



2026 PILOT — EIT WATER & POUL DUE JENSEN FOUNDATION

## WAVEMAKER Business Creation Award

Call for Applications · Regional Event, Thessaloniki

The Region of Central Macedonia invites early-stage start-ups and university spinouts working in the water, marine and maritime (WMM) sectors to apply for the WAVEMAKER Business Creation Award — a regional pitching and mentoring event held under the 2026 Pilot of EIT Water, the European Institute of Innovation and Technology's newest Knowledge and Innovation Community, co-funded by the European Union and the Poul Due Jensen Foundation.

**Thessaloniki will host one of only eight WAVEMAKER regional events taking place across Europe in 2026.**

### What we are looking for

We welcome solutions that address one or more of the following EIT Water Strategic Objectives:

- Securing and reversing marine and freshwater ecosystem degradation and compromised water quality
- Overcoming limited water efficiency, recycling and resource circularity
- Increasing resilience to climate-related extreme events and external threats

Our regional focus is **on climate resilience**: Central Macedonia faces intensifying droughts, flash flooding and ageing water infrastructure across river basins. We are particularly interested in smart water monitoring, flood early-warning systems, and drought-resilient agricultural water management — but all WMM solutions within the objectives above are eligible.

### What you get

- Pre-event coaching sessions with expert mentors to sharpen your pitch and business case
- A five-minute pitch before a jury of academic, industry, investor and utility experts
- Breakout mentoring open to all participating teams — not only finalists
- Direct exposure to the regional innovation ecosystem, investors and public authorities

**The three regional winners each receive a one-year EIT Water membership for 2027.**

**A representative of the first-place winner will be invited to pitch at the EIT Water Launch Event on 15 October 2026, competing for the overall WAVEMAKER title — an additional one-year EIT Water membership (2028) and a EUR 5,000 monetary award.**

### Who can apply

- Early-stage start-ups, spinouts and venture teams in the water, marine and maritime sectors
- Based in Greece or in the wider South-East European region
- At a stage where mentoring, validation and market-readiness support add real value

We actively encourage applications from women-led ventures, teams from rural and peri-urban areas, and participants from EU Cohesion regions. The venue is fully accessible and application materials are available in Greek and English.

## Key information

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|----------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Event date           | 18 September 2026                                                    |
| Venue                | Regional Council Hall, Region of Central Macedonia, Thessaloniki-TBC |
| Format               | In-person                                                            |
| Language             | English                                                              |
| Application deadline | 10 September 2026, 23:59 EET                                         |
| How to apply         | d.innovation@pkm.gov.gr                                              |
| Participation fee    | None                                                                 |
| Contact              | Maria Goulaptsi — m.goulaptsi@pkm.gov.gr — +30 2313 319 611          |

## Selection

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Applications will be assessed on the relevance of the solution to the strategic objectives above, the stage and readiness of the team, the potential for market uptake, and the value the team stands to gain from the programme. Selection criteria are applied transparently and all applicants will be notified of the outcome.

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