



GUIDELINES

for application and participation in
AgriTech & TourTech Startup Program



Idea in brief

The Foundation for Sustainable Development PREDA Plus within the framework of its operations and project activities, has established **PLUS Accelerator** in the Municipality of Resen, where through specially designed start up program and other supporting services for start-ups will contribute to the economic development of the region of Prespa.

The creation and development of business and start-up community in Prespa and the wider region is the first step towards self-employment, the creation of new and/or modern jobs, and attracting investments.

Within the framework of the **PLUS Accelerator**, PREDA Plus Foundation will:

- organize and implement hackathon (event for creation, realization and competition of ideas), mentoring and training programs, networking events, presentation of business ideas to investors and all kinds of technical-administrative support for start-ups,
- provide an exchange of information, know-how and experiences for investment programs in support of start-ups,
- contribute to the establishment of a good cooperation network among the PLUS Accelerator, the public, civil society and private sectors in the municipality of Resen.

This document contains a plan and rules for implementing a start-up program for applying and participating in the first start-up batch in the Accelerator.

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Introduction

Purpose of the call

This document provides applicants with an informative overview of how to submit a high-quality proposal for the PREDA Plus Startup Program that aims to support innovative and prosperous start-ups based on the approved Strategic Plan of PRESPA Startup Accelerator¹.

Background of PLUS Accelerator

PREDA Plus implemented start-up programmes for the last four years and is established as a relevant factor for the development of the **start-up community in the Pelagonija region (the Prespa area is part of the Pelagonija Region)**. So far, six start-up programs have been launched and finalized, 5 targeting general start-ups and one specialized targeting fintech start-ups. The support is targeting start-ups in pre-seed phase. Until today, more than 77 teams and companies were supported to develop business models and links with potential investors. The established network of associates from the Macedonian start-up ecosystem as well as the close cooperation with the business sector are the basis for creating future sustainable start-up programs in this region.

Our overall goal is to ensure continuous and sustainable support of entrepreneurship in the Pelagonija Region, and in particular Prespa area (Municipality of Resen) and other regions outside Skopje through specially designed start-up programs, supporting the creation and development of business ideas, and contributing towards economic development, innovation, and job creation. The desired results are built on the existing potential of the region and human resources, focusing on entrepreneurs and start-ups to create jobs, enter to the labour market and enhancement of self-employment of targeted people in the wider Pelagonija region, upgrade entrepreneurs and start-ups skills and abilities, offer them support services for mentorship and seed funding, limit the brain drain phenomena the region is facing lately.

PREDA Plus start-up program aims to bring about a transformation through technology in the competitiveness and international perception of the agri-business, sustainable tourism sector in Resen, Prespa region and N. Macedonia as a whole. Its vision goes beyond building a PRESPA Startup Accelerator within the region of Prespa (Municipality of Resen) to playing a critical role in the development and growth of emerging technologies primarily for agri-businesses, sustainable tourism and blue economy in Resen and Macedonia as a whole.

PLUS Accelerator is built around the already existing capacities of PREDA Plus for support of start-ups and further upgraded and specialized in the agri-businesses, sustainable tourism and blue economy. In the short run, already-known PREDA Plus start-up services will be adapted to work for the agri-business and sustainable tourism such as networking and meetups, mentorship acceleration programme, hackathons, demo days, etc. Access to emerging technologies (e.g. drone technologies, smart farming, irrigation system, post-harvest technologies etc.) in these sectors is currently not available in Prespa area and are with limited access in the country, therefore it will be a priority in the long-run.

¹ PRESPA Start-up Accelerator is a working name and branding of the start-up program is in the process of creation.

The PLUS Accelerator program is supported by “The EU for Economic Growth (EU4EG)”, which aims at increasing the local economic activity and competitiveness in four target areas: North-East, Polog, and South-West planning regions and Prespa area (Municipality of Resen) by improving access of start-ups and Micro, Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (MSMEs) to financing and high value-added services. The duration of the project is four years until 01/2025.

The project implementation partners are Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit GmbH² (GIZ), and Area Science Park (ASP), Trieste, Italy as service providers in the field of international cooperation for sustainable development and international capacity development, experience in wide variety of areas, including economic development, private sector development and employment promotion.

² German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ)

Applicant Eligibility

Broad Eligibility Criteria

In order to be eligible for admission in the PREDA Plus Start-up program applicants must constitute one of the following:

- Start-up team or
- Start-up legal company.

Our focus is on women, young people under 40, and vulnerable groups that will have their economic activity and the new jobs created in the Prespa region.

Definition of a Start-up Team

Each team consists of members, one of whom should be the team leader. The number of members in the team (together with the team leader) for this Program can be at least two and at most five.

Criteria for start-up teams:

- majority of team members have Macedonian citizenship,
- has the potential of fast incorporation and scaling,
- the economic activity, and the new jobs are created.

Definition and Criteria for start-up companies:

- legally established as a for-profit entity in N. Macedonia (corporation, LLC, partnership or sole proprietorship),
- new or early-stage business from one to three years old (on the closing date of call),
- the economic activity, and the new jobs are created.

Eligibility Requirements

Applicants (start-ups / teams) must complete an Online Application Form to determine if Applicant meets the following eligibility requirements:

- has a technology orientation through its operation and/or services/products;
- has either developed prototype of its new innovative product or service OR it is in the developing stage of prototype of its new innovative product or service;
- intends to commercialize its innovative new product or service;
- is innovative and creative;
- has potential for growth and scalability (adoption to changing needs);
- is either providing solution in agri-food industry and sustainable tourism
- shows team compatibility.

General Information

Important Dates

Applicants should be aware that the PREDA Plus Startup Program call is a one-step process. The key dates to remember during the call period are as follows:

- Call Launch - **20th of March 2023**
- Results from Call – at the end of June 2023
- 3-months PREDA Plus Startup Acceleration Program (tailor-made trainings, lectures, workshops, mentoring and consulting - July 2023- September 2023
- Bootcamp, demo day & pitching - October 2023

Call for ideas 20 March 2023 – 15 June 2023	Results from Call for ideas 10 June 2023	AgriTech & TourTech Startup Program July 2023 – September 2023	Bootcamp, demo day & pitching and opportunity for grant October - 2023
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Funding

Applications which are selected, will be eligible for admission in the 3-months PREDA Plus Startup Acceleration Program. Within this Acceleration Program, participants will receive non-financial assistance consisting of participation in trainings, lectures, workshops, mentoring and consulting assistance of various kinds. The total calculated value of this support is 3.500 EUR per team.

In addition to this type of support, depending on the type of idea, the participants may be provided free use of space and/or some type of equipment, if PREDA Plus Startup Program has such opportunities. The use of such support will be regulated by the Annex to the Agreement for participation in the Startup Program.

Within this program, successful start-ups / teams will continue to a Boot Camp Weekend including Demo Day pitching Event, where they can pitch their business idea / concept in front of PREDA Plus Startup Program business angels, investors, VC's, corporations and partners.

Successfully graduated start-ups with economic activity in the Prespa area will have the right³ to apply for the EU4EG startup grant scheme (up to 50.000 EUR with min. 20% co-financing) for:

- A. Purchasing new modern machinery and equipment, production lines, tools and measurement instruments for scaling-up, increasing production capacity, improving business processes, product quality and production efficiency;
- B. Purchasing business support services, but not as the sole activity and/or only if related to the above-mentioned investments.

PREDA Plus Startup Program will match companies as a (most likely) first round of investments from business angels, investors, VC's or corporations in return to between 5-15% of equity, depending on the Valuation and the co-investment offer coming from the business angels, investors, VC's or corporations.

PREDA Plus Startup Program "seed investment" type of funding will be obtained in exchange for:

- an equity stake in the newly-established enterprise, or
- through a Convertible Note agreement.

Applicants that are not incorporated by the time of potential investment will have to legally register their business within a period of 3 months.

Additionally, a set of services will be added as supporting services on top of the seed-investment (such as: knowledge hub services, networking events, additional mentorship, consultancy, infrastructure, R&D, etc.) if applicants are in need of such services.

Origin of the Funds

The funds attached to the PREDA Plus Startup Program come directly from:

- EU for Economic Growth (EU4EG) Project in a form of a grant⁴
- Private Investors (Business Angels, Entrepreneurs, SME's, VC's and Corporations) – in a form of an investment.

Duration and Content of the PREDA Plus Startup Program

The total startup program will be 7 months (from March 2023 to September 2023) and consisted of: 1) application and selection process (from March 2023 to June 2023), 2) 3-months PREDA Plus Startup Acceleration Program (tailor-made trainings, lectures, workshops, mentoring and consulting) (June 2023-September 2023), and 3) Bootcamp, demo day and pitching event, as well as investment negotiation (September 2023).

The official acceleration program itself will be based on tailor-made workshops and support services, therefore covering a total time period of 3 months. Topics to be covered through the program duration

³ Via grant application and selection following established criteria including sector, type of economic activity, financial sustainability, etc..

⁴ ibid

are consisted of Startup Design Methodology individual tailor-made according the ideas and applicants' needs.

PREDa Plus Startup Program may adapt the program and the duration of some of the project phases if needed to best suite unexpected circumstances.

Means of Submission

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

<https://forms.monday.com/forms/c8cc85bbf95f6dfc144fe3d4395592c0?r=euc1>

One applicant (Startup or Startup Team) may submit only one application. An individual person can only participate in one application.

Language

All applications are to be submitted in English Language. Proposals which are submitted in any other language will not be evaluated.

Documentation Formats

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

Application areas

We welcome ideas based on:

- Tech product (or service),
- Working proof of concept, and
- Complementary founding team.

Focus of the PREDA Plus Startup Program

Tomorrow's global food supply challenges demand a radical approach to innovation in the food and agriculture sectors today. Due to their innovative capacity, PREDA Plus believes that startups are the propelling force behind the agri & food tech and sustainable tourism innovations required to meet global demand in the future. Our mission is to accelerate agri-business tech and sustainable tourism tech startups shaping the future.

Best suited teams and companies for the PREDA Plus Startup Program are:

- Ideas in early development stage with composed team and seeking guidance for the next steps.
- Working on the minimum viable product (MVP) or started market testing and are looking for a safe environment to experiment.
- Showing an international ambition, i.e., planning to scale internationally and are interested in international markets, collaborators, and/or staff.
- Seeing value in our ecosystem and are looking to exchange with scientific and industry experts.
- Believing in peer and community support.
- Striving for holistic value creation that heavily considers economic, environmental, and societal aspects of their business model.

Acceptable activities

Within the framework of this accelerator program, activities intended for the development of innovations that should result in products or services that are new in the offer in society and/or new in the market are acceptable. It also includes process innovation as long as those processes contribute to the development of a product or service. Start-ups that do not aim to develop a real product or service are not acceptable. Innovations may include innovative products, technologies, and/or service delivery innovations.

The product or service is a novelty in the offer to society, if there is no product or service with the same functionality, or if the technology and/or procedures by which that product or service was obtained is fundamentally different from the existing ones. The product or service is new on the market if there is no other product or service available on the market that has the same functionality, that is, the technology that the new product or service uses is significantly different from the technology of the existing ones.

Areas of interest

PREDA Plus Startup Program focuses on new technologies with the potential to significantly impact or improve current operations within the following areas:

Agri-business Technology

- **Agriculture production technologies:** novel crop inputs, digital farming processes (drones, sensors, IoT, predictive analytics, automation), irrigation technologies supply chain management, traceability innovations, monitoring systems, disease prediction & prevention, cellular agriculture, sustainable food production, use of natural fertilizers, etc.
- **Food technologies:** innovative value-added products, food processing & manufacturing, alternative proteins, food safety, process automation, innovative packaging etc.
- **Support services in agriculture and food:** energy efficiency, renewable energy, circular economy, agri-finance and e-commerce, marketing solutions, bio waste and bio leftovers solutions, soil carbon markets, etc.
- **Post-harvest technology solutions:** innovative apple-based end products (full menu), storage, transport, etc.

Sustainable Tourism

- Smart resource use: for e.g. energy and water, local agricultural products etc.
- Circular economy and waste management.
- Sustainable destination strategy and systems for its management.
- Sustainability certificates and labels.
- Visitor engagement and satisfaction.
- Communication, marketing and sales.
- Human resources and internal management.
- Technology and digitalization.
- Access to finance and incentives

Example of technologies that can be used, not exclusively: Artificial Intelligence (AI), Internet of Things (IoT), big data, augmented and virtual reality, etc.

While PREDA Plus Startup Program does not exclude service-oriented business models, it prefers companies that either possess or are developing some form of proprietary technology.

Guide to Filling in Call Questions

There are some key factors which will be assessed during the evaluation process. Please read the criteria listed below as a guide outlining how an application is likely to be evaluated:

One-liner: describe your business in one paragraph

In this section the applicant should outline a problem which they have identified, how they envisage to solve it, and what's benefits the solution will bring to the receiving customer.

Industry

An industry is a classification that refers to a group of companies that are related in terms of their primary business activities. For legally incorporated business, please provide your national classification number.

Customer Focus

- B2B – Business to Business
- B2C – Business to Customers
- B2G – Business to Governments
- C2C – Customers to Customers
- B2B2C – Business to Business to Customers

Number of co-founders & team members

The total number of (co)founders should be minimum 2 but not exceeding 5 people. Total number of support members may be more. These criteria are valid for both Teams and already registered Start-ups. Please provide their names, business roles and citizenship.

Describe the problem you are solving

When outlining the problem, the applicant should consider the number of people, businesses or end users that are affected. The applicant should also make use of quantitative and objective data to when describing the scale of the problem.

Describe the solution

The applicant is required to propose a solution to the business problem. It should be sufficiently clear as to how the proposed solution will operate to address the problem. In this instance the applicant should illustrate the process of how the solution will work and identify risks of likely obstacles and how these may be addressed during the development and deployment phases.

Describe who are your customers and your market

The applicant should demonstrate their knowledge of the existing market and the potential for their proposal. Attention should be given to the potential use in the testing and deployment environment, identifying the target end-users such as people, businesses or end users, and existing or similar applications in the market.

Submission Process

Open Call for Proposals

The PREDA Plus Startup Program Open Call for Proposals will be launched on March 24, 2023. The call will be published on the PREDA Plus website (<https://predaplus.eu/startup/agritech-tourtech/>), on the PREDA Plus social media platforms and on suitable web portals. In addition to the Call, PREDA Plus Startup Program will also publish the Guidelines for Applicants – to guide applicants through the application and evaluation process

The documents will be published and made available while applicants are submitting their applications.

Also, PREDA Plus will publish informative and educational posts on social media during the whole session.

Evaluation Process

Overview of the Evaluation Process

As previously mentioned, this Call for Proposals is a one-step process.

Each application will be reviewed by members of Selection Committee according to the following criteria:

- Innovation & creativity of the solution,
- Scalability (Adoption to changing needs),
- Understanding of the problem described,
- Team compatibility.

Communication

During the application and evaluation period all communication between PREDA Plus Startup Program and applicants will be conducted via email. It is important therefore that if a change of email occurs at any point during the process that PREDA Plus Startup Program is informed to ensure each applicant remains updated on the latest developments.

The unofficial communication may be conducted by phone, via social-media or in person.

By submitting an application form, the Applicant confirms:

1. Acknowledges reading and understanding the selection criteria,
2. Acknowledges that he/she is applying for admission to the PREDA Plus Startup Program and understands that the information contained in this application will be held in strictest confidence,
3. Acknowledges that he/she understands that this application is subject to review and in no way guarantees Applicant's admittance to the Program.

Points of contact

Contact points for applicants within the PREDA Plus Startup Program (General Information; Information for applicants; Information for partnerships)

Phone: 047/ 203 113

e-mail: lidija.angelkova@predaplus.eu