridge organised by the Danubian partners and 30 local civic associations, with around 2 000 people availing of good food and a chance for discussion.



The festival was also the setting for the exhibition of pictures of bread baked for the project's Create and Bake competition, the winners of which were present. A total of 92 competitors from eight countries submitted their visions of Europe in the form of baked goods. Furthermore, an online photo campaign was held in which around 3 000 people participated in 1 000 bread-related pictures.

Finally, a key part of the project is the creation of a virtual cultural route of bread along the Danube to be presented on the multilingual website. The route is the result of research by groups from all Danube countries into current and historical handicraft bakeries, public bread ovens, mills, cultural and religious festivals and bread traditions.

*"The EESC prize is a huge recognition and honour for the many organisations and people involved in this project, especially the volunteers. It gives a strong impetus to expand our European cooperation and build a cultural route of bread across Europe", says Ms Stadelhofer. "Winning the prize will strengthen our intercultural friendship links along the Danube and help us to invite others to join our activities and connect people in the Danube region and all over Europe, thus fostering a peaceful and solidarity-based Europe."*

**MORE INFORMATION:**

[bread-connects.tastes-of-danube.eu](http://bread-connects.tastes-of-danube.eu)

# 2

2<sup>nd</sup> prize:

## SWANS initiative

Women from immigrant families and women of colour account for almost 10% of students enrolled in German universities. However, these groups remain under-represented in all professional fields. Moreover, studies show that women with non-German-sounding names have to write more applications than their German-sounding counterparts in order to get jobs.



Composed of five female volunteers from immigrant backgrounds, the SWANS initiative organises career and leadership seminars for high-potential female university students from immigrant families and women of colour. The first initiative of its kind in Germany, its aim is to increase the representation of such women in the workplace.

*“Despite the inclusive European values and identity we teach, Germany’s job market doesn’t provide the same opportunities for highly qualified women from immigrant families and women of colour as it does for white people with German heritage. That’s where we come in”, says SWANS CEO Martha Dudzinski. “We organise career seminars for female university students from such backgrounds, teach them skills like networking, leadership and application processes, and help them get the jobs they deserve, thereby promoting a more inclusive job market in line with our diverse identities and European values.”*

As well as acquiring skills and knowledge, SWANS seminars – some of which are organised in cooperation with potential employers – enable participants to bond, network and exchange ideas and experience, including through team-building exercises. The seminars also look at topics like scholarships, internships, jobs and programmes abroad that participants either didn’t know about or for which they wouldn’t have thought of applying.

# 2

Each seminar includes a networking dinner with successful women from immigrant families or women of colour, providing participants with additional knowledge and putting them in touch with prospective employers. The women are reminded to be inspired, not intimidated, by others' achievements and role models share their stories of overcoming obstacles to become successful via monthly blog entries on the SWANS website.



During feedback sessions at the end of the seminars, many women express a sense of empowerment thanks to what they have learned and an appreciation of the chance to talk with people in similar situations. Others have written to the SWANS team to tell them about the impact the seminar had on them, such as leading them to apply for programmes, jobs or scholarships for which they hadn't thought they would be considered. Some have even started their own projects with women they met at a seminar.

*"Having what we do recognised by such a prestigious award as the EESC Civil Society Prize sends an immensely valuable signal to all women who participate in our seminars, making them feel supported and valued and encouraging them to follow their chosen paths"; says Ms Dudzinski. "With the prize money, we will be able to organise more seminars and support more women."*

*"In a world where we constantly have to explain that women from immigrant families face discrimination, the prize is a big step towards convincing stakeholders of the importance of the issue", she concludes.*

## MORE INFORMATION:

[www.swans-initiative.de](http://www.swans-initiative.de)

# 3

## 3<sup>th</sup> prize: Aria Nuova Eco-Museum



People with mental health problems often lack access to cultural and heritage resources. This leads to a limited understanding of concepts like beauty and identity, and low levels of awareness of the character of the places where they live.

The Aria Nuova social cooperative has been involved in the field of mental illness for many years, working on projects for local authorities in the Campania region of Italy, where it is based, and elsewhere. It specialises in a particularly complex area – namely treatment of people previously housed in Italy’s judicial psychiatric hospitals.

Aria Nuova’s Eco-Museum initiative promotes European values, identity and cultural heritage to people with mental disorders. The heritage covered is not limited to monuments and museums but also includes crafts, local products and the natural environment.

*“The Eco-Museum project was born from the desire to organise a series of cultural and artistic initiatives with the main objective of helping people with social and psychological problems”, explains Maria Grazia Gaudiano of Aria Nuova. “Eco-Museum makes it possible to sensitise these groups to the preservation of tangible and intangible assets inherited from the past.”*

Eco-Museum involves 39 participants with differing degrees of mental disability living in seven residential units around the cities of Caserta and Benevento – an area of particular cultural significance given its wealth of Roman remains, examples of architecture from many different periods and museums.

Work begins with preparation of the participants, conclusion of agreements with museums and fine arts organisations, definition of multisensory activities that meet the needs of people with limited cognitive ability and training for staff guiding the activities.

Divided into four groups, participants then analyse and discuss with tutors the identities, history, values, traditions and monuments of the communities in which they live. They visit and photograph less well-known historical sites to discover hidden aspects of local heritage, interview craftsmen and interpret the experience based on an approach that enables them to express the feelings which it inspired in them.

Subsequently, they attend participatory laboratories in which they give creative expression to their understanding of the history and traditions of their communities. Among other things, the laboratories have resulted in production of artistic maps of the visited sites made of materials including plastic, clay and paper, clay models of monuments, photographic reports and films. These have been exhibited to the public in the facilities where the participants live.



By giving participants new aesthetic experiences, guiding them in a process of reflection and explaining to them the rich and diverse traditions, identities and values on which European integration is based, Eco-Museum fosters active citizenship and a sense of belonging. Moreover, learning about cultural heritage and values and communicating these experiences using a multisensory approach broadens participants' knowledge and helps them develop self-confidence, social skills and creativity, while reducing their sense of isolation and removing barriers to their social inclusion.

*"The EESC prize will allow us to continue to offer solutions to improve the use of cultural and territorial heritage in the perspective of an inclusive society and the universal right to culture", says Gaudiano.*

**MORE INFORMATION:**

[aria-nuova-societa-cooperativa-sociale.business.site/?m=true](http://aria-nuova-societa-cooperativa-sociale.business.site/?m=true)

# 4

4<sup>th</sup> prize:

## Safe Passage International

Worldwide, half of the 1.2 million people in need of urgent resettlement are children, yet only 10% of the necessary places have been pledged. Refugee children have been arriving in Europe in large numbers since 2015 but many have become stuck in makeshift camps or had to undertake dangerous onward journeys, putting themselves at risk of exploitation.

When UK-based organisation Safe Passage International began operating in 2015, not a single child had been transferred from France to the UK through the EU's family reunification route. By mid-2018, it had enabled more than 1 500 to reach safety via this mechanism and other routes it had helped to establish throughout Europe.



*"Safe Passage International opens safe and legal routes for refugees, predominantly children, to travel to a place where they can lead a full life", explains CEO, Beth Gardiner-Smith. "We believe that refugees should not have to risk their lives making dangerous journeys to a place they have a legal right to reach. Through political advocacy, campaigning, legal work and casework, we open and strengthen routes to safety across Europe and build public support for child refugees."*

The 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Kindertransport, in which British communities took in children fleeing Nazi persecution, provides an opportunity to make the case for welcoming more child refugees today.

*"Our Kindertransport commemoration campaign, entitled '80 years on, child refugees still need Safe Passage' celebrates the contributions made by people who arrived in the UK as child refugees on the Kindertransport 80 years ago and aims to carry forward the legacy of this mass rescue effort by asking the UK government to accept 10 000 children today", says Gardiner-Smith.*

# 4

“80 years on” draws parallels between the current situation and that of the late 1930s. Stories of Kindertransport refugees – some of whom play leading roles in the initiative – are shared to explore issues of European identity. Today’s child refugees also share their stories, thereby gaining skills and confidence.

Launched in the UK Parliament in May 2018, “80 years on” includes cultural activities around the country and work with grassroots associations and politicians to encourage local authorities to commit to making spaces available for refugee children. A public event in November 2018 brought together Kindertransport survivors, their descendants, faith leaders and public figures to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary and re-state the need for more children to be accepted.



In light of the UK’s impending departure from the EU, which could mean the closure of safe routes for refugee children, “80 years on” is working to defend these routes, support those children who are already in the UK and create a permanent legacy of protection for child refugees.

*“Winning the EESC prize will enable us to support more refugees to reach sanctuary through safe and legal routes. It will also help to raise awareness of the contributions made by those who came to the UK on the Kindertransport, and of the importance of public support for today’s child refugees”, Gardiner-Smith concludes.*

#### MORE INFORMATION:

[safepassage.org.uk](http://safepassage.org.uk)

[80yearson.org.uk](http://80yearson.org.uk)

# 5

5<sup>th</sup> prize:

## Balkans Beyond Borders Short film festival

Established in 2010, Balkans Beyond Borders (BBB) is a non-profit organisation promoting European identity and cooperation in the Balkans by empowering citizens to overcome the differences embedded in the region's history. Its flagship activity is its short film festival (BBB-SFF) which showcases cross-border and international productions, particularly those by directors from south-eastern Europe and co-productions between Balkan and western European countries.

*"BBB-SFF is an annual film festival that has taken place in a different city for nine consecutive years, giving rise to dialogue on contemporary issues through the themes it develops";* explains BBB co-founder Veroniki Krikoni.



*"Building on a grassroots approach, it aims to function as a stage for interconnection between artists and audiences, boosting production by young film-makers and triggering debate over common European values, history, culture, heritage and identity. The main objective is to motivate young people to make use of their creativity in order to reflect on issues of concern in their region and facilitate access to European cultural heritage";* she adds.

A different theme is chosen for each edition and an international committee selects around 50 films to be shown. The festival is open to everyone in order to make arts and culture more accessible to diverse audiences and contribute to intercultural dialogue. In 2017, 1 400 films were submitted from 21 countries. In 2018, the number of countries represented rose to 27.

At the festival, the audience votes for the best film, while film students participate in experimental workshops which facilitate group dialogue. The films emphasise the lives of marginalised and oppressed people

and raise awareness of socio-political issues in different countries as part of a wider discourse on European identity and values.

By including films from both EU Member States and candidate countries, BBB-SFF supports the latter's cultural integration with Europe and fosters exchange based on respect, empathy and equality. In this way, it creates networks for sharing experience so as to enhance contributions to and knowledge of Europe's cinematographic heritage.



In light of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018, the 9<sup>th</sup> edition, entitled 'Societies on Sharing', took place in the 2021 European Capital of Culture, Novi Sad, Serbia in November 2018. The aim was to stress the advantages of sharing in building a European sense of belonging and promoting European values. This follows on from recent editions, which explored the struggle for the EU's future against a background of economic and political instability (2017), and formation of European identity as a process of changing individual perceptions (2016).

*"BBB celebrates its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2019. The EESC prize will further help us to raise awareness regarding the multiple layers and richness of European identities and to promote the common European values we all share through cultural activities", say the BBB core team of Veroniki Krikoni, Vasiliki Maltasoglou, Konstantina Karydi and Dimitris Maragos. "It will give the festival the boost it needs to expand its work and mission in audience development and intercultural dialogue and provide a tangible platform for furthering the formation of a European public space."*

#### MORE INFORMATION:

[www.balkansbeyondborders.eu](http://www.balkansbeyondborders.eu)

EESC website  
[www.eesc.europa.eu](http://www.eesc.europa.eu)

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