

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

EVENS PRIZE FOR PEACE EDUCATION 2015

Since its establishment, the Evens Foundation has awarded biennial prizes in various fields to fulfil part of its mission. In this tradition, the Evens Prize for Peace Education was launched in 2011 as part of its Peace Education Program.

Through the **2015 Peace Education Prize**, the Evens Foundation seeks to recognize and honour initiatives or practices that awaken and strengthen the social competence of preschool children, with particular focus on skills that facilitate a constructive attitude towards conflicts.

FOCUS: STARTING EARLY

AWAKENING AND BOOSTING THE SOCIAL COMPETENCE OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN TO FACILITATE A CONSTRUCTIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS CONFLICTS

The Evens Foundation highly values the contribution of active, critical and responsible citizens to achieving a more harmonious and democratic society in Europe, based on cultural and social diversity.

Convinced that a constructive attitude towards conflict is crucial to further a culture of peace in an ever more diverse society, the Foundation's Peace Education Program initiates and supports projects that promote the management of interpersonal and intergroup conflicts in a positive way.

The 2015 edition of the Evens Peace Education Prize aims to highlight the importance of early childhood for the development of social competence, to promote activities that encourage such development, and to share inspiring practices in this field.

The prize money of €25,000 will be awarded by an international expert jury and the Evens Foundation. It will be partly used to disseminate the good practice, in cooperation with the laureate(s).

HELPING OUR CHILDREN TO FLOURISH

Early childhood is a crucial time in a child's life. Science tells us that the foundations for social competence are laid during preschool years when our brain develops at full speed. Throughout this time, children begin to define themselves individually, acknowledge their sense of self, become conscious of different emotions, and unfold their own personality. Their social interactions increase and they develop and test their communication skills.

In this period of life, many children in Europe attend some form of Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC), such as nurseries, family daycare (host families), kindergartens, etc. It is widely accepted that ECEC can bring a wide range of benefits for children, parents and society at large. But all the potential benefits, including the development of children's social competence, are conditional on the quality of the education and care.

An important element is whether or how staff involve children and encourage and counsel interactions with and between children. Kids benefit from opportunities to play with peers, but peer socialization can be stressful and frustrating if not embedded in a warm and caring environment, with healthy relationships where adults are present to accompany and support children in their social interactions, if needed.

It is even more challenging to nurture the core preschool skills connected to social competence. Fundamental in this respect is to help children **identify and regulate their emotions**. Furthermore, fostering **empathy, active listening** and **assertive communication** helps children to deal with conflicts. These skills are also essential to support a child's capacities to **collaborate** with others and to **think critically**. Nourishing **creativity** helps kids to brainstorm and imagine solutions for the difficulties they encounter.

We are convinced that the development of such skills enables children to become independent, critical, active and responsible citizens in a democratic society. We consider young children as **a specific target group who need specific, tailored assistance and guidance, in a caring environment, so that they may flourish in their social development.**

CRITERIA

FORMAL CRITERIA – THESE CRITERIA MUST BE FULFILLED

- The Evens Foundation is in search of initiatives or practices that strive to awaken and strengthen the social competence of preschool children - below the age of 6 - with particular focus on skills that facilitate a constructive attitude towards conflict.
- Only registered organisations, associations or institutions **based and working in the European Union** can participate.
- Only ongoing initiatives/practices **in existence for two years or more** are eligible.
- Allowing for possible adaptations to context, the initiative/practice is **transferable** to other countries. The laureate(s) is (are) expected to be involved in future Evens projects related to the focus of the prize.

SELECTION CRITERIA – THESE CRITERIA WILL FORM THE BASIS FOR THE JURY DELIBERATIONS

The Evens Foundation, aware of the ambitiousness of these criteria, invites candidates to reflect on them, taking into account the possibility of perhaps not complying with all criteria but of making efforts towards each of them.

- The initiative/practice starts from a well-defined **vision** and/or **methodology**.
- The initiative/practice focuses on both **individual and group learning**, and also takes into account the **learning environment**. ('Learning' should not be interpreted here in the narrow sense of strictly formal learning; in this context, it includes informal learning, 'learning from life', and so on.)
- Taking into account their evolving capacities, **children participate actively** in the learning process.
- The initiative/practice values the fact that **every child is unique**.
- To ensure continuity for the children between different contexts, both **caregivers/teachers and parents** are actively involved.
- The organizers consider and convey the idea of **conflict as an opportunity** to learn and change.
- The key principles of the initiative/practice are integrated in the **daily contact, personal care routines and activities with the children**.
- The key principles are implemented at the **institutional level** (organizational structure and culture, decision-making, etc).
- To improve the initiative or practice, it is **revised and evaluated** on a regular basis, taking into account the perspectives of the different stakeholders.

PROCEDURE

Submissions should be made in **English**, in electronic form or by post, along with the application form, which is available at www.evensfoundation.be, **before 15 October 2014**, and sent to Marjolein Delvou.

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If your initiative/practice qualifies for consideration, the Evens Foundation will contact you before 31 October 2014 in order to organize a site visit.

The prize money of €25,000, awarded by an international expert jury and the Evens Foundation, will be shared between the laureate(s) and the dissemination of the good practice (in cooperation with the laureate(s)). The jury will decide how the amount will be allocated.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact Marjolein Delvou.