



PRESS RELEASE

October 2017

### Multimedia tool for blind and visually impaired people awarded €50,000 by European Commission

*Digital visionary Feelif selected as a winner in European Social Innovation Competition 'Equality Rebooted' addressing inequality in Europe.*

**Feelif** has been announced as one of three winners in the 2017 European Social Innovation Competition. Selected from a total of nearly 800 entries from more than 40 countries, the project was awarded a €50,000 prize at the Awards Ceremony in Brussels on 26 October.

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

Slovenian winner **Feelif** is a multimedia tool for blind and visually-impaired people, which allows users to feel shapes on a flat touch screen. Knowing that blind people often read Braille, Feelif aims to solve the problem of flat surface touch screens that modern technology presented. The project allows blind users to feel 'bumps' that form shapes and contours on the screen through vibration signals, opening up endless possibilities to read, learn and create content for blind people, making technology more inclusive.

Željko Khermayer of Feelif said: *"Feelif was born out of a vision that smartphones and tablets could become devices which blind and visually impaired people could use in their everyday life. Knowing that blind people read Braille, our main problem was how to display bump on a flat surface of touch screen. We came up with an idea to imitate bumps, which are used in Braille alphabet, with vibrations on flat screen."*

*"We are very excited to be named as winners in this competition. The whole process has helped us learn and refine our business plan and winning will enable us to expand our project and reach more people and continue working with parents, families and children who can be empowered by Feelif."*

Feelif is a special grid on top of the touchscreen of a standard smartphone or tablet combined with an app to bond it all together. Using vibrations and speech Feelif signals to a blind person what is beneath their finger. For the first time, blind and visually impaired people can feel shapes on standard touch screens. With Feelif one can feel shapes, feel geometric functions, draw, learn how to read and write Braille, learn and exchange knowledge, watch interactive stories, create content, play online and offline games, share, sell and buy content.

Commissioner Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, responsible for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs at the European Commission said: *"Digitisation and automation are rapidly changing the way we live and work. There is a growing gap between those who are equipped to take advantage of this transformation and those who are lagging behind. To help close this gap, this year's edition of the European Social Innovation Competition looked for new ideas for a truly inclusive economy and society. The three winning projects have the potential to make a real difference."*





As part of the Competition this year, the Feelif team attended a mentoring academy in Madrid in July where they worked with experts in social innovation to refine their idea and develop their business plan before pitching to the jury of social innovators and tech experts at the awards ceremony in Brussels.

The other *Equality Rebooted* winners were UK-based open source home building platform [Buildx](#) and peer to peer platform learning network [SAGA](#) from the Netherlands.

Three winners selected out of [10 finalists](#) and the 2016 Impact Prize winner were each awarded a prize of €50,000 at the Awards Ceremony on 26 October 2017 in Brussels.

Organised since 2012 in memory of the Portuguese politician and social innovator Diogo Vasconcelos, the European Social Innovation Competition will help the most innovative ideas to become real, sustainable and transformative projects.

For full details of the competition please visit: [bit.ly/2017diogochallenge](http://bit.ly/2017diogochallenge)

Follow the competition on Twitter: [@EUSocialInnov](https://twitter.com/EUSocialInnov) #diogochallenge



*Image: 2017 Winners on stage at the European Social Innovation Competition Awards Ceremony in Brussels.*





*Željko Khermayer pitches for Feelif at the Social Innovation Mentoring Academy in Madrid*

#### NOTES TO EDITORS

##### **About the 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.

The competition is organised by the European Commission, supported by [Nesta](#), [Kennisland](#), [Shipyard and Impact Hub](#). For information about previous competitions and winning projects see:

To find out more about the Competition and previous editions please visit;  
<http://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/innovation/policy/social/competition/>

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