



PRESS RELEASE

A VAST ARRAY OF OPPORTUNITIES FROM THE NEX-LABS PROJECT TO FOSTER CROSS-BORDER INNOVATION AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP TO BUILD A SUSTAINABLE WATER-FOOD-ENERGY ECOSYSTEM IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

Barcelona, 10 May 2023

The [NEX-LABS project](#) has launched a vast array of opportunities to support **the growth of innovation and entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean region**. The project, which is funded by the European Union under the ENI CBC MED program, aims to establish **cross-border cooperation between startups, incubators, and accelerators in Italy, Lebanon, Tunisia, Cyprus, Spain, Egypt and Jordan**.

The aim of the project is to create a **network of innovation labs** in each of the seven participating countries to provide **support, training, and mentorship to young entrepreneurs**. These labs will facilitate the **exchange of knowledge, expertise, and best practices** between startups and established businesses to **foster growth and development** in the Mediterranean region's economy.

After almost 3 years of work, the **international consortium** has reached a series of important milestones towards the creation of a **sustainable ecosystem** in the **water, energy and food nexus**. This **enhancement of innovation and entrepreneurship** across the Mediterranean region is leading to **capacity building, stronger public and private partnerships, global competitiveness and inclusive growth**.

To this end, the Mediterranean region project partners have worked together to establish a **vast array of vouchers for Water-Energy-Food innovators**.

The following two calls are open to researchers and entrepreneurs with an interest in developing and/or commercializing existing or new WEF NEXUS related products and services in Jordan, Lebanon, or in eligible countries of the Mediterranean region.

- 1) The [NEXUS Idea Generation Programme](#) will engage 30 candidates and give access to free virtual **training, advice, business model prototyping** of their business idea for **WEF +ICT**. Through a final competition, 20 researchers or entrepreneurs, will be



granted additional support such as **funding, market explore, commercialization, and access to an expert mentor** to assist in validating technologies and business models. Awarding will be on a first come, first serve basis - [Read more and apply](#).

- 2) [Innovation vouchers for entrepreneurs and SMEs](#) based in **Cyprus, Italy, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Spain, Tunisia**; the call is open **until 30 September 2023**. The vouchers will grant free expertise in Process development, Business modeling, Technology, IPR, Strategy, Marketing, Industry linkages, Exporting, Regulations. Awarding will be on a first come, first serve basis. Please note that each country has different criteria and application procedures please consult the following dedicated landing pages: [Cyprus](#), [Italy](#), [Egypt](#), [Jordan](#), [Lebanon](#), [Spain](#), [Tunisia](#).

Additional grants dedicated to the **Lebanese ecosystem** include:

- 1) **4 Incubator Vouchers** to Lebanese startups and SMEs and will grant 20.000 euros worth of services such as **co-working space, facilities, coaching and mentorship from experts** in the WEF field qualified to accompany selected candidates in a **business plan development, a go-to-market strategy**, the development of a **marketing plan** and to provide **legal advice**. The aim of this collaboration is **to support 4 new promising businesses** in validating their business model and technology, and access to market opportunities. The application will be open until all vouchers are assigned. [Read more to apply](#).
- 2) **8 Testing Vouchers** to early-stage start-ups, including physical infrastructure and know-how to test and validate prototypes, products, services, materials, pilot processes, methods. Successful start-ups will have an opportunity to correct any errors efficiently and effectively. The continuous improvement of product and processes, ensures quality, efficiency and competitiveness, a requirement to attract investors and to access the market. The application will be open until all vouchers are assigned. [Read more to apply](#).
- 3) **2 Commercialization Vouchers** dedicated to **researchers or academics**, providing start-up training and mentoring. This prize is directed at acquiring services for researchers that have obtained research results in the field of Water-Energy-Food (WEF) NEXUS towards enabling commercialization and the creation of spin-offs. It is not intended for direct employment, R&D costs, or services other than consulting/advisory services. The application will be open until all vouchers are assigned. [Read more to apply](#).



As part of its goals, the NEX-LABS project has established **2 NEXUS Driven Open Living Labs (NDOLLs) in Lebanon and Jordan respectively**. The NDOLLs intend to establish an **open space that brings together scientists, industries, society, and business communities that are NEXUS-driven to collaborate, innovate and co-create the future of the Water, Energy and Food (WEF) -NEXUS sector**.

The NDOLLs are meant for Entrepreneurs, Innovators, Researchers, Startups and SMEs, Students, Industry and private sector representatives, Academia and Research representatives, Citizens, NGOs. By joining the NDOLLs participants can

- Find direct support, advice, and enabling network to develop and launch innovative products/services
- Collaborate and build synergies with WEF-NEXUS Stakeholders working across disciplines
- Contribute to the development of innovative and sustainable solutions to solve challenges faced in Jordan, Lebanon and MENA Region
- Empower the WEF-NEXUS local ecosystem by generating value throughout the innovation development process

The NDOLL in Lebanon is located at Saint Joseph University Sciences & Technology Campus Dekwaneh in Beirut while the NDOLL in Jordan is hosted at iPARK's Aqaba incubator.

For more information on how to join the NDOLLs you can contact Seema Azzam s.azzam@iPARK.jo for the NDOLL in Jordan and Krystal Khalil krystal.khalil@berytech.org for the NDOLL in Lebanon.

NEX-LABS is also delighted to inform that 20 candidates, amongst 100 applicants, have been selected and awarded Mediterranean Innovators **Mobility Vouchers**. The selected individuals will participate in two fact-finding missions, one in Italy (May 2023) and another in Spain (July 2023). The mobility voucher winners will visit and meet with different clusters in Mediterranean partner countries that deal with Water, Energy, Food Nexus. This will allow them to gain access to knowledge relevant to their sector at both national and international levels. These missions present an opportunity for exchange of best practices and to identify cross-border cooperation opportunities among experts in the field of Nexus, as well as the exploration of potential strategic partnerships for present and future developments. The detailed program for the two missions in Italy and Spain is being finalized. NEX-LABS is



looking forward to seeing the results of these fact-finding missions and continuing to support innovation in the Mediterranean.

ABOUT THE PARTNERSHIP

NEX-LABS project includes a partnership of 11 institutions (Autonomous University of Barcelona (ES), Chamber of Commerce and Industry of the Center (TN), Royal Scientific Society- Aqaba Liaison Center (JO), Berytech Foundation (LB), INNOLABS SRL (IT), Academy of Scientific Research and Technology (EG), American University of Beirut (LB), Centre for promotional services to enterprises – Special Agency of Cagliari Chamber of Commerce (IT), Net7 Srl (IT), C.I.P Citizens In Power (CY), The Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development /Princess Basma Community Development Centre Aqaba (JO)) from 7 different countries across the Mediterranean. With reference B_A2.1._0124, NEX-LABS project is funded by the EU under the ENI CBC Med Programme. With a total budget of €3.450.984,97, the project has received a contribution of € 3.105.866,47 (90%).

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The 2014-2020 ENI CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin Programme is a multilateral Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) initiative funded by the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI). The Programme objective is to foster fair, equitable and sustainable economic, social and territorial development, which may advance cross-border integration and valorise participating countries' territories and values. The following 13 countries participate in the Programme: Cyprus, Egypt, France, Greece, Israel, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Malta, Palestine, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia. The Managing Authority (MA) is the Autonomous Region of Sardinia (Italy). Official Programme languages are Arabic, English and French. For more information, please visit: www.enicbcmmed.eu

Explore the NEX-LABS Agora: the digital hub to be kept informed about the Water, Energy and Food news and updates in the Mediterranean <https://nexlabsagora.eu/>

For more information on the ENI CBC MED NEX-LABS project, please visit <https://www.enicbcmmed.eu/projects/nex-labs>

Visit and subscribe to our Youtube channel at: <https://www.youtube.com/@nex-labsproject>

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