#EYESON EARTH Contest

Application Guidelines

What is the #EyesOnEarth contest?

Forests: a valuable ally against climate change in the Mediterranean

The Mediterranean basin is a unique region for its climate, environment, history, and culture. Year-round, millions of visitors from all over the world flock to enjoy the mild climate and food, and stunning scenery. However, the Mediterranean region is experiencing the impacts of climate change very harshly: 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 clear decarbonisation actions, temperatures are projected to increase by an additional 1.5 degrees by 2050.

Climate change may harshen the Mediterranean climate and have huge negative impacts on the lives of the people living in the region: around 180 million people in the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries are already suffering from heatwaves, wildfires, drought, and air pollution. Moreover, the negative effects of climate change in the Mediterranean also put people's livelihoods at risk, negatively affecting water supply and vital industries, such as agriculture, tourism, and the blue economy.

Natural ecosystems in the Mediterranean region, including forests, are also facing the impacts of climate change, and are threatened by increased risks of biodiversity loss, catastrophic wildfires and drought.

However, forests represent a crucial tool in climate mitigation strategies. Forests naturally contribute to climate regulation by influencing local and regional climate patterns, including temperature, humidity, and rainfall. Moreover, when managed in a sustainable way, forests can contribute to climate change resilience and provide additional benefits to the people and the planet

- Sustainable forest management can help limit emissions and slow down climate change by preventing deforestation, promoting sustainable land use practices, and implementing responsible logging and harvesting techniques. Forests can act as **«carbon sinks»** by absorbing carbon dioxide (CO_2) from the atmosphere through photosynthesis and storing it in biomass and soil. Sustainable forest management practices can enhance the capacity of forests to sequester carbon.

- Climate change impacts, such as increased temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, and extreme weather events, affect forest ecosystems and their ability to provide **ecosystem services. Regenerating, restoring** and sustainable managing forests can enhance ecosystems' resilience and their adaptive capacity.

- Forest management that focuses on protecting and restoring forests can contribute to the conservation of **biodiversity**, preservation of **water resources**, and provision of **livelihoods** for local communities.

- Forest-based **circular bioeconomy** can maximise the value derived from forests while promoting sustainability and minimising environmental impacts. A forest-based bioeconomy can be an alternative to fossil fuel-based economies, aiming to create a more sustainable and circular economy. In this context, biomass residues from forestry and wood processing industries can be utilised to produce bioenergy or transformed into value-added products.

Recognising the interdependencies between climate change and forest management, international agreements such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and initiatives like Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+) aim to integrate forest conservation and sustainable management into global climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Moreover, the new EU Forest Strategy for 2030 reflects the EU›s commitment to promoting sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, and the development of a bioeconomy based on forest resources. The Strategy goes beyond the EU territory as an important pillar of the EU Green Deal and its External Dimension.

The #EyesOnEarth contest

After two successful editions of the #EyesOnGreen and #EyesOnBlue regional competitions and in line with World Environment Day, DG NEAR, EU Neighbours South, the **SwitchMed/MedWaves** programme, the **European Forest Institute**, with the support of ENI CBCMED are teaming up for this third edition named **#EyesOnEarth.**

> The competition aims at selecting the best entrepreneurial eco-innovations and civil society initiatives in the forest conservation and sustainable management sectors in eight (8) Arab countries in the Southern Mediterranean: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine[1] , and Tunisia.

#EyesOnEarth gives voice to change-makers and innovators and supports them to showcase sustainable business models and social innovation tackling forest-related problems and threats to the biodiversity and the environment in the Mediterranean.

What are we looking for?

The #EyesOnEarth contest is seeking visionary change-makers and innovators who possess sustainable business models and demonstrate social innovation. We are looking for individuals or organizations that are committed to addressing the challenges faced by Mediterranean forests and are dedicated to protecting biodiversity and the environment.

The #EyesOnEarth is looking for solution-oriented approaches and entrepreneurs and civil society initiatives who are passionate about making a positive impact in the region. this contest is the perfect platform for showcasing your entrepreneurial eco-innovation or civil society initiative.

Who can apply?

This year's contest is **open to:**

1. Early- and growth-stage sustainable businesses working in the forest-based circular bioeconomy.

2. Local Civil Society Organisations and Community Based Organisations addressing environmental and social challenges in the domains of forest conservation and sustainable management.

In particular, the **targeted sectors** are as follows:

1. Biodiversity conservation: actions addressed to protect and preserve the variety of plant and animal species, as well as their habitats, within forest ecosystems.

2. Forest Regeneration: actions aiming to establish new green areas or restore a previously forested area after it has been disturbed or depleted.

3. Forest-based bio-economy: economic and social activities that utilise forest resources and biomass as the basis for the production of renewable materials, energy, and other bio-based products.

4. Circular Economy business strategies: products or services addressing prevention or alternative measures to land-based pollution sources affecting forests, having as key features eco-design and eco-innovation.

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1. 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.

Here are the criteria to participate:

Sustainable Business Models:

a. To be a business set up at least 2 years ago before the deadline of this call for applications.

b. To be a registered business.

c. To target one of the above-mentioned sectors.

d. To have a sustainable business model, based on the interdependency between society, environment and economy[2] .

e. To be established in any of the eligible countries of the contest. These countries are Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

Civil Society Organisations or Community-Based Organisations:

a. To be a Civil Society Organizations[3] .

b. To be legally registered as non-profit-making.

c. To be registered at least 2 years before the deadline of this call for applications.

d. To target one of the above-mentioned sectors.

e. To be established in any of the eligible countries of the contest. These countries are Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

What are the prizes?

2 prizes for each main category (Business Models / CSOs) will be awarded:

a. 1st prize: A cash prize of 1500 euros provided by DG NEAR and 2.000 euros voucher to spend on services or training for the business.

b. 2nd Prize: A cash prize of 1,000 euros provided by DG NEAR and 1.500 euros voucher to spend on services or training for the business.

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2. Please check our definition of Sustainable Business Model in the following publication: Burcu Tuncer and Giorgio Mosangini. SCP/RAC. (2020) "Circular economy business strategies: conceptual framework to guide the development of sustainable business models". Available from: https://www.theswitchers.eu/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Strategies-for-the-Development-of-CEBM-1.pdf?

3. The definition of "CSO" is the one used by the EU-funded CSF: "The EU considers CSOs to include non-State, non-profit making actors operating on an independent and accountable basis which include: non-governmental organisations, organisations representing indigenous peoples, organisations representing national and/or ethnic minorities, diaspora organisations, migrants› organisations in partner countries, local traders› associations and citizens› groups, cooperatives, employers› associations and trade unions (social partners), organisations representing economic and social interests, organisations fighting corruption and fraud and promoting good governance, civil rights organisations and organisations combating discrimination, local organisations (including networks) involved in decentralised regional cooperation and integration, consumer organisations, women›s and youth organisations, environmental, teaching, cultural, research and scientific organisations, universities, churches and religious associations and communities, the media and any non-governmental associations and independent foundations, including independent political foundations

Timeline

- **21 June:** Applications opened
- **21 July:** Applications closed
- **21 July to 05 August:** Evaluation by the Jury
- **05 August:** 10 best projects are selected by the Jury
- **End of August – Mid-September:** Popular voting through EU Neighbours South social media pages

Evaluation criteria – Category 1

Criteria	Key Questions	Type	Weight	Max. Points
A. Value Proposition	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?	Y/N 10 Points	A1: 60% A2: 40%	A1: 6 A2: 4
B. Environmental Challenge	B1. Does the entrepreneur clearly justify that the business is directly solving an environmental challenge related to the contest categories? B2. Is this relevant to the local and regional context?	Y/N 15 Points	B1: 70% B2: 30%	B1: 10,5 B2: 4,5
C. Environmental Benefits	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?	Y/N 10 Points	C1: 65% C2: 35%	C1: 6,5 C2: 3,5
D. Social Benefits	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?	Y/N 10 Points	D1: 60% D2: 40%	D1: 4,8 D2: 3,2
E. Economic Feasibility	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?	Y/N 10 Points	E1: 60% E2: 40%	E1: 6 E2: 4
F. Innovation	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	Y/N 5 Points	F1: 100%	F1: 5

Evaluation criteria – Category 2

Criteria	Key Questions	Type	Weight	Max. Points
A. Value Proposition / Mission	A1. Can you clearly understand what the environmental value created by the CSO/CBO is? A2. Is it relevant and logically linked to the underlying environmental challenges the CSO/CBO is addressing?	Y/N 10 Points	A1: 60% A2: 40%	A1: 6 A2: 4
B. Environmental Challenge	B1. Does the CSO/CBO clearly address an environmental challenge related to the contest categories? B2. Is this relevant to the local and regional context?	Y/N 15 Points	B1: 70% B2: 30%	B1: 10,5 B2: 4,5
C. Social Benefits	C1. Does the CSO/CBO provide quantitative figures to justify the social benefits of their mission? C2. Are these benefits relevant to the local and regional context?	Y/N 15 Points	C1: 60% C2: 40%	C1: 9 C2: 6
D. Grassroots outreach	D1. The information provided by the entrepreneur is enough to assess their community support and social interaction at local level?	Y/N 10 Points	D1: 100%	D1: 10

Application System

Google Form

Jury

The Jury is composed of four experts, gender and geographically balanced who will be designated by the partners and announced through social media.