

Good practice by “EEN SEIMED”

“WATER EUROPE ACCELERATHON”

Accelerating the development of innovative wastewater treatment and valorisation solutions through mobilising startups and innovation ecosystems.

This new initiative is fully aligned with the SDGs, Access to finance, Startup and ScaleUp support, Materials, RD Innovation and technology with a fresh communication strategy.

*An initiative by IVACE and REDIT, regional partners from the **EEN SEIMED** Region of Valencia consortium. Our initiative is also connected with the **Startup Europe Awards** of the DG CONNECT.*

What?

- Water Europe Accelerathon is a competition (hackathon-like format) to identify low cost innovative solutions from startups giving solutions to the advanced treatment and valorisation of wastewater, including the circular economy through raw materials recovery from urban/industrial wastewaters.
- This competition is not only opened to startups but to all kind of stakeholders, like SMES, RTOs, Universities, municipalities, regional administrations working in teams.
- The word “Accelerathon” stands for “Hackathon” combined with “Accelerator”, so in an online Hackathon-format sessions, we put together 10 teams which are accelerated by our mentors in 3 qualifying rounds, out of which only one project/team becomes the winner. The 3 finalists received more than 3,800 votes from the public.
- The winning team is granted (free of charge) the technical support for the preparation of a winning proposal for LIFE project for the 14th July call of dates of the **LIFE Programme**.
- Not only the winner, but all the teams have high exposure and visibility of their projects and they connect with potential partners and can also as well prepare and submit their proposal with their own means.
- All the teams enjoy free-of-charge, the use of an attractive and gamified online learning platform with the LIFE Programme methodology.
- Our initiative is linked with the **Startup Europe Awards** initiative (as explained below)

How?

- How you came up with this idea?

IVACE, the leading partner of our consortium, EEN-SEIMED, wanted to adapt its services to the current context of advanced online services. We wanted to do something different but at the same time attractive, engaging, and tuned with fresh ideas.

In the design of our initiative we thought about including several “have-to’s”, like the following ones: support to our startups, suffering from funding needs, to access to funding in order to test and develop solutions, the Green Deal initiative of the EC, the problem of water scarcity in our region as well as the industrial wastewater, particularly from the textile industry as well as the link with the SDGs, in particular:

- SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation
- SDG 9: Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities
- SDG 13: Climate Action
- SDG 17: Partnerships

The opportunity of taking advantage of the funding opportunities from the ongoing call-of - dates (closing the 14th of July) of the LIFE Programme was also a big point. Having our EEN Partner REDIT on board was a key element because REDIT (our 11 Technology Centers network) have deep expertise in LIFE Programme so they provided valuable mentors and experts to help our startups and the teams to work their “Water Europe Accelerathon” challenges).

The final ingredient was to link our competition with something bigger and at EU level, so we got on-board a strategic stakeholder: **Finnova Foundation**. They work closely with the **DG CONNECT** and they run the successful Startup Europe Awards competition since 2017. They decided to create the Water category in the framework of Startup Europe Awards. The EU final of **Water Startup Europe Awards** will take place in 2021 and our winner will compete against the finalists from other countries.

How it innovates compared with what you and Network partners already do/used to do?

- This initiative is very fresh, delivered online with DevPost and Slacks interactive platforms so it adapts to the current context.
- It introduces a learning platform <https://accelerathon.learningpark.io/#!/dashboard> to help participants to understand the methodology of the LIFE Programme, on top of customised expert guidance. This online tool is very attractive and gamified by one of our startups <https://beprisma.com/> egressed from our EEN-SEIMED Scale Up Programme.
- It adapts to the present context where we need to generate attractive events in an online format with a solid communication strategy.

How did/does it improve the way we do things?

- Accelerathon initiative is an ecosystem builder because it taps into a collaborative approach where Startups, RTOs, Universities, SMEs, large companies, Public authorities are brought together to solve environmental challenges. Our EEN node SEIMED acts as the “glue” to connect these players, not only at regional level, but also with the EU competition **Startup Europe Awards** in the WATER category.
- This practise is very powerful because it combines several strands mutually reinforced:
- It helps startups to participate in EU projects in order to test and scale their solutions.
- Brings together multiple actors from the 4th helix to co-create solutions (Startups, SMEs, RTOs, Municipalities ...) to the posed water challenges.
- It is aligned with the SDGs in water, energy, climate, health, materials and sustainable consumption, ...
- Improves access to funding to participants.
- Our initiative is linked with the **Startup Europe Awards** competition of the **DG CONNECT**. The startup from our winning team which has won our national competition “**Water Europe Accelerathon**” will participate in 2021 in the **Pan-European final of the Startup Europe Awards** in the category of “Water”.

What positive impact did/can it have for the Network?

- This practice has enhanced the Network’s connexion to Startups, which is a key customer for the Client Journey approach. As a Network, we do not need to lose track of these younger companies. They are the future and we need to reach out to them through attractive services like The Accelerathon, connecting them to our innovation players (RTOs, Academia...) who have a tractor effect involving startups with fresh ideas in EU projects and help them to access to funding in order to test, pilot and develop the new solutions.
- All the resulting projects submitted by the teams were related to Environment and some of them to Circular Economy and the recuperation of Materials from the wastewaters, such as heavy metals, micro plastics and biomass via different treatments, reducing in this way the environmental impact that sewage has and providing by-products very valuable for other industries.
- The participants in these projects can now be connected to the clients of the Network members of the SGE and other thematic groups in order to explore further opportunities and potential collaborations abroad.
- The winner project -EXIT project- MicroplasTic EXtraction is led by the company Bioferric Ink (<https://www.bioferricink.es/>): This project pursues to demonstrate the feasibility of magnetic particles in the removal and recovery of micro plastics prevailing in wastewaters, both urban and industrial, avoiding their discharge into the environment and contributing, through their subsequent recovery to the circular economy. It has also positioned our EEN consortium in delivering services related to the field of sustainability, the SGDs and the Green Deal.
- We have also tapped into bringing stakeholders in our EEN services with shared interests and put them at work very eagerly. The EEN does not need to spend a huge amount of efforts in time, or on human resources, but to spark collaboration working with the right stakeholders and partners who altogether make things happen.

- This model of Accelerathon can be replicated by the EEN in other fields like Energy, Mobility, Biotech, and any S3 strategic priorities of our regions.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION Good practice owner(s)

Consortium*:	EEN SEIMED
Responsible partner(s):	IVACE, REDIT
Contact person:	José Vilar
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Award category

- Clients' services with focus on: sustainability and innovation, market access, access to finance, scale up

Network group endorsing the Good Practice

SG Environment and seeking support of SG Materials, TG Access to finance

TG Circular economy, TG Innovation, TG Scale up

Pictures

Website and promo video <http://accelerathon.eu/water>

[Video of the kick-off Accelerathon Ivace Water startup Europe Awards](#)





LIFE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM

Accelerathon WATER concludes with the presentation of the EXIT - Microplastic Extraction project to the LIFE programme on Environment of the European Commission

Brussels, July 16, 2020 – The EXIT project - MicroplasTic extraction, winner of the first edition of the Accelerathon WATER Startup Europe Awards, ends its journey through this open innovation competition with the presentation of its project to the LIFE programme on Environment of the European Commission, with which you can opt to up to 2 million euros of financing per project. During the last fifteen days, the members of the project, promoted by Global Omnium and Bioferric Ink, from the Miguel Hernández University (UMH), have received the training of experts in European funds from the Finnova Foundation with the aim of refining the proposal and multiplying your chances of winning it.