

International Young Creative Entrepreneur Awards

Highly original programme supporting structured visits
to the UK's creative and cultural industries and promoting international networking

Background

The creative economy is a priority for the UK Government and the International Young Creative Entrepreneur Awards Programme was introduced by the British Council to help sustain the next generation of international leaders in the creative and cultural sector. It does this primarily by providing opportunities for young entrepreneurs to visit the UK for a tailored introduction to the appropriate creative/cultural industry sector there.

The programme focus is on young entrepreneurs from emerging economies in recognition of the fact that while developments in information communication technologies and the internet have revolutionised international contact in the cultural sector, as in other spheres, breaking into an international market remains especially challenging for young creative people from developing countries or new economies.

There are six International Young Creative Entrepreneur (IYCE) awards:

- International Young Publishing Entrepreneur;
- International Young Music Entrepreneur;
- International Young Design Entrepreneur;
- International Young Fashion Entrepreneur;
- International Young Screen Entrepreneur; and
- International Young Performing Arts Entrepreneur.

Three further awards will be added to the programme during 2008/09 including visual arts.

In addition, a new parallel programme has been introduced for UK Young Creative Entrepreneur in the areas of design, fashion, music, publishing, screen and, from 2009, performing arts. In the case of music, for example, the successful UK award finalists will participate in a tour of the music industry in India in November 2008, meeting leading figures and their peers and gaining a greater understanding of that nation's music market and infrastructure.

How it works

Annually, British Council offices in emerging economies around the world are encouraged to apply to participate in the IYCE awards. The Creative Economy team at the British Council in the UK, which manages the programme, then chooses eight to ten of the British Council offices to take part in each award, based on the strength of the applications submitted and a wish to ensure a good geographical and demographic spread of countries.

Once the participating countries are chosen, each British Council office begins its own national selection process. The programme is publicised and applications are received, from which a short list is drawn up and the individuals are interviewed by a jury of leading local figures from the relevant cultural sector. One finalist is then selected from each country to visit the UK and participate in a tailored introductory tour, meeting leading UK individuals and organisations, networking with peers in their sector and perhaps attending industry events. These individual's travel and hospitality costs are met by the British Council.

During the UK tours, one of the winning participants from each country is selected to be the overall international winner of the award for that year. This individual receives 7 500 GBP to be spent on a collaborative project with the British Council that strengthens the relationship between his/her own country and the UK. There may be other benefits, e.g. the winner of the Young Publishing Entrepreneur Award also gets a free stand at the London Book Fair. The choice of the overall winner of each award is based on a presentation which each country winner must make to a UK industry jury about their own work and their understanding of, and vision for, their own creative sector in their country.

Candidates for each of these awards must be aged between 25-35 and are selected in each country – following competitive interview (see above) – on the basis of the contribution they have made to their domestic creative/cultural industry. For example, applicants for the new international Young Performing Arts Entrepreneur Award will need to demonstrate how their work in promotion, management and business development helps champion talented actors, directors, theatre designers, and writers in their domestic market. Similarly, applicants for the International Young Music Entrepreneurs Award – whether festival or event managers, representatives of recording companies, distributors and retailers, music producers, broadcasters or artist managers – must be able to demonstrate their advocacy of the music industry in their country.

By the end of 2008, 49 countries will have participated in the programme awards, nine from the EU – Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania and Slovenia. The engagement of nationals from these countries with their UK counterparts and the development of an international network of young creative entrepreneurs is clearly expected to further the mobility of young professionals in the cultural and creative industries.

Results

This relatively new and expanding programme is unique in several aspects. First because of the recognition it gives to the central role of young creative entrepreneurs in the development of a competitive and sustainable creative economy. Secondly, because of the emphasis given to supporting talented young professionals from emerging economies and developing countries to visit the UK. Thirdly, because of the national and UK selection process and financial incentives. Finally, by enabling young foreign entrepreneurs to establish contacts and meet their UK peers, there is the potential to build long term relationships. Of course, the scheme is not entirely altruistic! The British Council recognises that it is important for the UK to develop a culture of engagement with young creative entrepreneurs at this stage of their professional development. By demonstrating that the UK is a centre of creative thinking, an important nexus of international networking and a place where entrepreneurs can do business, the presumption is that young creative people from other countries will be attracted to collaborate with the UK cultural/creative industries in future. Moreover, such networking could be strengthened by the new programme of support for young UK entrepreneurs that are emerging to mirror the international awards.

Sources

British Council, Creative economy: <http://www.creativeeconomy.org.uk>

British Council press release (20/07/2008) for International Young Music Entrepreneur Award 2008

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