



PRESS RELEASE

Empress Theophano Prize

*'The city of Thessaloniki takes centre stage
in highlighting the modern European Union ideal'*

Theofano Foundation launches its activities from Greece, from the city of Thessaloniki, with the initiative of an annual award, the *Empress Theophano* prize, to recognize personalities that promote modern European identity and highlight common European principles and values.

The first *Empress Theophano* prize aspires to be an initiative of pan-European prestige and significance, which will:

- Be awarded to personalities or organisations for their contribution towards recognizing and promoting the principles, values and bonds that shape the modern European Ideal;
- Promote awareness of the common origins of Eastern and Western Roman Empire, the historical interdependence of the peoples and nations of Europe and their significance for present-day European cooperation, as well as the relationships between Europe and its neighbouring cultures;
- Highlights and publicizes the contribution of the laureates, thus expanding our views on the European Union and European cooperation as well as their roots in history.

The Prize will be awarded every year by **Theofano Foundation**, as a distinction and with no monetary reward, following a process of assessment of the candidates by the Advisory and Governing Committees of the Foundation. The Award Ceremony will be taking place in Thessaloniki, at the Rotunda Monument, a site symbolizing and bearing witness to the Roman, Byzantine, Christian Orthodox, Ottoman and Greek influence in the shaping of Europe. The first Award Ceremony will be held on 9 November 2019.

Beyond the pan-european significance of this initiative and its international scope, the *Empress Theophano* prize is of particular importance for the city of Thessaloniki, since it is established and awarded here, but also since the official seat of the Foundation is in the city and because of the active role this city's representatives from the realms of culture, the Arts and Letters and Business have undertaken in the administration and action of the Foundation.

The Advisory Committee of the Foundation -the participants to which are eminent European personalities (including former European state Presidents, distinguished professors at European universities, Academy Members and others) representing a wide range of activities and interests, who come from a wide geographical range- collects, assesses and proposes candidates to the Governing Committee of the Foundation.

The Chairman of the Advisory Committee will be the President Emeritus of the European Council, **Mr. Herman Count Van Rompuy**.

The Governing Committee of the Foundation, seated in Thessaloniki, most of the participants of which are Greek, will receive the candidates nominated by the Advisory Committee and select the person to be awarded the *Empress Theophano* prize.

The Chairman of the Advisory Committee will be **Mr. Stavros Andreadis**, President of the Cultural Society of Entrepreneurs of Northern Greece.



In the packed Meeting Hall of Thessaloniki Municipal Building, the first official announcement of *Empress Theophano* prize was hailed by the Governor of the Region of Central Macedonia, **Mr. Apostolos Tzitzikostas**, and the Mayor of Thessalonki, **Mr. Yiannis Boutaris**, who stressed the significance of the new award for the promotion of both the historic and the contemporary identity of the city and its broader region.

Thessaloniki was consciously chosen, as confirmed by the Chairman of the Advisory Committee, Mr. Herman Count Van Rompuy, who characteristically commented: *“The choice of prize name and location are full of symbols”*; he also made extensive reference to the bridging role of Empress Theophano between the East and the West, the importance of bringing the Greek civilization to the West Roman Empire of the 10th century and the symbolism of this woman’s position in society. He went on to say that *“more than ever before, our times need bridges, overcoming contradictions and polarisation”*. In stressing that the foundation of the European Union ideal lies in the values of humanity, peace and unity, Mr Herman Count Van Rompuy commented on fragmentation and the role a historical approach can play in the course states follow: *“Greatness is to look beyond one’s narrow economic interests and beyond the time when he or she happens to be politically active. The Union must be and remain a Union”*. Finally, praising the wide scope of the members of the Advisory Committee, who come from the realms of politics, diplomacy, the Letters and economy, he underlined the values symbolized by the *Empress Theophano* prize: European cooperation, the importance of education and culture, gender equality.

The Chairman of the Governing Committee, Mr. Stavros Andreadis, referred to the aspiration of the Prize to acquire the pan-European prestige and status of the *Charlemagne Prize*, which has been awarded since 1950 in Aachen, Germany. Discussing the aim of the prize, he stressed that: *“at a time when the European Union idea is being tested, the Empress Theophano prize aims at serving as a bridge of mutual understanding between the diverse peoples and cultural features that, combined, make up contemporary Europe”*; Mr. Andreadis also stressed the pivotal role of Thessaloniki and Greece for European civilization and the modern European ideal.

In a truly positive climate, the Press Conference –coordinated by Mr. Dimitris Keridis, Professor of Panteion University- was attended by numerous representatives of consular authorities, local self-government, cultural and institutional organisations, chambers, the business community and citizens of Thessaloniki.

EMPRESS THEOPHANO

Empress Theophano, who inspired this prize, is a historic figure of Europe, who played a significant role in its development during the 10th century.

She was the niece of Emperor Ioannis I Tzimiskes and married Otto II and was crowned Holy Roman Empress as his wife. Following his death, she maintained the empress title. Her historic presence in Western Europe, dedicated to improving relations between East and West, offered a positive contribution to the cultural renaissance of Western European territories, bringing to the west the significant role women played in Byzantine society and transferring significant influence from the flourishing Byzantine empire in the fields of education, the arts, commerce, and health, while upgrading the status of civil governance as opposed to that of the military.

Empress Theophano is buried at Cathedral of St. Pantaleon in Cologne, Germany.



ADVISORY COUNCIL

(confirmed members until today / final synthesis of the council will be completed soon)

Chairman

Herman Van Rompuy

*President Emeritus European Council
f. Minister of State of Belgium*

Members

Mary McAleese

Former President of Ireland / President of Glasgow University Council (IRL)

Gerry Brown

Chairman Novaquest Capital / Member of the University Council of Exeter (GB)

Nikiforos Diamandouros

Former European Ombudsman (GR)

Agnieszka Holland

Author and film director (PL)

Georges Prevelakis

Professor, University Paris-Sorbonne (France)

Sir Ivan Rogers

Former UK Ambassador to the EU (GB)

Chiara Saraceno

Honorary fellow Collegio Alberto, University of Turin (I)

Vassilios Skouris

Former president European Court of Justice of the EU (GR)

Karl Prince zu Schwarzenberg

Former Minister Foreign Affairs (CZ)

Panos Tzonos

Professor, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (GR)

Luuk Van Middelaar

Professor EU Foundations and Institutions, University of Leiden (NL)



GOVERNING COMMITTEE

Chairman

Stavros Andreadis

Chairman of 'SANI SA' Group

Chairman of the Cultural Society of Entrepreneurs of Northern Greece

Members

Nikolaos Efthymiadis

Chairman of the 'REDESTOS' Group

f. President of the Federation of Greek Industries

Evangelos Gerovasileiou

Chairman Gerovasileiou Wines

Constantinos Gleoudis

Chairman of 'KAVEX'

Member of the Board of the 'Hellenic Society for the Environment and Cultural Heritage'

Theodoros Ikonomou

Chairman of the Greek Forest Property Association

Head of forest management and wood production firm

George Mylonas

Chairman of 'ALUMIL' Group

Nada Korac Kakabadse

Professor of Policy, Governance and Ethics, Marketing & Reputation Department of the Henley Business School, University of Reading

Sonja Puntscher Riekmann

Professor of Political Theory and European Politics, University of Salzburg

Stefan Schepers

Chairman 'EPPA'

Visiting Professor, Marketing & Reputation Department of the Henley Business School, University of Reading