



Environment



Elena Baturina's foundation launches DesignEquality with Innovation: a global student competition in support of SDG#5

By [Van Dongen Online](#)



DESIGN EQUALITY is the seventh installment in BE OPEN's long-running series of global competitions inspired by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Initiated by the socio-cultural platform **BE OPEN**, the contest invites participation from students, graduates, and young professionals. Its mission is to empower the next generation of creators to generate visionary ideas that foster inclusion, equality, and sustainability in alignment with the UN's global development framework.

The world community has pledged to reach full gender equality by 2030, yet multiple ongoing crises continue to expose deep inequalities. Armed conflicts, pandemics, climate instability, and economic hardship still disproportionately affect women and girls, underlining the urgency of collective global action.

The year 2025 will mark three decades since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, endorsed by all 189 UN member states at the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995. This landmark agreement remains the cornerstone of international policy for women's rights, defining strategic goals and concrete measures to advance gender equality worldwide.

According to data from the UN Department of Economic and Social Development, empowering women and ensuring equal opportunities is one of the most powerful engines for economic and social progress. Studies show that achieving gender parity in the global labor market could boost worldwide GDP by more than 10%.

With this in mind, BE OPEN is dedicating its 2025/2026 competition to the advancement of SDG 5 – Gender Equality. The initiative invites projects that celebrate women's contributions to innovation, social development, and sustainable business. Proposals that promote gender-responsive design and highlight women as inventors, entrepreneurs, and changemakers will be given special consideration. Winners will receive grants between

€2,000 and €5,000, gain access to educational programmes, and be invited to take part in a major international sustainability-focused event.

Elena Baturina, BE OPEN's Founder, entrepreneur, and long-time advocate of innovation, explains: "For six years, BE OPEN has been committed to supporting the UN Sustainable Development Goals through international student design challenges. This edition continues that tradition by engaging the creative energy and intellectual courage of young people to move us closer to equality and empowerment for women and girls—thus nurturing future leaders of sustainable change."

As humanity faces increasingly complex and interlinked challenges, traditional approaches often prove insufficient. To achieve the SDGs—and especially gender equality—new strategies rooted in creativity, cooperation, and experimentation are essential. The competition aims to promote precisely this kind of interdisciplinary, forward-thinking mindset. The main goals of the competition are:

- to increase awareness of the SDGs among young and emerging professionals and emphasize the urgency of achieving them;
- to motivate younger generations to engage with the sustainable development agenda on a regular and practical level;
- to stimulate and reward innovative ideas that contribute to a fairer, more resilient future;
- to identify, showcase, and promote creative concepts that accelerate the world's transition toward sustainability and efficiency.

Founded by philanthropist Elena Baturina, BE OPEN functions as an international think tank dedicated to unlocking human creativity. Through competitions, exhibitions, talks, educational programmes, and cultural initiatives, the foundation nurtures ideas that can build a better future. In Cyprus, BE OPEN's projects have received the support of the **Deputy Ministry of Culture**, further strengthening its mission to unite art, design, and innovation for global good.

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