

European Commission announces a €3 million Horizon Prize to develop a tactile display for the visually impaired

The European Commission launches a new Horizon Prize, challenging innovators to develop the most affordable, internet-enabled, full-page tactile display. The €3 million prize will go to the best solution able to convey digital information -text and graphics- for blind and visually impaired people.



There are around 30 million visually impaired Europeans that need assistance to access content online. Recent technological developments have provided them with some solutions, such as text-to-speech technologies. But in a digital world, where communication has become increasingly visual, this is not enough.

There is a need for tactile displays that would assist visually impaired people to read texts and graphics through the sense of touch and improve the quality of their lives, especially in the area of education and navigation.

To tackle this need, the European Commission launches the Tactile Display Horizon Prize in order to challenge innovators to develop an affordable, portable, internet-enabled device with a full-page tactile display.

The €3 million prize will be awarded to the innovator that will come up with the best solution, able to make digital information understandable and easily accessible for visually impaired users. The winning solution should convey digital information in braille, and by using touch to illustrate graphics and charts, mathematical and spatial information and maps.

Beyond its social inclusive role, this device would have an important role in supporting literacy among blind students, as well as helping to tackle some of the challenges around the employability of people with visual impairments.

You think you can come up with a solution? Here is what you need to do!

Have a look at the Rules of Contest for more detailed information and submit your application between 17 April 2018 and 27 November 2018 via the Participant Portal.

The contest is open to any legal entity, including natural persons, or group of legal entities established in an EU Member State or in a country associated to Horizon 2020.

The five best applications will be asked to submit a prototype and will be invited to demonstrate a working solution to specially selected jury of judges.

The prize will be awarded to the proposal that best meets the award criteria and comes up with the most breakthrough user-friendly solution.

Why do we need a tactile display?

Digital technologies have brought us access to a huge amount of knowledge and information. Therefore, they should be available to everyone, so that all can make the most of the opportunities offered by the digital age. However, accessing digital information without assistance remains extremely difficult for visually impaired people.

Advances in technology have already created major breakthroughs for the visually impaired. Instead of relying only on paper-based Braille, visually impaired people have access to a much broader range of assistive tools thanks to technology like text-to-speech and specialised keyboards. But these technologies are not helpful when it comes to videos, graphics and other rich multi-media content. Existing solutions in braille do exist but are very costly and provide limited reading experience.

This is why the European Commission would like to encourage the development of an affordable, portable, internet-enabled device with a full-page tactile display that would allow users a greater independence to carry out day-to-day tasks.

To know more and get involved, follow #HorizonPrize and #TactileDisplayEC on Twitter and visit the prize website.

For any questions, please send us an email.

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