

European Civil Society rewards real entrepreneurship and quality employment champions

The EESC has shortlisted five applications from **Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy and Spain** for its 2017 Civil Society Prize. This year's prize goes to organisations which have distinguished themselves through their work **in supporting the labour market integration of groups requiring specific support.**

The EESC received over 100 wide-ranging and high calibre applications from 25 Member States. This has clearly shown that almost ten years after the start of the economic and financial crisis **entrepreneurship and quality employment** continues to be a major area of action and concern for European Civil Society. Already in its 9th edition, the 2017 Civil Society Prize will reward innovative projects which fight against employment exclusion and remove barriers to participation in the labour market for people in need, such as young people, people from migrant backgrounds, the long-term unemployed, women detached from the labour market, people with disabilities, and people living in poverty.

The five shortlisted applications are:

- **[Discovering hands](#)**, a German project which trains blind and visually impaired women, using their superior tactile sense to enhance early breast cancer detection;
- **[DUO for a JOB](#)**, from Belgium: an intergenerational and intercultural mentoring programme which offers a free 6-month individual service for young migrant job seekers with people over 50 years of age who have professional experience in a similar field to theirs;
- **[Institute of Robotics for Dependency \(IRD\)](#)**, a Spanish foundation, and its project **[Laundry ID](#)** aimed at creating jobs for people with disabilities, in a laundry service which has been redesigned technologically and adapted to their needs;
- **[Progetto Quid](#)** by **Cooperativa Sociale Quid**, from Italy: a social cooperative that supports the integration of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as asylum seekers and victims of slavery, prostitution and domestic violence into the labour market.
- **[REvive Greece](#)** helps refugees, asylum seekers and migrants to integrate into the receiving countries by teaching them computer programming and connecting them with young European entrepreneurs.

“Almost ten years after the start of the economic and financial crisis, the EU is still struggling with high unemployment. Despite recent improvements, 8.6 % of the active population – almost 21 million people – were out of work in 2016. Several forms of unemployment need tackling as a priority: long-term unemployment, youth unemployment and the unemployment of women, particularly mothers and others with caring responsibilities, who remain under-represented

in the workforce”, said EESC President Georges Dassis. “The European Economic and Social Committee’s 2017 Civil Society Prize rewards projects that promote quality jobs and entrepreneurship with the potential to create such jobs. The projects focus on young people, migrants and others finding it hard to get onto the labour market”.

The ranking of the winners will be announced at the award ceremony on **7 December during the EESC Plenary session in Brussels**. EUR 50 000 will be shared among the five winning projects, with the intention that this money will be reinvested in projects providing further help in the community.

Background: *The Civil Society Prize, launched in 2006, is awarded for “excellence in civil society initiatives”. Each year, the prize covers a different aspect of the EESC’s activities. In previous years, awards have gone to initiatives that improve the lives of refugees and migrants, combat poverty and social exclusion, support Roma communities, promote sustainable lifestyles and green jobs, encourage networking, education and campaigning, and defend the interests of young people.*

Further details about the 2017 Civil Society Prize are available [here](#).