

## Press release

**ZEIT ONLINE's "Europe Talks" project, leading thousands of Europeans to debate, wins the 2019 Jean Monnet Prize. The University of Tirana and Toi d'Europe place second and third.**

**9 November 2019** — As an election year, 2019 was a pivotal moment for European integration. It is a testimony to citizens' engagement that so many of this year's applicants acted to promote electoral debates, voting analyses, and mobilisation campaigns. **By bringing together thousands of European citizens across borders to debate, ZEIT ONLINE managed a tour de force combining active citizenship, the power of digital tools, and the role of the media.**

Organised in partnership with 15 European media outlets, the "Europe Talks" project brought together over 16,000 Europeans, meeting in pairs from different countries, all at the same time — via video chat or in person — to discuss the impact of the EU in citizens' lives and common topics such as the environment, citizenship or migration. On 11 May, 500 gathered at a kick-off meeting in Brussels, while thousands were paired up online and in other live sessions — with some traveling up to hundreds of kilometres to meet their matched partner in a different country.

This project also underlines the crucial role of the media in contributing to European integration. Coming together as a European society means hearing about each other across border lines, listening to each other despite linguistic differences, and discussing together the choices we make for our common future — or any other topic of interest.

"News media — be they printed, on tv, or online — are an essential pillar of our communication and mutual understanding. Ahead of the Europeans elections, some outlets decided to focus on national candidates, national talking points, and national perspectives," says Louis Drouneau, President of EuropeanConstitution.eu. "Others decided instead to help European citizens get a better understanding of themselves and, in so doing, bring us closer together. Thirty years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, this remains as important as ever."

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Straddling the field of EU studies and the pressing topic of EU enlargement, **the University of Tirana's multiyear project entitled "The Albanian society towards full integration into the European family" wins the second place of the Jean Monnet Prize.** Involving 300 students, researchers, as well as institutional, NGO and media representatives to support Albania in its integration process and engage them in a constructive debate, this project highlights both the need for greater understanding of the EU and the crucial role of universities in accompanying and preparing for large-scale society changes.

A tremendous example of citizen self-engagement, **Toi d'Europe wins the third place of the Jean Monnet Prize.** For 18 months, two French youths, Mathilde and Sophie Hériaud criss-crossed Europe to collect the testimony of over 300 young Europeans and understand their expectations for the future of our Union. Available online, their documentary was screened at dozens of events to trigger debates and discussions gathering over 2,000 participants. The result is a vivid reminder that, in the words of Jean Monnet, Europe is not about coalescing States but about uniting people.

For more information about the Jean Monnet Prize for European integration, please visit [europeanconstitution.eu/2019JMP](http://europeanconstitution.eu/2019JMP).

## About the Jean Monnet Prize for European Integration

The Jean Monnet Prize for European Integration aims at honouring Jean Monnet's life and dedication to European integration by recognising projects that support this ideal in a concrete and apolitical manner for European citizens. Where other prizes may reward public figures of high standing, it focuses on activities that impact the day-to-day life of Europeans, as well as on citizens' personal engagement for Europe.

This year marks the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the Prize. It is organised under the patronage of the [European Commission](#) and [European Parliament](#), and in partnership with the College of Europe, the Good Lobby, the European Democracy Lab, European Alternatives, the European University Association, the European Students' Union, the Federation for Education in Europe, and the Maison de l'Europe in Paris.

This edition received 75 applications, a stark increase from the previous year, stemming from 28 countries — 16 Member States, 12 non-EU Members, making up respectively 63% and 27% of the projects received.

## About EuropeanConstitution.eu

EuropeanConstitution.eu is a French non-profit dedicated to promoting the adoption of a European constitution, European federalism as the means for democracy, and European integration. Our aim is to make Europe understandable to citizens.

In 2018, we published a short and citizen-oriented European constitution, which we continue to improve, as a tool to foster an easy and open discussion on European governance and federalism. The Jean Monnet Prize is our flagship project for the promotion of European integration.

