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**EESC opens applications for its Civil Society Prize on tackling mental health**

**Civil society organisations, individuals and private companies can now enter their non-profit projects for the EESC's prize dedicated to supporting the mental well-being of Europeans**

The **European Economic and Social Committee (EESC)** has launched its 14th Civil Society Prize. By choosing **mental health** as this year's theme, the EESC will reward creative and innovative non-profit projects that help individuals with mental health conditions and create a supportive environment for their mental well-being, whether on an individual level or as a collective effort.

A total of **EUR 50 000** will be awarded to a maximum of five winners.

The **deadline for entries is 10 a.m. (Brussels time) on 30 September 2023.**

The award ceremony is likely to take place during the EESC Civil Society Week in spring 2024.

The aim of the EESC's flagship Civil Society Prize is to raise awareness of civil society's outstanding contribution to creating a European identity and citizenship and to promoting the common values that bolster European integration. Each year, the prize focuses on a different theme particularly relevant to the EU.

**WHO CAN APPLY?**

Applications can be submitted by all civil society organisations officially registered within the European Union and acting at local, regional, national or European level. The prize is also open to individuals who reside in the EU, as well as to companies registered or operating within the EU, provided that their projects are strictly not-for-profit.

All eligible initiatives and projects have to be carried out in the EU. They must have already been implemented or still be ongoing. Those which are planned but which have not begun implementation by 30 September 2023 will be excluded.

The full description of requirements and the [online application form](https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/CivilSocietyPrizeMentalHelalth) are available on our [webpage](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/14th-eesc-civil-society-prize).

**WHICH PROJECT THEMES ARE ELIGIBLE?**

To be eligible, the entries must cover at least one of the issues listed in the eligibility criteria published in the [Rules governing the 14th EESC Civil Society Prize](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/sites/default/files/files/eesc-2023-03162-00-00-info-ref-en.pdf), available on the EESC's dedicated [web page](https://www.eesc.europa.eu/en/agenda/our-events/events/14th-eesc-civil-society-prize).

Among other things, projects can focus on preventing and combating psychosocial risks at work and promoting supportive workplace cultures, reaching out to people at risk of mental health problems, providing crisis intervention and ensuring person-centred services for mental health.

They can also address the mental health needs of disadvantaged groups and ageing populations or promote mental well-being in children and adolescents, by tackling issues such as substance use and abuse, cyberaddiction, youth violence and bullying.

Projects focused on community work such as empowering local communities, creating networks for community involvement and establishing a supportive environment for mental health will also be eligible. Improving mental health literacy and combating the stigma which often deters people from seeking help are also acceptable as entry themes.

The EESC hopes its prize will honour and showcase the non-state efforts made so far to help people battling with mental health issues. It also aims to encourage ongoing projects and inspire new ones, thus highlighting the contribution such projects can make to curbing the explosion of this silent epidemic in the EU.

**To apply, click** [**here.**](https://ec.europa.eu/eusurvey/runner/CivilSocietyPrizeMentalHelalth)

**MORE ABOUT THE THEME OF THIS YEAR'S PRIZE**

During and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, Europe saw an unprecedented spike in mental health conditions and disorders. Anxiety and depression were particularly prevalent among the elderly and vulnerable groups, and most of all among young people, with figures showing that the rate of depressive symptoms more than doubled among those aged 18 to 29 in several European countries.

The heavy impact of mental health issues on the EU population, with roughly 4% of annual deaths attributed to mental health and behavioural disorders and the direct and indirect costs of mental health problems accounting for almost 4% of GDP, pushed mental health to the top of the EU's political agenda.

The EESC has also put **mental health** at the centre of its work. It has called for binding legislation to prevent psychosocial risks at work and is advocating for stepping up EU and national measures for promoting mental health.

By dedicating its 2023 prize to this all-important topic, the EESC wants to recognise the crucial role played by civil society in mental health treatment and prevention. Civil society fills gaps in the public health system, catering to the unique needs of vulnerable groups. Through its close connection with local communities, it provides frontline assistance both formally and informally, reaching populations that are often overlooked.

**PREVIOUS CIVIL SOCIETY PRIZES**

In 2022, the EESC exceptionally awarded a prize for two themes: youth and Ukraine. In 2021, the prize honoured climate projects promoting a just transition. In 2020, the EESC replaced its Civil Society Prize with a one-off Civil Solidarity Prize dedicated to the fight against COVID-19. Other topics in the past have included gender equality and women's empowerment, European identities and cultural heritage, and migration.

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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 329 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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