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***European Economic and Social Committee***

**RULES GOVERNING THE
2015 EESC CIVIL SOCIETY PRIZE**

***Rewarding excellence in civil society initiatives***

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***A) Aim and overall objective of the Civil Society Prize***

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.

***B) Theme of the 2015 EESC Civil Society Prize: Combating poverty***

The Commission's communication *Taking stock of the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth* admits that the EU has drifted further away from its target of lifting at least 20 million people out of the risk of poverty and social exclusion and "there is no sign of rapid progress to remedy this situation – the number of people at risk of poverty might remain close to 100 million by 2020. The situation is particularly serious in certain Member States and has been driven by increases in severe material deprivation and in the share of jobless households. The crisis has demonstrated the need for effective social protection systems[[1]](#footnote-2)."

It is therefore all the more important that one of the key flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy – the European platform against poverty and social exclusion – is reformed to become a real hub for discussing Europe 2020's EU social and anti-poverty initiatives and to take more decisive action. The original aim of the platform, which was created in 2010 and will remain active until 2020, was to create a joint commitment among Member States, European institutions and key stakeholders to fight poverty and social exclusion by establishing a dynamic framework for action embedded in the three priority areas of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Yet, so far, Member States have been putting most of the emphasis on financial and economic issues. Very little focus is placed on how to meet the poverty reduction target beyond employment measures and on developing an integrated strategy in this area.

At the global level, the United Nations aims to set up a new global partnership for eradicating poverty worldwide and promoting sustainable development at a UN summit in September 2015. This agenda will establish a new, globally applicable model of development that is human rights-based and people-centred and combines poverty eradication with the preservation of the environment in such a way that both are mutually reinforcing.

The EESC, in launching the 2015 Civil Society Prize, wishes to reward initiatives undertaken by officially registered civil society organisations and/or individuals. The initiatives will be aimed at combating poverty in Europe by improving the economic and social inclusion of people living in poverty and countering the increasing risk of exposure to poverty.

The prize will be launched in April/May 2015 and awarded on **10 December 2015**.

***C) Eligible initiatives***

Given that civil society actors play a major role in combating poverty and alleviating the consequences of material deprivation, the specific objective of the prize is to reward initiatives in areas such as:

* social support, housing, education and health;
* in-work poverty;
* energy poverty;
* child poverty;
* homelessness;
* financial exclusion and over-indebtedness;
* cooperation with public authorities.

***D) Eligible candidates***

**The EESC Civil Society Prize is open to civil society organisations**[[2]](#footnote-3) **officially registered within the European Union and acting at local, national, regional or European level. It is also open to individuals.**

Civil society organisations are private-initiative, non-state 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 voluntary commitment by members of the general public to take part in the work and activities of those organisations.

This definition excludes bodies and structures set up by a legislative or regulatory act and to which affiliation is partially or totally mandatory.

Individuals are natural persons. Third-country nationals are also eligible, provided they are legally resident in the territory of the EU.

Candidates for the prize (both organisations and individuals) must be nominated by:

* one or several members of the European Economic and Social Committee; or
* one or several national economic and social councils (ESCs) or similar institutions; or
* one or several European civil society organisations and networks.

European civil society organisations and individuals are not allowed to nominate themselves.

"European organisations" means organisations which have members and associates in several Member States and which coordinate their activities at European level.

Applications sent **directly** to the EESC will **not** be considered.

To ensure full transparency of the nomination and selection process, members of the assessors panel and members of the selection board are not allowed to nominate candidates for the prize.

***E) Nomination procedure***

Nominations are to be made by filling in the application form which is available on the EESC website at the following address:

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

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

* firstly, to ascertain that the civil society organisations or the individuals concerned fulfil the formal entry criteria; and
* secondly, to evaluate the substantive merits of each civil society organisation or individual in relation to the theme and objectives of the prize.

In order to facilitate the selection board's work, application forms and any accompanying documentation should be sent in French or English, wherever possible.

Candidates should note that the prize is subject to Article 138 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 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) No 1605/2002 (OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1) and Article 211-215 of the Rules of Application. Nominees will therefore be awarded the prize only if they comply with the requirements of the aforementioned EU financial rules. To this end, they will be asked to duly fill in and sign the following forms:

* Declaration of honour on exclusion criteria and absence of conflict of interest (Appendix 1)
* Notice to candidates concerning rules applicable to the civil society prize (Appendix 2)

Before the prize is awarded, nominees will also be asked to duly complete and send back the financial identification form and the legal entity form available on the Europa website, together with the relevant supporting documents.

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

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

***F) Prize award criteria***

The selection board will assess the applications that meet the criteria set out under points C) (Eligible initiatives) and D) (Eligible candidates), taking into account:

1) The **aim and overall objective** of the prize as set out under point A

2) The **impact** of the initiatives in terms of:

* their target audience (categories of beneficiaries of the initiative and number of people concerned);
* the nature of their contribution to the well-being of the community;
* their long-term impact;
* their sustainability;
* their European dimension (geographical coverage);
* the implementation of human rights;
* outcomes in relation to awareness raising of poverty related issues.

3) The **degree of excellence** of the initiatives in terms of:

* innovation;
* creativity;
* uniqueness;
* participation of those experiencing poverty or social exclusion;
* ability to share good practice.

**The selection board** comprises the president and the two vice-presidents of the EESC, the presidents of the three groups (Employers, Workers, Various Interests), and the EESC secretary–general.

The selection board is responsible for the final selection of the winners, taking into account the results of the evaluation carried out by a three-member group of assessors which includes at least one external independent evaluator.

***G) Prize money***

The total value of the prize is EUR 50 000. This amount may be shared between a maximum of five winners, as follows: first prize EUR 14 000; EUR 9 000 for each of the other winners.

The Committee is not bound to award all five prizes.

Prizes will be paid by bank transfer within 30 days after the award ceremony.

***H****)* *Deadlines*

The final deadline for sending nominations is **31 July 2015, at 23.59 (GMT+1)**.

Winners will be notified by **13 November 2015**.

The prize-giving ceremony will be held on **10 December 2015**.

***I) Submission of nominations***

The duly completed application form should be sent to the EESC secretariat either by email to the following address:

civilsocietyprize@eesc.europa.eu

OR by post to:

European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)

Communication Department

Rue Belliard/Belliardstraat 99

Office VMA2 5/52

1040 Bruxelles/Brussel

BELGIQUE/BELGIË

For further information, please contact:

**Mr Peter Lindvald Nielsen, Head of the EESC Communication Department**

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

**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.

Proposers and nominees will receive confirmation by email that the application has been received on time and has been duly registered. They will also be informed of the deadline for the selection of the winners.

If relevant for other potential candidates, replies to emails will be published on the Civil Society Prize page of the EESC website, as indicated above, under Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ).

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1. See COM(2014) 130 final, p. 14. Material deprivation is defined as experiencing at least four out of nine deprivations. This is when people are unable to: afford the rent or utility bills; heat their home adequately; face unexpected bills; eat fish, meat or protein or an equivalent every second day; afford a week's holiday away from home each year; afford a car, washing machine, colour TV or telephone. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Civil society organisations include: 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; NGOs (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.; CBOs (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. (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). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)