An opportunity for culture

Young culture managers in Greece are becoming engines for change with the START project.

When Thalia Rizou took a good look at her surroundings during her studies in Thessaloniki, she was particularly struck by the gloomy mood of the city. "The lack of career opportunities was driving young people to resignation. They sat for hours in cafés and were passive." Every second Greek person under the age of 25 is unemployed – and the effects of the crisis are by no means over. But who, if not the next generation, could bring about the necessary transformation? "I asked myself how people who are still earning their college degrees could overcome their paralysis." Rizou wanted to offer opportunities for young people

in her hometown. That is how her project, Youthnest, began – and how Rizou became an international culture manager.
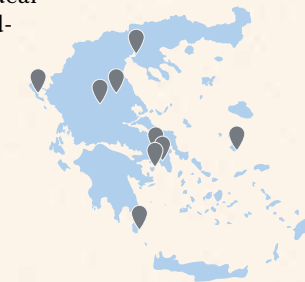
Youthnest brings young people together with experts from museums, foundations, NGOs, and cultural institutions. In group workshops, they deal with topics such as fundraising and branding for cultural institutions, or developing communication strategies for social media. "It is also about making the most of our collective intelligence and strengthening the community of the young, committed participants," says Rizou. Ideally, Youthnest participants themselves should become propagators of successful cultural work. "Our model allows the youth to create a new society; one that takes the young perspective seriously and steers young people towards a better future."

This fundamental belief that culture can improve the mood in crisis-ridden Greece also serves as the basis of the Robert Bosch Stiftung program called START – Create Cultural Change, which provides up-and-coming culture managers like Rizou with the opportunity to start their own initiatives and acquire the necessary expertise. START offers workshops on topics such as how to hold successful presentations to recruit sponsors, or create a good marketing strategy. The program also includes work

shadowing in a German cultural institution, where the culture managers can get fresh ideas and see factors for success firsthand. During the project phase in Greece, culture managers receive the support of experienced mentors to develop entrepreneurial skills and solve problems.

The 12 START participants presented their results at the closing ceremony, which was held in Thessaloniki. These results included a range of diverse projects, such as Youthnest and Topio. Through Topio, the city planner Vivian Doumpa wants to provide students and residents with opportunities to influence their immediate surroundings. Other projects are dedicated to the performing arts, the medium of film, and virtual worlds.

The START – Create Cultural Change program, which the foundation will continue to support in cooperation with the Goethe Institute in Thessaloniki and the Bundesvereinigung Soziokultureller Zentren e.V., empowers young culture managers to become engines for changing Greek society. It's a step into the future – and an example of solidarity in practice in Europe.   *ew*

There are START cultural projects throughout Greece.

With hands and feet: Art students and artists working on the Platformance project. Photo: Artemis Pyrpilis

W Photos of the closing ceremony and a magazine with all the START stories are available at:
www.bosch-stiftung.de/start

German School Award – ten years of good work

The award winners have spurred a movement supporting good schools that has caught on abroad.

What are the best schools in Germany, and how can other schools learn from their example? Over the past decade, the German School Award has been answering these questions and setting standards for the development of schools in Germany and other nations. In keeping with the slogan "Give learning wings!" 61 schools have been recognized so far for their excellent performance, innovative concepts, and successful practice.

The German School Award shows that good schools are possible everywhere. This year's first prize of €100,000 went to a school in the idyllic town of Schüttorf,

located close to the Dutch border. At the Grundschule auf dem Süsteresch elementary school, children take responsibility for themselves and others from an early age. The school appoints class representatives and has a class council where problems are discussed on a weekly basis, and which is directed by children from the class on a rotating basis. The school also provides "independent learning time," during which even the youngest children choose how they want to learn – alone, with a partner, or in a group – and with which materials. They can move freely between the classroom, learning studio, library, and the school's light-flooded atrium. Computers are always available to the kids – it goes without saying.

When the jury visited the school, they met "children who are excited to go to school, who are acquiring diverse competencies and developing their own personalities." Like all the award winners, the

Grundschule auf dem Süsteresch elementary school will be part of a network of good schools that share and pass on their ideas and experiences through work-

shops, seminars, and guest programs. Several thousand teachers have learned from the sound experience of the award-winning schools in the past ten years, and acquired tips that they can adopt in their own work. As such, the award has set into motion a whole movement supporting good schools.

To draw attention to these schools' good practices beyond the award network, the Robert Bosch Stiftung and Heidehof Stiftung founded the German School Academy in 2015. This provides other schools and school boards with examples of good school practices from the German School Award's ten years of experience. There have also been welcome imitators internationally. In Austria and Switzerland, for instance, school awards have been created based on the model of the German School Award.   *kv*

"Give learning wings!"

The School Award's motto

A good school atmosphere also counts for the German School Award.
Photos: Theodor Barth