
The Switchers Support Programme

Support for the creation and development of green, circular business models and enterprises



We are the Switchers Support Programme

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What is the Switchers Support Programme?



The Switchers Support Programme works to create an enabling ecosystem for entrepreneurs and small and medium-sized enterprises in the Mediterranean pursuing Circular Economy business models. The Switchers Support Programme works closely with young entrepreneurs that develop sustainable products and services and carefully engages with a wide range of partners, including policy-makers, business intermediaries and impact financing institutions. It is a unique regional programme supporting green entrepreneurs to design, develop and accelerate their green and circular business models, is set to be as the main catalyser of green innovation and green employment as strategic sectors for development in the Mediterranean region.

Specifically, the Programme provides entrepreneurs, business support organisations and local communities with business development services, networking opportunities and, most importantly, access to finance services.

The Switchers Support Programme is one of the demo-sub components of the EU-funded SwitchMed Programme launched in 2013 to speed up the shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns in the Southern Mediterranean, notably through the promotion of circular economy approaches. The activities benefit the private and public sector actors in 8 countries, namely Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Palestine and Tunisia.

The Switchers: inspiring changemakers who are switching towards a cleaner Mediterranean



The Switchers is a community of inspiring green entrepreneurs and changemakers in the Mediterranean region. Switchers are individuals, enterprises or civil society organisations implementing innovative ecological and social solutions that contribute to a switch to sustainable and fair consumption and production models. They are active in a variety of fields, including organic farming, sustainable tourism, waste management, organic textile, recycling of electronic waste, sustainable building, organic cosmetics production, among others. Most importantly, the Switchers is a community with a voice and a meeting place for people in the region who are passionate about shaping their environment towards a more sustainable future.

For the Switchers, circular economy solutions are at the heart of their business models and also inspire them to seek ways to innovate and achieve even higher levels of environmental sustainability in the design of products and services they provide. Together, these important economic actors are making significant progress towards one of the region's key sustainable development objectives: to accelerate the shift to more sustainable modes of consumption and production. In doing so, they are setting a positive example of how economic growth can also lead to protection of the Mediterranean and its precious, limited natural resources.



Our approach

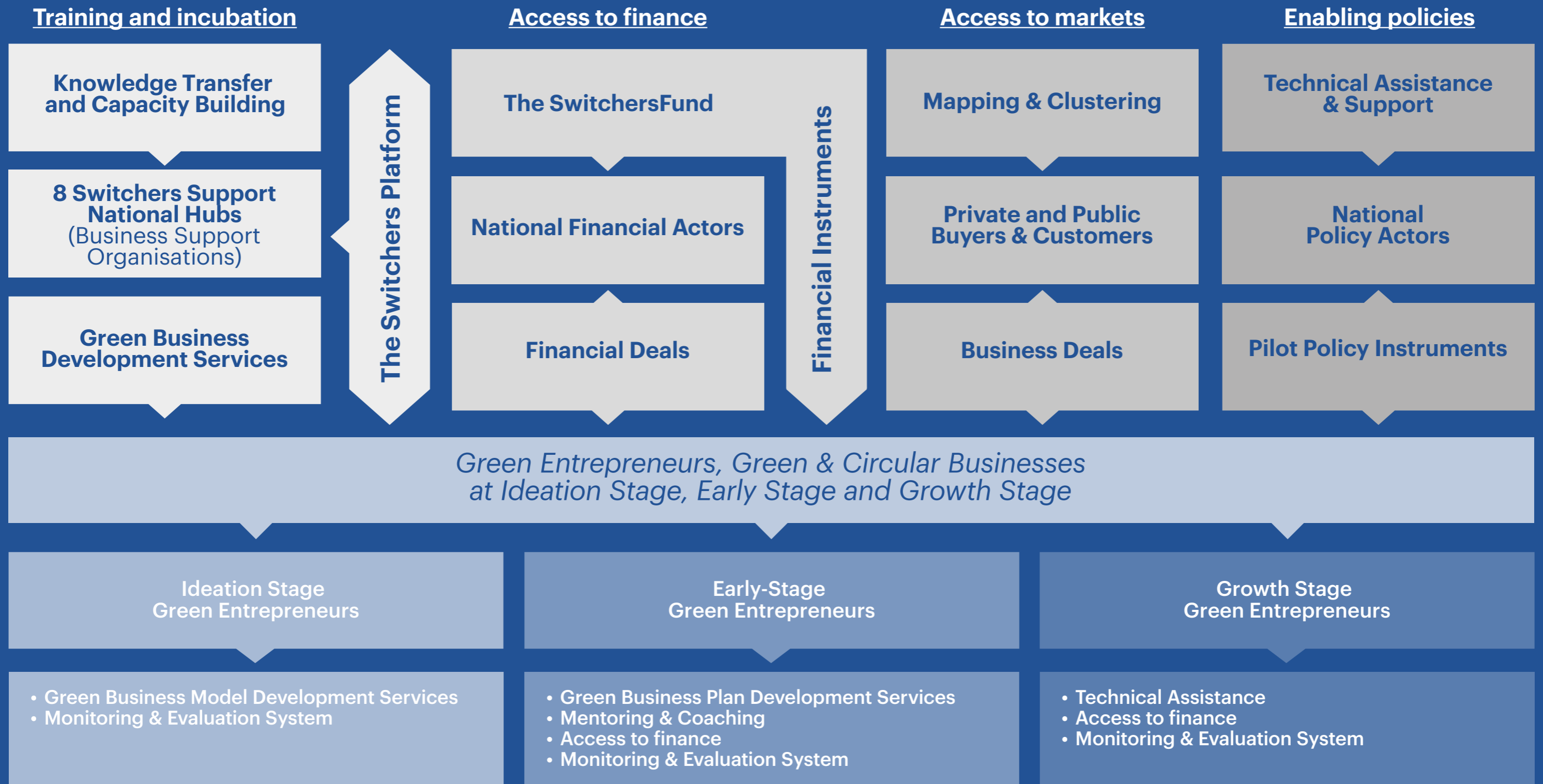


- We build local capacities in the field of Green and Circular Economy.
- We engage with a wide range of partners including policy-makers, business intermediaries and impact financing institutions both at regional and national level.
- We connect and bring together all stakeholders in the field of circular businesses and create synergies in share experiences with other like-minded change makers and amongst other key players.
- We boost green growth by accelerating and facilitating new circular businesses ideas and showcasing.

How does it work?

Through the Green Entrepreneurship, Networking and Policy Facilities, the Switchers Support Programme works for the creation and development of green and circular business model at regional and national level

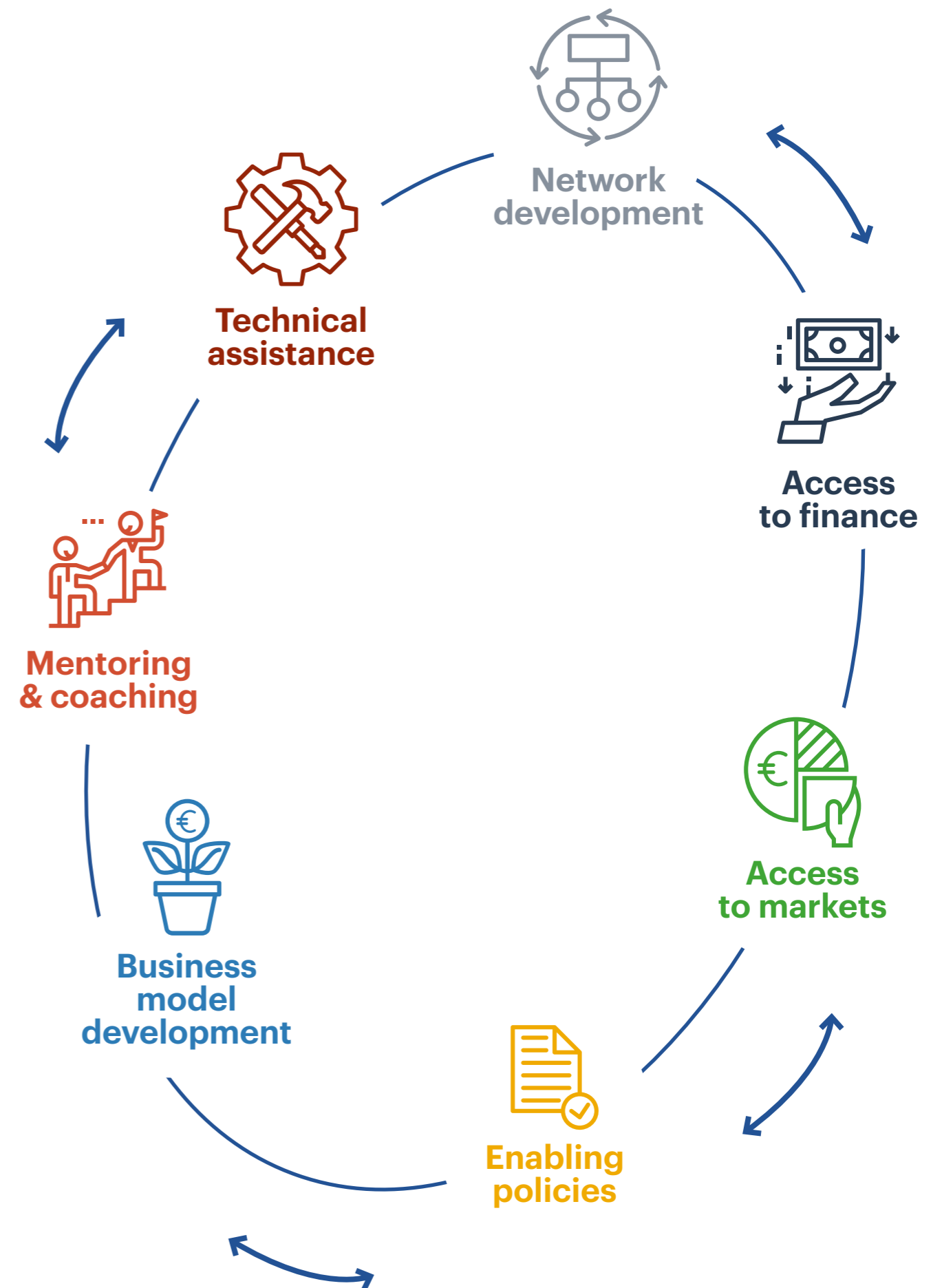
by providing green business development via training, coaching and incubation, access to finance, access to markets and enabling policies.





200 new green businesses have been established, providing around 1,000 jobs.

How can green entrepreneurs benefit from our programme?



The programme is for you if...



- You are looking to boost your entrepreneurial spirit.
- You would like to get guided through your entrepreneurial journey, from defining the idea to the commercialisation of products and services.
- You wish to launch a business that is capable of generating added value at all levels: economic, environmental and social.
- You are an ideation or early stage entrepreneur who wishes to discover entrepreneurial solutions to their challenges.
- You wish to partner with like-minded organisations, share experiences and get inspired by them.

Why is the programme unique?



1

Inclusive and interdisciplinary approach
The Green Business Model Development service uses an inclusive and interdisciplinary approach allowing a greater outreach in terms of rural/urban patterns and targeted population.

2

Innovative methodology
The training methodology on green business development and knowledge creation is highly relevant and applicable to the local context and needs of the green entrepreneurs.

The incubation methodology is perceived as relevant and appropriate with high-quality standards and tools clearly defining the steps involved in the process.

3

Effective training delivery methods
Quality delivery mechanisms are ensured using extended mentoring methodology combining face-to-face mentorship and practical work over a longer period than other support programmes, taking into account also the cultural local context.

4

High quality local trainers
Top notch trainers who are experienced in the support and assistance of entrepreneurs and in the creation of start-ups and enterprises.



5

Tailor-made technical expertise
High-quality technical expertise provided, enabling quality delivery mechanisms and accelerating the business life cycle of green entrepreneurs.

6

Outstanding networking opportunities
It provides strong and far-reaching networks that allow foster visibility and attractiveness of green and circular business models, as well as engagement and commitment among local stakeholders.

7

Access to finance
Needs-based approach is used to design the access to finance services for green entrepreneurs at ideation, early and growth stages.

8

Great exposure for your business
Online, easy-to-use web platform increases visibility and exposure for green entrepreneur products and services.

9

Enabling policies
Facilitate participatory policy-making approaches, as they contribute to the ownership of green business support programmes by national actors increasing quality delivery mechanisms.

We also collaborate with...



The supporting partners in the Switchers' business ecosystem can be grouped into three main target groups:

- Business service providers to the Switchers including financing services (incubators, trainers, mentors, technical experts, financial institutions), also called Business Support Organisations (BSOs);
- Corporate buyers and customers of the Switchers (retailers, manufacturers, big brands);
- Local authorities (municipalities) & national governments (ministries).

Programme Service offer



A set of services has been designed, prototyped and tested to support ideation and early stage green entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean as part of the Switchers Support Programme.

The programme offers support to businesses through 6 elements:

- Training (Business development plan)
- Incubation (Mentoring & coaching and external technical assistance)
- Creating networking opportunities
- Access to finance
- Access to market
- Policies enabling circular economy business models

Training



This training is a 5-day training programme on green business model development, delivered over a 3 month period, accompanied by a simplified on-line support service between the training sessions, in which trainees design and test their business ideas. It is based on a theoretical, hands-on learning methodology developed by the SCP/RAC aimed at training green entrepreneurs to transform their business ideas into a sustainable and successful business model.

The methodology – comprised of a handbook and workbook on green business model development and green business plan development & incubation– guides green entrepreneurs through the entire process of growing their green business idea into a full-fledged enterprise. The methodology also provides tools and tests the green entrepreneur’s business models, by explaining step by step how to validate the business model’s hypothesis with targeted customers and stakeholders.

During the training workshops, the trainees create a business model with the help of the business model canvas, based on a previous business idea that solves an environmental challenge, and a lean start-up approach. As of today, the training programme has been implemented in eight countries within the MENA region.

“The training programme requires green entrepreneurs to reflect on and articulate how their business idea will bring value to the economy, the environment and the community. Through the practical exercises, entrepreneurs must clearly identify the underlying problems and needs they are addressing, map their stakeholders, interview potential customers, document their mission and their environmental and social value proposition. Also they learn to evaluate the resources and energy needed to create their product or service and think about how they will generate revenue streams, amongst other activities.”

Programme overview

Sketch and Build Module

- Overview of the Methodology
- Sketch your business idea
- Identify problems and needs
- Understand the context
- Set your goals, your mission and vision
- Stakeholders
- Customer segments
- Value proposition
- Test (test the value proposition- customers-stakeholders)
- Channels and relationships

Green entrepreneurs' homework

- Entrepreneurs submit their questions and work on their business project, developing all the requested exercises in detail.

Eco-design, finance and testing of hypothesis module

- Pivoting the value proposition
- Key activities and resources
- Eco-design
- Cost structure
- Revenue streams
- Test hypothesis and prototype

Green entrepreneurs' homework

- Entrepreneurs submit their questions and work on their business project, developing all the requested exercises in detail.

Review and pitch module

- Review of concepts
- Lessons learn from the tests
- Green business canvas and business model test

1

Sketch & Set:

You will be asked to sketch your idea and reflect on the reasons behind this idea, asking yourself "why" you want to make it happen

2

Build:

You will design your project by means of the green business canvas

3

Test:

You will need to set your personal assumptions aside and rigorously validate your idea, by testing your proposal based on real market conditions and an hypothesis-driven approach

4

Implement:

Once the model is market-validated, you will plan the functioning and development of the project, by projecting into the future and making estimations of sales, costs and other resources needed (financial plan)

5

Measure & Improve:

Lastly, when your business is up and running, you will put a continuous improvement plan into place thereby measuring the impact of your initial objectives and looking at how to better these

Who is it for?

Active, creative thinkers and doers who want to be green entrepreneurs, innovators and changemakers.

What will you learn?

You'll discover how to launch and manage new green businesses. You'll learn to transform your idea into a concrete green business model, implement and manage in-company innovation strategies and systems. And you'll also develop the ability to navigate the start-up funding process.

The overall goal of the training programme is to provide with knowledge and skills to selected green entrepreneurs to better shape their business idea by developing a green business canvas and a green business model.

Your professors

Local trainers with proven experience in the training of entrepreneurs and in the creation of start-ups and enterprises. They also have great knowledge on forward-looking green projects and experience in a field associated with green entrepreneurship.



Incubation

The Switchers Support Programme's incubation phase includes coaching, mentoring and technical assistance.

Coaching includes a 10 hours of one to one coaching to the two best business model canvases in each workshop in the eight countries to further improve and develop the business models of the green entrepreneurs. The business model is submitted to the International High Level Jury, which then decides if the green entrepreneur offers a tailored follow-up advisory service to selected trainees. The best local trainers are selected as coaches.

Mentoring includes 40 hours of one to one mentoring which runs for up to 32 weeks. Each entrepreneur is assigned a local mentor. Meetings are usually held in person with up to 30% of meetings conducted via phone and/or Skype. Entrepreneurs are asked to invest 20 hours per week during the incubation period (640 hours in total).

Technical assistance includes support from a series of technical experts that is customised according to the green entrepreneur's needs to develop their Green Business Plan and to launch their product on the market.

Creating networking opportunities



A set of actions and tools have been deployed:

1. The Switchers Community

There are nearly 400 Switchers showcased in the Switchers platform. They are all shining examples of how circular economy approaches can lead to business opportunities and also drive innovation that benefits people and the environment.

2. SwitchMed Business to Business grant Facility

The programme provides Switchers with financial support and contacts to relevant events, such as conferences, fairs or workshops, so they can present their story and promote their products/services.

3. The SwitchMed Connect

SwitchMed Connect is the flagship event of the SwitchMed programme, bringing together entrepreneurs, start-ups, policy makers, industry experts, financial institutions, public and private actors to facilitate networking, and building synergies, exchange knowledge, and scale up eco and social innovations. The programme features a unique blend of expert discussions, entrepreneurial stories, best cases and hands-on applications about green and circular economy planning and implementation in the South and North Mediterranean countries.

Access to finance



The task of procuring finance is one of the toughest challenges faced by an entrepreneur. To overcome this, the SwitcherFund was created in 2017 through a partnership with the European Federation of Fair Banks (FEBEA), as a tool to provide and facilitate direct funding and business support services to existing and future green, circular and social entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean region. It mobilises local investors and enterprise support programmes as well as European resources to strengthening start-up projects and raise additional funds for the Mediterranean region.

The SwitchersFund serve as a meeting place for private funders including foundations, private donors, impact investors, that can use it as a way to identify interesting projects in the Mediterranean that could be funded directly. Complementary, it can serve as a means to pool different financial resources into a structured process that brings entrepreneurs from the ideation phase towards sustainability.

The SwitchersFund offers to entrepreneurs:

- Impact measurement monitoring and reporting scheme
- Grants from 3.000€ to 25.000€
- Innovative vouchers from 3.000€ to 10.000€
- Availability of finance guidelines and web tools such as practical financial toolkit to better access to finance and a guide to launch a crowdfunding campaign
- Opportunity to pitch at the “Green start-up meet investors” events including access to a wide network of potential investors
- Opportunity to attend business to business events
- Networking with peers, donors and policy makers



Impact measurement and reporting



Grants and innovative vouchers



Green start-up meet investors



Business and networking opportunities



Financial and crowdfunding tools

Enabling access to market



The main objectives of the Switchers Support Programme on access to markets are:

- To support Switchers to market their products by providing them capacity building and knowledge creation and, facilitating the sale of their products and services at national and international level.
- To stimulate the demand for sustainable products and services by engaging buyers, retailers and producers in their innovation and green procurement actions and in their product portfolio.

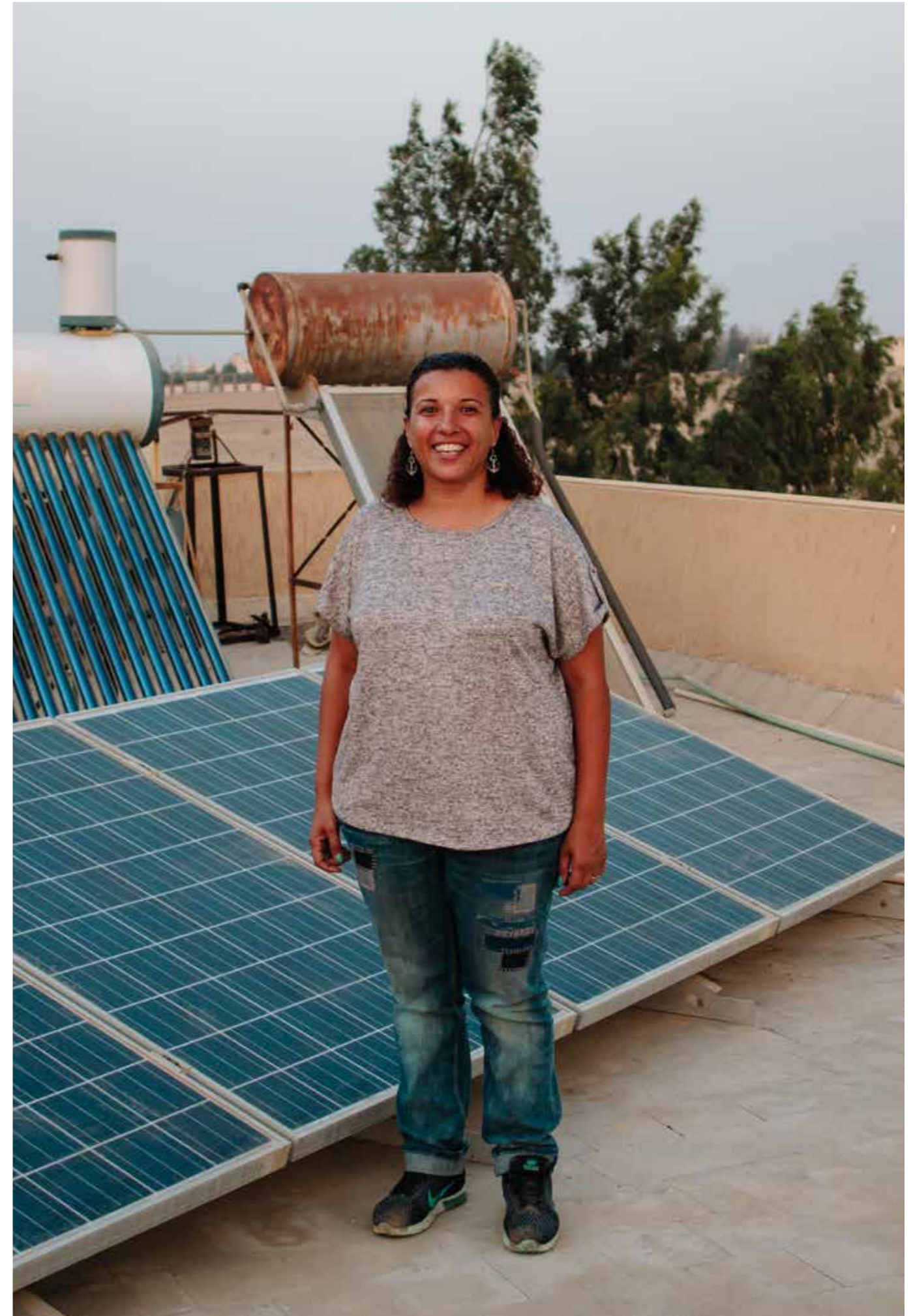
Services to entrepreneurs, notably early stage are:

- Capacity building and technical assistance on target market identification, penetration and expansion for green products and services, depending on their stage of development (i.e. marketing strategy, green labels, export concepts etc.).
- Facilitation of deals at the value chain level by improving value addition and inclusion of green entrepreneurs in the value chain of companies and facilitating exporting through partnerships.
- Encourage other businesses to adopt the partnership model in the sector and its supporting industries to build or integrate a sustainable and inclusive supply chain.
- Opportunity to promote their products and services via the switch-products online platform.

- Opportunity to attend business events so they can make relevant business connections and extent their network, especially with regards to building up their existing market and accessing new markets.
- Development of a green products and services catalogue to be distributed among national and international (European) retailers and distributors of sustainable products for stimulating their interest and procurement.

In addition to those,

- An open innovation platform developed to post and disseminate the challenges, to link companies to creative solutions and thus facilitate the matchmaking between the seeker of innovative circular economy solutions and the solver (green entrepreneur).
- Engagement models developed between green entrepreneurs, SMEs and other supply-chain actors - such as exporters, processors, public procurement actors, retailers-, based on the pre-matchmaking and on the interested showed by the different actors.



Policies enabling circular economy business models



The need to shift from traditional linear to innovative green and circular business models won't be achieved without a solid enabling policy environment. It has to be in place together with strengthened business support organisations and appropriated financial instruments at the regional and national level.

Likewise, proper policy dialogue mechanisms should be facilitated in order to take effective decisions fully in line with the real needs expressed by green entrepreneurs.

During the last years, SCP/RAC, through the SwitchMed programme, organised a numbers of synergies workshop and collected a large list of challenges faced by green entrepreneurs that could be minimised or reduced with an increased policy support to innovative green and circular business models.



Photo credit @Bernat Mestres (White Horse)

On this basis, the Switchers Support Programme works both at national and regional level.

- At the national level, it will provide technical support, peer-to-peer mechanisms to improve or create new policy tools facilitating the creation, supporting and sustaining green and circular businesses.
- At the regional level, the Switchers Support Programme will work on the selection of a key set of measures to be endorsed by the 22 Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and Coastal Region of the Mediterranean. The identification of such common criteria and set of measures will aim at providing a common understanding of innovative green and circular businesses, stimulating the market for sustainable products and services and facilitating investments green entrepreneurship projects. It would also promote policy coherence among the Mediterranean countries and synergies among national stakeholders.

Within this area, a large range of stakeholders will be engaged, from the Ministries, BSOs such as export desks, labelling agencies, to financing institutions for stimulating the market access and Switchers.

How can Business Support Organisations benefit from the programme?

As part of the Switchers Support Programme a new collaborative agreement will be established bringing together Business Development Service Providers (BDSP), including public and private organisations, targeting green entrepreneurs and circular businesses or willing to start supporting green business development, setting up the Switchers Support National Partnership (SNP) in the beneficiary countries. In addition, a Local Partner will be assigned to act as a coordinator within the SNP in each target country.

If you are a Business Development Service Providers (BDSP) such as Training Institutions, Business Development Centres, Business Incubators, Accelerators, Facilitation Centres, Chambers of Commerce, Financial Actors, Universities, Business Councils, Innovation Centres, or Co-working Spaces with the potential to reach Switchers in different stages of their business development you can benefit from the Switchers Support Programme by joining the Switchers Support National Partnership.

To this end, a set of services has been designed to empower and strengthen business support services for the creation, incubation and acceleration of green and circular businesses, by:

- Providing a complete set of Green Business Development methodologies and tools available online as well as training on the green entrepreneurship methodologies and toolkits;
- Channelling support to Switchers;
- Promoting additional Green Business Development common activities and strategies by encouraging them to collaborate in the promotion of the consumption of green entrepreneurs' products and services. Discussion groups among the members of the Partnerships will be organised to develop recommendations and action lines.

Programme overview:

A series of practical workshops will be held in each target country to train 5 to 10 Business Development Service Providers (BDSP) in the use of the different tools.

- 5-Day Workshop on The Green Business Model Development Toolkit
- 3-Day Workshop on Green Business Plan Development Toolkit
- 2-Day Workshop on Access to Finance Guide
- 1-Day Workshop on The Switchers' Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) System
- 1-Day Workshop on Eco-design Tool and Food Packaging module

In addition, the Switchers Support Programme also provides regional support to all the Support National Partnership through the following activities:

- Facilitate technical support to the members (advice in the use of the methodologies and tools, provision of new tools, capitalization of experiences, etc.);
- Support for the sustainability and the scaling up of the activities at national and regional level (develop revenue models for the members and the SNP, etc.);
- Support to the implementation of the Work Plans of the SNP in the countries (engage donors and other actors, providing advice, etc.);
- Promote the exchange of experiences, knowledge and best practices at national and regional level.

Our achievements



Business cases of our green entrepreneurs



Photo credit @Bernat Mestres (White Horse)



Rima Dates, Algeria



Photo credit @Pxsphere

Sector:

Agriculture

Rima Dates is a date farming family business from the south of Algeria. During the years, Hammou Boussada and his family, realised that 60% of date production ended up as cattle feed because is not the varieties that market asks for. Rima Dates acknowledged that and started making use of unwanted fruits, all while providing income to farmers.

Support received:

- Green Business Canvas & Green Business plan training and coaching
- Mentoring and Technical Assistance
- 15.000€ grant

Impact:

- 14 tonnes of low grade dates valorised into by-products (represents a 100% increase on their initial 7 tonnes)

“We are now able to valorise 14 tons of low grade dates into by-products, which represents a 100% increase from our initial seven tonnes.”

Hammou Boussada, founder of Rima Dates

- 4 new products developed
- 2 new female employees hired
- 100 Kg. reduction in cellophane used per year
- 50% reduction of electricity consumption within their overall production cycle
- 400% increase of vinegar production (from 3,000 litres to 15,000 litres per year)
- 200 grams oil that can be extracted from 4 kg of date seed: lab test on date seed oil demonstrates a business case for use of date seed oil in cosmetics
- 40% time saving achieved in terms of their packaging cycle

Lina Energy LE, Jordan



Photo credit @Bernat Mestres (White Horse)

Sector:

Renewable energy and Sustainable building

Lina Al-Kurdi is the founder of Lina Energy – LE, the first company in Jordan to specialise in designing and installing green roofs, insulating buildings at the same time as improving energy efficiency and air quality.

Lina Energy believes in the need to restore green spaces that are being lost for construction projects, resulting in environmental and energy challenges affecting us on many levels such mental and physical health.

“For any green entrepreneur the most sensitive part is the financial part. It enables you to hire people, to buy equipment and so on. So, when I learnt that I was the winner of the GEM OSCE Award prize of 15.000€, I was thrilled and actually relieved because it enabled me to upgrade my nursery as well as increase my production capacity.”

Lina Al-Kurdi, founder of Lina Energy

Support received:

- Training in Green Business Canvas development
- 8 months incubation support to develop the Green Business plan
- Mentoring and external support from 2 technical advisors
- Communication skills training to pitch to investors
- 15.000€ grant

Impact:

- Direct contribution to the climate change crises with a reduction of 82,500 Kg. of CO₂ emission
- 7,000 m² of increased production

ENRD²-Engrais Bio, Morocco



Photo credit @Bernat Mestres (White Horse)

Sector:

Renewable energy and waste treatment

ENRD²-Engrais Bio, is the venture created by Khaoula Remmal, that aims to give new life to organic waste. ENRD²-Engrais Bio assist and advise cattle farms to install biogas plants that transforms the organic waste into renewable energy used for electricity, heating and fertiliser.

Support received:

- Training in Green Business Canvas development
- 8 months incubation support to develop a Green Business plan
- Mentoring & external support from 2 technical advisors
- Networking & knowledge exchange opportunities with other entrepreneurs from the region

“Our organic waste recycling project has also a positive social impact as 24 permanent jobs will be created for a period of 10 years.”

Khaola Remmal, founder of ENRD²

Impact:

- 32 tonnes of organic waste per cow per month collected
- 3,400 tonnes of organic waste per year saved
- 38 million tonnes of CO₂ avoided (By 2020)
- 40% reduction of organic waste (sludge to be treated)
- Creation of 24 full time jobs over 10 years
- 155 tonnes of compost re-used per year, producing an average of 400 m³ of biogas & thermal energy, covering the total energy needs of a cattle farm and part of the dairy production unit

Who are we?



The Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) is a Regional Seas Programme under UNEPs umbrella that brings together the 21 Mediterranean neighbouring countries. MAP provides support to those countries in the implementation of the Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, the so-called Barcelona Convention. The Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC) is one of the centers belonging to MAP. It is appointed with the mandate from the Contracting Parties of the Convention to promote Sustainable Consumption and Production in the Mediterranean region. In order to accomplish that mission the center provides knowledge, training, advice and networking opportunities to businesses, entrepreneurs, financial agents, civil Society organizations and governments that work to provide Mediterraneans society with innovative services and products that are good for the people and for the planet. The center provides technical assistance to the Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention to adopt SCP as integrated approach to decouple development from pollution and environmental. Likewise SCP/ RAC supports green entrepreneurs and change makers driving eco and social innovations in the Mediterranean by providing training, technical and financial advice, jointly with a network of strategic local partners and local trainers. Moreover, SCP/RAC works closely with financial agents to establish mechanism that enable entrepreneurs and small companies that provide SCP solutions access to funding.

Partners and supporters



The Switchers Support Programme requires partners at different levels and geographic scope to ensure effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

At the regional level, the level of engagements is:

1) Associated Partners: These are partners who are ready to engage in the implementation of activities. This kind of partnership often involves a financial exchange and a Memorandum of Understanding.

2) Supporting Partners: These are partners who are already familiar with the organisation. We share the same interests but collaboration with these partners is less tangible. It's good to inform them and be informed about each other's actions in case more tangible opportunities arise.

At the national level in order to achieve the programme goals a multi-stakeholder approach is needed. The programme will involve a range of actors including Government officials, industries, entrepreneurs, business support organizations and civil society, among others.

Please contact us directly if you are looking to partner with us. **We look forward hearing from you!**

The Switchers Support programme is hosted by the Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP/RAC).

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