

# Sofia Urban Challenge

AIR POLLUTION SOLUTIONS WANTED

**APPLICATION DUE: 15 SEPTEMBER**  
**APPLY IF YOU ARE: STARTUP, SPIN-OFF OR SME**  
**FINALS: 12-13 OCTOBER**



## Sofia City Urban Challenge

FINALS, 12-13 OCTOBER 2017, SOFIA

SOFIA CITY IS LOOKING FOR EXCELLENT START-UPS THAT CAN OFFER SOLUTIONS FOR CLEAN AIR.

[APPLY](#) UNTIL THE 15TH OF SEPTEMBER 2017 AND GET A CHANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE URBAN CHALLENGES PITCH EVENT IN SOFIA IN OCTOBER 2017, PRESENT YOUR SOLUTIONS TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND ACCELERATE YOUR INNOVATION!

### The city of Sofia

Bulgaria's capital is home to  $\approx 1.3$  million people and it is the 15th largest city in the EU. At present, both the population and the economy are growing - 40% of the country's GDP is produced here, while the unemployment rate stands at 2.5%. Over 50% of the inhabitants are in the age group of 20-54 yrs.

### The problem

As in many other cities around the globe the air over Sofia is polluted with fine particles (Particulate Matter 10). The city is situated in a valley, surrounded by mountains to the north and south, reducing the circulation of air, which leaves the polluted air lingering over the city for prolonged periods of time. During the cold months the issue is at its worst - PM 10 exceeds the recommended concentrations. The main contributing factors to this threatening issue are the domestic use of solid fuels (especially in winter time) as well as the heavy traffic of old private vehicles and lack of wind due to the topography of the region.

### What has been done so far to solve the problem?

In order to improve the transportation facilities and ease the heavy traffic in the city, Sofia Municipality has been investing heavily in expanding the metro lines and replacing the entire fleet of busses. However, parallel to the increasing disposable income of people, we observe a significant decrease in the use of public transportation in favor of even more cars on the streets.

Other measures include forestation, restoration of green spaces and equipping buildings with energy efficiency installations. Additionally, the Municipality commissioned the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences to develop early warning system for atmospheric conditions favoring air pollution.

## Sofia Municipality's capacity to innovate

In the past 5 years, Sofia Municipality worked to establish Sofia as a leading regional hotspot for innovation. Forbes listed our city as one of the 10 best places from around the world to start a company. In 2015 the first science and technology park in the region opened doors in Sofia. During this process, the Municipality built capacity to cooperate with startups to apply and help scale their solutions.

## We are looking for solutions in the following areas:

The two main contributing factors to air pollution in Sofia are the growing number of old private vehicles on the street and the domestic burning of wood and coal.

### #1 TRANSPORT AND MOBILITY

We are looking for ways to motivate behavioural change in people so that they use their cars less often.

### #2 ENERGY USE

The central issue to address here is the domestic burning of wood and coal. How can people be encouraged to shift from one energy source to another?

### #3 RETROFIT SOLUTIONS

Additionally, we want to explore retrofit solutions for buildings and cars that would help capture some of the pollutants before they are released in the atmosphere.

## Who can apply?

The applicants may be startups, spin offs and/or SMEs that offer effective and innovative solutions minimizing air pollution in urban areas. The solutions should fall within the three main areas mentioned: transport and mobility; energy use and retrofit solutions (please see description above). It will be an advantage if the proposed solutions have already been implemented in other cities.

## What will happen next:

A panel of expert jury will select promising startups with their innovations, which will be invited to participate in a pitch event in Sofia, Bulgaria. Prior the event a pitch bootcamp will be held in order to prepare the participants for their final presentations.

## Sofia city Air Pollution Challenge Pitch Event

The selected start-ups will get the chance to participate in Sofia's Urban Challenges pitch event which will be held in parallel to the high-level conference on European air quality – SOFAIR, organized by Sofia Municipality. National and EU policy makers, scientists, business companies and NGOs working and having interest in the field of air quality will be present at the conference. The startups will introduce their ideas to key-stakeholders and will be able to discuss future collaboration and opportunities for solution implementation. The local coordinator of the initiative - [Cleantech Bulgaria](mailto:info@cleantech.bg), will provide further mentorship, business development and local ecosystem network services to the winners in the pitch event.