RONJA HOLOPAINEN WINS THE BBI JU EUCYS 2019 PRIZE!

*18 September 2019*

The young scientist **Ronja Holopainen** (19 years-old, Finland) is the winner of the EUCYS Bioeconomy Prize sponsored by the Bio-based Industries Joint Undertaking (BBI JU). An international jury selected her project ‘[**EcoMe: a reusable, ecological and affordable menstrual hygiene product for developing regions**](https://edcome.org/)’ for excellence in the field of bio-based research leading to a more sustainable future. The name of the winner was announced during the final ceremony hosted in Sofia, Bulgaria, on 17 September, where the BBI JU Head of Programme Eleni Zika presented the award. BBI JU has been sponsoring the EUCYS Bioeconmy Prize since 2016.

EcoMe is a reusable, ecological and affordable menstrual pad aimed for developing regions. The path to the final product has been an interdisciplinary one. In the first place, Ronja conducted a survey in three Asian countries (Mongolia, Azerbaijan and China) on the preferences towards menstruation of the local girls and women. These results were used to establish the limitations and preferences of women in developing countries, which Ronja used to design the bioproduct.

An average woman uses over 11,000 disposable menstrual hygiene products during her lifetime.  On the contrary, the bio-based menstrual pad created by Ronja is completely reusable. It is made of silicone and sea sponge and affordable for women in developing countries. The sea sponge has been deliberately selected because of its proprieties of absorbance, drying time and cleansing. In this way, this Finnish student wants to create a global impact on both ecology and women healthcare.

On top of that, Ronja has developed EdMe, a [smartphone app](https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=appinventor.ai_ronja_holopainen.EdMe&hl=fi) with scientific knowledge about puberty, menstruation, contraception and other aspects of sexual health and rights. More information about Ronja Holopainen’s research and products can be found [here](https://edcome.org/).

Every year the European Commission organises this contest to promote the ideals of cooperation and interchange between young scientists and to give them an opportunity to be guided by some of Europe's most prominent researchers. EUCYS serves as an annual showcase of the best of European student scientific achievements, giving students the opportunity to compete with the best of their contemporaries at European level. This EU Contest for Young Scientists is part of the Science and Society activities managed by the [Directorate-General for Research & Innovation](http://ec.europa.eu/research/eucys/index_en.cfm)at the European Commission. The participants had all previously won first prizes in their home countries' national science competitions in their specific fields. The projects covered a broad spectrum of scientific areas, including biology, physics, chemistry, computing, social sciences, environment, mathematics, materials, engineering and medicine.