**When Climate change meets social innovation. 8 remarkable Social Innovation initiatives to face climate change**

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Climate change has been one of the hot topics of 2019 as it is considered one of the most urgent challenges that humanity faces in this century. In recent years, extreme weather events have been revealing the direct consequences of climate change. Ocean warming and the melting of the polar ice-caps are causing an alarming rise in the sea level resulting in the sinking of cities like Venice.

Climate change is causing serious environmental problems which require urgent and collective action to find effective solutions to this global challenge. And thus, in the recent Climate Change Conference (COP25) held in Madrid from December 2-13, 2019 a call for action to all nations to develop policies and initiatives to globally combat climate change was launched. Non-state actors such as NGOs, companies, local authorities and individuals have to join efforts to figure out solutions to the environmental challenges we face.

In this context, social Innovation and environment are closely linked to reducing or mitigating climate change. The main interest of social innovations in the area of environment is reducing society’s environmental impact (SI-Drive project, 2017). Several initiatives around the world are being promoted looking for ideas to cope with these challenges.

Globally and regionally, we can find huge differences in conceptualising projects addressing environmental challenges as social innovation initiatives. Following the definition given by the SI-Drive project, social innovation in the area of environment is linked to the notion of “sustainability”. Thus, we can find a myriad of social innovations that includes those regarding unaddressed situations or problems such as the destruction of environmental assets, mistreatment of animals or wasting of resources and food consumption.

Social innovation actions regarding the mitigation of climate change can be split into several missions such as moving away from fossil fuels, looking for alternatives to the use of plastic or fostering re-forestation, among others. For example, the challenge set by the European Social Innovation Competition of 2019 was to find solutions to the problem of plastic waste.

Increasing pressure on the environment is causing serious damage to ecosystems and threatening the lives of millions of people. Therefore, bottom-up approaches are needed to engage people directly in behavioral change and green financing, to complement the top-down climate action initiatives led by governments and non-state actors.

Actions to combat climate change have gained the attention of social innovation competitions worldwide covering varied topics related to this challenge. Below, three of the most significant prizes or competitions are highlighted.

[The European Social Innovation Competition](https://ec.europa.eu/growth/industry/innovation/policy/social/competition_en) (EUSIC) is a challenge prize run by the European Commission across all EU countries and Horizon 2020 associated countries. Organised in memory of Diogo Vasconcelos, the competition calls all Europeans to come up with solutions to the problems affecting our society. The topic of the 2019 edition of this prize was Challenging Plastic Waste.

 [The UN Climate Action Award](https://unfccc.int/news/winners-of-the-2019-un-global-climate-action-awards-announced) shines a light on some of the world’s brightest solutions to climate change. The Awards, spearheaded by UN Climate Change’s Momentum for Change initiative, showcase some of the most practical, scalable and replicable examples of what people across the globe are doing to tackle climate change. **Momentum for Change** provides a public platform to highlight broad-ranging climate change actions that are already achieving real results on the ground. By shining light on the most inspiring and transformational mitigation and adaptation activities, known as 'Lighthouse Activities', Momentum for Change aims to strengthen motivation, spur innovation and catalyze further change towards a low-emission, high-resilient future.

[Better together Award.](https://www.bettertogetheraward.org/) Lead by Impact Hub Berlin. This is an international competition seeking collaborative innovations solving local climate challenges. The competition highlights the value of impactful collaboration between start-ups, SME or NGOs and local governments that jointly implement innovative solutions for effective climate mitigation and adaptation.

**8 Best Practices in Social innovation and Climate Change**

For the purpose of this blog, we have collected 8 remarkable climate change and social innovation initiatives that have been awarded in the above three international competitions. These initiatives are described in order to illustrate the diverse ideas to tackle climate change.

[**MIWA**](http://www.miwa.eu/blog) **(Czechia) winner of the European Social Innovation Competition 2019.** MIWA is a circular distribution and sale system for food and non-food products with reusable packaging. The system prevents the creation of packaging waste (pre-cycling) in the whole delivery chain from producer to household.

[SpraySafe](https://cimo.ipb.pt/web/index.php?r=highlights/view&id=351) (Portugal), **winner of the European Social Innovation Competition 2019.** SpraySafe offers an edible spray to preserve food items that reduces the need for plastic packaging; It challenges plastic waste by acting as a coating over foodstuffs, as a direct substitution of plastic wraps and plastic containers such as tupperware.

[**VEnvirotech**](https://www.venvirotech.com/en/) **(**Spain), **winner of the European Social Innovation Competition 2019.** VEnvorotech is a biotech start-up that transforms organic waste into biodegradable plastics using bacteria.

[**Impossible Foods**](https://impossiblefoods.com/) (Singapore, Hong-Kong, USA, Macau) **winner of the 2019 UN Climate Action Award, Category Planetary Health.** Impossible foods creates plant-based replacements for meat products that are more sustainable and help displace market demand for meat products.

[**MAX Burgers**](https://unfccc.int/climate-action/momentum-for-change/climate-neutral-now/max-burgers) (Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Poland) **winner of the 2019 UN Climate Action Award, Category Climate Neutral Now.** Creating the world’s first “Climate Positive” menu.

[**Campaign for Female Education’s Climate-Smart Agriculture Guides**](https://unfccc.int/climate-action/momentum-for-change/women-for-results/camfed) (Sub-Saharan Africa) **winner of the 2019 UN Climate Action Award, Category Women for Results.** Training young women from marginalized farming communities to become Agriculture Guides.

[**Beyond the Grid Fund**](https://unfccc.int/climate-action/momentum-for-change/financing-for-climate-friendly-investment/beyond-the-grid-fund-for-Zambia) (Zambia) **winner of the 2019 UN Climate Action Award, Category Climate Friendly Investment.** Providing affordable, off-grid clean energy solutions that are quick to deploy.

[**Carbonlites**](https://www.bettertogetheraward.org/carbonlites)(India) **winner of the Better Together Award 2019**. This initiative promotes the creation of biogas stations that eat up organic waste.

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