

# VOICES

## Voices Awards 2026

### Call for Entries

Second edition, Thessaloniki

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## About the Voices Awards

The **Voices Awards** is an international competition rewarding innovative ideas and changemakers in the fields of journalism and media freedom.

The Voices Awards is organised within the [Voices Festival](#), an itinerant event co-funded by the European Union to celebrate Journalism and Media Freedom in Europe.

The Voices Awards will celebrate **25 remarkable achievements**, each with a **€1,200 monetary prize**. This amount is intended to cover both the prize money and the necessary travel and accommodation expenses for the winner to attend the Voices Festival in **Thessaloniki, Greece, on 26 – 28 November 2026**, where the awardees will be publicly presented.

The Voices Awards aim to celebrate the diversity of contemporary journalism, and comprehensively cover the different media and formats that journalists employ to effectively convey their stories. The Awards will also recognise media literacy initiatives and international best practices in journalism. Proposals are welcome for initiatives that address pressing public issues, expose wrongdoing, contribute to greater transparency and accountability of those in power (investigative journalism, explanatory journalism, local and community journalism, data journalism, human rights journalism, public service journalism etc.).

The Voices Awards comprises the following eight categories:

1. **Press Journalism Award (4 awards)**
2. **Radio & Podcast Journalism Award (4 awards)**
3. **Video & Documentary Journalism Award (4 awards)**
4. **Digital Storytelling and Social Media Award (4 awards)**
5. **Cartoons and Comics Award (2 awards)**
6. **Photojournalism Award (2 awards)**
7. **Media Literacy Award (4 awards)**
8. **Lorenzo Natali Prize (1 award) – International Best Practices in Journalism**

The deadline for submissions is **11:59 PM (CEST) on 23 August 2026**.

For any questions, please contact [voices.festival@eui.eu](mailto:voices.festival@eui.eu)

## Eligibility criteria for all categories

Applicants may be natural persons or legal entities (public or private bodies).

Entries may be submitted by any of the following applicants:

- Media outlets;
- Freelance journalists;
- Students at journalism schools;
- Trainee journalists;
- Individuals or groups active in media literacy activities.

The following are **not** eligible:

- Online retailers, search services, portal sites and advertising sites.
- Applicants who have already received a Voices award in previous editions.
- Members of the Jury (the Voices Advisory Board) or the Voices Consortium.

The applicants must be legally residing or established in the 27 EU Member States, candidate countries and potential candidates: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Türkiye, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine ([more information here](#)).

**Only for the Lorenzo Natali Prize - International best practices in journalism** (category 8): in order to be eligible, entries must be submitted by applicants legally residing or be established **outside the EU27**.

Entries must focus on **current news and public affairs content**, demonstrating a clear emphasis on content of public interest and democratic relevance.

Each applicant must submit publicly available journalistic outputs (or works) produced in the **12 months prior to the publication of this call for entries** (15 June 2026).

If any of the selected outputs is behind a paywall, applicants must provide a direct access link, PDF copy, or a fully viable viewable alternative file format to ensure a fair and complete assessment from the Jury.

Any connections with members of the Jury or the Voices Consortium, as well as any potential conflict of interest, must be declared.

## General Evaluation Criteria

The Jury will shortlist and assess the submitted entries for these awards based on the following general criteria:

- Adherence to **journalistic ethical standards**.
- **Quality of work**.
- Proven track record of high-quality journalistic work by the applicant or team.
- **Impact** at the local, national or transnational level.

Such impact may include:

**Societal and/or institutional change:** Documented benefits for local communities, and influence in the public debate or in the legislative and policy proposals and processes, including the exposure or prevention of criminal activities.

**Professional innovation:** The capacity to demonstrate and inspire best practices in journalism, ethical standards, or innovative storytelling techniques that can be adopted by the wider media sector. The Jury will consider, as a distinct advantage, the applicant's demonstrated ability to responsibly leverage innovative Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools or data journalism techniques to enhance the quality or efficiency of their work.

**Collaborative Resilience:** Evidence of collaborative approaches, such as crossborder or inter-organisational teamwork, that actively strengthen the resilience, diversity, and inclusiveness of the journalistic sector.

**Inclusivity:** Initiatives that actively promote diversity and inclusion, both in their subject matter and in the composition of their teams. The Jury will consider, as a distinct advantage, initiatives that demonstrate measurable impact in fostering equality and representation within the media landscape.

Where submissions are of equal merit, preference will be given to the youngest applicant.

## Supporting Materials

In addition to the category-specific criteria, applicants are encouraged to demonstrate the impact of their work. The Jury will assess the strength of the evidence provided through clear documentation (links, screenshots, PDFs) and may include, but is not limited to:

- **Media coverage:** Links or PDFs showing significant coverage, citations, or follow-up reporting by other reputable media outlets.
- **Audience engagement data:** Verified data or analytics (e.g., reach, unique views, engagement rates) showing that the output effectively reached and engaged the target public.
- **Institutional uptake:** Official references to the submitted work in legislative drafts, policy documents, parliamentary debates, or reports by institutional bodies, NGOs, or civil society organisations.
- **Recommendations and endorsements:** Letters of recommendation or statements from relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society groups, or institutional figures attesting to the tangible effect of the work on their area of focus.

## Application procedure for all categories

- All entries must be submitted online through the application form available at [this](#) link. Receipt of an entry dossier will be acknowledged by an automated message.
- Each applicant may submit only one entry per category. The same entry may not be submitted in more than one category. For any clarifications, please contact [voices.festival@eui.eu](mailto:voices.festival@eui.eu)
- Entries must be submitted in English. The material attached can be in any language. However, all submitted material must be translated or subtitled if they are in a language other than English.
- The applicants must provide a valid ID and proof of place of residence (if natural persons) or evidence of legal existence and status (if legal entities).
- CVs and personal references may be provided to support the assessment of the entry.
- By submitting an entry, the applicant agrees to the processing and sharing of data in accordance with the [EUI Privacy Policy](#).
- Incomplete entries will not be considered.
- Anonymous submissions will not be accepted.
- For any clarifications, please consult the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\)](#). Should you have further questions, please contact [voices.festival@eui.eu](mailto:voices.festival@eui.eu).

## Voices Awards - Categories

### 1. Press Journalism Award (4 awards)

#### **Purpose**

This category recognises excellence in written journalism: news articles, investigations, and long-form reportage, in print and digital formats. Through its unique capacity for depth, precision, and sustained argument, the written word has long been a driving force in shaping public debate and holding power to account. This award celebrates reporters and media outlets committed to rigorous, fact-based, and impactful reporting on issues of societal relevance and democratic life.

#### **Selection criteria**

The Selection Committee will assess the submitted entries in this category based on the following criteria:

- Relevance for the thematic focus of this award.
- **Depth of research and accuracy:** demonstrated investigative rigour and contextual clarity.
- **Investigative depth:** demonstrated investigative effort, including original research, source development, or uncovering previously unknown information.

### 2. Radio & Podcast Journalism Award (4 awards)

#### **Purpose**

This category recognises excellence in audio journalism that serves the public interest. It highlights the work of journalists and media outlets that use radio, podcasts, and other audio formats to deliver in-depth, fact-based reporting on issues of societal relevance. As podcasting continues to grow rapidly across Europe, this format has proven to be a powerful tool for investigative reporting and journalism in the public interest. Submissions should demonstrate journalistic rigour, clarity, and a commitment to informing and engaging the public on matters that impact communities and democratic accountability.

#### **Selection criteria**

The Selection Committee will assess the submitted entries in this category based on the following criteria:

- Relevance for the thematic focus of this award.
- **Narrative originality:** ability to construct a compelling story that fosters empathy, intimacy, or reflection through sound, pacing, and voice.
- **Technical quality:** creative and effective use of audio production techniques, including editing, atmosphere, and music.
- **Investigative depth:** demonstrated investigative effort, including original research, source development, or exposure of previously unknown information.

### 3. Video & Documentary Journalism Award (4 awards)

#### **Purpose**

This award recognises outstanding journalistic investigation and storytelling through video and documentary formats, which is the most consumed medium across digital platforms. It recognises visual reporting that combines cinematic quality, factual precision, and emotional resonance.

#### **Selection criteria**

The Selection Committee will assess the submitted entries in this category based on the following criteria:

- Relevance for the thematic focus of this award.
- **Depth of research and accuracy:** demonstrated investigative rigour and contextual clarity.
- **Team structure, cross-border or multi-perspective dimension:** diversity in geographical origins, stakeholder viewpoints, and team composition in terms of gender, background, and expertise.

### 4. Digital Storytelling and Social Media Award (4 awards)

#### **Purpose**

This category recognizes excellence in two key areas: social media communication and digital storytelling. Social media refers to the use of platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, X, and YouTube to make information easily accessible, shareable, and discussable. As social media now drives more than half of young Europeans' news access, this award recognises stories that thrive on engagement, authenticity, and immediacy. Strong social media work demonstrates an understanding of platform dynamics, audience engagement, community building, and the ability to transform news into content that spreads quickly and meaningfully. Digital storytelling focuses on how a story is crafted using digital tools and media. This includes video, audio, data visualisation, animation, graphic design, and interactive formats that turn information into compelling and immersive narratives.

#### **Selection criteria**

The Selection Committee will assess the submitted entries in this category based on the following criteria:

- Relevance for the thematic focus of this award.
- **Audience impact:** measurable engagement, reach, and resonance among the intended communities.
- **Investigative depth:** demonstrated investigative effort, including original research, source development, or uncovering previously unknown information.

## 5. Cartoons and Comics Award (2 awards)

### **Purpose**

Cartoons and comics can be highly relevant to public debate because they condense complex issues into a simple, visual message that people can quickly understand and emotionally engage with. Political and social cartoons use symbolism, humour, or satire to highlight problems, expose contradictions, and hold powerful actors accountable. Because they are easy to share and provoke strong reactions, they often spark conversation among people who might not read long articles or technical reports. This category recognises excellence in journalism and commentary through cartoons, comic art and graphic novels. It celebrates both political satire and journalistic storytelling conveyed via illustrations.

### **Selection criteria**

The Selection Committee will assess the submitted entries in this category based on the following criteria:

- Relevance for the thematic focus of this award.
- **Conceptual depth:** ability to distil complex issues into impactful visual commentary.
- **Ethical and responsible use of humour or satire:** the entry uses humour or satire to inform and hold power to account, without resorting to discrimination, stereotyping, or gratuitous offence.

*Note that this category encompasses both cartoons and comics. While these are distinct formats, all entries will be evaluated against the same criteria, which have been designed to apply equally to both. Applicants may submit one or more works for this category. Where multiple outputs are submitted, applicants are encouraged to explain how the works relate to each other and why they were selected together.*

## 6. Photojournalism Award (2 awards)

### **Purpose**

This award recognises outstanding visual storytelling that captures the human impact of global development, human rights, and social change. This award honours photographers who combine technical skill with ethical sensitivity to highlight pressing issues, amplify underrepresented voices, and bring complex realities to life through compelling and informative imagery.

### **Selection criteria**

The Selection Committee will assess the submitted entries in this category based on the following criteria:

- Relevance for the thematic focus of this award.
- **Visual and technical excellence.**

- Adherence to **ethical standards** in photojournalism and responsible use of images.
- **Investigative depth**: demonstrated investigative effort, including original research, source development, or uncovering previously unknown information.

## 7. Media Literacy (4 awards)

### ***Purpose***

The Voices Awards for Media Literacy (ML) comprise a single umbrella category celebrating four (4) outstanding initiatives that promote critical thinking, active citizenship, and healthier information ecosystems in today's rapidly evolving media landscape. The Media Literacy Awards Programme welcomes all projects and individuals who have achieved significant impact in any media literacy-related topic, such as advancing news literacy and artificial intelligence awareness, strengthening media freedom, and enhancing citizens' engagement and participation in democratic life. This award recognises a wide range of media literacy initiatives that empower people to navigate and create media responsibly, promote digital wellbeing, and support journalists and media professionals in becoming advocates for informed, ethical communication. From innovative educational practices to creative approaches that address the impact of artificial intelligence on information integrity, the Media Literacy Awards Programme invites diverse contributions that excel in resilience, inclusion, and trust across our shared media environment in Europe.

### ***Selection criteria***

The Selection Committee will assess the submitted entries in this category based on the following criteria:

- **Relevance**: Alignment of the initiative or project with current and pressing media and information literacy needs within its targeted domains, including the methodologies applied.
- **Impact and Effectiveness**: Demonstrated impact of the initiative, including measurable outcomes or improvements achieved, and the extent to which it effectively addresses media literacy challenges and contributes to broader media literacy goals.
- **Innovation and Sustainability**: Evidence of innovative approaches to addressing media literacy needs, along with clear plans for the sustainability and scalability of the initiative in future projects.
- **Ethical Standards and Public Interest**: Adherence to ethical standards and promotion of ethical behaviour in the context of media literacy.

## 8. Lorenzo Natali Prize (1 award) – International Best Practices in Journalism

### ***Purpose***

This prize rewards international journalists and initiatives that inspire newsrooms across Europe to adopt higher professional standards, more collaborative methods, and innovative approaches to investigation, verification, and storytelling. The prize recognises and rewards the endeavours of journalists who contribute through their investigative work to issues relating to: climate, environment, and energy; digital and infrastructure; gender equality; human development; migration and forced displacement; peace and governance; sustainable growth and jobs; and youth.

This prize is named after **Lorenzo Natali and is a continuation [of the long-standing Prize](#)**. It will be awarded within the Voices Festival, with the same procedures as the Voices awards.

### ***Selection criteria***

The Selection Committee will assess the submitted entries in this category based on the following criteria:

- Entries can only be submitted by applicants legally residing or be established outside the EU27
- Relevance for the thematic focus of this award.
- Journalistic quality and integrity.
- Uses creative or experimental narrative formats, data, multimedia, or investigative tools.
- Introduces approaches that could inspire other newsrooms to evolve their practices.
- Tests new ways of engaging audiences, especially in fragmented or digital information environments.
- Demonstrates cooperation across countries, newsrooms, disciplines, or sectors.
- Shares methodologies, workflows, or tools that can be replicated in other contexts
- Contributes to building networks that strengthen journalism internationally.

## The Selection Process

- Preliminary screening of the entries against the eligibility criteria will be carried out by the Voices Festival Executive Committee, composed of representatives of the Voices consortium. The Executive Committee reserves the right to ask for additional supporting documents or information to verify the eligibility of the entries.
- Examination of the eligible entries and preparation of the shortlist for each category will be carried out by the Voices Executive Committee
- The Jury (the Voices Advisory Board) will evaluate the shortlisted entries and make the final selection of the award winners.
- In case no entry meets the eligibility criteria or the quality selection criteria for a given category, the Jury reserves the right to award one or more outstanding entries in another category.
- Applicants will be informed of the decision of the Selection Committee via email by mid-October 2026.

## **Award ceremony and visibility**

- The public announcement of the award winners will be coordinated by the Voices Festival's Communication Team.
- The award winners will be celebrated during the Voices Festival in Thessaloniki, Greece, on 26 – 28 November 2026. The winners will have a dedicated space to present their work to the Festival community.
- The award winners will be contacted by the Voices Festival's Secretariat to arrange their participation in situ.
- The Voices team is committed to enhancing the visibility of awardees' work with ad-hoc communication activities throughout the project.

## Payment arrangements

The award winners will receive a monetary award of **€1,200** each to be distributed by the consortium leader (the European University Institute) upon formal acceptance of the Award and participation to the Awards Ceremony during the Voices Festival in Thessaloniki, Greece.

Where the awardee is a legal entity, the prize will be transferred to the organisation's bank account.

Individual bank accounts are not accepted for institutional awardees. Please note that the prize will be disbursed only after the festival edition.

Voices – the European Festival of Journalism and Media Freedom is brought to you by

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