

[Data mining algorithms needed. Second EFSA crowdsource challenge now live](#)

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This [second challenge](#) aims to find ways to automate systematic reviews – the ‘data extraction’ step of scientific assessments.

The prize of US\$28,000 (EUR 23,000) is targeted at software experts or amateur computer enthusiasts who can build information extraction algorithms to identify data elements from a full-text scientific article. The challenge was launched on 11 April 2018 – and runs for 90 days until 10 July.

The [first challenge](#), held in 2017, asked for ideas about how to visualise scientific uncertainty – the limitations in available knowledge. Three participants based in Australia and the US won prizes ranging from US\$1,000 to US\$2,500 for their ideas.

EFSA’s technical staff are looking at how their ideas can be adapted to EFSA’s work and used to support its new approach to [assessing scientific uncertainties](#).

Who can apply?

Anyone can apply after registering on the [InnoCentive platform](#). It is quick and easy, requiring only five simple steps.

Why are the prizes in dollars?

‘Solvers’ registered on the InnoCentive platform come from across the world so the prizes are in US dollars.

How is EFSA involved in crowdsourcing?

In 2015 EFSA launched a [project](#) on ‘Crowdsourcing: Engaging communities effectively in food and feed risk assessment’ to explore the risks and opportunities in applying crowdsourcing and citizen science to collect and process data and increase the openness of EFSA.

Why is EFSA interested in crowdsourcing?

Several factors make crowdsourcing appealing: engaging the public and stakeholders in the process of scientific assessment, widening our evidence base, promoting data sharing and re-use of data, better use of expertise, encouraging public enthusiasm and support for science, and increasing transparency and trust in science.

Is EFSA part of other European crowdsourcing initiatives?

EFSA is part of [Citizen Science Cost Action](#) where we participate on activities related to scientific quality, standardisation and interoperability of data.

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[Reflecting on Europe: How Europe is perceived by people in regions and cities](#)

This week the first [preliminary report](#) on the Reflecting on Europe initiative has been released, providing some interesting insights into the ways citizens want to see the EU developing in the future.

Since March 2016, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) has been listening to about **30.000 citizens** in **81 regions** and **114 cities and municipalities**. The results of the citizens dialogues and the online survey/app collected so far are presented in this report.

Thank you to those who shared their thoughts and contributed to this listening process!

The final report will be delivered in view of the CoR opinion on the future of Europe due for adoption in October 2018.

The CoR will continue its citizens' dialogues over the coming months in the run-up to the European elections in May 2019.□

[Future of Europe: politicians and academics share view that more regional and local authorities' power](#)

must be reflected in the EU

EU policy-makers have recently come up with policy proposals and scenarios on the way forward for Europe. Yet many of these proposals remain silent about the role of regions and cities – even if their follow-up might significantly impact local governments' leverage in a renewed Union. Regions will however have to be granted more influence in the EU architecture to facilitate policy-making and ownership of policy decision on the ground. This was one of the key messages expressed by politicians and academics at a [conference](#) organised yesterday by the European Committee of the Regions' Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs ([CIVEX](#)).

In the context of the debate on the future of the EU, the rise of regional separatist movements and the ongoing work of the [Task Force on Subsidiarity](#), this [one-day conference](#) brought together politicians from local and regional governments, members of the European Parliament and academics to shed some light on the role that regions and local communities could and should play in the future EU27. The event was co-organised by the CoR, the University of Tübingen (Germany), and Danube University Krems (Austria). The outcome of discussions will feed into the CoR opinion on the Future of Europe – to be adopted on 9 October – as asked by the European Council President.

CoR President **Karl-Heinz Lambertz** stressed that: *“Europe is not Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg but its where its citizens live – its regions, cities, towns and villages. A stronger, more united EU is only possible by improving the lives of every citizen. This doesn't mean less Europe but a more effective Europe. This will only be achieved by strengthening the role of local and regional authorities and ensuring every level of government work together to show the EU's added value in the lives of the people it serves”.*

Speakers to the conference recalled that stronger demands for a “Europe of the regions” were voiced in the early 1990s, leading to a number of reforms, including the creation of the CoR. In this regards, **Barbara Duden (DE/PES)**, CIVEX commission President and member of the Hamburg City Parliament, was eager to underline: *“ We need to be careful that the ‘Europe of the Regions’, which some consider an outdated concept, is not played off against the ‘Europe of the Cities’ that is nowadays more fashionable. In the CoR, we represent local and regional authorities of very different sizes and structures, and we need both, cities and regions, with a stronger role in European integration, to make it work for citizens. ”*

MEP Danuta Hübner (PL/EPP), Chair of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and former EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, emphasised: *“Regions, cities and local communities have always played a unique role in linking citizens' daily life with Europe. In these times, this link must not be a missing link”.* She further pointed out that subsidiarity should not be used as an instrument to defend local or national interest against the European one, but that it should focus on effectiveness to determine which level is the more effective for policy action.

Prof Dr Gabriele Abels , Director of Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence PRRIDE, University of Tübingen, Germany, insisted on the need to focus on the EU institutional architecture so as to tackle the perceived democratic deficit of the EU. In particular, she suggested a better involvement of regional parliaments in EU policy-making; notably by securing more seats to members of regional parliaments in the CoR. She further called for a more systematic use of territorial impact assessments to evaluate the likely impact of policies, programmes and projects at local and regional levels.

The conference was followed by an evening debate on the regional impact of Brexit. Participants discussed among others the results of the recent [CoR report](#) detailing the consequences of Brexit on trade and economy in the EU27 regions and cities. Speakers included **Mairi Angela Gougeon**, Member of the Scottish Parliament and CoR member

Michael Murphy , head of the Irish EPP delegation to the CoR and Councillor from Tipperary County Council, **Prof Dr Raquel Ortega Argilés** from the University of Birmingham, UK, and **Prof Dr Ulrike Guérot** from Danube University Krems, Austria.

About the event:

Co-organised by the CoR, and Prof Dr Gabriele Abels, Jean Monnet Centre of Excellence PRRIDE, University of Tübingen, Germany, in cooperation with Prof Dr Ulrike Guérot, Danube University Krems, Austria, founder of the European Democracy Lab., the event entitled "[The future of the EU and the role of the regions / BREXIT: a regional perspective](#)" aimed to investigate the role of regions as actors of democracy at the European level through various angles: "multi-speed Europe", subsidiarity, macroregional strategies, economic governance, solidarity, democracy in the European regional governance, and the regional consequences of Brexit.

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[**ECI Day calls for genuine citizen participation**](#)

Successful European citizen initiatives must trigger dialogue and proper follow-up at EU level

Six years after the introduction of the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) with barely any impact on EU legislation, the constructive criticism,

particularly from the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and other institutions such as the European Parliament and the European Ombudsman, is finally beginning to bear fruit, tempting the European Commission to review this important instrument of participative democracy.

At the 7th EESC ECI Day First Vice-President of the Commission **Frans Timmermans** presented the main changes, including lowering the age from 18 to 16 years, which would open up ECIs to 10 million new potential supporters, or simplifying data requirements for signing initiatives.

Opening the event, EESC President **Georges Dassis** welcomed the Commission's initiative as a leap forwards as regards the simplification and reduction of the bureaucratic burden, but regretted that the follow-up and dialogue have not been reinforced in the current proposal.

"The dialogue between the ECI organisers and the European Commission needs to be strengthened. We need genuine follow-up on people's issues and worries," demanded Mr Dassis, who also motivated participants to "keep up the dialogue and transnational cooperation" despite the setbacks.

This year, the ECI Day focused on the theme of *Working together*, which aimed to highlight the value of cooperation and shared responsibility in promoting active citizenship.

A well-functioning ECI must empower people

In his keynote speech, **Luca Jahier**, president of the EESC's Various Interests Group, emphasised the importance of Article 11 TEU, which imposed a legal obligation on the European institutions to consult and engage in dialogue with civil society and citizens. "A well-functioning ECI should empower citizens; it should give them a voice, a sense of belonging and identity, helping to rebuild trust and to rediscover the solidarity of the European project".

The EESC has therefore always been very vocal about the ECI, Mr Jahier stressed. "Citizens and civil society need to use this instrument to provide innovative solutions, inform the population about matters of public interest, open up channels of communication with the political elite and hold public authorities to account".

European Ombudsman **Emily O'Reilly** underlined the importance of making the ECI as transparent as possible. "In an era of gross online manipulation of the democratic process, we must protect the ECI from any possible abuse," she said.

Deputy Minister for the Bulgarian Presidency of the Council of the EU **Monika Panayotova** warned that the future development of the EU will depend on its ability to bring citizens closer to its decision-making and to engage in an open and direct dialogue with them, addressing their expectations and concerns.

A well-functioning ECI must give people a say

Three workshops followed the session, in which participants were asked to look at possibilities for strengthening the ECI. They consistently expressed the wish for the EU to become more participatory and called on European and national leaders to listen to their citizens. EU and national politics as well as parliamentarianism should therefore become more interactive, using the new tools to bring people together rather than produce a series of individual fighters.

One of the workshops focused on an ECI Online Collaborative Platform, a project which is going to be launched officially in a few days' time. The platform should support citizens interested in starting an ECI and will showcase best practices, help with finding partners in other countries and provide active advice by experts. Participants welcomed this platform, but suggested improving the content by including more explanatory videos and simplifying information or by allowing users to connect to each other more easily.