



D4.2

**Promote use and increase participation to the
S3E framework**

International Development Ireland Ltd (IDI)



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D4.2

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Abstract

This deliverable covers the Progress and outcomes of Task 4.2, preparing the ground for the Boost phase and the 2nd cycle of our acceleration programme. The purpose of T4.2 was to Support participation and engagement of our beneficiaries and stakeholders: Start-ups, challenges organisations, experts.

The deliverable presents the structure of our S3E framework as it evolved through the 1st cycle, consolidates conclusions and insights from other deliverables (Open Call #1 Results, Engagement, Dissemination & Communication, and Synergies Plan). The deliverable also refers to the Impact Assessment and our strategy to improve and further promote S3E Framework.

Keywords

Deep tech, entrepreneurship, innovation ecosystem, south Europe, innovation project, open innovation, research, startups, synergies plan, science-based entrepreneurship, technology commercialization.

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SEN Confidential to S3E project and Commission Services





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Abbreviations

AUS	Australo Interinnov Marketing Lab SL
D	Deliverable
DoA	Description of Action
EIS	European innovation scoreboard
EPLO	The Institute for Sustainable Development is an initiative of the European Public Law Organization
HST	HiSeedTech
IDI	International Development Ireland Limited
S3E	Southern European Entrepreneurship Engine
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SME	Small and medium-sized enterprise
WP	Work Package
TTO	Technology Transfer Officer
VC	Venture capital





1 Executive summary

This document is **Deliverable 4.2 "Promote Use and Increase Participation to the S3E Framework."** It provides a comprehensive analysis of the progress and outcomes of Task 4.2, which focuses on promoting participation in the S3E program.

The S3E Framework refers to the overall initiative, including the Engine, Community and Ecosystem components. The Engine is the operational backbone, the Community directly participates, and the Ecosystem is the broader landscape S3E aims to impact.

Structure:

The document has eight main sections:

1. Introduction to S3E: Overview of the program, partners, structure, and acceleration framework.
2. The Engine: Metrics and assets from the Start, Charge and Reverse tracks.
3. The Community: Analysis of the various stakeholders like partners, experts, research teams.
4. The Ecosystem: Mapping insights, synergies with other programs.
5. Promoting S3E: Communication strategies like social media, events, multimedia.
6. Building the Community: Onboarding experts, training participants, outreach.
7. Maximizing Impact: Defining impact, metrics, sustainability.
8. Conclusions: Achievements, challenges, future vision.

Key Insights:

- S3E has strong social media engagement, with 1,400+ followers. Newsletters and promotional assets also drive participation.
- Tailored expert onboarding and clear guidelines support knowledge exchange. Community meetings enable valuable networking.
- The project has expanded its reach through events, info sessions and roadshows. Strategic partnerships can further growth.
- Impact is defined as the positive change created in the ecosystem. Dashboards track quantifiable metrics aligned to goals.

Overall, the deliverable offers a comprehensive analysis of S3E's progress in engaging stakeholders, highlighting key achievements while also identifying areas for improvement in upcoming project cycles.





2 Introduction to the S3E Programme

2.1 Overview

Southern Europe Entrepreneurship Engine or **S3E** is an EU-funded project under the European Innovation Ecosystem initiative of Horizon Europe¹. We aim to improve the market connectedness and efficiency of research teams, startups & SMEs working on Deep Tech.

The core of the S3E activities is the implementation of an Engine **Program** that will offer innovation support services to the Research Teams, Technology Transfer Officers (TTOs) and start-ups in various stages of their growth journey.

The **mission** of the S3E program is to accelerate Deep Tech projects coming from research teams, and deep tech solutions coming from start-ups and SMEs that can impact social development and economic growth for a more sustainable future.

The **goal** of S3E is to reduce the market risk for Southern Europe Deep Tech companies in their struggle to secure funding and reach the market. The programme focuses on:

- 1 Upskilling researchers to an **entrepreneurship mindset**.
- 2 Supporting growth-stage startups in **business development**.
- 3 **Brokering** access to investment.
- 4 Facilitating **Open Innovation** with Industry partners.
- 5 Contributing to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The S3E project **vision** is to develop an **engine of growth** that will contribute to improving the connectedness and efficiency of **entrepreneurship ecosystems in Southern European countries**.

According to the European Innovation Scoreboard, EU countries are classified into four performance groups based on their scores: Innovation Leaders, Strong Innovators, Moderate Innovators, and Emerging Innovators². The **European Innovation Scoreboard** provides a comparative analysis of innovation performance in EU countries, other European countries, and regional neighbours. It assesses the relative strengths and weaknesses of national innovation systems and helps countries identify areas they need to address³.

For the scope of S3E, Southern European countries include the following European countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Cyprus, Romania, Slovenia, and Spain. And the

¹ Grant agreement ID: 101072135 ([see here the Cordis fact sheet](#))

² https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/statistics/performance-indicators/european-innovation-scoreboard_en

³ [Inforegio - European Innovation Scoreboard: Innovation performance keeps improving in EU Member States and regions \(europa.eu\)](#)



following Associated countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Kosovo, and Turkey.

This selection was made based on the capacities of the partners to offer services in these areas.

2.2 Structure

S3E focuses on accelerating **deep tech projects, start-ups, and SMEs** that, by providing solutions towards a more sustainable society and economy, can impact social development and economic growth in these countries and contribute to the timely achievement of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, in line with the EU Green Deal, the Recovery and Resilience Facility and the Next Generation EU Fund. S3E provides skills to **researchers and technology transfer officers** in science-based entrepreneurship and technology commercialization. S3E also supports **growth stage start-ups** in business development and raising investment and provides technology brokerage for corporates and **scale-up stage start-ups and SMEs**.

The program is built around **three tracks** of bespoke services tailored to start-ups' varying levels of maturity (i.e., early, growth, and scaling stages):



Figure 1. S3E Tracks

- **S3E Start:** For research teams and technology transfer officers, S3E offers a hands-on training program to explore the potential social and economic impact of their scientific discoveries.
- **S3E Charge:** For growth start-ups, S3E provides mentoring and networking to develop an investment-ready business plan and facilitates access to non-dilutable and dilutable funding.
- **S3E Reverse:** Aimed at scaling start-ups and SMEs, S3E will set up an Open Innovation ecosystem to broker, connect, and match corporates to scaling start-ups through a challenge-solution duality.

The S3E engine program will be implemented through two open calls. The first call was launched in November 2022 and the second call was launched on September 18th. The first call, which this deliverable focuses on, was launched simultaneously for all three tracks (Start, Charge and



Reverse). The research teams, technology transfer officers, growth startups and scale startups were selected through the open call that was available from November 7th until February 10th at 17:00 CET Time. This document focuses on our activities to establish and promote the S3E Framework. Although there are overlapping activities and common goals, the tracks have some significant differences which are illustrated in Table 1.




	S3E START 	S3E CHARGE 	S3E REVERSE 
What?	Training and hands-on experience on Deep Tech	Mentoring Program on Deep Tech	Open Innovation Brokerage Programme on Deep Tech
Who is it for?	Research teams with deep tech projects and TTOs	Startups in growth phase	Scale-up Startups
How does it work?	18-week programme 14 hours of online training in early stages of business development. 10.5 hours of mentoring w/ industry experts to support project development. 7 hours of webinars (War stories, IP, Cold calling, Business case development, Path to Net zero, how to make a pitch, Funding opportunities) Networking with industry leaders and showcase opportunities at the S3E Open day.	14-week programme 10.5 hours mentoring with industry experts. Non-dilutable funding opportunities (both national and / or European) and support for application Networking with industry leaders , other innovators and showcase their start-up at the S3E Open day. Webinars and masterclasses (IP, sustainability, ESG, sustainable finance, etc.)	Innovation Readiness Assessment Training in public procurement , including PCP/PPIs Webinars , access to the webinars of Tracks 1 & 2 Networking with industry leaders and showcase opportunities at the S3E Open day and in collaboration with other programmes and initiatives. Gaining market traction by connecting to larger companies and potential customers or testbeds.

Table 1. S3E Tracks





2.3 S3E Partners

The S3E project is implemented by a consortium of four partners coming from strong and moderate innovation countries. The S3E consortium partners are:



HiSeedTech (HST) is a not-for-profit business association that aims to foster the creation of social and economic value from research and development activities. HiSeedTech initiatives are grounded upon a collaborative network (made up of member companies, researchers, investors, and start-ups) that works as a platform to link researchers and companies and have the goal of bridging the gap between science and the market.

HiSeedTech executive team has more than 19 years' experience in supporting researchers moving their deep technologies to the market. Since their first training program (in 2004) they have provided technology commercialization skills to more than 800 researchers and supported the creation of 50 start-ups in a wide range of fields (including materials science, biotechnology, chemistry, nanotechnology, energy, etc.).

The team has experience in managing large scale projects both at the national as at the international level and have extensive connections with the European and North American innovation ecosystems and was recognized with a Stanford Entrepreneurship Educators Award.



The Institute for Sustainable Development of the European Public Law Organization (EPLO), an international organisation, supports the public and private sectors in building implementation and governance capacity to deliver the UN 2020 Agenda (the SDGs) and to promote Sustainable Development and the European Green Deal. Operating as a knowledge hub bringing together expertise across different resources world-wide, the Institute offers training programs, and strategic and policy guidance in sustainable development, ESG, sustainable finance, circularity, and blue economy.

Originally launched in 2018 as the SDG Center on Governance and Public Law as a collaboration between the University of Cambridge and EPLO, the Institute has run several projects on sustainable development, organised high-level conferences and side events in UN Conferences (including the recent UN Ocean Conference) and is currently a partner in two European-funded programs; the Horizon Europe S3E acceleration program on deep-tech and sustainability and the upcoming Coastal Pro on upskilling in blue careers.



International Development Ireland Ltd. (IDI) is an Irish-based consulting company focused on providing world-class and wide-range services to transition economies in its core areas of expertise: Innovation Management, Technology Transfer, Research and Development, SME Competitiveness, Export Promotion and Foreign Direct Investment Attraction. IDI has successfully completed over 260 projects in 80 countries internationally to date.

IDI has long experience in implementing SME support projects and will participate in this consortium with the added experience of the successful implementation of BLOCK.IS project (INNOSUP-01-2018). A competitive advantage of IDI is that we are implementing “The İzmir Network and Innovation Centre (İzmir NIC) Project”. The project, implemented with partners as İzmir Institute of Technology (İYTE) and the Software Industrialists Association (YASAD), is planned to be completed in 3 years. Since its start, the IDI team has set up synergies with the stakeholders (Investors, Entrepreneurs, Techno parks, SMEs, Startups, TTOs, TDZs, R&D Centers) in İzmir and got familiarised with the innovation ecosystem. The İzmir NIC project’s purpose is to enhance the commercialization and internationalisation of innovative products, by fostering networks and strategic partnership among relevant stakeholders that aligns with the purpose of the S3E project. We plan to establish strong ties between two projects which will provide considerable advantage to the S3E consortium.



Building upon 10+ years of experience, **Australo Interinnov Marketing Lab SI (AUS)** is a marketing company providing services to thrive in the Lab-to-Market leap. AUSTRALO’ mission is to accelerate the potential of landmarks in Science & Technology to transform real-life challenges, creating, communicating, and delivering value to key stakeholders. AUS works with communities, thought leaders, researchers, and entrepreneurs, advocating for a trustworthy, fair and sustainable data-driven economy.

AUS will be utilising S3E in order to expand its network of actors and organisations plus becoming a gateway for SME participating in the following initiative, to which AUS is a key and active member such as the Next Generation Internet (NGI), 5G Infrastructure PPP (5G PPP), Future Internet PPP (FIWARE), and the Future Internet Research & Experimentation (FIRE). This is complemented with their membership in strategic networks, including 5G Infrastructure Association, NetWorld2020, Association European NanoElectronics Activities (AENEAS), Photonics21, Big Data Value Association (BDVA), World Smart Sustainable Cities Organization



(WeGO) and OpenCommons, Global Alliance for Genomics and Health (GA4GH) and EU Platform on Renewable Heating and Cooling (RHC).

2.4 The S3E Engine Framework

The S3E initiative is a comprehensive EU project designed to catalyze innovation and entrepreneurship in Southern Europe's deep tech sector. It operates on three interconnected pillars: the Engine, the Community, and the Ecosystem. Each of these elements serves a unique yet synergistic role in achieving the program's objectives.

The term "**S3E Framework**" serves as the overarching label for the entire initiative, encapsulating the Engine, Community, and Ecosystem components. This umbrella term aligns seamlessly with the official deliverable name, reinforcing its comprehensive nature and serving as an identifier for all stakeholders involved.

On the other hand, "**S3E Engine**" is designated for the specific set of tools, methods, and program activities that power the initiative. The term "Engine" aptly suggests that this component is the driving force behind the S3E Framework, responsible for executing the strategies and actions that propel the initiative forward. Together, these terms provide a clear and coherent nomenclature that reflects both the scope and the operational mechanics of the S3E initiative.

2.4.1 The S3E Engine

The S3E Engine is the backbone of the S3E initiative, encompassing all the tools, methods, and assets—both digital and non-digital—developed for the program. This includes a specialized training curriculum, mentoring processes, evaluation methods, and virtual platforms. The framework is instrumental in achieving the project's tasks such as developing a network between startups, international corporations, and investors, as well as facilitating matchmaking services. It provides the structural foundation for delivering all program services, from open calls to investor engagement.

2.4.2 The S3E Community

The Community consists of the various stakeholders directly involved in the S3E program. This includes startups, research teams, experts (evaluators, mentors and brokers), and partners. They are the core user base of the framework and benefit from its services, such as preparing investment-ready business plans and participating in various training and webinars to increase resilience and successful scale-up potential.

2.4.3 The S3E Ecosystem

The Ecosystem refers to the broader innovation or deep tech landscape that the S3E program aims to impact. This encompasses R&D organisations, Business Development Support Services



Providers (accelerators, incubators, intermediaries), industries, policies, funding sources, etc., that influence entrepreneurship in the target region (Southern European countries and associated countries). The S3E program aims to accelerate this ecosystem by enhancing connectivity and efficiency.

In essence, the S3E Engine serves as the operational foundation, the S3E Community directly utilizes and benefits from the framework, and the Ecosystem is the broader environment that S3E aims to positively impact. Together, these elements work in concert to support startups from emerging innovation countries across Europe, aligning perfectly with the project's focus on Southern Europe's deep tech companies.

2.5 Purpose of the document

The purpose of Deliverable 4.2, "Promote Use and Increase Participation to the S3E Framework," is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the progress and outcomes of Task 4.2, which is pivotal in supporting the engagement of start-ups in various stages (early, growth and scale) within the S3E initiative. This task is integral to the broader Work Package, as it lays the groundwork for the second Open Call of S3E.

The deliverable aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the three key components of the project as explained above: the Engine, the Community, and the Ecosystem. It will present our insights and experience from the various activities of S3E, trainings, webinars, and it will also assess how these efforts contribute to the goals of the S3E Framework, such as networking startups with international corporations and investors, attracting key stakeholders, and facilitating matchmaking services. By doing so, the report seeks to offer actionable insights and recommendations to optimize the entire S3E Framework.





3 The S3E Engine

The S3E Engine mechanism was analysed in detail in **Deliverable D4.1 – Implementation & Deployment of the S3E framework**, which included a comprehensive overview of the processes, tools and activities designed and implemented as part of the S3E engine program. D4.1 provided a consolidated reference guide that explained the framework for training, mentoring and technology brokerage services offered through the program's three tracks - Start, Charge and Reverse. It outlined the implementation methodology including timeline, expert engagement, evaluation processes, training curriculum, virtual tools, impact assessment protocols and sustainability plans.

D4.1 also included details on the open call schedule, eligibility criteria, program duration and content structure for each track. The deliverable offered insights into the mentorship approaches, technology brokerage model and monitoring methodology tailored to projects at different maturity levels. Overall, D4.1 established a detailed implementation plan and operational framework to connect deep tech researchers to capital across the startup lifecycle through upskilling, business acceleration and facilitated matchmaking with industry.

3.1 Key Metrics from Track 1: START

The document D3.3 - Track 1 1st Open Call Engagement Results provides a comprehensive overview of the implementation and outcomes of the first open call for the **S3E START** track. This track focused on research teams and technology transfer officers (TTOs) working on deep tech projects in Southern Europe. The aim of START is to accelerate deep tech innovation and improve connectedness in European entrepreneurship ecosystems. The call was promoted through online info sessions, roadshows, events, meetings, and digital campaigns.

Engagement Metrics: Open Call Phase	Implementation Metrics: Acceleration Phase	Achievement Metrics: Post-Acceleration Phase
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • >7000 researchers engaged through outreach. • >1800 estimated research teams reached (through our campaigns) • 2.4% conversion rate of teams reached to teams applied. • 30 research team applications received. • 14 TTO applications received. • Total 44 applications received Accepted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 research teams accepted (60% of applications) • 12 TTOs accepted (86% of applications) • 30 accepted Experts • 33 hours of training • 15 online tutorials held. • expert webinars held. • 17 hours of mentoring provided Impact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 research teams trained. • 13 teams pitched at S3E Start Open Day • 21 mentors engaged to support teams. • 12 TTOs upskilled in commercialization

Table 2. Key Metrics from Track 1: START



3.2 Key Metrics from Track 2: CHARGE

The document D2.4 provides an analysis of the CHARGE track's implementation and outcomes under the S3E project. This track is designed to support start-ups and entrepreneurs in the deep tech sector across Southern Europe.

The primary objective of CHARGE is to foster innovation, scalability, and collaboration among deep tech start-ups. The promotion of the open call was executed through various channels including online information sessions, community meetings, and targeted digital campaigns.

Engagement Metrics: Open Call Phase	Implementation Metrics: Acceleration Phase	Achievement Metrics: Post-Acceleration Phase
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • >9,500 start-ups engaged through outreach activities. • >2,300 Estimated Start-ups Reached: (assuming 4 team members per start-up). • 3.1% conversion rate of start-ups reached to start-ups applied. • Start-up Applications Received: 36. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 research teams accepted (60% of applications) • 30 accepted Experts • 33 hours of training • 15 online tutorials held. • 7 expert webinars held. • 84+ Mentoring Sessions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 research teams trained. • 13 teams pitched at S3E Start Open Day • 21 mentors engaged to support teams.

Table 3. Key Metrics from Track 2: CHARGE

3.3 Key Metrics from Track 3: REVERSE

The same document (D2.4) presents the key metrics of the REVERSE track within the S3E project. This track is aimed at connecting challenge organizations with innovative deep tech solutions that address the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) across Southern Europe.

The primary focus of REVERSE is to facilitate impactful collaborations between these organizations and deep tech start-ups. The open call for this track was promoted through various avenues, including online forums, partnership events, and targeted social media campaigns. The key difference between this track and the previous is that this track aims at more mature start-ups that are able to respond to specific challenges. They were collected through an open call that was open only to public and private organisations willing to contribute an important problem they were facing.

Engagement Metrics: Open Call Phase	Implementation Metrics: Acceleration Phase	Achievement Metrics: Post-Acceleration Phase





<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • >1465 organisations reached. • 15 challenges accepted. • 25 solver start-ups applied 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 Solvers accepted. • 13 Challenge Orgs • >70h of Brokerage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 Verified Matches • 10Tech Brokers involved
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Table 4. Key Metrics from Track 3: REVERSE

3.4 Assets developed under the S3E Project

The S3E project, has created many useful assets that will likely be beneficial in the future, and which are also making the project more efficient now. This deliverable gives more information about these assets, concentrating on the tools used in the START and CHARGE tracks, as well as the Technology Brokerage Program for the REVERSE track.

3.4.1 Engine Programme Mechanism (START, CHARGE)

The S3E project has crafted a comprehensive set of Open Call rules accompanied by guidelines for both applicants and evaluators. These assets are predicated on the principles of fairness, transparency, and effectiveness, thereby ensuring an equitable evaluation process. The potential utility of these mechanisms transcends the immediate project scope; they can serve as archetypal frameworks for subsequent innovation support programs. The target demographic for these assets includes R&D organisations, technology transfer officers, accelerators, incubators, and various institutions committed to the promotion of deep tech and entrepreneurship. As for future exploitation, these guidelines and rules are amenable to adaptation for diverse thematic or geographical contexts. It is noteworthy that the evaluation process is divided into two stages, involving both internal project partners and external evaluators, thereby adding an additional layer of scrutiny (D4.1).

3.4.2 Technology Brokerage Program (REVERSE)

The REVERSE track presented a unique methodology for Open Calls that caters to both challenge organizations and solution providers. This methodology is further enriched by the inclusion of guidelines and onboarding material explicitly designed for Technology Brokers. The potential for the replication or adaptation of this methodology is considerable, particularly for other technology brokerage initiatives. The primary target audience for this asset comprises corporates, public organizations, and technology brokers. The methodology is sufficiently flexible to accommodate expansion into additional sectors or challenges. The Open Call documentation is comprehensive and has been made publicly accessible through Zenodo, thereby enhancing its transparency and accessibility (D4.1).

3.4.3 Training Material: START and CHARGE

The START and CHARGE tracks have developed and delivered more than 50 hours of training (that included online tutorials and webinars).



The training subjects of the **START** program introduced concepts according to three phases: Ideation, Development, and Commercialization. First, the Ideation phase aimed to have the teams come up with multiple product concepts for their technology, especially ones that diverged from any pre-concepted applications. Second, the development phase encouraged researchers to focus on the highest potential product, while keeping the others as backup plans. Finally, the commercialization portion of the program provided tools to compile the business model for that product.

The **CHARGE** webinars covered a wide range of topics essential for start-up success providing in-depth insights into areas such as business strategy, market research, financial planning, marketing and sales, sustainable practices, and funding opportunities.

In summary, the legacy assets developed by the S3E project are multifaceted and hold considerable promise for future exploitation. These assets are not merely operational tools for the current project but are, in essence, intellectual properties with considerable exploitative potential. One of the goals is 'train the trainers' that will ensure the sustainability of the program in their respective countries, after the project comes to an end. Their design and implementation have been executed with a level of dedication and foresight that ensures their relevance and utility extend well beyond the current activities of the S3E project.





4 The S3E Community

4.1 S3E Community: A Strategic Asset for Sustainable Impact

The S3E Community serves as the cornerstone of the S3E project, embodying a diverse array of stakeholders ranging from startups and research teams to mentors, experts, and partners. This community is not merely a byproduct of the project's activities but is, in fact, a strategic asset that amplifies the project's impact and extends its reach. The community members are the primary beneficiaries of the S3E framework, gaining access to invaluable services such as investment-ready business plan preparation, specialized training, and webinars aimed at enhancing resilience and scaling potential.

Importance of the S3E Community

The importance of the S3E Community lies in its capacity to serve as a dynamic ecosystem that fosters innovation, collaboration, and mutual growth. It acts as a conduit for the exchange of ideas, resources, and expertise, thereby enriching the individual and collective capabilities of its members. Moreover, the community serves as a feedback loop, providing real-time insights into the effectiveness of the S3E framework and offering avenues for its continual refinement.

Longevity Beyond Project Duration

The sustainability of the S3E Community beyond the project's lifecycle is a critical consideration. To ensure its longevity, it is imperative to establish mechanisms that encourage ongoing engagement. These could include the development of a digital platform for continuous interaction, the organization of annual events or webinars, and the initiation of community-led projects that align with the S3E objectives. By transforming the community into a self-sustaining entity, it can continue to generate value and impact long after the project has concluded.

Involvement in the Second Cycle

As the S3E project transitions into its second cycle, the community's role becomes even more pivotal. The lessons learned and the relationships formed during the first cycle can be leveraged to enhance the effectiveness of the second cycle. Existing community members can serve as ambassadors or mentors for new entrants, thereby accelerating their integration and success within the framework. Furthermore, the community can be actively involved in the co-creation of new services or the refinement of existing ones, ensuring that the project continues to meet the evolving needs of its stakeholders.

In conclusion, the S3E Community is not just a beneficiary of the project but a critical enabler of its success and sustainability. Its diverse composition and active engagement make it a valuable asset for achieving the project's objectives and ensuring its long-term impact. By strategically leveraging this community, the S3E project can not only amplify its current effectiveness but also lay the foundation for sustained success in future cycles.





4.2 The S3E Community Components

The S3E project's first year has provided crucial insights into the dynamics of stakeholder participation, displaying a spectrum of involvement across varied groups. This section seeks to define the roles, degrees of engagement, and future strategies for each stakeholder group, as supported by empirical data and observations gathered during the project's implementation.

We have seen significant engagement from various stakeholders. Notably, research teams and technology transfer officers have actively participated in the program, showcasing their enthusiasm for deep tech projects. Additionally, we have fostered strong relationships with industry partners and investors who have shown keen interest in our initiatives.

4.2.1 Partners

The partners are the backbone of the project and play a crucial part in its orchestration, contributing to the project's management, coordination, implementation, dissemination, and exploitation.

Current Engagement: Partners have been consistently and comprehensively engaged across all project phases, from the initial conceptualization to the ongoing execution. Their involvement is not merely administrative but extends to shaping the project's strategic direction and ensuring its alignment with broader objectives.

Strategies for Future Engagement: To sustain and amplify partner engagement in the project's subsequent cycles, several strategies are recommended. As we move to the 2nd year and acceleration cycle of the project, several strategic planning sessions will be organized to revisit and refine the project's objectives and key performance indicators. The partners of S3E are already considering the following strategies:

- **Network Leverage:** Partners will leverage their existing networks to broaden the project's reach, attract additional stakeholders, and facilitate collaborations that can enrich the project's outcomes.
- **Asset Incorporation:** Partners will start incorporating components of the project's assets into their own portfolios and services, thereby enhancing their organizational capabilities and market offerings.

The S3E partners are key strategic assets for the S3E project. Their ongoing commitment and potential for future engagement make them essential for the project's long-term success and sustainability.

4.2.2 Experts Community

Such community, encompassing evaluators, mentors, and deep tech brokers, serves as the intellectual scaffolding of the project, imparting specialized knowledge and guidance.



Current Engagement: The external experts engaged in various roles, including evaluators, mentors, and deep tech brokers, have made a significant contribution to the project's success. Their expertise and guidance have been crucial in shaping the experiences of participants. The expert onboarding sessions provided a unique opportunity for mentors to network with their peers. This networking aspect has fostered collaboration, shared insights, and the establishment of valuable connections.

Our engagement with experts across all tracks enriches the S3E ecosystem by providing invaluable guidance, knowledge transfer, and mentorship. These experts contribute significantly to the success of our program, fostering innovation, growth, and impactful sustainability-focused solutions.

In conclusion, stakeholder engagement within the S3E framework has played a pivotal role in connecting researchers, entrepreneurs, start-ups, challenge organisations, and deep tech experts. These interactions have fueled innovation, accelerated growth, and enabled impactful sustainability-focused collaborations, ultimately contributing to the advancement of southern Europe's deep tech ecosystem.

Strategies for Future Engagement: The vibrant community of experts that have been created during the project is one of its most valuable assets. The 2nd cycle of the program will further empower and strengthen the links between these community. Moreover, partners of the project are planning to utilize the community in other innovation support programs creating useful synergies.

4.2.3 Technology Transfer Officers (TTOs)

TTOs act as intermediaries between research teams and the market. They play a critical role in facilitating the commercialization of research outputs, thereby aligning with the project's overarching objectives.

Current Engagement: TTOs have shown considerable interest in the project, especially in exploring effective methodologies for knowledge commercialization. Their active participation in the project underscores their commitment to bridging the gap between research and market needs.

Strategies for Future Engagement: To further bolster the engagement of TTOs in upcoming project cycles, a multi-faceted strategy is recommended. It should be noted that although we do not have time to incorporate these suggestions to our next cycle (Open Call 2), we believe that they should be considered for any continuation of the acceleration programme **beyond the duration of our project.**

- **A mentorship program** could be established where experienced TTOs can share best practices and insights with those newer to the field. Professionals from such TTOs could be invited to participate as mentors in the other tracks of our acceleration.





- **A recognition program** could be implemented to highlight and reward the most active and effective TTOs. This could include public acknowledgment in project publications, or priority access to project resources. Additionally, offering TTOs exclusive access to networking events with industry leaders and potential investors could serve as a strong incentive for increased participation in future calls.

In summary, TTOs are a critical component in the ecosystem of the S3E project. Their role is not just functional but strategic, and their engagement is crucial for the successful commercialization of research outputs.

The proposed strategies and incentives aim to not only sustain but also enhance their involvement, thereby contributing to the project's long-term sustainability.

4.2.4 Research Teams

Within the S3E initiative, the research teams perform an essential role as the hub of innovation. They are the primary source of fresh ideas and technology, making them vital to the project's goals of transforming laboratory-based research into solutions that can be sold to the public.

Current Engagement: A significant acknowledgement of the 1st cycle was related to assigning research teams to technology transfer officers. We had cases where research teams didn't want or couldn't accept one TTO in their team and vice-versa. But it is vital for a TTO to learn the team's methodology and have full experience, so they must participate in a research team.

Strategies for Future Engagement: To further engage research teams in the project's second cycle, we need to strongly encourage TTOs to come with a research team, not alone, to avoid the challenges of the 1st cycle. Such collaboration would address the unique needs of research teams in transitioning from a research-centric model to a market-oriented one.

4.2.5 Challenge Organizations

Challenge organizations serve as the critical interface between innovation and market demand within the S3E project. They provide real-world challenges that the project aims to address, thereby ensuring that the innovations generated are both relevant and impactful.

Current Engagement: Challenge organizations have been actively participating through the REVERSE track, where they articulate specific challenges that solution providers within the project aim to tackle. Their involvement ensures that the project remains aligned with market needs and real-world applicability.

Strategies for Future Engagement and Additional Considerations: To further enhance the engagement of challenge organizations, several strategies are recommended.

- First and foremost, a **feedback mechanism** should be established to gauge their engagement levels and identify areas for collaboration. This will provide actionable insights for refining the project's approach to meeting their needs.



- Additionally, there is a **need for these organizations to be more committed** to working with start-ups. This could be facilitated by organizing joint workshops or innovation bootcamps that foster closer collaboration between challenge organizations and start-ups within the project.
- To address the need for a **clearer innovation culture** within these organizations, the project could offer specialized training sessions or consultancy services aimed at fostering an internal culture of innovation. This would enable them to better manage their innovation portfolios and articulate their challenges more effectively.
- Furthermore, these organizations require support in managing their innovation portfolios and effectively communicating their ideas and needs. **Tailored advisory services** could be offered to assist them in these areas, enhancing their capacity to engage meaningfully with the project.
- Lastly, to foster stronger, more personalized connections, challenge organizations could be invited to become part of a consortium or be given a more formal role within existing project structures. This would not only deepen their engagement but also provide them with a platform to influence the project's direction and outcomes.

4.2.6 Start-ups

Start-ups, particularly those at the growth stage, are indispensable for the project, infusing it with business intelligence and market-oriented perspectives.

Current Engagement: Start-ups across diverse sectors have demonstrated interest in the project, with growth-stage startups showing particularly high levels of engagement.

Strategies for Future Engagement: To **support** their future participation, the organization of targeted business development workshops is suggested, along with networking events designed to facilitate interactions with potential investors and clients.

In summation, each stakeholder group has made unique contributions to the project's success. As the S3E project transitions into its second cycle, the outlined strategies offer a roadmap for sustaining and amplifying stakeholder engagement, thereby fortifying the project's long-term success.

5 The S3E Ecosystem

The S3E Ecosystem refers to the broader innovation or deep tech landscape that the S3E program aims to impact, encompassing networks, industries, policies, and funding sources that influence entrepreneurship in Southern Europe and associated countries. In alignment with Horizon Europe, the S3E project focuses on EU member states such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, and Associated Countries like Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey.





5.1 Ecosystem Mapping

5.1.1 Insights and conclusions

The Deliverable D2.4: Ecosystem Mapping serves as the foundational resource for the S3E program. It provides a comprehensive analysis of the innovation ecosystem in Southern Europe, identifying strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement. The report emphasizes the importance of openness and connectedness and suggests that sustainable innovation ecosystems need to be strengthened. One key insight is the crucial role of Knowledge and Innovation Communities in fostering economic growth and competitive advantage.

5.1.2 Methodology and Data Sources

The ecosystem mapping is based on publicly available data, reports, and other resources, supplemented by informal interviews with researchers, financial entities, academic institutions, and investors. The S3E consortium will continually update this mapping throughout the project's duration. Since the commencement of the Open Calls and the first Roadshow in Greece in November 2022, the database has been regularly updated with new contacts, accelerators, and incubators.

5.1.3 Target Entities and Stakeholder Engagement

The project has reached out to a diverse range of entities that promote innovation and stand to benefit from the S3E program. These include Universities, Research Centres, Tech Transfer Offices, Business Development Support Services Providers, Foundations, Chambers of Commerce, Government entities, Banks, Corporates, growth and scaling start-ups, Horizon NCP, and Investors. The S3E team has also been active in participating in relevant ecosystem events and conferences, taking up speaking opportunities to engage with stakeholders and the ecosystem at large.

5.1.4 Implications for the S3E Program

The findings from the "Ecosystem Mapping" report have direct implications for the S3E program. By focusing on enhancing connectivity and efficiency, the S3E program can contribute to closing the innovation gap identified in the report. Moreover, the program can take the lead in fostering the creation of new Knowledge and Innovation Communities, thereby playing an essential role in the region's economic growth and competitive advantage.

In summary, the S3E Ecosystem is deeply interconnected with the broader innovation landscape in Southern Europe. The program aims to make impactful contributions to this ecosystem, fulfilling its aim to accelerate innovation and entrepreneurship in the region.





5.2 Synergies and Collaborative Frameworks in the S3E Ecosystem

The S3E ecosystem serves as a dynamic and interconnected platform for innovation and entrepreneurship in Southern Europe. This section explores the synergies and collaborative frameworks that can be created within this ecosystem, focusing on the "Synergies Plan" and the "Stakeholder Collaboration Framework (D5.1)." Both documents aim to foster innovation and support the growth of the deep tech and sustainability sectors in Southern Europe by facilitating partnerships between various stakeholders.

5.2.1 Dynamic Nature of Synergies and Ecosystem Mapping

The Ecosystem Map and the Synergies Plan are adaptive documents that evolve in response to changes in local, regional, national and European policies, as well as market developments. For instance, the New European Innovation Agenda aims to position Europe at the forefront of deep tech innovation. Alongside national endeavors like Elevate Greece and the Bulgarian Ministry of Innovation and Growth, the S3E team has been proactive in forging new contacts and collaborations.

5.2.2 Integrated Stakeholder Collaboration Framework

The Stakeholder Collaboration Framework (D5.1) is designed to identify the ecosystem of entities impacted by S3E. It aims to increase connectedness among members of deep-tech research and start-up ecosystems and to the larger European business ecosystem. The framework is crucial for the outcomes of Open Call #1 and is decisive for the impact and success of Open Call #2. It is closely linked to the Dissemination, Communication & Exploitation plan (D5.2) and the Ecosystem Map (D2.1), which provide specific action plans and a relevant stakeholders database, respectively. As a Horizon Europe project, S3E employs an Agile Stakeholder Engagement Framework to continuously develop and strengthen communication streams with key stakeholder groups.



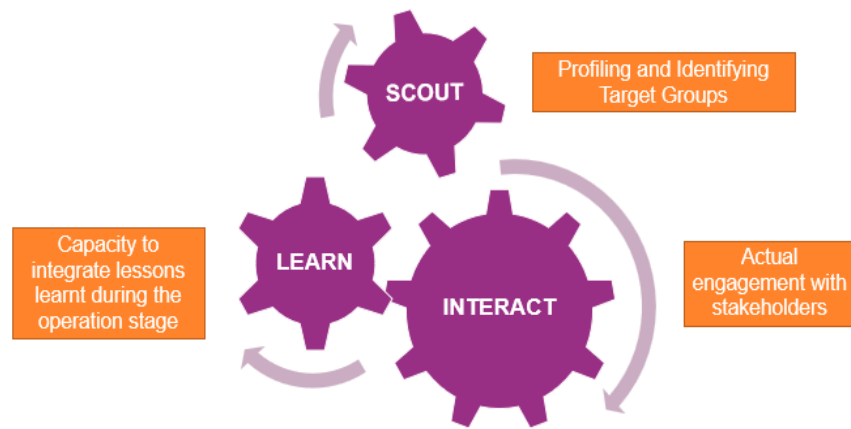


Figure 2. S3E's Stakeholder Collaboration Framework

5.2.3 Insights from the Synergies Plan

The Synergies Plan offers a promising approach to foster innovation by uniting relevant projects, stakeholders, and initiatives. It provides a framework for collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and resource pooling, thereby helping startups access new networks, expertise, funding, and market opportunities.

5.2.4 Commission Organized Meetings and Collaborations

Participation in Commission-organized meetings in Brussels has enriched our database and ecosystem mapping with more projects and incubators. It has also opened up opportunities for synergies, collaboration, and information sharing, particularly in the realm of cascading funding opportunities provided by the EU and private investors.

5.2.5 Future Directions and Agile Engagement

More roadshows in regions such as the Western Balkans need to be organized to attract enablers and participants. The S3E team has also been active in participating in relevant ecosystem events and conferences, creating new synergies, facilitating broader exposure, and extending its range of actions.

The Synergies Plan and the Integrated Stakeholder Collaboration Framework are instrumental in achieving the S3E project's objectives. They provide a structured approach to stakeholder engagement and offer a roadmap for maximizing the impact of the S3E ecosystem.





6 Promoting our S3E Framework

The S3E project aims to serve as an engine of growth, enhancing the connectedness and efficiency of entrepreneurship ecosystems in Southern Europe. S3E partners have devoted significant efforts into communicating and disseminating critical project activities, outcomes, and opportunities to the wider community. This section outlines the comprehensive strategies and activities implemented for community engagement, dissemination, and communication during the first phase of the project (Open Call #1). It is based on the overarching Dissemination, Communication & Exploitation plan (D5.2), which itself stems from an extensive stakeholder engagement framework (D5.1).

The specific objectives of the Dissemination, Communication & Exploitation plan are:

- Implement a branding strategy for full recognition of the S3E brand within European and potentially international innovation ecosystems.
- Deliver a strategic plan for Communication & Engagement to achieve the widest reach of the Open Calls.
- Showcase the most relevant S3E results, creating awareness of the impact of the acceleration programs.
- Provide a refined outreach strategy to ensure continuing support of the project through solid partnerships.

In terms of engagement, we have identified various categories of stakeholders and created an internal database with more than 40,000 contacts that are GDPR compliant. These stakeholders are engaged on a monthly basis through targeted dissemination and communication campaigns, aiming to enlarge and consolidate a robust S3E Community.

6.1 Engaging the community: Creating awareness

In terms of creating awareness (dissemination and communication activities), the main results achieved by month 14 can be summarized as follows:

- Publication of more than 66 blog posts on the website
- Participation in 13 events
- Celebration of 8 bilateral meetings with Stakeholders
- Organization of 3 Roadshows for the Open Call Promotion
- Organization of 9 Info Webinars for the Open Call Promotion
- Creation of multiple promotional and multimedia material elements (digital banners, videos, interviews, roll-up, brochures, etc.)
- Reinforcement of our presence on social media, with more than 480 followers on Twitter and 950 followers on LinkedIn
- Preparation of 13 project newsletters

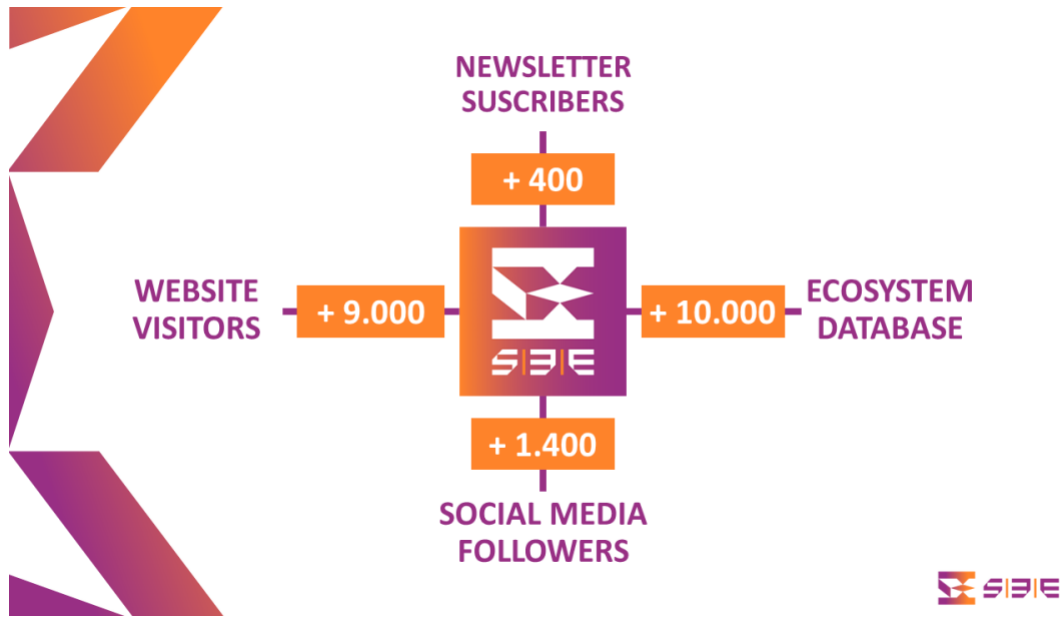


Figure 3. S3E Community at month 14 (August 2023)

6.1.1 Social Media Engagement

S3E has established a strong social media presence, particularly on Twitter and LinkedIn, to engage with stakeholders. The channels have proven effective in driving traffic to the S3E website and raising awareness about open call opportunities.

S3E’s Social Media accounts are the backbone of our everyday communication. Both our social media channels (Twitter and LinkedIn) have reached 1,414 followers and a monthly average of almost 8,000 impressions.

Twitter and LinkedIn have been the most exploited channels to communicate and disseminate the S3E Open Call #1 activities and outcomes. On a monthly basis, AUSTRALO, the Communication and Dissemination Leader has prepared an editorial calendar, planning all contents and publications. We have implemented a well-structured social media activity through the delivery of campaigns.



Open Call #1 Save the Date

LinkedIn post	Twitter post	YouTube video
Views: 310	Views: missed data	Views: 52



Open Call #1 General Promotion

LinkedIn post	Twitter post	YouTube video
Views: 496	Views: 263	Views: 206



Expression of Interest for S3E Experts





LinkedIn post	Twitter post
 <p>Views: 152</p>	 <p>Views: 196</p>

Campaign targeting Women and Brokers

LinkedIn post	Twitter post
 <p>Views: 141</p>	 <p>Views: 341</p>

Open Call #1 results announcement





LinkedIn post	Twitter post
Views: 399	Views: 136

S3E Start program implementation.

LinkedIn post	Twitter post
Views: 264	Views: 45

S3E Charge program implementation





LinkedIn post	Twitter post




S3E Reverse challenges selected.

LinkedIn post	Twitter post
<p>Views: 160</p>	<p>Views: 58</p>

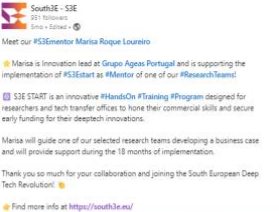

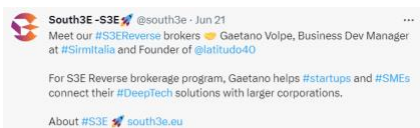





S3E Open Call #1 for SOLVERS

LinkedIn post	Twitter post	Youtube video
		
Views: 774	Views: 1083	Views: 17

S3E Mentors promotion

LinkedIn post	Twitter post
 	 
Views: 323	Views: 95

Open Day Start and Charge promotion



LinkedIn post	Twitter post	Youtube video
Views: 347	Views: 528	Views: 306

Open Day Pitches

LinkedIn post	Twitter post	YouTube video
Views: 258	Views: 69	Views: 27

6.1.2 Newsletters

During the first phase of the project, newsletters acted as teasers to our Open Call and program implementation announcements and outcomes. Newsletters have been an extremely useful



resource given that we account for almost 400 subscribers and the following metrics represent very interested and committed members.

Thirteen newsletters have been shared with the growing S3E subscriber base, supporting community engagement and conversions for open call applications. These newsletters have been effective in keeping the community up to date on various aspects of the project.

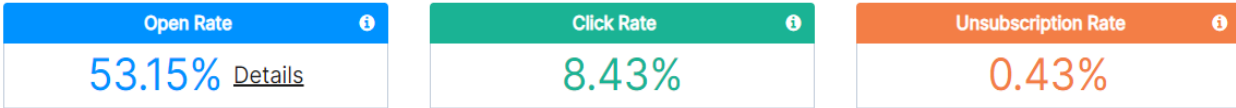


Figure 4. Newsletter Metrics

6.1.3 Press Releases

In addition to newsletters, Press Releases have also helped as a way to spread the word and announce some key events and activities. During the first phase of the project, we have published 5 Press Releases.

Title	Open Access	Views	Downloads
S3E Joint Press Release	https://zenodo.org/record/7051182	88	68
S3E Press Release Open Call 1	https://zenodo.org/record/7326446	298	222
Press Release S3E Open Call #1 Reverse for solvers	https://zenodo.org/record/7727284	38	37
Press Release: S3E celebrates the Charge Open Day to present the deep tech solutions of the selected growth startups	https://zenodo.org/record/8033628	17	72
Press Release: S3E celebrates the Start Open Day to present the deep tech projects of the selected research teams	https://zenodo.org/record/8069070	26	70

Table 5. S3E Press Releases

6.1.4 Banners and Brochures

To support all communication and dissemination activities since the beginning of the project we have created several materials to use both virtually and on-site. This content has been instrumental in communicating key information on the Open Call and has been available for all team members in the common workspace.



Roll-up banner: Our roll-up banner serves as a self-contained, portable advertising solution, featuring a visually compelling **graphic** that retracts into a sleek base for effortless transport. Utilized at every event and conference we've attended; this banner has been instrumental in capturing attention and disseminating key project information in a professional manner.

Trifold brochure: the tri-fold brochure is also known as the letter fold, a brochure presented in the same style as a letter in an envelope (hence the name). It's folded in two places and is divided into three, even rectangular sections. We have printed the trifold and distributed it to events and conferences where we have participated.

Digital Banners: In line with our branding strategy, we deployed a series of uniquely designed digital banners to reflect the identity and ethos of the S3E project. These banners served as versatile tools for promotion across various online platforms, including social media and websites. The visual consistency they offered not only enhanced brand recognition but also provided a cohesive and professional appearance to our dissemination efforts. Their adaptability and high visibility made them an effective and efficient means of capturing attention and conveying key messages to our target audiences.



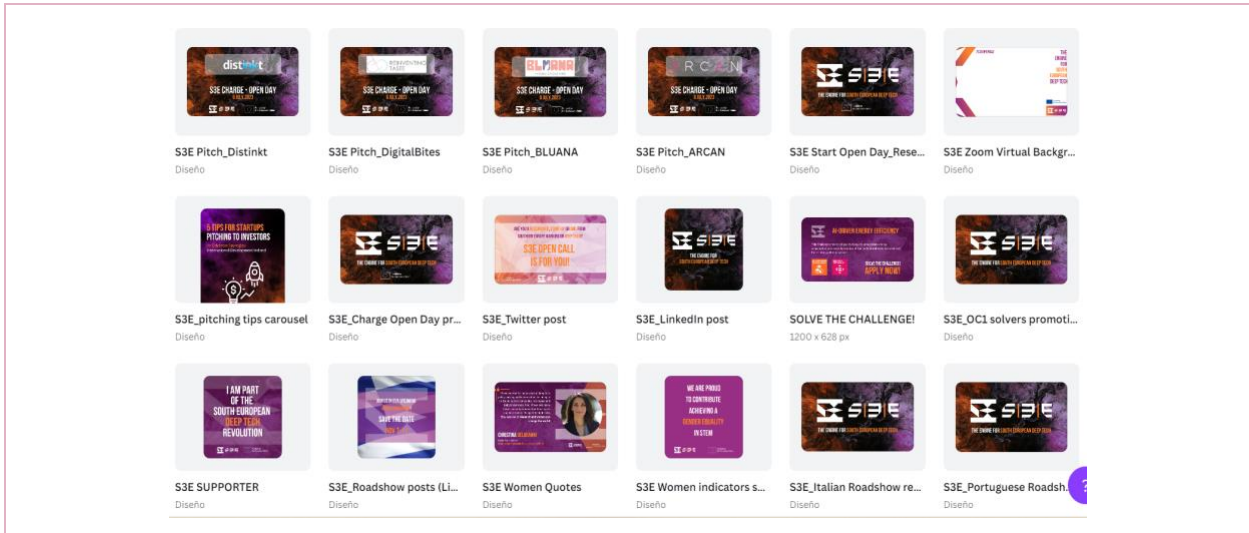


Figure 5. Banners and Leaflet

6.1.5 Multimedia content

S3E YouTube Channel has been an additional tool to engage with our stakeholders thanks to the publication of promotional videos. We have created and shared 54 videos that have attracted more than 2,000 views so far. All the videos are organised in playlists based on the Campaign. Many of our videos are also available on our website.



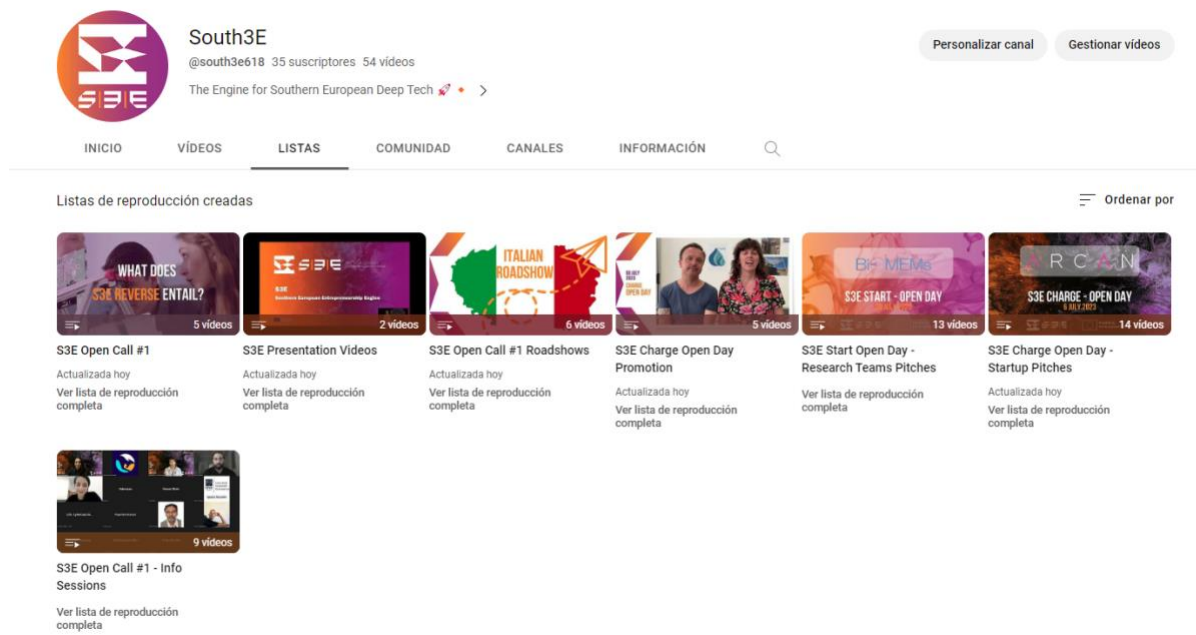


Figure 6. S3E YouTube channel

6.1.6 Roadshows and Physical Events

Three regional roadshows were organized to directly engage potential applicants and promote the open call. Additionally, 13 other events were attended to raise general awareness about the S3E program and its upcoming opportunities.

Roadshow 1 - Greece (Athens and Thessaloniki)	
Article with detailed information	https://south3e.eu/2022/11/02/s3e-roadshow-greece-join-us-from-7-to-11-november/
Promotional Video	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KwFsYRIRXnM

Table 6. S3E Roadshow 1 - Greece

Roadshow 2 - Italy (Milan)	
Article with detailed information	https://south3e.eu/2023/01/09/open-call-1-is-on-the-move-s3e-travels-to-milan-for-the-italian-roadshow/
Promotional Video	https://youtu.be/4ME6SIAAE44

Table 7. S3E Roadshow 2 - Italy (Milan)



Roadshow 3 - Portugal (Porto and Lisbon)	
Article with detailed information	https://south3e.eu/2023/02/06/six-fruitful-meetings-promoting-the-s3e-open-call-in-our-portuguese-roadshow/
Promotional Video	https://youtu.be/_WhfmjQSMMw

Table 8. Roadshow 3 - Portugal (Porto and Lisbon)

6.1.7 Webinars and Online Info Session

For the promotion of the S3E Open Call #1, the consortium has organised and celebrated a total of 9 virtual information webinars, to invite interested applicants to better understand the scope of the Open Call, to connect with them and solve potential doubts before submitting their applications. In the table below, we list the Info Sessions held.

Info Session	Day	Participants	Recording
S3E START Q&A session (PT ecosystem)	22/11/2022	12	
S3E START Q&A session	24/11/2022	37	Link
S3E CHARGE Q&A session	5/12/2022	19	Link
S3E START Q&A Session	7/12/2022	26	Link
S3E START Q&A session (PT ecosystem)	13/12/2022	36	
S3E TÜRKİYE Informative session Open Call #1	15/12/2022	92	Link
S3E START Q&A session (PT ecosystem)	12/1/2023	6	
S3E CHARGE Q&A session	13/1/2023	35	Link
S3E START Q&A Session	17/1/2023	46	Link
S3E CHARGE Q&A session 6 February 2023	6/2/2023	13	Link
S3E START Q&A Session	7/2/2023	21	Link
Info Webinar Open Call #1 REVERSE for Solvers	26/4/2023	39	Link

Table 9. S3E webinars and Online Info Session

6.2 Building and Supporting the Community

The Southern Europe Entrepreneurship Engine (S3E) project is committed to fostering a vibrant and supportive community centered around deep tech innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development in Southern European countries. Here are the key initiatives and actions undertaken by the S3E consortium to build and support this community:



6.2.1 Supporting the Experts

S3E initiated an open call to engage external experts (evaluators, mentors and brokers), drawing upon their diverse backgrounds and experiences. This inclusive approach ensured a wide range of expertise to support the project's participants on the three tracks (Start, Charge, and Reverse).

The open call for experts started on 10/12/2022, and was originally set to close on 16/01/2023, but, as the consortium team received messages from interested parties requesting an extension, it was extended until 31/01/2023.

The evaluation of results for the Open Call for Experts took place from 01/02/2023 to 15/02/2023 and the results were announced on 16/02/2023. Overall, **76 experts representing 18 distinct countries were selected** to join the S3E Project for the first round of services provided to participants. Such international representation enriched the project by bringing together expertise from various industries and preferred scientific areas.

Expert Onboarding

Selected experts underwent comprehensive onboarding processes, including signing non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) and participating in specific meetings tailored to their roles. These onboarding sessions clarified their expectations and responsibilities within the project and provided them with a unique platform to meet and collaborate with fellow experts. This networking aspect was invaluable as it allowed mentors to exchange ideas, share experiences, and establish connections with colleagues who share a passion for deep tech innovation and entrepreneurship.

These meetings were scheduled on the following dates:

- S3E Start kick off meeting for evaluators - 9/10/23.
- S3E Charge kick off meeting for evaluators - 9/10/23.
- S3E Start Mentors' onboarding - 23/03/23.
- S3E Charge Mentors' onboarding - 23/03/23
- S3E Reverse Brokers' onboarding - 26/04/2023

Expert retrospective meetings

The project hosted ad hoc retrospective meetings to gather insights and feedback from experts to improve the second open call. These meetings were online and were more informal, often between the lead member of the consortium for the relevant track and a few experts.

Development of Guidelines and Handbooks





The consortium developed detailed guidelines and handbooks specific to each role within the project. These resources provided experts with precise instructions and guidance, ensuring a consistent and structured approach, namely:

- Guideline to evaluate the applications of S3E Start
- Guideline to evaluate the applications of S3E Charge
- Handbook for mentors - S3E Start
- Handbook for mentors - S3E Charge
- Handbook for brokerage - S3E Reverse

6.2.2 Supporting the beneficiaries

S3E conducted an open call for participants (beneficiaries of our acceleration program), targeting research teams, technology transfer officers, startups, and SMEs in specific science fields. The call required projects to align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), reinforcing the project's commitment to social and economic development.

Detailed application forms for S3E Start, S3E Charge, and S3E Reverse are described in specific deliverables and are available in the Zenodo repository. The application forms for S3E Start are outlined in S3E Deliverable 3.2 - Track 1 open call platform and for S3E Charge and Reverse are outlined in Deliverable 2.2 - Tracks 2 and 3 Open Call Platform and Documentation.

S3E Start open call for deep tech research teams received 30 applications from a wide array of research fields, as detailed in deliverable D3.3 - Track 1 Engagement Results. Additionally, 14 applications were submitted for the role of Technology Transfer Officers (TTOs). Overall, the S3E Start received 44 applications. S3E Charge, according to deliverable 2.4 - Track 2 and 3 1st Open Call Engagement Results, received 36 applications from growth startups. While 36 corporates initiated the application process on the F6S platform for S3E Reverse, only 13 challenges were ultimately accepted.

Mentorship and Brokering

The S3E project facilitated mentorship for research teams, growth startups and brokerage services connecting corporates with scaling startups. These interactions fostered collaboration and knowledge exchange within the community.



Community Meetings

Recognizing the importance of fostering community spirit among participants, community meetings were established within S3E Start and Charge. These meetings provided a platform for logistics discussions, pitching sessions among teams, and the sharing of valuable feedback. Participants, including university professors with spin-offs and investors/founders, shared experiences, tips, and information, leading to collaboration opportunities.

The extensive mapping of the ecosystem and the connections forged since the program's inception, have led to collaboration opportunities with other stakeholders. These collaborations extend the reach of the S3E program, engage audiences in Southern Europe and globally, and enhance participation in webinars and events, mentioned throughout this deliverable.

The vision of the S3E project is to create a nourishing and inclusive community that will persist beyond the completion of the program. This enduring community will continue to drive innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development, marking a lasting impact on the Southern European ecosystem.

Training and Upskilling

The project established tailored tracks (S3E Start, S3E Charge, S3E Reverse) offering skills development, business development support, investment access, and technology brokerage services. These tracks equipped participants with the tools and knowledge needed for success.

6.2.3 Reaching out to the ecosystem

Transparency and Information Sharing

The S3E project prioritized transparency by making project-related information, including the Open Call #1 details, available on the Zenodo platform (<https://zenodo.org/communities/s3e-heurope/>). This open access platform ensured that interested parties could easily access critical project information, promoting transparency and knowledge sharing.

Furthermore, all documents related to the training sessions were shared through an internal Google Drive accessible to all program participants. This facilitated seamless access to training materials and resources, thus enhancing the learning experience.

S3E facilitated collaborations between scaling startups and corporates, enhancing the community's growth potential and providing solutions to real-world challenges.

Strategic Partnerships and Alliances

To extend its reach and impact, the S3E program is actively seeking strategic partnerships with key industry players, academic institutions, and governmental bodies that are not currently part of the S3E community. These partnerships aim to create a symbiotic relationship where both parties can benefit from shared resources, knowledge, and networks. For instance, alliances with



academic institutions can provide S3E with cutting-edge research and a pool of young talent, while the institutions gain access to real-world applications and potential funding opportunities.

Public Engagement and Outreach

Recognizing the value of public engagement in expanding the ecosystem, the S3E program plans to initiate a series of public webinars, workshops, and hackathons targeted at stakeholders who are not yet part of the community. These events will serve as platforms for introducing the S3E program's objectives, achievements, and opportunities for involvement. They will also provide a venue for stakeholders to share their insights, thereby enriching the program with diverse perspectives and potentially leading to new collaborations.

By adopting these approaches, the S3E program aims to create a more inclusive and expansive ecosystem. These strategies not only serve to engage a broader audience but also enrich the program with diverse perspectives and resources, enhancing its overall impact and effectiveness.

6.3 Expanding the Community: Growth and Collaboration

6.3.1 The S3E 2023 Cohort Community

An interesting fact that emerged from the interaction of the research teams and especially the start-up teams of S3E Charge so far has been the **community building** amongst the program participants. In S3E Charge, apart from the webinars and meetings with mentors, there was not much opportunity to connect the participants with each other, so **community meetings** were established to go through logistics, to do pitching amongst the teams and to share feedback. Those meetings were the ground for teams to share their experience, tips and information relevant to all (some of the participants are **university professors** that have spin-offs or **investors/founders**). Collaboration opportunities have thus emerged for EU programs submission and feedback from interaction with investors, leading to creating a **synergistic community among participants**.

All in all, the extensive mapping of the ecosystem and the connections forged since the beginning of the program have led to collaboration opportunities with other stakeholders that disseminate the S3E program, helped us reach audiences in the South of Europe and at a global level has increased participants in our webinars and the Charge Open Day event. It is the vision of this project to create a **nourishing and inclusive community of the S3E program** that will continue to exist after the completion of the program.

6.3.2 Geographical and thematic synergies

To augment the visibility of the S3E project and the participants in it, the S3E team will be reaching out to the projects and initiatives that are presented in detail in D2.3 the Synergies Plan and exploring opportunities to work with them, particularly in countries where the projects overlap. To ensure that there is no duplication of efforts for supporting the European deep tech community



for countries/regions covered by S3E and other projects, certain in-person or digital meetings will take place. The S3E project aims to invite projects in some of its thematic webinars and masterclasses that have been organized for the participating researchers, TTOs and start-ups/SMEs, commencing in mid-April 2023 lasting through July 2023 and also invite some of their key experts to deliver some webinars.

6.3.3 Joint outreach activities

The S3E project places great importance on promoting knowledge and research outcome sharing among peers and potential users. To achieve this goal, the projects may work together to share their results by publishing joint memos, or by actively collaborating on editing and submitting joint special policy papers, articles or other published material. In addition, the partners of the projects could make efforts to co-participate in policy events, workshops and conferences hosted by other projects, organizations or institutions, to promote their common goals and objectives.

Joint communication undertakings

The S3E intends to enhance collaboration with other projects by:

- Engaging with other projects' social media accounts.
- Encouraging other projects (and consortium members) to follow S3E social media accounts.
- Exploring opportunities for issuing joint press releases and articles.
- Exploring possibilities for creating joint social media campaigns to boost the visibility of the projects' outcomes.

A joint event on ecosystem challenges

As many of the challenges in the South European deep tech ecosystem are common with all projects and initiatives, the S3E team will take the initiative for a joint event to discuss challenges, opportunities and best practices towards the end of the S3E program in Q4 2024.

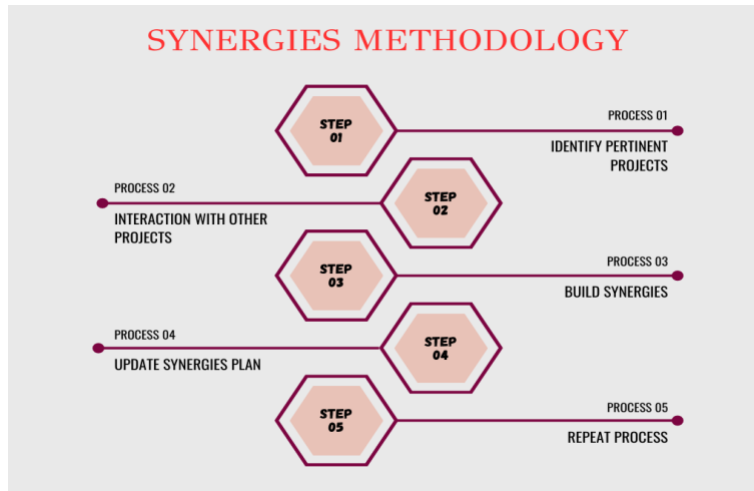


Figure 7. S3E Synergies Methodology from D2.3 Synergies Plan

Furthermore, in the frame of Engagement activities, for the Open Call #2 we will strengthen our Communication and Dissemination activities, based on the lessons learnt from the previous program. The actions considered are the following:

- Individual visual identity for each track, addressing each communication action to the target audience, avoiding misunderstanding.
- A Press and Media Strategy, to increase awareness about the project opportunities and boost the impact of the project.
- Creating new connections with relevant actors of the research and innovation ecosystems in Southern European countries that can support our promotion activities and attract new nationalities into the program.



7 Maximising Impact

7.1 How we define Impact Assessment

OECD defines impact as a “positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended”. In most definitions Impact Assessment is the process of **evaluating the change** (positive or negative) an action can have in an ecosystem or environment. This change can be measured in both a quantitatively and qualitatively approach.

It is often the case where the line between action evaluation and impact assessment is bleared. The two processes are always interlinked, and both necessary. Evaluation tends to focus on the achievement of outputs and objectives, whereas impact assessment focuses on the **actual results and impacts** our action will have in the innovation ecosystem, beyond the simple measurement of performance or implementation indicators. Nevertheless, quantitative impact assessment requires developing relevant indicators (KPIs), establishing a baseline and collecting data through many sources and methods.

In S3E **we define Impact Assessment** as a process of continuously monitoring and evaluating the achievement of our objectives and examining their impact throughout the duration of the project and beyond.

Our **hope** is to **be the catalyst** that will boost the networking of the members of the ecosystem, raising understanding of the opportunities of Deep tech and stimulating the creation of new innovative solutions.





7.2 Metrics used to evaluate the program's success

The measures of success and forecasted impact indicators for each measurable dimension of the S3E project objectives are presented in Table 3 for the full project cycle.

Dimension	Indicator	Target	Justification
Engaging entrepreneurial research teams	# R&D organisation contacted to help in research teams & trainees' engagement	65	Assuming 4 per target country
	# Research teams contacted	1.000	Estimated minimum for engaging the desired number research teams assuming 5% conversion rate
	Conversion rate (%)	5%	Based on experience by one of the consortium members
	# Screening interviews	100	Assuming a 50% compliance with the criteria for onboarding
Providing skills in technology commercialization	# Teams enrolled	50	Assuming a 20% waiver of participating teams in the training program
	# Research teams presenting @ Open Day	40	Based on experience by one of the consortium members
	# Mentors engaged	60	Assuming two mentors per team and an 80% repeat over the two cohorts
	# Trainees engaged	40	Assuming an average of 3 per target country
Accelerating growth stage start-ups	# Business development support services contacted	50	Assuming an average of 4 per target country
	# Applicants	150	Assuming an average of 3 per business development support service contacted
	# Participating start-ups	60	Assuming 40% applicants will satisfy criteria to enter the program
Market traction for scaling start-ups	# Corporates contacted	540	Assuming an average of 20 per EU country
	# Corporates presenting challenges	30	±5% conversion rate
	# Scaling start-ups replying to the challenges	120	4 per challenge to ensure sufficient match





	# Corporate – start-up matches	45	Assuming an average of 1.5 matches per challenge
Access to dilutive and non-dilutive funding	# Investors participating in open days	100	Estimated on network connections of the consortium members
	# Projects & start-ups connected to public funding opportunities	20	Connecting 10 projects and 20 start-ups to relevant public funding opportunities
Promote and publicize deep tech start-ups and developing innovation ecosystems	# Unique website visits	6.000	Required to attract high exposure and engagement
	# Social media engagements	12.000	Based on networking experience of consortium members
	# Open Day participants	300	3 times the number of investors
	# Number of media articles	24	1 per month starting at month 6
Coordination	Average Net Promoter Score from research teams and projects	50+	Benchmark for excellence
	Sustainability plan	1	Detailed and updated plan to ensure sustainability of the project beyond its lifecycle

Table 10. S3E Metrics

7.3 Evaluation and feedback process

In order to better understand and evaluate the project's impact we have to start by **creating clear links between the various components** of the project from objectives to KPIs to expected impact. We can then measure the success of the project by collecting data and feedback from various sources.

7.3.1 How we are monitoring our action

Impact assessment needs reliable data and the establishment of a continuous, action monitoring system that will allow us to collect these data and organise them in a meaningful way. To this end, we have established an Impact Dashboard as a vital tool for continuously assessing and evaluating the outcomes of the S3E Program. This dashboard is the main repository of statistics and data and is evolving with the project as it is enriched with results from evaluations, surveys and feedback from partners and beneficiaries of this engine programme.

7.3.2 Data Sources

The impact assessment monitoring is using a combination of quantitative and qualitative sources of data. The main sources for compiling it are:



- **Online surveys** based on structured questionnaires that are used consistently and throughout the various activities of the project.
- **Interviews:** In-depth interviews with program participants, mentors, experts, and other stakeholders provide qualitative data that complements survey findings.
- **S3E database** of applications during the Open Calls.
- **S3E database** of deliverables.
- **Data and methodologies** from the implementation of previous programmes led by the partners of the consortium or publicly available.

7.3.3 Success stories and testimonials

In addition to the quantified results nothing can work better than a strong narrative. A narrative will allow us to capture, preserve, curate, organise and communicate sets of unstructured entrepreneurial experiences, stories and anecdotes that can help individuals as well as institutions delve into, to find inspiration for new ways of conceptualizing and promoting entrepreneurship, and how these new ways can be reflected into every-day practices, policies, and foundations for visions of our common European future.

In synergy with project Excellent: Excellency in Entrepreneurship: Expanding European entrepreneurship by boosting youth (self) employability and promoting a sharing resources culture (GA 101100515) we plan to promote the value of entrepreneurship and startup stories and narratives as incomparably strong and motivating. Instead of elaborating theories with use cases or case studies, we promote the idea of offering real-world cases that are shared by entrepreneurs themselves and which can be used to guide young entrepreneurs to each step of their journey. This approach will help creating a needs-driven and evidence-supported, reference model for developing, testing, and pitching Business/startup ideas.

7.3.4 Fostering Synergies

The Synergies Plan (D2.3) explored the establishment and nurturing of synergies with other initiatives and EU programs (e.g., Startup Europe, EITs, Startup3) can guarantee a wider reach of our project output and impact. All partners will **increase the connectedness among members of deep-tech start-up ecosystems** and their companies (regardless of their stage of development) and to the larger European business ecosystem seeking maximum synergies. Synergies can start from bringing all projects from the EIE Scaleup Calls together and working on common activities. The programmes of the HE-EIE-SCALEUP-01-01 call are:

ACRONYM	TITLE	DESCRIPTION
SPREAD2INNO	SPREADING the global potential of developing innovation ecosystems to strengthen INNOvation in regional and local businesses	SPREAD2INNO brings together different innovation stakeholders – incubators





AccelerAction	A pan-European Networked Acceleration Programme to expand acceleration ecosystems and foster the scalability potential of European business	The European innovation landscape is still geographically unbalanced
ACCELERO	Accelerating Local Innovation Ecosystems in Europe	Europe has been in the forefront for research and innovation
Food-scalEUp	Food-scalEUp: expanding the European digital agri-food acceleration ecosystem	Food_scalEUp is a collaborative project involving 10 organisations covering 11 regions (5 emerging & moderate innovator regions and 6 leader and strong innovator regions)
BEYOND	Boosting pan-european Exchange between acceleration ecosYstems for improving quality and Outreach of business acceleration services in Developing innovation ecosystems	BEYOND aims to achieve a more interconnected European business acceleration industry in between 'modest' or 'moderate' and 'strong' or 'leading' acceleration ecosystems in Europe

Table 11. EIE Scaleup Projects

Expanding the search, we can identify more than 90 projects under the European Innovation Ecosystem initiative. Some of them are not only relevant but may be complementary.

Synergies can also be created with projects under Excellence Hubs initiative of WIDERA programme (HE-WIDERA ACCESS-04-01). IDI is a key partner in SolarHub Excellence Hub and can create the necessary links between the 2 communities.

7.4 Ensuring Sustainability

Sustainability is a cornerstone for the long-term impact and success of the S3E initiative. While the project has a defined timeframe, its influence and benefits should extend well beyond its official conclusion. Here are the strategies to ensure the sustainability of the S3E project:

7.4.1 Establishing a Self-Sustaining Community

One of the most effective ways to ensure the sustainability of the S3E project is to cultivate a self-sustaining community of stakeholders. This involves creating platforms and forums where members can continue to collaborate, share knowledge, and access resources even after the project has ended. The community itself becomes a living entity, continually generating value and attracting new members, thereby ensuring the longevity of the S3E ecosystem.

7.4.2 Strategic Alliances and Spin-offs

Forming strategic alliances with governmental bodies, academic institutions, and industry organizations can provide the project with additional resources and avenues for impact. Furthermore, successful initiatives within the S3E project could be spun off into independent entities, contributing to the project's legacy and ongoing relevance.





7.4.3 Policy Advocacy

Engaging in policy advocacy to institutionalize the best practices and insights gained from the S3E project can also contribute to its sustainability. By influencing policy, the project can leave a lasting impact on the innovation ecosystem, shaping frameworks and guidelines that will continue to drive deep tech entrepreneurship in Southern Europe.

7.4.4 Documentation and Knowledge Transfer

Comprehensive documentation of the project's methodologies, KPIs, and impact assessments can serve as a valuable resource for future initiatives. This knowledge transfer ensures that the insights and lessons learned are not lost but are available for subsequent projects, thereby multiplying the project's impact over time.

By implementing these sustainability measures, the S3E project aims to create a lasting impact that will continue to foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and sustainable development in the Southern European ecosystem long after the project's official end date.





8 Conclusions

8.1 Achievements and Vision for the Future

The S3E project has made significant progress in its first year of activities, overcoming challenges and establishing a strong foundation for the future cycles. This chapter summarizes the key achievements so far and outlines the vision and goals for the final year of S3E and beyond.

The first open call of S3E received an enthusiastic response with 194 applications across the three tracks - Start, Charge and Reverse. After a rigorous evaluation process, 30 research teams and TTOs in START, 36 start-ups in CHARGE, and 25 solution providers responding to the challenges of 13 corporates were onboarded with the help and support of the partners and 90 experts.

The project successfully delivered the planned services including tailored training programs, mentoring and technology brokerage. Over 40 hours of trainings and close to 190 sessions of mentoring were conducted. The community building efforts also paid off, with participating teams networking and exploring potential collaborations.

The dissemination and communication activities generated awareness about S3E's mission and opportunities. This expanded S3E's stakeholder network significantly, as reflected in the website traffic, social media followers and newsletter subscribers.

The monitoring and impact assessment protocols were implemented effectively, collecting valuable feedback through surveys and interviews. The dashboard offers data-driven insights into the project's performance on key metrics.

On the whole, S3E has achieved its major objectives for the first year, building the operational Engine and onboarding an engaged Community to participate in it. The project has gained recognition in the deep tech ecosystem and laid the foundations for greater impact.

8.2 Challenges Faced

As part of our comprehensive assessment of the S3E Program, we delve into specific challenges faced by each track: S3E Start, S3E Charge, and S3E Reverse. These track-specific challenges shed light on the unique hurdles encountered and lessons learned within each program segment. By understanding these track-specific dynamics, we can tailor our strategies for future iterations, ensuring a more streamlined and effective experience for all participants. Join us on this journey as we explore the intricacies and insights within each track of the S3E Program.





8.2.1. S3E Start Challenges

Simultaneous Open Calls: Running the S3E Start, Charge, and Reverse tracks simultaneously led to confusion among the target audience. The dissemination strategy resulted in lower applicant and eligible applicant rates.

Conversion Rate: Building a deep tech ecosystem takes time, which is reflected in the 2.4% conversion rate. The challenge is to improve this rate by leveraging testimonials from participants and encouraging technology transfer officers (TTOs) to join research teams.

8.2.2. S3E Charge Challenges

Lack of Interaction: Initially, there was limited interaction among participating start-up teams due to the customised mentoring sessions. This affected the sense of community among teams.

Dropouts: Some teams dropped out, and mentors faced commitments, resulting in additional workload for the program team.

Clarity in Communication: Ensuring clear communication about the program's nature and mentor commitment is vital.

8.2.3. S3E Reverse Challenges

Challenge Maturity: Challenges submitted by organisations sometimes lacked maturity and clear problem definitions.

Engagement from Challenge Organisations: Motivating participation from challenge organisations with weaker innovation cultures proved challenging.

Misunderstanding of Program Model: Some challenge organisations dropped out when they realised the program didn't provide direct funding, misunderstanding the brokerage-focused model.

Technology Broker Commitment: Some technology brokers had concerns about the time commitment initially proposed.

In conclusion, the challenges faced by the S3E Program are an integral part of its growth and development. These challenges, whether pertaining to engagement, communication, or program design, have provided valuable lessons that are instrumental in shaping the program's second open call. While each track—S3E Start, S3E Charge, and S3E Reverse—had its unique set of obstacles, the overarching goal remains the same: fostering deep tech innovation and collaboration across southern Europe.

Through thoughtful reflection and adaptability, the S3E Program aims to address these challenges head-on. Enhanced communication, clearer program expectations, and more robust engagement strategies will contribute to a more seamless experience for participants. As the program evolves,



it will continue refining its approach, making it increasingly effective in catalysing innovation partnerships.

The S3E Program recognizes that the journey toward building a thriving deep tech ecosystem takes time and persistence. With the resilience to learn from past challenges and the commitment to leverage lessons for future growth, S3E is poised to make a lasting impact on southern European innovation.

8.3 Vision for the Future

Building on the momentum from the first year, S3E aims to expand its reach and impact going forward. The second open call has already been launched in September 2023 looking for innovations explicitly aligned with the UN SDGs.

The community building will continue with events, partnerships and policy engagements. Participation from prior teams will be facilitated to leverage their experience and networks.

Training content will be adapted and updated if necessary to further cover sustainability, investment readiness, policy regulations and emerging deep tech topics. The corporate-startup brokerage model will be strengthened by attracting more mature scaleups.

Beyond the project's lifetime, the goal is to sustain S3E as an independent entity promoting deep tech entrepreneurship. The consortium partners are exploring options for generating revenue, attracting sponsors and securing public funding.

The imparted skills, collaborations formed, and ambitions stirred in the first year sets up S3E for even greater success in its final phase. The S3E project is committed to building capacities and mindsets to drive innovation and entrepreneurship across Southern Europe's deep tech ecosystem.

It should be noted that we intend to continue updating and refining this document as our programme progresses. We hope that at the end of the project, this document will serve as the main guide for the implementation of such an engine programme.



9 References

9.1 Reference to other documents

All our public references can be found in Zenodo in our S3E community, available at <https://zenodo.org/communities/s3e-heurope/>

The screenshot shows the Zenodo interface for the S3E Horizon Europe Project community. The top navigation bar includes the Zenodo logo, a search bar, and links for 'Upload' and 'Communities'. On the right, there are 'Log in' and 'Sign up' buttons. The main content area is titled 'S3E Horizon Europe Project' and features a 'Recent uploads' section with a search bar and three entries:

- March 7, 2023 (v1)** - S3E Open Call #1 - REVERSE for SOLVERS Open Call Documents. Description: S3E Consortium; The S3E REVERSE Open Call documents include the Guidelines for Applicants and the Open Call Text and are mandatory to read and follow in order to apply for the S3E REVERSE Open Call for Solvers. Any doubt, please contact the S3E Consortium through this. Uploaded on March 7, 2023.
- October 31, 2022 (v3)** - S3E Open Call #1 - REVERSE Open Call Documents. Description: S3E Consortium; The S3E REVERSE Open Call documents include the Guidelines for Applicants and the Open Call Text and are mandatory to read and follow in order to apply for the S3E REVERSE Open Call for Challenge Organisations. Any doubt, please contact the S3E Consortium t. Uploaded on December 21, 2022. 3 more version(s) exist for this record.
- October 31, 2022 (v3)** - S3E Open Call #1 - START Open Call Documents. Description: S3E Consortium.

On the right side, there is a 'New upload' button and a community profile for 'S3E Horizon Europe Project' with the S3E logo. The profile includes a description: 'At S3E we are building an engine of growth to improve the connectedness and efficiency of the entrepreneurship ecosystems in Southern European countries. We focus on the acceleration of deep tech initiatives, startups and SMEs that can lead the way towards a more sustainable social development and economic growth in these countries.' It also lists metadata: Curated by: s3e_heurope; Curation policy: Only material related to S3E project; Created: June 27, 2022; Harvesting API.

Figure 8. S3E Zenodo

9.2 Data protection

The D.1.1 Data Management Plan (DMP) of the S3E project outlines how the project data will be handled during the lifetime of the project.

Please refer to <https://www.f6s.com/privacy-policy> to check the F6S platform data privacy policy and security measures and to <https://south3e.eu/privacy-policy/> to get informed about the S3E Privacy Policy.

