

Discovering hands from Germany wins first prize in the EESC 2017 Civil Society Prize for genuine entrepreneurship and outstanding work on employment

Initiatives from Greece, Belgium, Italy and Spain are awarded the other prizes

The five winning initiatives show what is being done by numerous NGOs across Europe to help some of the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in society enter the labour market. Each of the winning projects demonstrates, in its own way, the vital role played by grassroots organisations in making labour markets more inclusive and in encouraging people of all ages and backgrounds to move into employment or entrepreneurship.

“It is a great pleasure and a privilege to present this prize to the winners. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate them, but also to pay well-deserved tribute to all the individuals and civil society organisations whose hard work and commitment to making people’s lives better is an example to everyone,” said EESC President Georges Dassis.

The German project [Discovering hands](#), which trains blind and visually impaired women to use their superior tactile sense to improve early breast cancer detection, was awarded EUR 14 000. The four other initiatives from Greece, Belgium, Italy and Spain were awarded EUR 9 000 each. [REvive Greece](#) helps refugees, asylum seekers and migrants to integrate into host countries by teaching them computer programming and connecting them with young European entrepreneurs. [DUO for a JOB from Belgium](#) is an intergenerational and intercultural mentoring programme which offers a free six-month individual service for young migrant job seekers provided by people over 50 years of age who have professional experience in a similar field to theirs. The Italian [Progetto Quid run by Cooperativa Sociale Quid](#) is an ethical fashion brand which helps vulnerable and disadvantaged groups such as asylum seekers and victims of slavery, prostitution and domestic violence to enter the labour market. The Spanish [Laundry ID](#) project by the [Institute of Robotics for Dependency \(IRD\)](#) aims to create jobs for people with disabilities in a laundry service which has been technologically redesigned and adapted to their needs.

The five winning initiatives were chosen from a list of over 100 projects. The high number of entries for the 2017 Civil Society Prize shows that unemployment continues to be a real issue in Europe, with one in ten people being unemployed and one in four at risk of poverty or social exclusion. Civil society initiatives are often able to help people who are most isolated from the labour market in a more personalised manner, which is crucial for

meeting their needs.

The Civil Society Prize, now in its ninth edition, is awarded for “excellence in civil society initiatives”. Each year, the prize covers a different aspect of the EESC’s activities. The 2016 prize was dedicated to civil society organisations working to improve the lives of refugees and migrants.

Further details about the 2017 Civil Society Prize are available [here](#). You can watch the video of the winning projects [here](#).