



## EUROPEAN YOUTH AWARD

ICNM – International Center for New Media  
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[www.eu-youthaward.org](http://www.eu-youthaward.org)

<http://www.facebook.com/EuropeanYouthAward>

<http://www.twitter.com/eyagraz> | #EYA16

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## The most creative met in Graz: The Festival of the European Youth Award 2016

*The EYA Festival was held in Graz this year from November 30 to December 3, 2016 to honour the winners of this year's European Youth Award. Inspired by the motto "D (r) ive deep digital," the international EYA community met for four intensive days in Graz to exchange creative digital ideas for improving society.*

The extensive program consisted of winning presentations, workshops, keynotes and the traditional "EYA Campfire." In this very special format, successful entrepreneurs and business leaders shared their own personal success story and experiences in small circles with young and creative festival participants.

Other Festival highlights included interactive World Cafés on "Virtual and Augmented Reality Improving Society" with Michael Putz (bongfish) and other VR/AR experts. One morning long, concepts were developed for creating value for society with VR and AR. The idea of "A day in my religion" emerged, using VR/AR to understand religions and cultures 'from the inside.' The internationally acclaimed speakers, Eleanor T. Khonje and Paul Hughes, inspired and motivated a festival participant to say: *"I think they changed my life"*.

**The winning projects:** 13 digital start-ups from all over Europe – from Italy to England, from Sweden to Serbia – were invited to Graz to present their projects to more than 300 international guests and the festival jury. Topics were diverse: one project links generations, another offers a gadget for urban navigation on bicycles, while another helps in the search for part-time jobs. However, they are all characterized by social commitment and technical excellence.

**The winning project:** The EYA Young Digital Champion for 2016, was selected on the basis of the 13 winners' presentations. Abdulrahman AlAshraf convinced the 16 international experts of the festival jury with *FreeCom*. This is not only a crucial tool in war regions, but can also help in places without internet.

The personal life history of Abdulrahman AlAshraf, now living and studying in Germany, led him to recognize the need for and to implement such an application. The jury found the project particularly praiseworthy for using existing technologies and addressing contemporary social problems. The fact that the application is introduced into the technology itself and does not have to be downloaded via an app store was the key reason for declaring *FreeCom* as the overall winner. Juror Georg Steinfelder says that the project is *"a wonderful approach and a nice alternative"*.

More than 300 participants from business, politics and science made the Festival a bubbling cauldron of digital ideas. Students from 10 European countries added their feedback to the winning projects and also participated in the EYA Festival. Across the board, the Festival was a stunning success.

New digital projects with added value for society for persons up to 33 years old can be submitted for the European Youth Award 2017 from the beginning of January on the website: <http://eu-youthaward.org>

More information: <http://eu-youthaward.org/>  
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### About the European Youth Award (EYA)

Called to life by prof. Peter A. Bruck, honorary chairman of the International Center for New Media, in 2012, the European Youth Award (EYA) is a leading pan-European competition honouring excellence in the use of Internet and mobile applications for social empowerment. Conducted under the patronage of the Council of Europe and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, EYA is an annual contest motivating young people under the age of 33 to produce socially-valuable digital projects addressing the goals defined by the Council of Europe and Europe 2020.

EYA is conducted with the support of our partners



under the auspices of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland, and the patronage of The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

