



Ίδρυμα Θεοφανώ  
THEOPHANO  
FOUNDATION

## FOREWORD BROCHURE

Two thousand years of history, cultural, religious and social roots, continue to play an important role for people all over Europe, and worldwide. Technology, economy or politics cannot erase them.

Since its launch in 1952, the EU and its precursor organisations have been based on a rather one sided interpretation of European history, focussed on the Charlemagne Empire, the successor to the West-Roman Empire. Central and Eastern Europe were behind the Iron Curtain and could be conveniently forgotten. After the EU enlargement, the narrative did not fundamentally change, not least because the different histories of countries east of Vienna or Prague are less well known in Western Europe. Moreover, there was a hidden belief that its political, economic and societal models were superior.

Strasbourg University, the idea of the prize was developed by Stefan Schepers, a Belgian, and Theodor Ikonomou, a Greek.

It received immediate support of Herman Count Van Rompuy, the President Emeritus of the European Council, who understood the importance for cooperation in the EU of understanding and bridging of Europe's cultural diversities.

It was turned into reality in just one evening by Stavros Andreadis and his friends in the Cultural Society of Entrepreneurs of Northern Greece, Nikolaos Efthymiadis and Constantinos Geloudis, later joined by others.

The Empress Theophano Prize honours a nearly forgotten woman who played an important role in early European history, and who has herself a good example of inter-cultural exchange and adaptation to a 'Leitkultur', by marrying the heir of the German Empire, Otto II. She was a niece of the Byzantine Emperor Johannes I Tzimiskes. Throughout the whole Carolingian and Ottonian period, the Byzantine Empire was regarded in Western Europe as the ultimate symbol of economic development and cultural sophistication. For a woman of the Eastern Imperial House to marry the heir apparent of the ruler of the Holy Roman Empire conferred immense prestige on the West. She was to have a significant and lasting influence.

Theophano would have a great influence on the early beginnings of gender equality in Western Europe, on education, on trade with the Empire and beyond, and on its sanitary and culinary habits. She thus contributed to the foundation of the flourishing culture in the Middle Ages.

The website, [www.theophano.eu](http://www.theophano.eu), gives further information about her impact.