

PRESS RELEASE

Seven laureates recognised at the 2026 ENCATC Awards Ceremony in Nice



Nice, 24 September 2026 | The 2026 ENCATC Awards celebrated six laureates whose outstanding research and educational practices make a significant contribution to the development of cultural management and policy: **Maria Camila Montalvo Senior**, recipient of the **ENCATC Research Award on Cultural Management and Policy**; **Linda Idjéraoui** and **Mara Cerquetti** ex-aequo recipients of the **Best Research Paper Award**; **Ellen Loots** and **Marjelle Vermeulen** recipients of the **Best Teaching and Educational Practice Award**; **Rute Carmo Mendes**, recipient of the **Young and Emerging Researchers Forum Award**; and **Tzu-Jung Chen** recipient of the **Best Student Paper Award**.

The 2026 ENCATC Awards Ceremony took place on the evening of 24 September at Villa Arson, bringing a festive close to the second day of the **34th ENCATC Congress "Artists and Cultural & Creative Professionals at the Centre: Rethinking Work, Policy, and Cultural Ecosystems"**, organised in partnership with the Université Côte d'Azur.

Beyond providing international recognition, the ENCATC Awards are designed to act as catalysts for knowledge and innovation in the cultural and creative sectors. By giving visibility to research and educational practices and connecting them with ENCATC's international network, the Awards help ideas move beyond academic and educational settings and contribute to cultural policy and practice. The 2026 edition also marks the introduction of two new awards recognising young talent, broadening ENCATC's celebration of research across different stages of academic and professional development.

Gianna Lia Cogliandro-Beyens, ENCATC Secretary General, said: *"At a time when we are rethinking how cultural and creative professionals are valued, supported and equipped for evolving career paths, new knowledge, perspectives and innovative educational practices are more important than ever. The ENCATC Awards give visibility to research and educational practices that can inform this debate and act as a catalyst for change in cultural ecosystems"*

2026 ENCATC Award Laureates

ENCATC Research Award on Cultural Management and Policy Research that equips policy and practice

Established in 2014 and run in partnership with the Cultural Management Fund of the University of Antwerp, the ENCATC Research Award recognises doctoral research that demonstrates rigour, originality and interdisciplinary thinking, while delivering methodological innovation and relevance to real-world cultural management and policy.

The 2026 laureate is **Maria Camila Montalvo Senior** from the **University of Granada in Spain**, for the PhD thesis **"Making Hands with the Earth: Curatorial Proposals from Indigenous Material Practices for Inhabiting the Earth"**.

In her doctoral research, she explores Indigenous material practices as a lens through which to rethink cultural management, sustainability, governance, and the role of cultural institutions. Grounded in four years of multi-sited ethnographic research conducted in close collaboration with nine Indigenous communities and collectives across Amazonian territories, the study combines participatory action research, ethnography, practice-based inquiry, and curatorial experimentation.

The jury particularly highlighted the thesis's innovative approach, noting: *"Its innovative concept of 'curatorial-ethnography' reimagines curating as a method of research, collaboration, public engagement, and institutional transformation. By positioning Indigenous knowledge and participants as active co-creators of knowledge, the thesis offers an original and practice-based perspective on how cultural institutions can become ecosystems of relationships, care, knowledge, and territorial stewardship, while contributing to contemporary debates on cultural policy and sustainability"*.

As part of the award, the winning thesis will reach an international readership through publication in the **ENCATC Advances on Cultural Management and Policy (EACMP) Book Series**, published by Routledge.

The second finalist of the Award was **Maria Antonietta Cipriano** from **Roma Tre University** in Italy for the PhD **"Participatory Governance for the Sustainable Management of Cultural Heritage. Pathways to Social, Cultural and Civic Value Creation"**

Best Research Paper Award Evidence that sets direction for policy excellence

Presented annually since 2019, the Best Research Paper Award recognises the most outstanding scholarly contribution published in the Book of Proceedings of the ENCATC Congress. The award celebrates research that combines academic rigour and originality with relevance to contemporary challenges in cultural management and policy, offering new perspectives or evidence that can inform policymaking and professional practice.

The 2026 award had two ex-aequo laureates: **Linda Idjéroui**, from the **SIC.Lab Université Côte d'Azur, France**; for her paper **"Inclusive Intercultural Museology and Sustainability? From the (In)-Visibility of Competencies to International Cross-Fertilization"**; and **Mara Cerquetti**, from the **University of Macerata**

for her paper "**Emerging Skills for Digital Cultural Mediation: Rethinking Local Heritage Narratives through the Museum Serious Game**" *"I Codici del Tempo"* (Monteprandone, Italy).

Linda Idjéraoui's work examines the often-invisible dimensions of professional work in museums, bringing together questions of cultural labour, professional competences, fair working conditions, and sustainable careers. Drawing on an extensive review of documentary sources across different national contexts, the paper develops an analytical framework that helps connect the multiple dimensions of museum work and make them more visible. The jury's valorisation was the following: *"By offering a shared language through which museums, educators, and sector leaders can reflect on professional roles and working conditions, the study provides a relevant contribution to current debates on the sustainability and recognition of cultural and creative professionals."*

Mara Cerquetti's research, Cerquetti explores how game-based approaches can contribute to digital cultural mediation and to new ways of engaging audiences with local cultural heritage. Focusing on the museum serious game *I Codici del Tempo*, the study combines semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, field observations, focus groups, and the System Usability Scale, allowing the experience to be examined from multiple perspectives. As the jury of the award commented, *"the research provides empirical evidence of the potential of playful experiences to strengthen visitors' engagement with heritage content, while connecting game-based learning, digital mediation, and emerging professional skills. It thus offers a timely contribution to understanding current transformations in cultural participation and the cultural sector."*

As part of the recognition, Linda Idjéraoui and Mara Cerquetti will receive the opportunity to have the research paper published in the **European Journal of Cultural Management and Policy (EJCMP)**, the official ENCATC Journal published by Frontiers.

Best Teaching and Educational Practice Award

Educators inspiring capacity for tomorrow

Launched in 2025, the Best Teaching and Educational Practice Award celebrates creative, effective and transferable teaching approaches and educational practices that inspire educators in cultural policy and management to renew curricula and methods in response to current and future challenges. The award recognises practices that help students and professionals develop the critical thinking, knowledge and practical skills needed to navigate and contribute to change in the cultural and creative sectors.

The 2026 laureates are **Ellen Loots** and **Marjelle Vermeulen**, from the **Erasmus University of Rotterdam** in the Netherlands, for the teaching method **"Impact Education in Cultural Management: Experiential Learning through Real-World Impact Assessment"**.

According to the jury: *"This teaching practice effectively bridges academic learning and professional practice through real-world impact assessment with cultural organizations. It develops critical thinking and practical skills while responding to the sector's growing focus on social impact. Its transferability make it a strong model for use across different educational and cultural contexts."*

Special visibility will be given to the winning practice through an article in the **ENCATC Scholars** publication.

Young and Emerging Researchers Forum Award

Recognising the next generation of cultural management and policy researchers

Launched in 2026, the Young and Emerging Researchers Forum Award recognises an outstanding contribution to the **Young Professionals and Researchers Forum**, held annually as part of the ENCATC Congress. The Forum provides a platform for the next generation of researchers and professionals to exchange ideas and contribute to discussions shaping the future of cultural management and cultural policy. The new Award highlights emerging research within the ENCATC international community while supporting the visibility and professional development of early-career researchers.

The first laureate of the Young and Emerging Researchers Forum Award is **Rute Carmo Mendes** from the **Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE)** in Portugal, for doctoral thesis, **"The Communication of Cultural Policies in Portugal: Ideology, Mediatization and Leadership in a Networked Society"**.

In her thesis, she explores how cultural policy governance is shaped not only through formal institutions, but also through communication, ideological narratives, and networks of influence. Focusing on the Portuguese context, the study demonstrates how Ministers of Culture actively construct narratives, frame cultural priorities, and legitimise policy decisions, revealing communication as a central mechanism through which cultural policy is made and enacted.

Commenting on the significance of the research, the jury noted: *"Through an innovative mixed-methods approach, the thesis offers a fresh perspective on how cultural policy operates in contemporary networked societies and how it influences cultural ecosystems and the visibility of cultural and creative professionals."*

Best Student Paper

Celebrating excellence in emerging research

Introduced for the first time in 2026, the Best Student Paper Award recognises the most outstanding student paper published in the Book of Proceedings of the ENCATC Congress. The Award celebrates excellence in student research and gives wider visibility to work demonstrating quality, originality and relevance to current debates in cultural management and policy.

The first laureate of the Best Student Paper Award is **Tzu-Jung Chen**, a **PhD candidate in Arts Management and Cultural Policy at the National Taiwan University of Arts**, for her paper **"Cultural Impact Assessment: A Sustainable Development Framework for Mid-sized Live Music Venues in Taiwan"**.

Drawing on both scholarly expertise and professional experience in Taiwan's cultural and creative sectors, her research focuses on cultural governance, cultural impact assessment, and the sustainable development of cultural infrastructure. In her paper she addresses an important challenge facing the cultural sector: how to assess the value of cultural organizations beyond economic performance alone.

In its assessment the jury commented the following: *"By developing the Operational Cultural Impact Assessment Framework (OCIAF), she offers an innovative and practically relevant tool for capturing the cultural, social, economic, and environmental contributions of live music venues. Combining strong theoretical grounding with clear policy relevance, the paper makes a valuable contribution to contemporary debates on cultural value, sustainability, and evidence-based cultural governance."*

The ENCATC Congress 2026

The 34th ENCATC Congress took place from **23 to 25 September 2026 in Nice, France**, in partnership with **Université Côte d'Azur** bringing together 300 people from across 35 countries. Under the theme **"Artists and Cultural & Creative Professionals at the Centre: Rethinking Work, Policy, and Cultural Ecosystems"**, the Congress brings together educators, researchers, artists, cultural practitioners and policymakers to examine the roles, working conditions and support systems shaping cultural and creative professionals today. The programme includes keynote speeches, panel discussions, Education & Research Sessions, workshops, networking activities and the ENCATC Awards Ceremony.

Media assets: download the photos [here](#).

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More information about ENCATC Recognitions:

<https://encatc.org/en/about-us/encatc-recognitions/>

Learn more about our publications:

- ENCATC Advances on Cultural Management and Policy (EACMP) Book Series: <https://encatc.org/en/knowledge-hub/resources/?type=19>
- European Journal on Cultural Management and Policy (EJCMP): <https://encatc.org/en/knowledge-hub/resources/?type=18>
- ENCATC Scholars: <https://encatc.org/en/knowledge-hub/resources/?type=20>

About ENCATC

ENCATC is the European network on cultural management and policy, bringing together educators, researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and artists across the cultural and creative field. With consultative status at the UN, as an official UNESCO partner, observer to the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Culture, and a Creative Europe Network, ENCATC advances an inclusive, sustainable, and democratic cultural ecosystem. We facilitate networking, foster interdisciplinary education, publish research, and advocate for evidence-based cultural policies at international, European, national, and local levels.

Learn more at www.encatc.org.

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