



**OHRID BLUE  
ECONOMY  
ACCELERATOR**

# APPLICATION GUIDELINES

**SPECIALIZED ACCELERATION  
PROGRAM FOR GREEN-TECH  
AND BLUE-TECH STARTUPS**

PARTNERS

**PRIMEPOINT**  
PARTNERS

  
**ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE  
UNIVERSITY**  
OF INFORMATION SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

EU FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH



Implemented by

**giz** Deutsche Gesellschaft  
für Internationale  
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**AREA**  
SCIENCE PARK



**PRIME BLUE  
ESG INSTITUTE**

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

### a) Ohrid Blue Economy Accelerator

The **Ohrid Blue Economy Accelerator** is a specialized program for green-tech and blue-tech startups that aim to address sustainability challenges of the Ohrid lake, river watersheds and the surrounding areas. The program is implemented by Prime Blue ESG Institute in partnership with the University of Information Science and Technology (UIST) St. Paul the Apostle in Ohrid and aims to promote technologies and services for transforming the Lake Ohrid and the South-West region with sustainable projects and activities.

The goal of the Ohrid Blue Economy Accelerator is to assist the growth of innovative startups and scale-up with upside potential by supporting them with business advisory, access to market and access to finance. More specifically, the applicants will gain access to:

- A tailor-made training for development of sustainable business models
- Mentoring by leading experts in the fields of financing, internationalization, development of technological solutions, attracting investors, etc.
- Connections with international clients and investors
- Company promotion and visibility at networking events
- Access to modern co-working space on the premises of UIST.

**Applicants that successfully complete the acceleration program and comply with the EU4EG funding requirements, will qualify for the opportunity to apply for a startup grant scheme and receive a maximum grant amount of 50,000 EUR with a maximum percentage of 80% of the total eligible costs of the action.**

The primary focus of the selected companies will be the **blue economy sectors, sustainable tourism, sustainable agriculture and light manufacturing, and ICT as a cross-cutting theme.** More specific areas include:

- sustainability and climate change-related blue-tech and green-tech innovations, with the particular focus of freshwater blue economy sectors including:
- sustainable cities and communities
- sustainable innovations for lake transportation and mobility
- wastewater treatment, recycling and waste management
- solar energy and renewables
- self-sufficient buildings
- electric vehicles and electrification of lake vessels
- circular and green innovations
- tackling air pollution, and more.

### b) What is Blue Economy?

The Blue Economy, as a sustainable use of water and coastal resources for economic growth, improved livelihood and jobs creation, is a very significant part of the European Green Deal. It encompasses a number of activities including **coastal renewable energy, maritime transport, waste management, sustainable tourism and agriculture, climate change, biodiversity, as well as emerging sectors like aquaculture, bioeconomy, desalination, blue-tech innovation and robotics, etc.** As stated by the 2022 EU Blue Economy Report of the European Commission *“The Blue Economy represents one of the greatest drivers of the European business growth, generating around € 750 billion and creating 5.4 million job opportunities per year”*.

### c) Implementing partners and supporters

This initiative will focus on promoting green-tech and blue-tech start-up companies in the South-West region by leveraging UIST's academic competencies in the development of ITC technologies with Prime Blue Institute's expertise in the implementation of private sector development programs including business acceleration, advisory, training and mentorship programs.

- ❖ **Prime Blue ESG Institute** - The local implementing partner for the acceleration program is the **Prime Blue ESG Institute**, a center of excellence for blue economy and a creator of the regional cluster based in Ohrid. The center promotes research, innovation and entrepreneurship programs for sustainability related economy sectors including tourism, manufacturing, agriculture and municipal services (green cities). The Prime Blue ESG Institute is a non-for-profit arm of Prime Point Partners, a management consulting company specializing in business advisory services for international development institutions, donor organizations and corporate sponsors in the Western Balkans region.
- ❖ **UIST "St. Paul the Apostle" - Ohrid** - The main project partner is **UIST "St. Paul the Apostle"** the 4<sup>th</sup> highest ranked university in the country and a leader in the quality of academic programs and research projects in the fields of information science and technology. UIST is a public research university engaged to improving local community life through educational, economic, social and cultural development. UIST prides itself in its Academic acumen and offered contemporary studies on Bachelor and Master level for the areas of ISVMA, CSE, CSN, ICS, and AITMIR.
- ❖ **EU4EG project** - The "Ohrid Blue Economy Accelerator" is supported by "**EU for Economic Growth (EU4EG)**" project, which aims at increasing the local economic activity and competitiveness in four target areas: North-East, Polog, and South-West planning regions and Prespa area (Municipality of Resen) by improving access of start-ups and Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) to financing and high value-added services. The duration of the project is four years until 01/2025. The project implementation partner is Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH - GIZ (German Corporation for International Cooperation), and Area Science Park – ASP, from Trieste, Italy as a service provider in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development and international capacity development, experience in a wide variety of areas, including economic development, private sector development and employment promotion. The EU4EG project is co-funded by the European Union (EU) Delegation to North Macedonia and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK). The project is implemented by GIZ in partnership with ASP and supported by the BMWK and the Central European Initiative (CEI) as Associates.

## 2. APPLICANT ELIGIBILITY

### a) Eligibility Criteria

To be eligible for admission to the **Ohrid Blue Economy Accelerator** applicants must constitute the following:

- Startup and scale-up companies which are innovation-driven with a significant track record and growth potential
- Focused on international clients and markets
- Innovate with technological solutions in either blue/ green economy sectors
- Is legally established as a for-profit entity in N. Macedonia (corporation, LLC, partnership or sole proprietorship)
- Is a new or early-stage business less than 3 years old or a spin-off of an established business considering pursuing sustainability projects
- Its economic activity, and the new jobs are being created in the South-West region.

### b) Additional requirements for grant funding from the EU4EG program

Although all are welcomed to apply, the priority for grant funding will be given to the startups that are owned by and/or employ majority:

- people under 40 years old and/or
- women; and/or
- vulnerable groups.

In nutshell, the start-ups should meet several conditions to comply with EU4EG funding requirements:

(1) create a benefit for the target groups (youth, women and vulnerable groups) in the SW region; (2) to have an impact on the local economic development of the SW region (creation of new jobs (primarily for the target groups), involvement of local suppliers, increase in income and exports, etc.) and to have a clear contribution to the Green Agreement of the EU and circular economy; and (3) envisage measures to reduce the impact on the environment and climate change (leading to zero-pollution and zero-waste).

## 3) GENERAL INFORMATION

### a) Important Dates

EVENT	DATE
Call Launch	May 3, 2023
Info Session in Ohrid	May 19, 2023
Step 1: Application Submission Deadline	June 15, 2023
Step 2: Individual assessment of short-listed companies (training needs assessment and business advisory assessment)	August, 2023
Step 2: Bootcamp & Selection Pitch	September, 2023
Notification of the Selected Applications	September – October, 2023
Acceleration Program	October – December, 2023
Final pitching event	January – February, 2024

## b) Funding

Applications which are selected will be eligible for admission in the 12-week acceleration program and offered tailor-made trainings, business advisory and mentorship. All graduated startups will be provided with opportunity to access additional financing from private investors and other funding. Successfully graduated startups that comply with the EU4EG funding requirements will have the opportunity to apply for the EU4EG startup grant scheme with a maximum grant amount of 50,000 EUR and a maximum percentage of 80 % of the total eligible costs of the action, that can be used for:

- 1) Purchasing new modern machinery and equipment, production lines, tools and measurement instruments for scaling-up, increasing production capacity, improving business processes, product quality and production efficiency;
- 2) Purchasing business support services, but not as the sole activity and/or only if related to the above-mentioned investments.
  - Preference would be given to companies who use BSS from the EU4EG Academy Catalogue of services

Additionally, a set of services and non-monetary benefits will be available to the program participants. These include office space, meeting room, networking events, additional mentorship, consultancy, infrastructure, R&D etc. if applicants are in need of such services.

## c) Duration and Content of the Acceleration Program

The total Acceleration Program including the application and screening process will be undergoing for a period of 6 months. During this period the following stages will take place: **application process, individual interviews and business assessment, selection process, training, mentoring and advisory, pitching activities and investment readiness.**

The Ohrid Blue Economy Accelerator training, mentoring, and advisory program itself will last a total of 12 weeks and cover the following topics:

1. Ideation, Business model and Business model testing
2. Technology evaluating and IPR
3. Start-ups/Spin-offs: Strategy, Market identification, Marketing and Sales
4. Sustainability, Circular Economy and ESG standards
5. Financial Management, Access to Finance and Investment planning
6. Pitch development and tips

If needed, Prime Blue Accelerator may adapt the program and the duration of some of the project phases to best suite the training and advisory needs of the applicants.

## d) Means of Submission

Applicants shall submit their application in electronic format and online via the Google Form platform by filling-in the Online Application Form.

One applicant may submit only one application. A person can only be enrolled in one application.

## e) Language

All applications can be submitted in Macedonian or English.

Proposals which are submitted in any other language will not be evaluated.

#### f) Documentation Formats

Any document requested shall be submitted electronically in PPT, PDF, Word or any other format without restrictions for printing.

#### g) Origin of the Funds

The funds attached to the Ohrid Blue Economy Accelerator come directly from:

- Private Investors (Business Angels, Entrepreneurs, SME's, VC's and Corporations)
- EU for Economic Growth (EU4EG) Project in a form of a grant

*(Startups selected for funding will be subject to compliance with the criteria)*

#### h) How to apply

Startups interested to apply should fill out the Application Form on this [LINK](#) latest by June 15, 2023.