

Philanthropic Initiative BE OPEN Invites Young Creatives To Become Part Of A Positive Change



The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries – developed and developing – in a global partnership. They recognize that ending poverty and other deprivations must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education, reduce inequality, and spur economic growth – all while tackling climate change and working to preserve our oceans and forests.

The UN SDG program has incorporated the most urgent and grave issues that mankind can no longer ignore, and has therefore become a great focus point for globally spread calls for action, challenges, competitions and other idea-producing initiatives all over the world.

These are held all over the world by UN agencies, commercial and non-commercial organizations, philanthropies and educational institutions – as long as the ultimate goal is to contribute to developing and establishing those projects and ideas that will be helpful on the way to achieving the global welfare.

One of such calls to action is a series of competitions by a private philanthropic initiative BE OPEN, set up by an international businessperson Elena Baturina. The competitions are held for year four in a row now. Every year the competition chooses to focus on one particular goal; the current one being called 'Better Energy by Design' calls for actions related to SDG7: Affordable and Clean Energy. While the submissions period for this one is only opening, we have asked a few questions to the winner of BE OPEN's previous competition.

“Design to Nurture the Planet” ran in 2021/2022 and aimed to bring the talent and creativity of the global creative community to focus on SDG2: Zero Hunger that strives to develop solutions to ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition and promoting sustainable agriculture.

All the eligible submissions were evaluated by the international jury comprised from BE OPEN Community members: representatives of global academia and business, experts in design, sustainability, economy and environmental studies. By the combination of criteria, such as viability, feasibility and desirability of the design, evidence of a comprehensive research and the level of awareness, the creative value of the solution proposed, the jury members have named Helen Markus from Tallinn, Estonia, the winner with her Sys-Stem project, and awarded her with the First Prize of €5,000.

Sys-Stem is a blockchain-based system of food production and distribution. According to the concept, Blockchain as a data technology can help address challenges of food supply through fixing faults in the producer – supplier – consumer chain, raising the efficiency at each stage. Transparency of processes, sustainability, quicker feedback and regulation are only a few advantages of blockchain technologies that food industry can benefit from.

We asked Helen about what winning the competition meant to her. “It was thrilling, to have your project noticed and appreciated like that is a great thing for any young professional, she said. “BE OPEN is great foundation with a spectacular community of professionals, great names in all areas of creativity, and their acknowledgement gives you confidence and inspiration to continue, to evolve, to try harder.”

Does that mean that Helen will continue working on her **blockchain**-inspired system, and in what way? “Absolutely. I first applied the concept to try ease the food-related issues, because I am convinced that hunger is the problem that should be addressed and eliminated first of all, because food is our primary need. It is impossible to imagine people tackling any larger issues, if they and their children suffer from hunger. But I do believe that blockchain as a decentralized, distributed, and public system can be applied to many other social problems due to unobstructed parallel communication.”

Has the money prize been helpful in any way to her work and life? Helen reveals that she spent most of the prize money on travels to cities with museums and research centers she has long wished to visit. “The experience has been very rewarding and inspirational in both personal and professional sense.”

“I intend to take part in BE OPEN’s future competitions as well, confirms Helen. “Taking up a sustainable development goal year after year in the form of a competition with a notable money prize is a great way to educate younger people about the SDG program and motivate, and draw their attention to the deep problems people in far corners of the world are facing every day. BE OPEN gives us a chance to make it better, to become part of a positive change, and I would love to be part of it.”