

Launch of the 2019 European Social Innovation Competition: €150,000 for three innovations reducing plastic waste

Today, at an event in Ljubljana, Slovenia, the European Commission launched the 2019 edition of the European Social Innovation Competition. Under the theme Challenging Plastic Waste, this year's edition is looking for ideas and projects that reduce plastic waste by targeting systemic change at the local, national and European level. Independent Judges will determine the three projects that will each be awarded €50,000 in October 2019.

"We collect more than 27 million tons of plastic waste in Europe per year. Whilst addressing plastic waste is a big challenge, it is also an opportunity to innovate and create new solutions. That is why this year we are calling for ideas to tackle this societal issue, laying the foundations for new business models, new forms of cooperation and stimulating new ways of doing things for a better, cleaner and more sustainable future for all," said Slawomir Tokarski, Director in charge of Innovation and Advanced Manufacturing at the European Commission.

The European Commission has already implemented several measures, as part of a determined action to turn the challenge of plastic waste into a positive drive for the future of Europe. This includes the first-ever Europe-wide [Plastics Strategy](#), the launch of the [Circular Plastics Alliance](#) as well as a [voluntary pledges campaign](#). With these measures, the Commission is laying the grounds for a transition towards a more circular economy, fostering growth and innovation.

The aim of the 2019 European Social Innovation Competition is to support ideas and projects that reduce plastic waste and littering through changing and improving existing processes or through introducing brand-new products and initiatives. These innovations need to reduce the amount of plastic waste created or encourage and enable the greater re-use and recycling of plastic waste. Solutions should be scalable and target change at the systemic level and be rooted in one of the following areas:

- Reducing the consumption of single use plastic products;
- Recycling, reusing, and upcycling existing plastic waste;
- Dealing with accumulated plastic waste in landfills and the environment;
- Changing consumer behaviours, or retail and wider business practices;
- Implementing alternative business models and optimising supply chains;
- Introducing new materials fit for a circular economy or that offer sustainable alternatives to fossil-based plastics.

The European Social Innovation Competition is seeking ideas from social innovators, entrepreneurs, students, designers, businesses, doers, makers and change creators - anyone who has an innovative and creative idea for turning the tide on plastic waste.

The 2019 edition of the Competition was launched in Ljubljana, a sustainability pioneer, former European Green Capital and winner of the 2018 Sustainability category in the European Capital of Smart Tourism Awards. This zero waste city collects 68% of its waste separately (more than any other European capital). Furthermore, two recent winners of the Competition are from Slovenia, demonstrating a burgeoning social innovation ecosystem in the country. Ljubljana was therefore a natural choice to host this year's Launch Event for the 2019 Competition.

At the Launch Event attendees had the opportunity to learn about the Competition and hear from one of last year's winners, [HeritageLab](#), regarding their experience. In addition, attendees were able to gain insights from a discussion panel in which some of [this year's Judges](#) discussed the issue of plastic waste, as well as take part in a mini hackathon thinking up solutions to the plastics problem. The event closed with an exhibition titled "[Toasted Furniture](#)" from Slovenian artists Nuša Jelenec and Nina Mršnik. It showcased the artists' innovative method of actually toasting plastic waste, transforming it into beautiful and colourful panels, which are then used as the building blocks for furniture and lighting. This offered a fantastic and creative example of Challenging Plastic Waste.

End notes:

Applications are open until Thursday 4 April noon CET. For full details visit: www.eusic.org

More information about European Social Innovation Competition:

Launched in memory of social innovation pioneer Diogo Vasconcelos, the European Social Innovation Competition is a challenge prize run by the European Commission across all EU Member States and Horizon 2020 associated countries. Now in its 7th year, the Competition acts as a beacon for social innovators in Europe, employing a proven methodology for supporting early-stage ideas and facilitating a network of radical innovators shaping society for the better. Each year the Competition addresses a different issue facing Europe. This year, the focus is: **Challenging Plastic Waste.**

The Competition is organised by the European Commission with support from Nesta, Kennisland, Ashoka Spain, the European Network of Living Labs, and Scholz & Friends.

For information on earlier editions and winning projects, visit: www.eusic.org

Questions about the Competition can be sent to: info@socialinnovationprize.eu

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