



S3E Charge

Guidelines for Applicants for open call #02

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Table of contents

1	Introduction	4
2	S3E overview	4
3	S3E Charge at a glance	5
3.1	Who is this program for?	5
3.2	What will you get from the program?	6
3.3	How is the program structured?	6
4	Open Call #2	7
5	Timeline	9
6	Eligibility criteria	10
7	Open call submission	10
7.1	Application form questions	11
7.2	Criteria rank	11
7.3	Open Call #2 publication	11
7.4	Proposal preparation	11
7.5	Proposals reception	12
8	General Information	12
8.1	Means of submission	12
8.2	Language	12
8.3	Data protection	12
9	Information and support	13



1 Introduction

S3E – Southern European Entrepreneurship Engine is a project, funded by the European Commission, focused on accelerating **deep tech projects, start-ups, and SMEs** that aim at providing solutions towards a more sustainable society and economy in line with Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)¹.

The program is built around **three tracks** of carefully designed services tailored to support the stakeholders of each track in advancing their technologies, products, processes, or services towards the market. Participants in the programs will be selected through open calls.

This document provides a full set of information regarding the S3E Charge program, namely the **guidelines for applications**.

2 S3E overview

The **S3E – Southern European Entrepreneurship Engine** project mission is to develop an **engine of growth** that will contribute to improve the connectedness and efficiency of the **entrepreneurship ecosystems in southern European countries**.

S3E consortium partners are:

- **HiSeedTech** - A not-for-profit association founded by private companies that came together with the purpose of enabling the creation of value from knowledge through technology entrepreneurship and open innovation.
- **EPLO Institute for Sustainable Development** – part of an international organization dedicated to mainstreaming the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the EU Green Deal, providing capacity building, policy work and educational programs.
- **IDI** (International Development Ireland) specialised in practical day-to-day implementation for Government agencies in economies which are growing and changing rapidly
- **Australo** Interinnov Marketing Lab SI - is a marketing agency specializing in growth hacking for research and innovation.

The S3E project is co-funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 European innovation ecosystems under the grant agreement ID: 101072135 ([see here the Cordis fact sheet](#)).

¹ <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>





S3E will focus 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 NextGenerationEU fund.

S3E will provide skills to researchers and technology transfer actors in science-based entrepreneurship and technology commercialization, supporting growth stage start-ups in business development and in procuring investment, and providing 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):

- **S3E Start:** Aimed at 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:** Aimed at growth start-ups, S3E provides mentoring and networking to develop an investment-ready business plan and facilitate 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.



S3E START



S3E CHARGE



S3E REVERSE

Figure 1. S3E Tracks

3 S3E Charge at a glance

3.1 Who is this program for?

S3E Charge is for **growth start-ups** with deep tech products, services, or process concepts, grounded in a scientific discovery or meaningful engineering innovation and at a growth development stage, that are already in the market.





For this program, a **growth start-up** is a business that aims to grow and scale quickly to serve a global market and needs support to develop an investment ready business plan to access to non-dilutable and/or dilutable funding, that is, it does not have funding or have pre seed and its TRL is up to 6-7.

3.2 What will you get from the program?

On S3E Charge you will get mentoring and networking to develop an investment-ready business plan and will have support to access to non-dilutable and dilutable funding.

The mentoring process will guide the growth start-up teams in the development of a business plan for a product, service or process that makes them investment ready and takes their validated business case to an investor attractive level. So, you will acquire skills in technology commercialisation, science-based entrepreneurship, business development and intellectual property protection using your own business offerings through tailor-made mentorship.

When you finish the program, you will have developed a business plan for a product, service or process and you will have acquired skills and be investment ready to:

- link your product/service/process product with market needs,
- better communicate your offerings to potential clients and investors,
- become market ready to pitch, persuade and readapt your business offerings to different audiences, depending on market needs.
- connect to 'Innovation Leaders' and 'Strong Innovators' Ecosystems
- better understand to protect IP.
- prepare an investment ready business plan.
- get access to funds and funding.

The outcome of the S3E Charge **will better position you to apply for public or private funding and programs**, because it will help you link your business offerings to market needs and become market ready to pitch and attract investments whilst having validated and honed your business plan and your value proposition.

3.3 How is the program structured?

The **starting point must be a written business case** characterizing the product concept and the opportunity (market need), the technology and the development plan, intellectual and strategy, the market and the first customer, the competitive advantage, and the funding needs. The selected start-ups will participate in a program that provides **mentoring and networking**. Regular mentor meetings will be held throughout the program to exchange experiences and the network of contacts to provide to the participating start-ups. Each start-up will be assigned with one mentor.

S3E Charge offers you a 14-week tailor-made program that involves:



- **Mentoring** (by pan-European industry experts) that will guide each growth start-up through the validation of the project, the development of the investment-ready business plan and the investment process. The mentors supporting the S3E Charge edition are individuals who are connected to deep tech and entrepreneurship, and who are prepared to help start-ups solve problems that arise throughout the program. You can see an updated list of mentors on the S3E website (<https://south3e.eu>). Note: meetings with mentors last 1,5 hours and are held every two weeks (7 meetings in total).
- **Networking** with industry leaders and investors and showcase opportunities at the S3E Open day in which the teams will give a 7-minute pitch followed by a 10-minute Q&A period to investors. **Post Open Day** the project will have a mechanism to facilitate one-on-one meetings between investors and start-ups.

It is also important to mention that the investment ready business plan, to be delivered as the outcome of the program, will build upon the business case provided by the participating teams, and shall include detailed sections on (i) opportunity description, (ii) product concept, (iii) technology, IP and pipeline, (iv) market analysis, (v) strategic framework, (vi) sales plan and marketing, (vii) development roadmap, (viii) financials and (ix) team. The validation of the assumptions supporting the different sections of the business plan (using external primary sources) is a key point that the mentors will need to provide support through their personal networks and enforce.

Non-dilutable funding opportunities (both national and / or European) will be permanently scouted and posted on the project web site and mentors will also provide support for the start-ups to apply to these opportunities.

It is important to note that the approach used in the program **will be highly iterative**; in the sense that as the teams amass information from the market, they may be required to iterate back to improve previous decisions and findings. The role of the mentors is crucial in this iterative process in forcing the teams to iterate back and select the best opportunities. At the end of the program there will be an **Open Day end of April 2024**.

4 Open Call #2

S3E Charge is launching its second open call for applications.

S3E Charge call is open to growth start-ups from Southern European countries² with deep tech products, services, or process concepts, grounded in a scientific discovery or meaningful engineering innovation and in a growth development stage. Projects in the following scientific fields will be considered: agricultural sciences, engineering and technology, medical and health sciences, and natural sciences.

² For the scope of S3E, Southern European countries include the following European countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, and Spain. And the following Associated countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey.



The projects must envisage an economic and social impact, targeting one or more UN Sustainable Goals:

- **No Poverty (SDG 1):** End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
- **Zero Hunger (SDG 2):** End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
- **Good Health and Well-Being (SDG 3):** Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.
- **Quality Education (SDG 4):** Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
- **Gender Equality (SDG 5):** Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
- **Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG 6):** Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
- **Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG 7):** Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all.
- **Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8):** Promote sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all.
- **Industry Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG 9):** Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
- **Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10):** Reduce inequality within and among countries.
- **Sustainable Cities and Communities (SDG 11):** Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.
- **Responsible consumption and production (SDG 12):** Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- **Climate Action (SDG 13):** Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
- **Life below water (SDG 14):** Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas, and marine resources for sustainable development.
- **Life on land (SDG 15):** Protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
- **Peace, justice, and strong Institutions (SDG 16):** Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels.
- **Partnership for the goals (SDG 17):** Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalise the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

The S3E Charge Open Call #1 will be launched on **September 18, 2023 (12:00 CET)** and will close on **December 15, 2023, at 17:00 CET**. Regardless of the number of applications, up to **30 start-ups from Southern European Countries** will be selected. Selected startups will be announced on **January 12, 2024**, and the program will start on **January 18, 2024**, and end on **April 26, 2024**.



The F6S platform will be the entry point for all proposals' submissions to S3E Open Calls, which is directly linked from S3E website (<https://south3e.eu/>). Submissions received by any other channel and after the open call deadline will be automatically discarded.

Growth start-ups should apply via: <https://www.f6s.com/s3e-charge/apply>

For the application form and detailed guidance for applicants, please download the files available at the <https://south3e.eu> website.

The S3E consortium will organize at least **four Q&A Webinars** and be present at events in November and December 2023, to connect with interested applicants. Please note the following dates of our Q&A Webinars and follow us on social media and our website to get updates:

- 28 September | 13:00 CET
- 30 October | 13:00 CET
- 21 November | 13:00 CET
- 13 December | 13:00 CET

Save your place at <https://south3e.eu/>

5 Timeline

Submission to the Open Call #2 for growth start-ups will be launched on **September 18, 2023 (12:00 CET)** and the deadline for applications is on **December 15, 2023, at 17:00 CET**.

Please find below the expected timeline for the open call and the program. The opening and closing dates of each stage can be subject to change in case of any modifications in the project's schedule.



Figure 3. S3E Charge timeline.



The evaluation process will be composed by two stages:

- First, the application will be assessed by S3E project partners to validate if it conforms to the eligibility criteria.
- Second, the application will be assessed by a pan-European committee that, if required, will select the top ones for an interview.

The selected projects will be announced on January 12, 2024, and the program will start on the January 18, 2024, and last till end of April 2024 when the Open Day of the S3E Charge Program will take place.

6 Eligibility criteria

S3E Charge is for **growth start-ups with deep tech products, services or process concepts**, grounded in a scientific discovery or meaningful engineering innovation and at a **growth** development stage that want to take their business offerings to investors and leverage the mentoring and networking opportunities of the S3E program, all aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs).

For this program, a **growth start-up** is a business that aims to grow and scale quickly to serve a global market and needs support to develop an investment ready business plan to access to non-dilutable and/or dilutable funding, that is, it does not have funding or have pre seed funding and its TRL is up to 6-7.

Growth start-ups are considered eligible for S3E Charge Open Call #2 if complying with **ALL** the following rules:

- Must be established as a start-up in the following science fields: agricultural sciences, engineering and technology, medical and health sciences, and natural sciences. Please check the full categories here.
- The deep tech solution project must envisage to provide an impact on one (or more) UN SDGs for this call.
- Must submit a **short description** of the start-up and activities; a **video presentation** of a pitch deck focused on sustaining the value proposition for the proposed product, service or process concept; a **written business case** characterizing the product concept and the opportunity (market need), the technology and the development plan, intellectual property status and strategy, the market and the first customer, the competitive advantage and the funding needs, and a **statement of the motivation** of the team to participate in the call.
- Must be established in one (or more) of these countries: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey.





7 Open call submission

On the Open Call #2, S3E Charge will **select up to 30 growth start-ups to participate in the program**. All growth start-up teams should fulfil the eligibility criteria as expressed in Section 6 and submit the application form on F6S.

The application form for **growth start-ups** is available at:

<https://www.f6s.com/s3e-charge/apply>

7.1 Application form questions

Growth start-ups:

- Identification of the team members,
- A short description of the start-up and activities,
- A video presentation of a pitch deck focused on sustaining the value proposition for the proposed product, service, or process concept,
- A written business case characterizing the product concept and the opportunity (market need), the technology and the development plan, intellectual property status and strategy, the market and the first customer, the competitive advantage, and the funding needs,
- The SDGs the project aims to address, and
- A statement of the motivation of the team to participate.

7.2 Criteria rank

The criteria to rank the applications from **growth start-ups** will include the:

- value proposition for the proposed product, service, or process concept, and
- the unique market opportunity that the product covers,
- motivation to participate in the training program and the entrepreneurial spirit of the team, as perceived from the interview, will also contribute to the applications ranking.

Selected growth start-ups will be announced on January 12, 2024, and the program will start on January 18, 2024, and end on April 26, 2024.

7.3 Open Call #2 publication

The Open Call #1 will be published on **September 18, 2023 (12:00 CET)**. It will be supported by:

- **S3E Charge Open Call #2 Text**, which provides a full set of information regarding the Open Call for Proposals for the S3E Charge.
- **S3E Charge Guidelines for Applicants**, this document.

Interested applicants should register at the F6S (www.f6s.com). This will be the central interface for managing the proposal applications for the remainder of the open calls.





7.4 Proposal preparation

Please follow the steps:

1. For the proposal preparation, the applicants are requested to apply online and answer all mandatory questions.
2. Be concrete and concise. Please examine all the Open Call documents and attend the various events promoted by the S3E Charge project, that will be made available at <https://south3e.eu/>
3. It is highly recommended to submit your proposal well before the deadline. If the applicant discovers an error in the proposal, and provided the call deadline has not passed, the applicant may request the S3E Charge team to resubmit the proposal (for this purpose, please contact us at info@south3e.eu). However, S3E Charge is not committed that resubmission in time will be feasible in case the request for resubmission is not received by the S3E Charge team at least 48 hours before the call deadline.

It is strongly recommended to not wait until the last minute to submit the proposal. Failure of the proposal to arrive in time for any reason, including network communications delays or working from multiple browsers or multiple browser windows, is not acceptable as an extenuating circumstance. The time of receipt of the application as recorded by the F6S submission system will be definitive.

7.5 Proposals reception

Submissions will be done ONLY via the F6S platform. A full list of proposers will be drafted containing their basic information for statistical purposes and clarity (which will be also shared with the European Commission for transparency).

The applications for S3E Charge will close as indicated in section 5 “Timeline” on **December 15, 2023, at 17:00 CET.**

The application form is available at:

<https://www.f6s.com/s3e-charge/apply>

8 General Information

8.1 Means of submission

The F6S platform will be the entry point for all proposals’ submission to S3E Open Calls, which is directly linked from S3E’ website: <https://south3e.eu>. Submissions received by any other channel and after the open call duration will be automatically discarded.





8.2 Language

English is the official language for S3E Open Calls. Submissions done in any other language will not be eligible and, thus, will not be evaluated. English is also the only official language during the whole execution of the S3E Charge program.

8.3 Data protection

The proposals are confidential, and each person involved in the program will sign and non-disclosure agreement, namely the reviewers of the proposals.

To process and evaluate applications, S3E will need to collect Data. S3E partners will act as Data Controllers of data submitted through the F6S platform for these purposes. The F6S platform's system design and operational procedures ensure that data is managed in compliance with The General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR). Each applicant will accept the F6S terms to ensure coverage.

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

9 Information and support

For the application form and detailed guidance for applicants, please download the files available at the <https://south3e.eu> website. Please check our website, follow our social media accounts³ and [subscribe to our Newsletter](#) if you want to stay tuned with this program.

Open call #2 support material:

- **S3E Charge Open Call #2 Text**, that provides detailed information regarding the S3E Charge program and its second Open Call for Proposals.
- **S3E Charge Guidelines for Applicants**, this document.

For other needs, please contact the [Help Desk](#).

³ Follow us on LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/south3e> and X (former Twitter): <https://x.com/south3e/>