

Press release

Info

Transmission deadline: Tuesday, 26th March 2019, 4 p.m.

The Erasmus Student Network (ESN) is awarded the *Médaille Charlemagne 2019*

- The interdisciplinary student organisation in Europe is awarded the prize for its services as a trans-European network.
- The justification states that relationships can be built up and resentment reduced by studying and living in a different country, by meeting and exchanging views with foreigners. In an age when voices against a united Europe ever becoming ever louder, the ESN publicly stands up for a common Europe.
- The prize-giving ceremony will be held on the 23rd May in the *Krönungssaal* of Aachen Town Hall. João Pinto, president of the ESN, will receive the award.

The Erasmus Student Network (ESN), one of the largest interdisciplinary student organisations in Europe, will be awarded the Charlemagne Medal for European Media (*Médaille Charlemagne pour les Médias Européens*) on 23rd May in Aachen. This medal has been awarded since 2000 in the run-up to the Charlemagne prize ceremonies to a European personality or institution, who or which has or have particularly served the process of European unity and the formation of a European identity in the field of the media. The Portuguese João Pinto, the current president of the Erasmus Student Network, will receive the award today in Aachen Town Hall.

Curious young people open to the world

By awarding this 19th Charlemagne Medal, the board of trustees of the "*Médaille Charlemagne*" is honouring the network's services as trans-European. This

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organisation nor only supports students in completing a semester abroad, but also basically pursues the goal of bringing together people from different cultural backgrounds. In its justification, the board of trustees accordingly states that a united Europe can only function when people start to think of themselves as European (although without losing their national identities). To quote verbatim: "It is essential that we get to know other countries, their cultures and mentalities for this purpose. Relationships are built up and resentment reduced by studying and living in a different country, by meeting and exchanging views with foreigners. We need curious young people who are open to the world. As supporters of a united Europe, they must stand up for its values. In an age when the voices against a common Europe are growing ever louder, the ESN publicly stands up for a united Europe".

The Erasmus Student Network (ESN) is one of the largest, interdisciplinary student organisations in Europe. It looks after exchange students, who usually have a place on the Erasmus programme, and helps them become integrated in the locality. In Germany alone there are 29 sections, which support and advise the Erasmus-Plus participants. The network is made up of 472 sections in 37 countries throughout the world, which support a total of 150,000 students on Erasmus scholarships.

Bringing people together

"Europe is in a deep crisis. It is frightening if you see how negligent we are with the achievements of the last seventy years. I sometimes ask myself the question of how long this Europe will survive and whether, at some time, will lose the basis for awarding the *Médaille Charlemagne*", wonders Michael Kayser, chairman of the "*Médaille Charlemagne*" association, today (26th March 2019) on the announcement of the current prize winner in Aachen. What is missing is emotions. Many people know a Europe nowadays that mainly places the accent on economic aspects. Mr Kayser continues: "In contrast, the Erasmus Student Network brings people together and awakes these emotions that are so important to identify with Europe."

Symbol for the future of the European project

The Lord Mayor of Aachen, Marcel Philipp, reminds us that a longer period abroad spent learning and working is a whole lot more than just a subject-related part of your education. Associated with this is immersion in another culture, living and

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thinking in a foreign language and getting to know other points of view. Above all, however, it is encounters with people from different countries that often create life-long friendships and build up professional networks. Mr Philipp talking to the press: “The Erasmus programme has ensured that precisely this is possible for millions of young Europeans for 32 years now. Particularly in the current difficult times, in which Europe is under pressure, Erasmus is a symbol of hope, one that stands for the future of the European project, for tolerance and acceptance, for cross-border contacts and cooperation, for variety and, at the same time, for European unity.”

Europe as an opportunity

Dr. Jürgen Linden, chairman of the Charlemagne Prize directorate, emphasised that inter-state resentment within Europe is becoming ever larger against a united Europe – and that the calls for national demarcation are becoming ever louder. According to Dr. Linden, “the best ambassadors for such a Europe are the young people who know Europe not just from the papers or from the news, but who have experienced Europe themselves, who know what it is like to move across a Europe without borders and have gotten to know foreign people and cultures.” He believes that the Erasmus Student Network starts its work precisely at this point: “Exploring the variety of Europe, getting to know other cultures is a major component of this work. Europe is without exception understood as an opportunity. Receptiveness and curiosity toward other people and cultures are decisive factors, which all students should fulfil.”

Previous prize winners

The previous prize winners of the *Médaille Charlemagne* were the publicist Lord George Weidenfeld (GB), the author Cees Nooteboom (NL), the producer Jan Mojto (D), the director Jean-Jacques Annaud (F), the former head of Westdeutsche Rundfunk in Cologne Fritz Pleitgen (D), the Polish actress Krystyna Janda, the Berlin Philharmonic foundation, jointly the directors Fatih Akin (D) and Abdellatif Kechiche (F), the “Reporters without Borders” organisation, the musician André Rieu (NL), the publisher Inge Schönthal-Feltrinelli (I), the Russian journal Novaya Gazeta, Timothy Garton Ash (GB), the European Film Academy (EFA), the OSZE representative for the Freedom of Media Dunja Mijatović, the Eurovision Song Contest, the German television journalist and former head of the ARD studios in Brussels Rolf-Dieter Krause and, last year, the British writer and historian Sir Ian Kershaw.

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The founders of the prize

The prize is donated by the “*Médaille Charlemagne pour les Médias Européens*” association, to which the following institutions belong: the City of Aachen, the City of Maastricht, the German-language society of Belgium, the NRW State Institute for Media Film- und Medienstiftung NRW GmbH, Arte - the European cultural broadcaster, BBC World News, Deutsche Welle, EOS Entertainment GmbH, Euronews, Discovery Networks Deutschland, Zeitungsverlegerverband Nordrhein-Westfalen e. V. and Gesellschaft für die Verleihung des Internationalen Karlspreises zu Aachen e. V. The association was founded in 2006 on the initiative of the NRW State Institute for Media and the City of Aachen.

Angela Katzy designed the medal

The medal itself was designed by the artist Angela Katzy who lives in Cologne. It is around 10 cm in diameter and is made from 925 silver. The lapis lazuli is framed in 750 yellow gold, the inner brace is also designed in yellow gold. It stands for the line that Charlemagne added (like a signature) to his seal because he was not able to write himself.

Registration

Citizens who are interested in participating in the award of the *Médaille Charlemagne* can digitally register for the award ceremony immediately at <https://eveeno.com/Charlemagne19> and/or at the e-Mail address protokoll-aachen@mail.aachen.de of the Protocol Department of the City of Aachen.

There is more on the *Médaille Charlemagne pour les Médias Européens* on the Internet at www.medaille-charlemagne.eu .

Notice for editors:

We are pleased to allow you to use the attached photo of João Pinto, president of the Erasmus Student Network, at no charge for your reporting.

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The same applies to the photos of the press conference today on Tuesday (26th March 2019).

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CAPTIONS

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