

PRESS RELEASE

Entrepreneurship and innovation to tackle water scarcity in Europe

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is looking for 40 SMEs or startups with innovative solutions at an advanced stage of development to address specific challenges related to water use.

Applications can be submitted until 26 April. Those selected will work for three months in with a mentor and will be eligible for prizes of up to 30,000 euros and the option to test their solutions at an end customer's facilities.

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40 SMEs or startups with innovative solutions to water scarcity are being sought. In a context in which this is one of the major current and future problems in southern Europe, affecting the entire value chain of the agrifood industry, the need to address it is urgent. In order to find concrete solutions, the [European Institute of Innovation and Technology \(EIT\)](#) is relaunching the [Water Scarcity](#) programme.

This initiative brings together companies that have a water-related problem with those who can provide a solution, and has been organised through collaboration between different Knowledge Communities (KICs) of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT). It is coordinated by [EIT Food](#), with the participation of EIT Climate-KIC, EIT Digital and EIT Manufacturing, as well as other partners such as Athena Research, Bioazul and TU Delft.

The aim of this multiannual and multidisciplinary programme is to facilitate the transition to a water-saving economy and to contribute, in the long term, to reducing water consumption, waste and pollution in Europe. This call is part of the activities of InnoWise Scale, the entrepreneurial support arm of the Water Scarcity project.

In this edition, the programme will select 40 SMEs or startups with innovative and smart solutions to address water scarcity to help them reach the market. This year the number of participants in the programme has doubled compared to last year. The deadline for [submitting applications](#) is 26 April.

Specific sectoral challenges

This is a unique opportunity to boost the market launch of advanced water-related technologies. These should be oriented to specific challenges detected in different sectors: food and beverage (where challenges such as water recycling in processing lines or water quality monitoring have been detected); agriculture (with challenges such as tools to improve water efficiency or improvement of irrigation and drainage systems); infrastructures (solutions to advanced water treatment or water and energy saving are sought); and manufacturing industries (with challenges such as wastewater treatment or solutions for the textile industry).

There will be 40 solution providers selected to address one or more of the challenges. On the one hand, they will have access to a three-month mentoring period with an expert who will accompany them in technical, commercial and financial development. On the other hand, they will have the opportunity to participate in networking with end customers who have a real need related to water. In addition, at the end of the programme, they will participate in sectoral competitions, with the opportunity to win prizes of up to €30,000 and to implement a demo at the facilities of these end customers, located in Southern European countries.

A launching process and several awards

During the mentoring and training period, the 40 selected companies will work with an expert in different areas such as product development, definition of the business plan, finance, internationalisation, etc. In September, they will have the opportunity to present their solutions to potential end customers in their respective sectors. These, in turn, will express real identified water-related needs and explore how innovative solutions can help them address them.

In November, sector-specific online competitions will take place in which specific cases provided by the end-user, up to five per sector, will be studied. Participating SMEs and start-ups will also present their solutions. At the end of each competition, they will compete for three prizes: the first prize of €12,000 in cash; a second prize of €10,000 in cash; and a special prize of €30,000 to implement a demo of their solution, which will be awarded to the company that best suits the needs of the end customer.

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EIT Food is the leading initiative in food innovation in Europe. It works to make the food system more sustainable, healthy and trustworthy. The consortium is made up of more than 100 entities, including key industries, leading companies in this field, startups, research centres and universities from all over Europe. It is one of the eight innovation communities established by the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), an organisation which is independent of the EU and was created in 2008 to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

The headquarters of the south of Europe is established in Spain (in Madrid and Bilbao) and works with partners such as: Acesur, AIA, Angulas Aguinaga, AZTI, Caviro, Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, CSIC, Grupo AN, Granarolo, Hub Innovazione Trentino, Inalca, International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory (INL), Mondragon Corporation, PeakBridge, Strauss, Technion, UAM, UNITO, University of Bologna and Volcani Institute of Agricultural Research.