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Great ideas for the greater future – how young creatives can help the UN's work

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Great news for the authors of 50 short-listed honorary entries in an international student competition co-held by two philanthropic initiatives Cumulus and BE OPEN. Though the main winners have been selected and awarded already, two more young creatives have a chance to receive €2,000 each in the 'Second Life of Things in Design' competition.

'Second Life of Things in Design' was launched in support of the United Nations sustainable development initiative called the Sustainable Development Goals.

These are a universal set of goals, targets and indicators that UN member states use to frame their agendas and political policies up to 2030. These goals have the power to create a better world by ending poverty, fighting inequality and addressing the urgency of climate change. Ban Ki-moon, the former United Nations Secretary-General stressed their importance by saying "We don't have plan B because there is no planet B."

Up to January 31, 2020, students of arts, design and architecture-related courses of Cumulus-registered universities and colleges were encouraged to submit works that demonstrate a creative, design-oriented take on the problems of sustainability, wiser production and consumption called for in one of the SDGs.

Photo by Naassom Azevedo on Unsplash

Founder of BE OPEN Elena Baturina explains: "It's vital to give younger creative minds all the support they need to bring their ideas to fruition, because it is the originality of thought that is required to make any breakthrough, and younger people possess that originality."

The main winners were selected earlier this month out of a total of 683 submissions from 44 countries by an international jury and awarded by BE OPEN and Cumulus in equal parts with €10,000; €6,000 and €4,000 for the first, second and third places respectively.

Yet it's not all good news for the participants: in June BE OPEN will award two more submissions – one selected by the founder of BE OPEN Elena Baturina, and one selected by an open online vote that is on right now at the competition's website http://sltd2019.com/choose-your-winner/.

Commenting on the current stage of the competition Elena Baturina says: "We encourage people of all ages and professions to take part in the online vote. Not just to help one more of our contestants receive a monetary prize, but rather to see the remarkable creativity, awareness and responsibility of the younger generation of creatives that hold the future in their hands.

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All the stakeholders in this international competition programme are positive that creativity, or as we call it design-thinking, is integral in the shift to sustainable and circular existence. Humanity has a great imperative to rethink the design of products, services and systems that contribute less waste, can be regenerative and add value to our planet's ecosystem. The objective of 'Second Life of Things in Design' is to recognize, showcase and promote the best design ideas and projects that embody the principles and aims of United Nations' SDG Programme."

Speaking of what sustainability means to her personally, she says "I am genuinely concerned with the topic, and to embrace this global UN's initiative with this competition immediately seemed a great and promising idea to me on so many levels – building awareness, introducing sustainability into educational process, developing solutions, training young professionals able to approach the problem creatively, etc.

At my end, investment has been allocated to sustainability-related businesses, such as solar energy production, energy-efficiency technologies, membrane engineering. As for my everyday life, I try to make positive shifts to greater sustainability as we all should. Even such minor steps as separating waste and avoiding single-use plastics, if taken consistently, make sustainability part of our joined future."