What is the Eyes on Blue contest?

The Mediterranean basin is often perceived as an ideal place in terms of climate, comfort, and culture. Year-round, millions of visitors worldwide flock to enjoy the mild climate and food, and stunning scenery. However, climate change may harshen the Mediterranean climate and disrupt vital industries such as tourism and agriculture. The average temperature in the Mediterranean basin has increased 1.4 degrees Celsius since the late 19th century, compared with the global average of 1.1 degrees — and without targeted decarbonisation, temperatures are projected to increase by an additional 1.5 degrees by 2050.

Around 180 million people in the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries are already suffering from water scarcity.

Environmental issues are broad and far-reaching, but the urgency to tackle water issues and switch to a circular Blue economy is more crucial than ever, especially at the kick-off of the dry season when more awareness, behavioural change, new habits, and new production and consumption patterns are mostly needed.

Therefore, after the first #EYESONGREEN regional competition and within the framework of the World Ocean Day (8 June 2022), the European Commission Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (DG NEAR), EU Neighbours South, and SwitchMed programme are teaming up again for a second edition of their regional environmental campaign #EYESONBLUE.

The competition aims at selecting the best entrepreneurial eco-innovations in the water sector, including the Blue Economy, in 8 Arab countries in the Southern Mediterranean region: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine*, and Tunisia.

#EYESONBLUE gives voice to change-makers and innovators and supports them to showcase sustainable business models tackling water-related problems and threats to the marine environment.

*This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of the Member States on this issue.
**Who can apply?**

This year's contest is open to early- and growth-stage sustainable businesses working in the water/Blue Economy sectors.

In particular, participants should be active in any of the below:

1. Blue Economy\(^1\) – activities related to the sustainable use of ocean resources, solutions to the pollution of oceans, seas, and coastal areas
2. Water scarcity and water demand management – solutions addressing water scarcity and aiming to secure access to water for all
3. WASH, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene – solutions addressing water pollution and securing safe water and good hygiene to citizens

Here are the criteria to participate:

- a. At least 2 years have passed since the establishment of the business
- b. The business is fully registered as per national, and if needed regional and international laws and regulations
- c. The business offers solutions and carries out activities that are tackling the above named sectors
- d. The business has a sustainable business model, based on the interdependency between society, environment and economy\(^2\).
- e. The business is based in any of the MENA SwitchMed countries. These countries are Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine* and Tunisia.

**What are the prizes?**

The prizes for the three winners will consist of:

- a. First prize: A cash prize of 2,000 Euros and 2,000 Euros voucher to spend on services or trainings for the business.
- b. Second Prize: Cash prize of 1,750 Euros and 1,750 Euros voucher to spend on services or trainings for the business.
- c. Third Prize: Cash prize of 1,000 Euros and 1,000 Euros voucher to spend on services or trainings for the business.

Winners will also have access to TheSwitchers.org platform. MedWaves will ensure follow-up of the technical assistance with the winners for a more efficient implementation of the vouchers.

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\(^1\) Sustainable Blue Economy business (SBE) includes all those sectors in the Blue Economy (BE) over which the Circular Economy principles are extended. The Sustainable Blue Economy therefore includes all the economic activities that use the sea and/or inland waters (rivers and lakes), directly or indirectly. It covers activities that are located in the sea and inland waters areas as well as others located in coastal areas or in remote areas of the coast, if related to the sea or inland waters. The SBE implies the existence of sustainable business providing commercial solutions, which create ecological value and/or safeguard the environment (addressing environmental challenges and/or reducing environmental impacts) and are economically viable and socially empowering. It also implies long-term social and economic benefits while protecting and restoring the diversity, productivity and resilience of aquatic and coastal ecosystems.

**Timeline**

- **08 June**: Applications opened
- **30 June**: Applications closed
- **July**: Evaluation by the Jury
- **31 July**: 10 best projects are selected by the Jury
- **End of August – Mid-September**: Popular voting through EU Neighbours South social media pages
- **September – October (TBD)**: Closing Ceremony

**Evaluation criteria**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Key Questions</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Weight</th>
<th>Points</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. B Value Proposition</td>
<td>A1. Can you clearly understand what the business is offering/solving/providing? A2. Is it relevant and logically linked to the underlying environmental challenges he/she is addressing?</td>
<td>Y/N</td>
<td>A1: 60%</td>
<td>A1: 6</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>10 Points</td>
<td>A2: 40%</td>
<td>A2: 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>B. Environmental Challenge</td>
<td>B1. Does the entrepreneur clearly justify that the business is directly solving an environmental challenge? B2. Is this relevant to the local and regional context?</td>
<td>Y/N</td>
<td>B1: 70%</td>
<td>B1: 10,5</td>
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<td>15 Points</td>
<td>B2: 30%</td>
<td>B2: 4,5</td>
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<td>C. Environmental Benefits</td>
<td>C1. Does the entrepreneur provide quantitative figures to justify the environmental benefits of the project? C2. Are these benefits relevant to the local and regional context?</td>
<td>Y/N</td>
<td>C1: 65%</td>
<td>C1: 6,5</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 Points</td>
<td>C2: 35%</td>
<td>C2: 3,5</td>
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<tr>
<td>D. Social Benefits</td>
<td>D1. Does the entrepreneur provide quantitative figures to justify the social benefits of the project? D2. Are these benefits relevant to the local and regional context?</td>
<td>Y/N</td>
<td>D1: 60%</td>
<td>D1: 4,8</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>10 Points</td>
<td>D2: 40%</td>
<td>D2: 3,2</td>
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<td>E. Economic Feasibility</td>
<td>E1. The information provided by the entrepreneur is enough to foresee the economic soundness of the project. E2. Does the information provide insights on the viability of his/her revenue models?</td>
<td>Y/N</td>
<td>E1: 60%</td>
<td>E1: 6</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10 Points</td>
<td>E2: 40%</td>
<td>E2: 4</td>
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<td>F. Innovation</td>
<td>F1. Does the entrepreneur explicitly describe and justify why the value proposition of the project is unique in its context, and how it provides an added value compared to the current market/technology solution</td>
<td>Y/N</td>
<td>F1: 100%</td>
<td>F1: 5</td>
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<td>5 Points</td>
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Who we are?

This contest is organised by:

EU Neighbours South

The European Union works with its southern neighbours to promote peace, stability and economic prosperity in the whole region.

Through the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the EU supports political and economic reforms in Europe's neighbouring countries in the Southern Mediterranean. The EU Neighbours South Programme is a regional communication programme that complements and supports the communication work of the Commission and EU Delegations in the 10 Southern Neighbourhood countries. EU Neighbours South carries out regional communication campaigns, national opinion polls in each of the 10 countries, works on developing and nurturing a network of multipliers including the media, young digital content creators and young 'connectors' who help multiply and spread the word about the EU in their countries and regionally. The programme also provides strategic communication advice and support to EU Delegations and works closely with each one of them.

The programme’s approach is thematic, whereby it strives to identify, each year, a number of priority themes that guide all communication content. The environment being a major strategic priority for the EU at a global and regional level, tackled through the EU Green Deal, it is also a main communication priority for the EU Neighbours South programme.

EU Neighbours South benefits from the close collaboration with the communication teams at DG NEAR and the European External Action Service (EEAS) South StratCom Task Force.

SwitchMed

The SwitchMed programme is funded by the European Union and implemented by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Economy Division, and MedWaves, the United Nations Environment Programme Mediterranean Action Plan (UNEP/MAP) Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (formerly known as SCP/RAC). The initiative is carried out in close coordination with the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement (DG NEAR).

The programme was launched in 2013 to speed up the shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns in the Southern Mediterranean, notably through the promotion of circular economy approaches. The programme aims at achieving productive, circular and sharing economies in the Mediterranean by changing the way goods and services are consumed and produced so that human development is decoupled from environmental degradation.

Its activities benefit 8 countries in the Southern Mediterranean: Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia. Through policy development, demonstration activities and networking opportunities.

SwitchMed supports and connects stakeholders to scale-up eco and social innovations. The programme supports policymakers, eco-innovative small and medium-sized enterprises, industries, start-ups and entrepreneurs in the Southern Mediterranean countries, which have identified job creation and natural resource protection as priority issues that also contribute to their economic stability.

Registration Form: https://forms.gle/3THhHW3HQxv43AdB6