



PRESS RELEASE

15 February 2021

SLOVENIAN PSYCHOLOGISTS ASSOCIATION WINS THE EESC CIVIL SOLIDARITY PRIZE FOR SLOVENIA

The entry submitted by the Slovenian association is among 23 projects from the EU and the UK that have received the award for their outstanding contribution to fighting against COVID-19 and its disastrous consequences

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) has awarded the Civil Solidarity Prize to the Slovenian Psychologists Association (SPA) for its project offering psychosocial support to the people of all ages during the pandemic. The Association also provided professional support to psychologists on how best to tackle the pandemic's effects.

The EESC, an advisory body representing Europe's civil society at the EU level, selected the association as the best Slovenian candidate for the Prize, saying its entry stood as a shining example of remarkable solidarity during the COVID-19 crisis.

Many people, including schoolchildren and students, benefitted from the psychosocial support provided, and the initiative strengthened connections between professionals in the field. In the longer term, it has created a network of experts who can be activated in the event of another outbreak or disaster.

The Slovenian Psychologists' Association was announced as one of the 23 laureates in a virtual award ceremony held by the EESC on 15 February. Each winner received a **prize worth EUR 10 000**.

Handing out the prizes, the EESC's vice-president for communication, **Cillian Lohan**, said:

"The EESC has repeatedly stressed that solidarity and targeted shared action are key to surviving such a pandemic. The only effective response to a crisis such as this pandemic is to act quickly, decisively, and together. There are lessons here for dealing with other crises whether they are social, economic or environmental.

Civil society has been at the forefront of all solidarity actions and without their help on the ground, the price paid for this pandemic would be much higher. All the projects we received are proof of selfless citizen and grassroots engagement, showing the contribution of civil society in this fight to be enormous. With this prize, we are acknowledging the people and organisations making a difference in these unprecedented times. It is an honour to be able to celebrate together".

The awards went to the winning entries from 21 countries of the European Union. One prize was given to a project with a cross-border focus and one to an organisation from the United Kingdom, as a gesture meant to show that the EESC wanted to keep close ties with UK civil society despite the fact that the country has left the EU.

Although the EESC aimed to find a winner in each EU Member State and in the UK, it received no eligible entries for projects in six countries.

The full list of the winners is available below and on our [webpage](#).

The winners were selected from a total of 250 applications submitted by civil society organisations, individuals and private companies. All of the projects had solidarity as their driving force and displayed creative and effective ways of rising to the often daunting challenges posed by the crisis.

Most projects targeted vulnerable groups or people most affected by the crisis such as the elderly or young people, children, women, minorities, migrants, the homeless, medical personnel or employees and employers.

As regards the content of the projects, they focused on five main themes: food supply and assistance to vulnerable groups, medical equipment, advisory services, educational services and information on the pandemic, and culture.

THE SLOVENIAN WINNER

The Slovenian Psychologists' Association received the award as one of the entries focusing on the theme "advisory services". The theme grouped projects offering online support in various fields, including mental health services, legal help or a virtual lifeline to victims of domestic abuse.

The Association created helplines offering counselling, including the free online counselling service for students in schools and universities, set up and run by psychology students who were also involved in the project under guidance. It published guidelines and developed websites for psychologists, as well as materials for the public about the psychological consequences of a pandemic.

"This is proof that fast volunteer activation in crisis without thinking about reimbursement is the right thing to do," said president **Marko Vrtovec**. "Although the main source of satisfaction for our COVID-19 psychological relief volunteers is the notion that they helped other human beings to cope with a crisis better. If a single suicidal thought was neutralised and a life saved, we have fulfilled our goal."

Other Slovenian candidates who competed for the EESC prize also submitted high quality projects. Those include Pimp my Walls, a creative initiative to help artists make a living during lockdown, at the same time prompting the general public to develop a taste for art. Another project, "Vi ste za nas, zdaj bomo mi za vas", connected children with people in retirement homes.

Detailed information about all of the winners and other candidates can be found in our brochure, which is available upon request.

The EESC hopes the Civil Solidarity Prize will enhance the visibility and raise awareness not only of the winning projects but also of many other creative citizens' initiatives taking place in the EU.

"Today, we are not applauding only our 23 winners. We are taking our hats off to all of Europe's civil society and to so many of its organisations, companies and individuals who have shown and who keep showing unprecedented solidarity, courage and civic responsibility in these difficult and trying times", **Mr Lohan** said.

The projects and initiatives run by citizens and civil society in many ways complemented efforts undertaken by Member States to cushion the blows of the crisis and were even ahead of them in some areas, such as the production of face masks at local and regional level, the EESC said.

Compared to the entries received for the Civil Society Prize in previous years, the EESC saw an increased number of applications from informal or less well-established organisations, which clearly demonstrates the spirit on the ground. There were also fewer entries from some countries that were less severely hit during the first wave of the pandemic or from those with stronger welfare systems.

THE PRIZE CRITERIA

The EESC launched the prize in July 2020 with the theme "Civil Society against COVID-19", announcing that it would be an exceptional, one-off award replacing its trademark Civil Society Prize. The aim was to pay tribute to Europe's civil society who actively and selflessly engaged in acts of solidarity from the very first days of the pandemic.

The contest was open to individuals, civil society organisations and companies whose projects had to be strictly not-for-profit and not more than 50% publicly funded. They had to be directly linked to COVID-19, specifically aiming to fight the virus or to tackle its consequences.

Each year, the EESC's flagship Civil Society Prize honours civil society organisations and/or individuals whose projects celebrate European identity and common values in a particular field of work. It has been awarded since 2006.

FULL LIST OF WINNERS OF THE EESC CIVIL SOLIDARITY PRIZE 2020:

COUNTRY	WINNER
AUSTRIA	Kommunikationswerkstatt Talk 27 , a network fighting disinformation, fake news and misinformation on the pandemic and motivating citizens to stand up against emotional and cognitive manipulation
BELGIUM	OKRA, trefpunt 55+ , an association which responded to the pandemic with <i>The resilience of OKRA</i> , a creative initiative aimed at keeping older people active and socially connected;
BULGARIA	Karin dom , a foundation which offered online training activities to support families of children with special needs
CROATIA	Hrvatska mreža za beskućnike , a Croatian network which supported homeless people as the country moved into lockdown and was further hit by an earthquake
CYPRUS	Volunteers for the support of vulnerable groups during the period of the Covid-19 pandemic , for their initiatives that included the delivery of food and medicines to people isolating because of their age or health issues. The initiatives were coordinated by Erika Theofanidi
CZECHIA	Nevypust' Duši – association of doctors, psychologists and social workers whose online webinars helped high school students cope with mental health problems and build psychological resilience during the pandemic
FRANCE	Bouge ton Coq , a platform which strives to keep rural France alive, for its initiative <i>C'est ma tournée! (It's my round!)</i> , which supported rural shops and businesses struggling to meet costs during the pandemic
GERMANY	Krisenchat , a 24/7 counselling service which provided free practical support and comfort via Whatsapp or SMS to young people and children
GREECE	Steps , a non-profit organisation, which transformed its existing One-Stop project into <i>Many Stops</i> , providing hot meals, bottled water and personal hygiene products to street-connected people and those in precarious housing;
HUNGARY	Magyar Helsinki Bizottság , or the Hungarian Helsinki Committee which provided free legal assistance in human-rights-related cases linked to the crisis

IRELAND	Alison - Free Online Courses & Online Learning platform, for its project Coronavirus: What You Need to Know , a free COVID-19 facts course that has been translated into over 60 languages and has reached over 350 000 people worldwide
ITALY	Casetta Rossa , a non-profit association which combines food delivery to vulnerable people and a radio station broadcasting information and personal testimonies to boost morale
LITHUANIA	Karolina Bariškauskienė , a communications expert for her project Priešakinėse linijose (At the Front Lines) , a digital campaign of stories and insights from medical professionals on the coronavirus front line
MALTA	Malta Chamber of SMEs for its project With You All the Way , which provided online advice and peer support to help thousands of SMEs to adapt to the pandemic
POLAND	Krystyna Paszko a high-school student who created Chamomiles and Pansies , an online shop offering a lifeline to victims of domestic violence during lockdown
PORTUGAL	Vizinhos à Janela , a neighbourhood initiative presented by Íñigo Hurtado which brought some relief through daily balcony concerts and food delivery to people in need
ROMANIA	Asociatia Prematurilor , the Romanian association of premature babies, for its project Support for Medical Staff and Newborns in Maternity – Protective Equipment and Apparatus Against COVID-19 in maternity wards
SLOVENIA	Društvo psihologov Slovenije , an association of Slovenian psychologists, for their project Psychosocial Support to General Public and Professional Support to Psychologists and Other Healthcare Professionals During COVID-19 Outbreak in Slovenia
SLOVAKIA	Človek v ohrození , a non-profit NGO, for its initiative Their Health is Also Our Health which supported hard-hit Roma communities and helped them through the pandemic
SPAIN	Asociación de Familias y Mujeres del Medio Rural (AFAMMER), an association of families and women in rural areas for its project AFAMMER Great Rural Solidarity Network , which brought together hundreds of women in rural Spain who gave their time and sewing skills to tackle a shortage of protective masks and the growing isolation of elderly people during the pandemic;
SWEDEN	Community and arts space and non-for-profit company Blivande for its project Crisis Response – an open-source initiative to create protective healthcare equipment on a large scale
UNITED KINGDOM	Cherwell Collective, CIC , for their project Live, Learn, Eat, Grow , which provided food and other essentials to people in need and trained residents to grow their own food

**CROSS-
BORDER /
EUROPEAN**

Emergency, an Italy-based NGO, for the assistance it provided in Europe and worldwide to contain the pandemic, in particular through its *Replicable Model of Safety and Protection Measures*, a scalable model to design and manage hospitals during the pandemic

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[VIDEO: The EESC from the inside](#)

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

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