

The European Social Innovation Competition

Grzegorz Drozd & Carolina Gario 26 October 2017

On October 26, 2017, three promising projects will be awarded the 2017 European Social Innovation Competition prize.

The Background

The European Social Innovation Competition was established in 2012 in the memory of Diogo Vasconcelos. Mr Vasconcelos was a Portuguese politician who was very active in promoting social innovation, and who focused his role on fostering innovation to address some of the great societal challenges of our time. During his career, he worked closely with the European Commission and others on issues such as globalization, sustainability and climate change, urbanization, democratic participation, public services, and healthcare.

In particular, he provided input to the European Commission, in the context of innovation policy after the 2010 Lisbon strategy. He was part of the origin of the Social Innovation Europe initiative by the European Commission in early 2011. He was also chairman of the Social Innovation Exchange and launched the Entrepreneurs Academy among other accomplishments.

He passed away in July 2011 at the age of 43.

Since then, The European Commission has remained committed to supporting social innovation through different initiatives. The competition is organized by the European Commission, supported by [Nesta](#), [Kennisland](#), [Shipyard](#), and [Impact Hub](#).

Social Innovation and the European Commission Today

For the European Commission, social innovation is about transforming the challenges our societies face into opportunities to create new solutions, business models, jobs, and more sustainable and inclusive growth. The Commission believes social innovation can lead to higher quality public services, value for money in the public sector, and savings for public budgets. The European Social Innovation Competition was created to showcase and support the best ideas that tackle societal issues across the continent. It is designed to support change through a bottom-up, co-creative, and participatory process at the local level.

The Commission awards prizes of €50,000 to three projects each year. It also includes an incubation element that supports projects becoming more robust and sustainable through a mentoring academy and coaching scheme. The academy also helps project teams better pitch their ideas to attract funding and strategic partners.

The new skills, together with enhanced visibility, the establishment of pan-European networks, and cooperation opportunities and, in the case of the winners, the seed money of the prize, contribute to the projects having a better chance for success and opportunity to scale up, and generates positive effects on the economy and the local community or society at large.

On top of the European Social Innovation Competition, the European Commission is active in supporting social innovation in a variety of ways. These include: financing, guarantee schemes, and support for the creation of networks and matchmaking.

Funding to support social innovation is available through a variety of sources, including the Employment and Social Innovation Program, which offers guarantees and capacity building for interested microcredit providers to finance social innovators and social entrepreneurs. Seed funding for the development of innovative ideas that address social challenges is available through the Social Challenges Platform. It is a space where local communities and authorities can promote a social challenge they would like to solve. Innovators can pitch their ideas and receive seed funding to demonstrate their project. 30 challenges are currently open for innovators to submit their ideas to until December 21, 2017.

Even more is done to favor networking among organizations across Europe through the Social Innovation

Community portal, which showcases social innovation projects around Europe and supports co-creation and the sharing of good ideas.

The Competition This Year

In response to digitization's transformative effect on society and the labor market, this year's Competition aims to "reboot" equality and ensure technology is used to allow everyone in Europe to benefit from the opportunities created by technological change. The 2017 theme was designed to inspire Europeans to provide fresh, energetic approaches to digital inclusion, connectivity, and skills development.

Economic growth should not benefit the lucky few, but should also provide opportunities for all. The competition this year enables inclusive growth by encouraging ideas to equip people with the skills they need to be able to compete in a changing economy. It is our aim that innovators will create business models that allow everyone to equally seize the opportunities offered by technological change.

In February, the 2017 Competition launched in Athens, and the Commission sought inspiring ideas, large and small, from people all around Europe. The competition was open to entrepreneurs, social innovators, students, designers, makers, tech enthusiasts, educators, and people from diverse backgrounds from across Europe.

As in previous years, the competition was open to applicants throughout the European Union and in countries participating in the Horizon 2020 program. This year there were nearly 800 applications from 40 countries across Europe.

The written applications phase closed in April 2017, following which time the jury panel made up of experts in the social and digital innovation space, met and determined the 30 semi-finalists. Each semi-finalist project team was invited to the 2017 Social Innovation Mentoring Academy in Madrid, where they worked with experts in social innovation to refine their ideas and develop their business plans.

All 30 semi-finalists then submitted their detailed business plans, including projects for how they will remain sustainable, what they will use the €50,000 for, and detailing any prototypes or test phases completed to date. Following this submission, the jury met again to determine the 10 Finalists, and after pitching at the Awards Ceremony in Brussels, the three 2017 winners will be announced.

Before pitching to the jury of social innovators and tech experts at the awards ceremony in Brussels, the winners were chosen based on how they have successfully and impressively proven how digital technologies can improve people's lives. The innovative projects demonstrate how everyday parts of a person's life whether it be learning,

reading, or living in an apartment can be made more accessible for all of society.

In addition to the three 2017 winners, one 2016 Competition semi-finalist will win the Impact Prize for its achievements in empowering refugees' integration (the theme of the 2016 Competition).

The Impact Prize will award €50,000 to the 2016 semi-finalist who achieves the most significant, measurable impact in the year following the submission of a detailed business plan in September 2016.

All semi-finalists from the previous year were invited to complete an impact report by the submission deadline. Entries were judged by the jury panel from the 2016 Competition and the winner will be announced at the Awards Ceremony in Brussels on October 26, 2017. The Impact Prize was first awarded in 2016.

An Introduction to the 2017 Nominees of The 2017 European Social Innovation Competition

The European Social Innovation Competition, launched in memory of Diogo Vasconcelos, is a challenge prize run by the European Commission across all European countries, now in its fifth year. The theme of the 2017 competition is Equality Rebooted and seeks to find innovations in tools, services, and models that allow everyone to seize the

opportunities offered by technological change.

In response to digitization's transformative effect on society and the labor market, this year's Competition aims to 'reboot' equality and ensure technology is used to enable everyone in Europe to benefit from the opportunities created by technological change.

We would like to thank the 2017 semi-finalists, and the participants who have chosen to share the details of their social innovation projects for this edition of the Social Innovations Journal.

We now have the honor of introducing the innovators and their work.

[MODI – The Museum of Diversity and Inclusion](#) by Dr. Andreas Heinecke & Katharina Petersen

[CUE](#) by Alexia Stamatelatou

[Hackability, Digital Fabrication, Technology, and Design for Social Impact](#) by Carlo Boccazzi Varotto, Gabriele Ermacora & Ludovico Orlando Russo

[Touch Screen without Barriers: Mouse4all Innovation to Make Technology Accessible](#) by José Ángel Jiménez Vadillo & Javier Montaner Gutiérrez

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[Mouse4all](#): Alternative Input Devices to Access the Knowledge

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[Bincome](#): Alternative Currency

For more information about the European Social Innovation Competition including the recipients of the 2017 awards please visit: <http://eusic.challenges.org>.