

PRESS RELEASE

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They enterprise in good causes UniCredit awarded innovative solutions

- This year's awardees of UniCredit *Step with us!* social innovation program offer innovative solutions in order to reduce biases against Roma society, to enhance retention force of the countryside and to solve heating problems of those living in extreme poverty.
- The three award-winning non-profit organisations can spend a total €55.000 on the realisation of their respective projects aimed to enhance opportunities.
- In addition to the prize, the winners will also get a one-year professional mentoring to successfully deliver on their objectives.
- Till the end of the program, UniCredit Bank employees will vote on further €5.000 for the organisation of their choice that will implement the most successful project.

The **Step with us! social innovation program** by UniCredit Bank and UniCredit Foundation has awarded non-profit organisations for the third time that offer **long-term sustainable and innovative solutions to overcome disadvantages of socially disadvantaged communities.**

This year, those socially beneficial organisations could apply that - in addition to the above features - **incorporate business aspects as well in their solutions. These so-called social enterprises** reinvest their produced profits to solve the problem, and their main aim is to maximize positive social impact. In addition, they help communities in a way where they integrate their communities in the work and motivate them for creating better conditions. With the help of innovative ideas they create new opportunities in areas too, where classical non-profit opportunities are limited.

This year's winners **focus on addressing a diverse set of social problems**

Based on the jury's decision €25.000 non-refundable support goes to "**UCCU**" **Roma Informal Education Foundation** that – in the frames of Roma acceptance - organises sensitivity programs for primary and secondary school students as well as sensitivity walks in two Hungarian cities, in Budapest with the name „Come with us to the 8th district!". They train capable Roma youngsters to tour guides whose positive example may change attitudes. With the help of the now awarded grant they plan to develop their interactive city tours and upgrade them to enterprise level, furthermore, they wish to organise teambuilding occasions for companies.

€15.000 will be awarded to **For the Countryside Social Cooperative** whose project aims at enhancing the retention force of Királyhegyes village in the south of the Alföld region, and at the creation of opportunities for small producers and local disadvantaged workers of the area. The 'Kanálka manufactory', which offers long-term livelihood for locals, produces chutneys, vegetable pastes and vegetable chips made of locally grown ingredients, based on their original recipes. With the help of the grant now they can extend their machinery and the range of products as well, furthermore, they will have a chance to develop the gastro-touristic appeal of the village in the long term.

€15.000 goes to **Igazgyöngy Foundation's** project as well that offers solution to ease the heating problems of the inhabitants of Told dead-end village in Hajdú-Bihar county. They plan to initiate the machine-production of wood briquettes from local materials, as these would offer a lower cost alternative to firewood. The product will not only be a solution for the villagers but in case of surplus production they can trade them to others living in the vicinity. The gained grant will enable them to purchase machines and tools necessary for the project as well as can hire permanent employees for the production.

In addition to the funds the winners will also get a **one-year customized professional mentoring**. In it, they will be supported in drafting and fine-tuning their business plan and can obtain financial, sales, marketing or organisational development experience. The program's professional mentoring partner is NESsT Hungary, who assist the organisations with **individual counselling and joint workshops**. **UniCredit's top managers will also take part** in the mentoring phase.

In favour of a most possibly extensive support, 10 organisations on the tender's shortlist could also participate at a counselling session so that they could show their best in front of the professional jury.

„We find it is important that this initiative does not mean an occasional, one-time help but will give long-term development guidance to social enterprises in a complex way so that the communities targeted by the above projects will be able to improve their conditions on their own account as well. We believe that the „Step with us!“ program is genuine help in it and our awardees will bring improvement to the lives of many communities.”
– said Marco Iannaccone, Deputy CEO of UniCredit Bank Hungary.

Till the end of the program in March 2019, **UniCredit Bank employees will vote on further €5.000** for the organisation of their choice that will realise the most successful project.

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UniCredit

UniCredit is a simple, successful pan-European commercial bank with a fully integrated corporate and investment banking services, delivering a unique Western, Central and Eastern European network to its extensive client franchise of 25 million clients. UniCredit offers local expertise and international reach, supporting its clients globally and providing them with unparalleled access to leading banks in its 14 core markets as well as 18 other countries worldwide.

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 (14 countries including Europe and Central Asia). Through the transfer of financial resources and the typical management skills of a company, UniCredit Foundation supports projects of significant social impact and innovation, implemented by local non profit organisations.
www.unicreditfoundation.org

NESsT

NESsT addresses the critical problems of emerging market economies by supporting and developing sustainable social enterprises. Operating in Latin America and Central Europe, NESsT is the catalyst of social enterprises providing them with funding and professional advice. Since its establishment in 1997, NESsT has invested more than USD 8 million in social enterprises and developed and trained about 3,300 social enterprises in 40 countries worldwide. More information: www.nesst.org