

P R E S S R E L E A S E

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Civil Courage – Entrepreneurship Brings Cash in the Civil Sector**Winners of UniCredit’s social innovation programme to receive EUR 60,000 and mentoring support**

That Hungarian civil society is not lacking in outstanding project ideas has become evident from the more than 120 applications received for the social innovation programme “Step with us!” of the UniCredit Foundation. In this programme, which motivates a rather large number of social organisations, UniCredit rewarded 4 plus 1 organisations this year. The social organisations that won support for the implementation of their projects are planning to establish the first Hungarian integrative fitness room for the disabled, enlarge the services of a coffee shop operated by people with disabilities, improve the employee skills of people living in extreme poverty, and promote the fight against prejudices.

Besides, a special award was also granted to a community building initiative that supports the professional career of girls and young women, thereby fostering the establishment a fair balance between the sexes in the technology sector.

In addition to the financial support, total EUR 60,000, the winners are also supported by a six-month professional mentoring programme in the implementation of their goals.

It is for the second time now that UniCredit Bank and the UniCredit Foundation announced its programme for civil organizations with the purpose that they do not merely provide financial support to solve current social problems, but much rather support organizations thinking in innovative solutions that are sustainable in the long term.

“The number of applicants was rather outstanding, as we received 124 applications for the programme, which means three times as many project ideas as in 2013”, - said Beáta Smid, UniCredit Bank’s Marketing and Communications Director. “The jury was in an extremely difficult situation, as we found many initiatives that were worthy of support. All in all we can say that our winners came up with definitely innovative solutions in identifying the breakout points of people living in communities with disabilities.”



In accordance with the decision of the jury evaluating the applications, “**Suhanj!**” Foundation can spend **EUR 15,000** on the establishment of a **wheelchair accessible fitness room** for the visually impaired and disabled, a unique initiative in Hungary. Operating on a market basis, this integrative facility may be used by everyone, in accordance with the outlook forming objectives of the foundation.

The programme of **Pearl Foundation**, which aims at **integrating handicapped groups into the world of production**, was also rewarded by the jury with **EUR 15,000**. This programme does not only provide an opportunity to earn income, but also develops the employee skills of the applicants: they receive basic agricultural and horticultural knowledge, and along with the experience of community work, their cooperative skills will also strengthen.

The **Hungarian Reformed Church Aid** won **EUR 12,500** for the further development of the Bódvalenke Fresco Village programme. Painted by Hungarian and other European Roma artists, the 33 secco paintings decorating the houses of the village may constitute a unique touristic attraction and an appealing destination, contributing to the decrease of prejudices and the strengthening of social acceptance. The awarded amount provides an opportunity among others **to increase the marketing facilities necessary to boost tourism in the village.**

The **Social Cooperative “We Will Not Give Up”** was also awarded a grant of EUR 12,500 to **enlarge the services of the “I Will Not Give Up!” Coffee Shop** opens in January this year and operated by people with disabilities. Serving integration purposes, and also functioning as a community space, the coffee shop is unique in Hungary. Due to the grant, the coffee shop will also be able to provide hot meal to its customers in the future, as well as undertake catering services, which will further increase its long-term sustainability and economically stable operation.

Apart from the 4 winners, the **For Technology Education Foundation** received a non-financial special award constituted by capacity development. During 2 years, the organization educated and inspired 550 young girls in the area of technology, which number they wish to increase manifold. The establishment of Skool Clubs provides an opportunity for this, **increasing** in the long term **the admission ratio of women in technology type training courses**, and offering career opportunities in the fastest developing industry. Due to the special award, the foundation will receive all non-financial supports offered by the “Step with us!” programme, can participate in the mentoring programme and in the professional workshops.

“We are very pleased that there are more and more organizations in Hungary who think in innovative solutions for the improvement and the employment of disadvantaged groups. We think it is important to make sure that projects that today are still considered innovative can also be sustainable, and at the same time form social outlook”, said Maurizio Carrara, UniCredit Foundation Chairman.



Apart from financial support, the winning applicant will also participate in a **six-month mentoring programme** adjusted to their needs in order to ensure that the projects and enterprises to be implemented by them will be sustainable in the long term. The professional cooperating partner of the programme is NESsT Hungary, which organisation is specialised on developing sustainable social enterprises to solve critical social problems. The leading managers of UniCredit Bank will also join in the mentoring.

Besides the awarded support, the winning organizations will also participate in a vote to be done among the UniCredit Bank staff, where the winner will receive a further non-repayable grant of EUR 5,000.

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UniCredit Foundation

UniCredit Foundation is a corporate foundation that was established in 2003 in order to contribute to the development of solidarity and philanthropy in the communities and territories, primarily where UniCredit is present (17 countries including Europe and Central Asia). UniCredit Foundation promotes social economy initiatives in the different countries in which UniCredit operates, in cooperation with institutions specialising in social entrepreneurship. By means of grants, training, consultancy, mentorship and networking, UniCredit Foundation is currently supporting social entrepreneurship and social innovation projects in Italy, Austria, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Bosnia Herzegovina and Turkey, where over 100 social enterprises engaged in welfare services and job creation have now been established and consolidated.
www.unicreditfoundation.org

UniCredit Bank

UniCredit is a leading European commercial bank with strong roots in 17 countries. Our overall global network embraces approximately 50 markets with around 8,600 branches and more than 148,000 employees (as of 30 September 2014).

In the CEE Region, UniCredit runs the largest and most diversified international banking network in 14 countries, with more than 3,420 branches and over 68,000 employees.

The Group operates in the following Countries: Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Turkey and the Ukraine. (30 June 2014 data)

NESsT

NESsT provide a solution for critical problems in emerging market economies by supporting and developing social enterprises. NESsT which is operating in Latin-America and Central- Europe is the catalyser of social enterprises, by giving to the organizations financial support and professional advice. Since it's founding in 1997 invested more than 8 million dollar in social enterprises and developed and trained 3300 social enterprises in 40 countries. More information: www.nesst.org

Further details on the winning foundations and projects:

“Suhanj” Foundation - SUHANJ! (“FLY!”) Fitness and Wheelchair Accessible Integrative Gym Project

The SUHANJ! (“FLY!”) Foundation shares the joy of movement with disabled or disadvantaged persons. In our integrative programmes, committed volunteers and amateur sportsmen assist persons with reduced mobility to get shared sports experiences. They organize sports programmes for visually impaired persons and those with reduced mobility or intellectual disability, and ensure training opportunities for them in several sports. Our volunteers enter running, swimming and triathlon competitions jointly with the disabled participants.

Pearl Foundation - The Work Experience Project

The mission of the foundation is to help people with multiple disadvantages - predominantly Roma children and their families - to attain a better life quality and quality integration. Developed 6 years ago, the chance creation model of the foundation implements a strategic intervention already in as many as 17 villages in view for integration. The purpose of their social innovation project is to “empower” disadvantaged persons to get jobs. The Foundation provides the foundations of work, and endeavors with all possible means to develop emotional and social competencies.

Hungarian Reformed Church Aid (MRSZ) - Bódvalenke Fresco Village Project

MRSZ is a charity organization operating in the Carpathian Basin that provides humanitarian aid regardless of race, gender or religion. The global objective of the Bódvalenke - Fresco Village Project is to promote the fight against anti-Roma prejudices and a social acceptance. A local aim of equal importance is to raise the village-dwellers from extreme poverty through the power of art.

“We Will Not Give Up” Public Benefit Social Cooperative - Enlargement of the Services of the Coffee Shop “I Will Not Give Up” Project

The primary objective of the Foundation is to ensure work opportunities and development opportunities for persons with disabilities and socially disadvantaged persons. This does not only mean a source of income for the disabled, but also an opportunity to evolve their capabilities and creativity. Operated by persons with disabilities, the job-creating coffee shop “I Will Not Give Up” is at the same time an integrative community space that serves—apart from the special needs of disabled customers—unimpaired customers as well.

Special award: for Technology Education Foundation - Skool Clubs Project

The “For Technology Education” Foundation is an independent nonprofit organization that endeavors to inspire and educate young girls and boys in the area of technology. They teach, inspire and motivate young girls in the area of technology at free, game-based and experience-based courses so that they get to know their possibilities and become creative people. The Skool team has elaborated a tried and tested curriculum and methodology for the Skool Clubs (that are to be established nation-wide in order to provide a wider accessibility), as well as training courses for the prospective educators. The participating girls get a free and regular programming know-how, their confidence will grow, and they become active participants of the digital creation process.