

AMAZONIAN INDIGENOUS WOMEN WINNING THE 2026 *FOR OUR PLANET* PRIZE OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

September 2026

In June 2026 the European Commission has announced the [Amazonia Indigenous Women's Fellowship \(AIWF\) programme](#) as the [official winner of the 2026 ForOurPlanet Prize](#).

Following a rigorous evaluation process, the AIWF Programme, led by [Conservation International](#), was recognized for its inspiring work, which stood out for recognizing that Indigenous women are not just passive victims of climate change, but are primary drivers of the solution. By trusting their deep-rooted and traditional knowledge over top-down corporate structures, the programme has helped place the future of the Amazon back into the hands of its most effective guardians.

The annual competition, which in 2026 focused on nature restoration and on bringing nature back to life, drew 370 high-calibre submissions from across the world. The award highlights AIWF's outstanding commitment to strengthening the leadership of Indigenous women in protecting the Amazon rainforest and secure climate stability.

The EU article presents the features of the [Amazonia Indigenous Women's Fellowship \(AIWF\) programme](#). "The Amazon rainforest is one of the most important places on Earth, but it is under constant threat. For the people who live there, the danger is personal. Cutting down trees, mining pollution, and changing weather patterns are making it harder for communities to survive. These challenges are also accelerating the loss of Indigenous knowledge passed down through generations. In response, Indigenous women across the Amazon are emerging as key leaders in the fight against climate change. They are supported by the [Amazonia Indigenous Women's Fellowship \(AIWF\)](#), a programme launched in 2021 to provide the funding and training needed to lead environmental projects rooted in traditional knowledge. Since the project began, it has focused on practical ways to protect the forest and the people who live there:

- Broad impact: The fellowship has supported more than 115 projects and directly benefited over 4,200 people.
- Significant investment: Since its launch, €1.36 million has been directly invested into Indigenous women-led initiatives.
- Key focus areas: These projects span the Amazon and focus on reforestation, food sovereignty, and territorial management.

In Bolivia, Fulvia Medina is working with women across 23 different communities. Together, they are preserving traditional weaving



techniques while creating sustainable ways to earn an income. Her work ensures that these cultural traditions remain a viable way for families to support themselves. In Colombia, Paola Margarita Chindoy is focusing on the connection between generations. By bringing young people and elders together, she is helping to protect ancestral knowledge and defend Indigenous territories from outside threats. These efforts ensure that the wisdom passed down through centuries is not lost to modern environmental pressures. As global attention turns toward inclusive climate solutions, this initiative highlights an important reality: Indigenous women are not only protecting the Amazon, but also helping define its future. By supporting these leaders, the programme ensures that the people with the deepest knowledge of the forest are the ones shaping its recovery.”

A key factor in the AIWF programme’s success is how it has addressed challenges in rainforest protection. By circumventing traditional, slow-moving international bureaucracies and channelling money straight into the hands of local actors who understand regional needs much better, the programme has shown a more effective way forward. This includes the transfer of €1.36 million in direct grants exclusively to Indigenous women-led conservation initiatives since 2021, as well as supporting more than 115 projects and directly benefiting over 4,200 people. The [#ForOurPlanet](#) judges praised the submission for demonstrating that protecting the human rights and sovereignty of Indigenous women is one of the most effective ways to physically safeguard the rainforest. Instead of fostering short-term charity dependence, the programme leaves behind an active, permanent network of self-sufficient female leaders who can continue managing the Amazon for generations.

The prize was awarded during a ceremony at [EU Green Week 2026](#) in Brussels, which focused on investing in a nature-positive economy model. The European Commission also honoured the exceptional contributions of the second and third-placed finalists:

- 2nd. place: [Trees Under the Microscope](#) – an Armenian hands-on eco-education project that uses outdoor microscopy workshops to connect displaced and vulnerable children with the cellular biology of trees, fostering a lifelong, science-based commitment to protecting local biodiversity.
- 3rd place: [360.come](#) – a Portuguese environmental education program in Guimarães that engages over 2,000 preschool children in hands-on sustainable practices, using school organic gardens and compost bins to teach the principles of circular economy, waste reduction, and regenerative food systems from an early age.

The [#ForOurPlanet](#) campaign is a joint initiative of DG ENV and the EEAS, which encourages citizens and communities around the world to take simple, practical actions to protect and restore nature. The campaign has partnered with the [European Training Foundation’s Green Skills Award](#) to create the #ForOurPlanet Award, which recognises outstanding initiatives in nature restoration and preservation from around the world. The finalists of the #ForOurPlanet Award were selected by a jury panel from DG ENV and the EEAS. The winner was selected from the 11 finalists featured on the campaign website through a combined voting process, with the final result based equally on public online voting (50%) and a jury vote (50%).



To know more

[News in EU website](#)

[ForOurPlanetPrize2026 Finalists](#)

[Amazonia Indigenous Women's Fellowship Programme \(AIWF\)](#)

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[AIWF 2024 Annual Report](#)

