

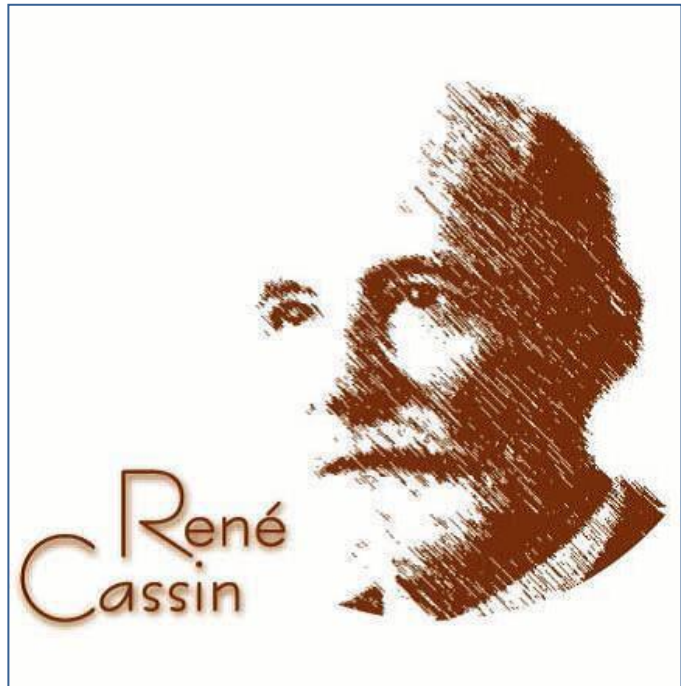
RENÉ CASSIN AWARD: TEN YEARS OF PROFESSIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUTH

Since 2009, the Universitas Programme of the KIP International School has been collaborating with the Emilia-Romagna Region of Italy in several activities promoted by the Region related to participatory democracy, human rights and culture. Of particular importance is the René Cassin Prize, an annual competition to award prizes in honour of René Cassin, considered the father of human rights.

The competition is open to recent graduates of second-level university degrees from the Region's universities with theses related to human rights or human development. It is also open to residents of the Region who have completed such degrees in other universities in Italy or abroad. The award currently consists of two bursaries of Euro 13.000,00 each, to be used as a contribution to a practical work-training experience of ten months in an organization associated with the KIP International School. Candidates are evaluated based on the quality of their second-level thesis and its pertinence to issues central to human development. Candidates are also evaluated based on their curriculum, with particular value given to activities that indicate a social commitment, an ability to face challenges, a spirit of adventure and knowledge of international languages.

The René Cassin award is an opportunity for qualified youth to acquire direct field experience that will contribute to their professional, scientific and cultural development.

Over the past ten years, this initiative has allowed twenty-nine highly-motivated young graduates to gain precious professional experience so far, in local economic development agencies (LEDAs) in El Salvador, Nicaragua, Colombia and Albania, part of the ILSLEDA international network of LEDAs; in the Ministry of women, family and gender and the Ministry for local governance, development and territorial management in Senegal; in the Italian Cooperation Agency in Albania; in the National Agency for Research, Technology and Innovation AKTI and the *B.A.ZH* NGO engaged in managing the National Catalogue of Innovations for Human Development in Albania; in the International Organization for Migration in Costa Rica and Rome; in the University of Winnipeg and community organizations in Winnipeg (Canada) engaged in reducing urban poverty and promoting indigenous rights; in the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and local associations in Rome and India as part of the Indigenous Partnership for Agrobiodiversity and Food Sovereignty Initiative.



Thanks to these experiences, several bursary holders have gone on to win UN fellowships in El Salvador, Bolivia, Kenya and Senegal, and a junior professional officer post (JPO) in Turkey. Still others have continued their careers in the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (Kenya and Ethiopia), in businesses committed to social responsibility or in community organizations in Senegal, Canada and Italy coordinating and supporting local development initiatives in those countries.

What are the factors contributing to the success of this initiative? In analyzing the salient elements that contributed to their professional and personal development, past Cassin Prize winners point to the duration of the work-training experience as sufficiently long so that supervisors are willing to invest in their professional development, the importance of a remuneration that transforms a simple internship into a first qualified professional experience, the pertinence of host organizations in relation to their areas of study and their passions, the quality of supervisors and mentors. And they see these learning experiences as an opportunity to build relationships and to learn from other young people around the world, in the words of Alessandra Pierella, “to co-construct a vision of a global future and experiment tools for making it possible”.

The [success stories](#) of some past Cassin Prize winners, in their own words, and other related information are available in the [Universitas website](#).

