



## European Democratic Citizenship Awards

**Category :** Personality of the Year

**Name of the Personality:** Helga Rubinstein

**Description of the Personality:**

Aleksandra (known online as Helga Rubinstein) has left her work and almost left her home since May 2015 to dedicate her entire energy, time, connections and money to support the refugees and asylum seekers that cross in Macedonia every day. In times when we close Europe and build walls between ourselves, Helga provides a true generous and inspiring act of European citizenship. She tells us that it's not about an ID card or political party support, not only about NGOs or expensive campaigning, but true citizen acts in solidarity and respect for human dignity from their heart and shows it in their deeds every day for more than 16 working hours a day.

**Impact achieved by your involvement:**

More than 1000 people from Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Iraq etc. cross the Balkans each day facing many degrading situations that step on their modest dignity as human beings. Helga is one of the people who organise a group of more than 100 volunteers who provide them with food, shelter, medical support and legal support when needed. They do this on their own and not as part of NGOs or government. In June they managed to change the law for foreigners allowing the migrants to get a status in the country (and then access medical care, transport and food) but this was not enough as the system is not prepared to take care of this number of migrants. But when the system fails, Helga and her team prove to use that volunteering and active citizenship can make a difference. They truly show that European citizenship is about action and giving your passion into making the world a better place.

**What makes the initiative innovative?**

"It's an initiative that inspires us all to demand human dignity above all and to ask for accessing Human Rights. It's an initiative that shows that Human Rights are not only laws, but are also the people and their acts, solidarity and courage.

The initiative also reminds us that even in the time of crisis, no society in Europe should even think of limiting the access to Human Rights or undermining human dignity. The only way to make sure we have our Human Rights respects is if all of us as European citizens voice our our concerns and support for the ones that are most in need (in this case the migrants who escape death to face terrible degrading treatment once they reach Europe)"

**Contribution to European values:**

It is linked to a value which is under risk these days - the respect for human dignity. It is linked to the rights of a specific group of people who are suffering at the moment and cannot access their basic

human rights. In addition it is based with providing an example of solidarity and working to make a fair and dignifying living conditions for human beings in Europe and globally.

**Website or promotional materials:**

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/help.mk.migrants/>