

EVENS PRIZE FOR PEACE EDUCATION 2017

Does your secondary school have a strategy for dealing with 'hot topics' in a constructive way?

Does your organization support secondary schools to deal with 'hot topics', through applying concrete strategies and tools?

If so, your school or organization might be in the running for the Evens Foundation Peace Education Prize 2017.

Why is this issue so important?

Dealing with hot topics in the classroom is a powerful yet complex process. It not only admits to the classroom an exterior conflict, but may also spark conflict within the classroom. Teachers often avoid addressing sensitive issues because they fear not being able to handle them, or that somebody or some group might be offended. Seen from the educational perspective, this is counterproductive.

School should be a place where it is safe to talk about difficult topics. Teachers should be able to handle such topics in a constructive way, turning this into a learning experience. This in turn can help to educate children for democratic citizenship, for active participation in the public sphere. This is particularly important at a time of growing alienation and disengagement of citizens from traditional democratic practices and institutes.

In the past few years, controversial events and issues have provoked educators to spontaneously put together recommendations to help their colleagues discuss hot topics in the classroom. This mobilization reveals the urgent need for educational strategies for teachers confronted with challenging views among students and the demand

to discuss complex and divisive issues. A broad range of subjects in secondary education – such as history, geography, religion, ethics, biology, social, cultural & social sciences, economy, languages, philosophy, sexual education – might open up topics that turn out to be 'hot' for the students but 'hot topics' might also arise from current events beyond the school as well as certain policies that are applied in schools (e.g. sanctioning, student participation, etc).

Evens Peace Education Prize 2017

The 2017 prize aims to identify inspiring initiatives successfully implemented in secondary schools, so as to answer the need for 'hot topic' education strategies and so that these strategies can be promoted and shared with other schools.

Such strategies can be diverse. They can relate to the curriculum or to a specific subject, to current events, to the general functioning or organization of the school (e.g. organized participation of students) or to a specific approach to relationships and communication in school, and so on.

Selection criteria – to form basis for jury deliberations

Specifically, the Evens Foundation seeks to recognize and honour a secondary school or organization that:

- has developed and implements or supports the implementation of a sustainable strategy to deal with hot topics in the classroom and/or in the school overall
- has created space for debate on hot topics, in which students are actively involved
- understands, addresses and works with the emotions that such topics can provoke – such as stress, frustration and hostility

Ideally, the strategy should take diversity as its starting point, should involve the broader school community (families, community organizations, etc) and, crucially, should strengthen students' democratic skills by helping them to learn:

- how to engage with a sensitive subject
- how to form their opinion on hot topics (critical reflection)
- how to debate and interact with others in a respectful way
- how to fight peacefully for their point of view and ideals

Both preventive and curative (response) strategies will be taken into consideration.

The Evens Foundation, aware of the ambitiousness of the 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.

Formal criteria – must be fulfilled

- Only secondary schools and organizations based and operating in the European Union can participate.
- If you are an organization wanting to submit, at least one of the secondary schools you work with should be a co-applicant.
- Only ongoing initiatives/practices are eligible.
- Allowing for possible adaptations to context, the initiative/practice is transferable to other countries.
- Any winner of the prize is willing to take part in future Evens projects related to the focus of the prize, in particular regarding the dissemination of the winning practice.

Procedure

Submissions should be made in English, in electronic form or by post. The application form, which is available at www.evensfoundation.be, should be sent to Marjolein Delvou by 30 September 2016.

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If your initiative or practice qualifies for consideration, the Evens Foundation will contact you by 15 October 2016 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 and the dissemination of the good practice, in cooperation with the laureate. The jury will decide how the amount will be allocated.

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