



## Junta de Andalucía inaugurates the Startup Europe Accelerathon Euroregion Alentejo-Algarve-Andalucía for the Covid-19 challenges and climate change

- *An open innovation programme to promote innovative technologies in the **Alentejo-Algarve-Andalusia Euroregion**.*
- *The Accelerathon was inaugurated by **José Enrique Millo Rocher**, Secretary General of External Action of the Ministry of the Presidency, Public and Interior Administration of the Junta de Andalucía.*
- *The event was attended by people from Spain, Portugal, Belgium and Mexico, 22 experts and representatives from the Alentejo-Algarve-Andalucía Euroregion participated and **more than 100 people were connected through platforms such as Zoom or Youtube**.*
- *A webinar, in the Portuguese **Presidency of the Council of the European Union**, as indicated in its priorities: "**It is time to act: for a fair, ecological and digital recovery**".*

09.03.2021. On Tuesday, March 9, 2021, the 2021 call for startup Europe Accelerathon Spain-Portugal was officially launched for the search for innovative solutions for the challenge of **combating Covid-19 and climate change in the Alentejo-Algarve-Andalucía Euroregion (EUorregion AAA)**. The Accelerathon methodology follows the directions of the United [Nations Sustainable Development Goals \(SDS\) contributing from each](#) challenge to the proposed SDP objectives – this time, [SDP 13: taking urgent action to combat climate change and its effects](#). It is a programme within the framework of the European [Commission's DG CONNECT](#) Startup [Europe Awards](#) methodology that was born from DG [Research, Development and Innovation](#) in 2020 with the pan-European [Hackthevirus campaign](#).

The webinar addressed the challenges of **innovation and cooperation against climate change** and discussed the **already famous European health passport, the Euro Digital Green Pass** (blockchain and Covid Free), challenges faced by both Spain and Portugal within the context of pandemics. The event co-financed by the Ministry of the Presidency, Public and Interior Administration of the Junta de Andalucía, served as a forum to encourage cooperation and encourage new talents to encourage and bet on their **ideas on combating climate change and covid-19**.



The day, attended by four representatives of European, Portuguese and Andalusian institutions, ten experts and five entrepreneurs, was the kick-off of this Accelerathon, an open innovation programme implemented by the Finnova Foundation, a foundation that facilitates access to the different European financing tools from a technological, disruptive, innovative and sustainable approach. On this occasion, innovative proposals have been sought to alleviate climate change and to adjust to the current health emergency, starting at all times from cross-border collaboration between the three regions that make up the AA Euroregion.

You can sign up for the challenge at the following link: <https://form.jotform.com/finnova/accelerathon-euro-aa>

You can see the event again at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lkWTqFLy9jk>

José Enrique Millo Rocher, Secretary General of External Action at the Ministry of the Presidency, Public and Interior Administration of the Junta de Andalucía, inaugurated the event from Seville and highlighted the commitment of the Junta de Andalucía in promoting cross-border cooperation because of the "unique and special character" of this autonomous community thanks to its strategic location and its particular characteristics within Spain and Europe. In addition, "the establishment of the EuroregionAAA has served to formalize a unit of work, which has resulted in greater efficiency in the use of resources and greater efficiency in the implementation of common strategies and projects between the three regions that make up it". José Enrique Millo also underlined the crucial role that the European Union plays in Cross-Border Cooperation "as part of the great European Integration project". On this occasion, the Secretary-General highlighted the work of the [INTERREG POCTEP Programme](#) through projects such as the Iberian Centre for Forest Fire Research and Control ([CILIFO](#)) which, with funding of EUR 24.6 million, is the most funded INTERREG forest fire project in the history of the European Union.





Juan Ignacio Zoido, a member of the European Parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, from Brussels, began his speech by emphasizing **the importance of European collaboration in these pandemic times, both in health and environmental matters, as these are challenging that states cannot successfully address individually.** In this regard, he also cited the **CILIFO Project** as an international reference in the fight against fires, in turn noting that "natural disasters have no borders". **Fires are one of the most serious consequences of climate change in the Iberian Peninsula, and these types of accidents are increasingly extensive and dangerous, with the capacity to wipe out entire counties.** The MEP stressed in this regard that, in **Spain, almost 100,000 hectares of forest area are burned each year in more than 12,000 fires and that because forest fires do not understand borders "they must be one of the main issues of cross-border cooperation".** Finally, Zoido underlined "Juanma Moreno and Carmen Crespo's **commitment to the 'Green Revolution', which is crucial to the economy**" and stated that he was delighted to welcome the winners of this [Spain-Portugal Accelerathon](http://www.accelerathon.eu) in Brussels.



On behalf of Portugal, from Lisbon (Portugal), the National Coordinator of [POCTEP](http://www.poctep.eu), Joao Bule, gave an overview of the Interreg POCTEP Programme and explained that **cooperation along this border, considered the oldest and longest (with 1234 km) of the European Union, has been held for decades.** In addition, he added that the current POCTEP programme "has supported projects related to some of the European Commission's main priorities, such as a **greener, more digital and more inclusive Europe.**" POCTEP operates in several areas, one of which is Area 5, Alentejo-Algarve-Andalusia, where the CILIFO project fits. The overall value of POCTEP 2014-2020 is in the **order of EUR 484 million in public expenditure, with an ERDF of EUR 364 million.** We are completing the resolution of the fourth call. These four calls resulted in the submission of 775 applications and 234 approved projects. An excellent example is collaboration between the three regions, and therefore joint protocols for action, knowledge and **exchange of good practices are being established, which are being translated into infrastructure and innovation for the prevention and extinction of forest fires, including training.**





**Maria de Lurdes Carvalho**, from Faro (Portugal), as director of services for the Algarve Regional Coordination and Development Commission, presented the challenge of "innovation and cooperation against climate change in the Algarve". Regarding the Covid-19 he stressed that, in Algarve, the number of new confirmed cases is represented graphically by a declining curve that is expected to continue to decrease. **In the Algarve from the beginning, there has been a great effort to combat the pandemic and diagnosis.**



Medical services, both from the Regional Health Administration, hospital services, Academic Research Center, have done a great job and even innovation. In addition, it referred to the recovery and resilience plan, in the context of mitigating the effects of climate change, "we have, around 200 million euros for the regional water efficiency plan in the Algarve," said Carvalho.

Finally, **Juanma Revuelta**, CEO of Finnova, launched the challenge related to Covid-19, and tourism, **nuanced the need to implement a European health passport (EuroDigital Green Pass) to reactivate especially affected economic sectors such as tourism.** This tool, he added, would not only provide security in the travel and processing of data, but can also become a **very useful tool in the health field in general.**



Next, the members of the Accelerathon jury took the floor, in the **block entitled "Initiatives aimed at supporting and promoting innovation against Covid-19 and climate change in the AAA Euroregion"** who were presenting themselves one by one and setting out the various initiatives aimed at supporting and promoting innovation in which they are directly involved in their professional activity. In total, there were **10 experts, from the business world, the public administration, non-profit entities or scientific or technological research, in a bloc aimed at supporting and promoting innovation.**

**José Manuel Requena**, from Seville (Spain), as director of the CILIFO Project in Finnova, alluded to the accelerator Firefighting Open Innovation Lab-CILIFO, from which 18 initiatives are already supported in the framework of forest fires: "**We encourage all entities involved to sign up for the Accelerathon**". Requena is a specialist in the [LIFE Programme](#), as she has worked as a technical manager of European projects for different Spanish public and private companies.





**Pedro Chaves**, from Faro (Portugal), as forestry technician of the Intermunicipal Community of the Algarve (AMAL), explained that at AMAL investment is divided into the development of twenty landscape management programs in ninety integrated areas and that the first pilot project was in the Sierra de Monchique, it is intended that what follows is in the Sierra del Caldeircao. The AMAL Intermunicipal Forestry Technical Office promotes the articulation and compatibility of planning tools at the municipal level and monitors and promotes the homogeneous transposition of Regional Forest Management Plans (OSRs) into Forest Master Plans (PDM), among other activities.



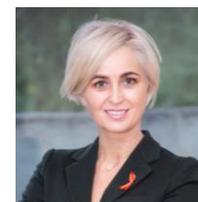
**María José Valero**, from Valencia (Spain), as an irectora ofTalent Growth Management stated that they are “starting with the youngest talent to break molds”, referencing the business project he currently leads, based on the firm belief and commitment to the growth potential of talent of **people** and companies (Talent Growth Management). From there, they support companies in their reorganization, in the establishment of control and communication guidelines, and ensuring the best management of their resources (human, financial and productive), in short, leading change and professionalization. She is currently an ambassador for [Technovation Girls Valencian](#) Community and equips young women (10 to 18 years old) to become leaders and tech entrepreneurs. With the support of volunteer mentors, girls work in teams to code mobile apps that address real-world issues.



**José Luis Muñoz**, from Madrid (Spain), as senior advisor [Next Generation EU](#), and expert in strategic programsand projects of the European Union, explained that the post Covid "takes us to a new environment of transformation and there are a lot of opportunities specifically for rural areas". So, he said, this is a place where you can help generate innovation ecosystems." José Luís is a member [of the Strategic Group on Urban Mobility of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology \(EIT\)](#). **European leader of the Pioneers into Practice (PeP) Climate KIC Climate Action Programme with** more than 1500 climate experts from across Europe, and Manager of Portugal's Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS) at Climate [KIC](#). Founder and president of Europe's first country-level EIT Cross-KIC Executive Team in Spain (2016-2020).



**Rosa Siles**, from Seville (Spain), as Managing Director Fundación Andalucía Emprende, said that "the new reality presents us with new challenges and new ways of addressing them, and cross-border cooperation is essential". He then explained that the horizon must be opened "so that entrepreneurial talent can come to know other experiences." Rosa Siles is a counselor and mentor for companies, start ups, confederations of entrepreneurs and non-profit entities of a national and international nature, as well as for government entities such as the Junta de Andalucía and the Government of Spain.





In Andalusia Emprende they promote the creation and development of companies and employment and promotes entrepreneurial culture in the region.

**Sofia Martins**, from Algés (Portugal), as project manager at [IrrADIARE](#), where they implement integrated approaches to support new visions on sustainability, development, competitiveness and quality of life. He explained in his speech cooperation "it is something that we have at the base of IrrADIARE". She was delighted to be part of the Accelerathon jury and welcomed the message that right now "it is essential that we all be cooperative and at this time and new ideas are an asset, because, however small they may seem, they can make a difference so that one can see them implemented on the ground." At IrrADIARE, Sofia participates in the implementation of energy efficiency and environmental sustainability support systems in supervision, management and planning.



**Nuno Guiomar**, researcher at the University of Evora (Portugal), explained that by collaborating with the CILIFO Project, they defined a research strategy that includes four major scenarios of action "in which we prioritize applied research, where we include actions in all phases of the fire management cycle to create bases to cover knowledge gaps and promote planning actions and evidence-based actions". Nuno said there is an "urgent need for a paradigm shift in policies that move away from the burned zone and focus more on addressing the effects of fire." From his experience as a researcher, he explained that a process innovation does not have to be a physical product, but one related to climate change and to the landscape."



**Josu Gómez**, from Seville (Spain), a strategic consultant and founder of [Red Business Market](#) (initiative to boost entrepreneurship and innovation in middle cities). Red Business Market is made up of more than 30 investment funds, Business Angels networks and Venture Capital nationwide and internationally. With more than 3000 startups and entrepreneurs and an investment capacity of more than 100 million euros.



**Guillermo Fernández**, from Madrid (Spain), as a representative of AROSA Consulting I+D, explained that in innovation there is only financing but also tax incentives to innovation, "we are delighted to bring our best expert knowledge in the management of aid to innovative projects". AROSA is a consulting company specialized in promoting and monetizing the technological and innovative activity of business organizations, managing both official public aid and tax incentives.





**Valentín Gómez**, from Madrid (Spain) as director of Business Development and Institutional Relations of Tragsa (Agrarian Transformation Company), commented that the Tragsa Group "has repopulated tens of thousands of hectares" and showed its full support for the Accelerathon initiative "I hope that good projects will be presented to value".



Next, a block was given way in which some innovative projects **were presented as an example of good practices**. From Huelva, Alfonso **Doctor Cabrera intervened**, who spoke about the actions that the University of Huelva (Spain) is carrying out within the framework of the CILIFO Project, such as the training of young research staff, especially necessary because there is currently no large mass of researchers involved in this field within the university. He also highlighted the incorporation of specific machinery and equipment thanks to CILIFO.

**Carlos Piedra**, general manager of Grupo Valora, connected from El Puerto de Santa María (Spain) to explain his work **in the field of waste management and valorization through its transformation into raw materials to give them agricultural, forestry or environmental restoration use**, among others. He stressed the importance of how companies like his, dedicated to waste management and the circular economy, can generate many direct and indirect jobs in rural areas. It also presented a solution developed by the Valora Group consisting of a technological substrate made with residues that decontaminates the atmosphere and fertilizes the soil.

From Lisbon (Portugal), **Pedro Forjaz Carreiro**, officer engineer at AgriStarbio, **exposed the challenge of the growing population, which results in increased use of chemical fertilizers and increased production of municipal and lives to organic waste**, which is a problem for farmers and foresters, as well as for the environment. The solution they offer from AgriStarbio to tackle these problems is a technology that collects all organic waste, which is processed in a reactor and results in organomineral fertilizers in less than three hours. Pedro Forjaz also spoke about how this solution contributes to fire prevention and burned soil regeneration.

From Elche (Spain), **Adrián Nadal López** participated, general manager and representative of Bioferrik and winner of [IVACE- WATER STARTUP EUROPE AWARDS 2020](#). Bioferrik's co-founder explained how this technology-based startup has as its main activity the sale of industrial purification facilities of compounds, for which they use a technology consisting of the use of magnetic microparticles to recover some concrete waste from the effluents of the industry.

The last example of good practice was that of **David Vinué**, from the Polytechnic University of Valencia (Spain), representative of ETHON, winner of [CILIFO – STARTUP EUROPE ACCELERATHON 2020](#). Vinué stressed the importance of Accelerathon and collaboration, as well as the need to trust mentors.



The day ended with the intervention of **Beatriz Martínez**, officer of communication of CILIFO in Finnova, who explained in detail the methodology of work to follow, as well as the characteristics and requirements that the proposals must meet in order to be taken into consideration and be able to participate and the main key dates. This Accelerathon is open to all those ideas that bet on cooperation and innovation as a solution to environmental and social problems such as forest fires and biodiversity loss, some of the great challenges of the EuroregionAAA.

**Accelerathon bases are available at:** <https://accelerathon.eu/accelerathon-espana-portugal-euroaaa>

Juanma Revuelta on behalf of Finnova and as a partner of **COP25** (United Nations Climate Change Conference) reported that the winner of the competition will be eligible to present his solution in November at **COP26 Glasgow**, as an event has been requested within the framework of the Firefighting Open Innovation Lab-CILIFO. Finnova traveled to Madrid in 2019 to be present at COP25 to hold [two events, one on water and one on climate change, forest management and firefighting](#).

#### About Startup Europe Accelerathon ([www.accelerathon.eu](http://www.accelerathon.eu))

Startup Europe Accelerathon aims to identify innovative ideas capable of obtaining funding from the European Union, such as the LIFE, Green Deal, Horizon 2020 or NextGenerationEU programme. Startup Europe Accelerathon follows the directions of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by contributing from each challenge to the proposed SDP objectives; under the European Commission's DG CONNECT Startup Europe Awards methodology from DG Research and Development in 2020 with the pan-European [Hackthevirus campaign](#). It has been successfully carried out with governments such as the Valencian Community with the challenge of industrial polluting waters or Junta de Andalucía with the challenge of combating climate change, forest management and innovation in the prevention, firefighting and regeneration of burned spaces.

#### About Startup Europe Network

Startup Europe is an initiative of the European Commission, DG CONNECT, to connect and promote high-tech startups, scaleups, investors, accelerators, corporate networks, universities and media.

Learn more about Startup Europe: [Startup Europe | Shaping Europe's digital future \(europa.eu\)](#)

#### About Startup Europe Awards (HIS) ([www.startupeuropeawards.eu](http://www.startupeuropeawards.eu))

It is a methodology of dg CONNECT of the European Commission, implemented by the Finnova Foundation since 2016. SEUA is an open innovation tool to identify disruptive startups, promote public-private collaboration and raise awareness of the importance of self-priming as an employment-generating engine. In addition to building partnerships to help meet the United Nations SDS and the actions of the European Green Pact, thus contributing to the circular economy, the fight against climate change and sustainable tourism. The winners get support to turn their projects into large projects financially supported by the EU (between 500,000 euros and 17.5 million euros),



international legal support and lobbying, strategic mentoring, international networking, investor access and support for internationalisation worldwide.

#### About CILIFO – Collaborating Project ([www.cilifo.eu](http://www.cilifo.eu))

The Iberian Centre for Forest Fire Research and Combat (CILIFO) is funded by the Interreg V-A Spain – Portugal – POCTEP Cross-Border Cooperation Programme (2014-2020), has a total budget of 24.6 million euros and is the Interreg project with the highest funding in the history of the forest fire programme. Focuses on the fight against forest fires and their consequences for climate change adaptation and mitigation; in a framework of cross-border cooperation for the prevention of risks and the improvement of the management of the natural resources of Spain and Portugal in the Euroregion Alentejo - Algarve -Andalusia. The project follows the directions [of Un Sustainable Development Goal 13](#): Take urgent action to combat climate change and its effects.

#### About Firefighting Open Innovation Lab – CILIFO ([www.innovation.cilifo.eu](http://www.innovation.cilifo.eu))

The CILIFO Project through its Firefighting Open Innovation Lab – CILIFO (accelerator – incubator managed by Finnova) supports the initiatives of entrepreneurs and companies in the field of prevention and fight against forest fires. There are currently 18 companies affiliated to the accelerator and are being mentored and guided to initiatives in the search for European funding.

#### About Finnova ([www.finnova.eu](http://www.finnova.eu))

European Foundation for the financing of innovation headquartered in Brussels and with offices in Andalusia, the Basque Country, the Valencian Community, Madrid, the Canary Islands, and with its own delegations of local law in Romania, Panama and Chile and whose objectives are to promote public-private cooperation through innovation to address social challenges such as employment, training, entrepreneurship, the United Nations SDS , the circular economy, health, digitization, water and renewable energies. One of his priorities is the training of young talent in European affairs management in Brussels.

#### Contact

Beatriz Martínez Muñoz, European Projects and communication officer at the Finnova Foundation. E-mail:

[beatriz.martinez@finnova.eu](mailto:beatriz.martinez@finnova.eu)

Phone: +34 605 52 10 84