

Brussels, 20 MARS 2014
Ares S(2014) 811409

Dear Citizen of Europe,

Less than one year ago, you kindly agreed to take part in a Europe-wide citizen consultation under the auspices of the VOICES initiative. VOICES – Views, Opinions and Ideas of Citizens in Europe on Science – was ground-breaking citizen consultation implemented by the European Network of Science Centres and Museums (ECSITE), on behalf of the European Commission.

The aim was to hold participatory workshops where European citizens could share their ideas, values and expectations on how we could tackle the challenge of urban waste in the years to come. The European Commission's motivation was to find an innovative and effective way of giving the general public a say on science and technology issues affecting our lives and shaping our future.

The VOICES citizen consultation consisted of one hundred workshops that took place across 27 EU countries - during four consecutive weekends between March and April 2013. A total of 1000 citizens were involved in these inclusive conversations, which took place in 23 official European languages. Participants expressed great enthusiasm for having taken part in the workshops and indicated their desire to be informed of the outcome of the deliberations, which I would like to share with you.

You participated in one out of several workshops held in your country. For each country an analysis of outcomes was conducted, which also led to the compilation of a country-level report. Once the outcomes of the 100 workshops were combined, this produced no less than 350 citizen ideas relevant to urban waste. These ideas were then analysed by the VOICES social science research experts, and presented to the European Commission. All of the VOICES outcomes, including the 27 Country Reports, are easily accessible on the VOICES website at www.voicesforinnovation.eu.

My staff at the EC used these ideas to draft the calls for research proposals under the new Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, which was officially launched in December 2013. The results of your efforts have made a significant contribution to the priority area 'Waste: A Resource to Recycle, Reuse and Recover Raw Materials', and in particular to the following five topics, that are expected to benefit from EU financial contribution of approximately 116 million EUR during the period 2014-2015:

- Moving towards a circular economy through industrial symbiosis
- A systems approach for the reduction, recycling and reuse of food waste
- Recycling of raw materials from products and buildings
- Towards near-zero waste at European and global level
- Promoting eco-innovative waste management and prevention as part of sustainable urban development

The next step is now for multi-actor European teams - made up of scientists, public bodies, industry and non-governmental organisations – to submit research proposals in response to the Horizon 2020 calls for proposals, some as early as April of this year.

Thanks to your commitment, the VOICES initiative was very successful in engaging citizens to contribute to the definition of future research priorities. As a result of this success, Horizon 2020 foresees further opportunities for citizens and civil society organisations to play an active role in shaping science and innovation.

I am also pleased to report on other unexpected positive impacts that have come about. The VOICES process has catalysed further debates on urban waste at the local and regional levels in a number of countries including France, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Slovenia and Spain. Moreover, the citizen outcomes have generated new valuable ideas in relation to European and National waste policies.

With the hope that you also found the experience rewarding, I wish to thank you for your participation in this exciting initiative, and at the same time I would like to congratulate you on the work well done!

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Máire Geoghegan-Quinn'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Máire Geoghegan-Quinn