

P.R.: Interreg NEXT MED / SPEEDUP: A project for accelerating the development of startups and innovative SMEs



Interreg



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NEXT MED

SPEEDUP



A new ambitious project, aimed at accelerating the development of start-ups and innovative SMEs, held its inaugural meeting at the Patras Science Park facilities, on November 3 and 4, 2025.

In the SPEEDUP project, which is implemented within the framework of the Interreg NEXT MED program, 7 partners from 7 Mediterranean countries will collaborate to create an interregional network of hubs for supporting mainly start-ups but also innovative SMEs, with an emphasis on specific target groups. For the operation of the network, it is planned that the partners and associated partners of the project will create local hubs that will contribute to the implementation of acceleration actions.

A basic principle for the operation of acceleration programs is the application of ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) principles and quality systems, so that the operation of a business enhances sustainable development, as well as the quality of the designed/produced products/services, as well as the overall operation of the businesses.

Overall, SPEEDUP is expected to have a strong and measurable impact on the programme area by:

- Creating a network of 21 local hubs across the Mediterranean to offer mentoring, training, and resources for innovative startups and SMEs
- Strengthening cooperation between local innovation ecosystems to boost sustainability, competitiveness, and adoption of ESG principles, including green and circular economy practices
- Developing and validating a flexible model to accelerate SME growth, sustainability, and attracting investment, ensuring long-term impact and regional replicability
- Developing an acceleration program to support mentoring, and selecting potential startups/SMEs for piloting, involving a total of 210 potential startups/SMEs
- Supporting 140 new or existing SMEs participating in the piloting, helping them initiate their sustainable activities across the project countries

The project partnership consists of three bodies from European Union Member States and four bodies from the Mediterranean Partner Countries, who will have the support of seven more associated partners from the outset, as well as a number of local stakeholders, who will be invited to participate in the network, creating new nodes. These are organizations coming from different countries, with different conditions for supporting and operating innovation ecosystems, with different weaknesses and strengths, which will draw useful lessons from the good practices that will be presented and decoded for each region, regarding support mechanisms for new and existing innovative businesses in the

Mediterranean region, which has been a place of exchange of knowledge, culture and goods for thousands of years.

The importance of the project for inter-Mediterranean cooperation between countries, the transfer of know-how and the acceleration of the development of startups and innovative SMEs was emphasized by the President of the PSP, Prof. Vasilios Loukopoulos, during his opening speech. The overall coordination of the partners during the two-day meeting was carried out by the PSP project team, which included Dr. Panagiotis Konstantinopoulos, Dionysia Mylona and Maria Veneri. The Region of Western Greece, which was represented at the meeting by the Head of the Development Planning Directorate, Ms. Anastasia Pyrgaki, supports and accompanies the project.

During the two-day kick-off meeting, all partners had the opportunity to present their strategy and expectations from the SPEEDUP project, as well as to assist in the detailed planning of the foreseen actions, especially with regard to the creation, staffing and equipment of the innovation hubs.

The 7 Organizations that make up the impressive, in terms of relevance to the project's subject, corporate structure of the SPEEDUP project are the following:

- Patras Science Park (Lead Partner, **Greece**)
- Official Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Services and Navigation of Seville (**Spain**)
- Al-Balqa Applied University (**Jordan**)
- Arab Academy for Science and Technology (**Egypt**)
- INJAZ Lebanon (**Lebanon**)
- COMCY – Centre for Competence Development Cyprus (**Cyprus**)
- The Chamber of Commerce of Tunis (**Tunisia**)



