

CALL FOR APPLICATIONS
EUROPEAN AI RISING STARS AWARD 2026

1. ORGANIZER

This initiative is organized by The Foundation for AI, Ethics, and Governance, hereinafter referred to as ‘the Organizer’, a private foundation established pursuant to Articles 14 et seq. of the Civil Code, with its registered office in Rome (RM), Via Vincenzo Bellini 2 – 00198, Fiscal Code No. 96656120589, Tel. 0645776021, email: desk@foundationaieg.com.

2. PURPOSE

The selection process for the 2026 European AI Rising Stars Award is now open. The award will be presented to the company that has distinguished itself for the originality of its business model and its growth potential through the use of artificial intelligence.

The purpose of this initiative is to encourage entrepreneurship in the European artificial intelligence sector by supporting the most innovative projects featured in connection with the *Third Annual Rome Conference on AI, Ethics, and Governance*.

3. ELIGIBILITY

Companies that meet all of the following requirements are eligible to participate in the Call:

- the company must be a startup incorporated in a Member State of the European Union, have been in operation for no more than four (4) years, and must not have completed any funding rounds beyond Series B;
- the company must build its business and development model in a meaningful and sustained way around artificial intelligence technologies, using AI to drive innovation, create competitive advantage, and deliver market impact through high-tech products, services, or processes;
- the majority of key persons of the company (founders and directors) must be under 45 years old.

These requirements are mandatory, and failure to satisfy any of them shall result in exclusion.

4. HOW TO APPLY

Applications must be submitted to the Foundation starting on the date of publication of this Call and no later than 11:59 p.m. (GMT) on May 21, 2026, failing which they will be excluded. The organizers reserve the right to extend the deadline for submitting applications; any such extension will be announced through the same channels used to publicize this Call.

Applications must be submitted exclusively by email to: desk@foundationaieg.com.

The application must, under penalty of exclusion, include:

- a document describing the company and its governance structure, including the CVs or résumés of key team members;
- a document outlining the company's activities, objectives, and projected development plans;
- a pitch deck that, if selected, the company will present to the Panel during the Final Stage.

By submitting an application, each company must represent and warrant, on its own responsibility, that it is the sole owner of all rights relating to the materials and content included in the pitch deck. The company must be able to support that representation by providing original documentation, certified copies, or self-certifications or sworn statements in accordance with Italian Presidential Decree No. 445/2000. Any false statement shall be subject to the penalties provided under the Italian Criminal Code and applicable special laws.

If the required documentation or self-certification is not provided, the application shall not be considered by the Panel. The Panel also reserves the right to verify the accuracy and truthfulness of any such statements.

Applications submitted by companies that do not meet even one of the eligibility requirements set forth in Section 3 above, or that are submitted after the stated deadline, or that do not include the required documents, or that are submitted in a manner other than that specified in this Section, shall be excluded without further notice.

5. SELECTION PROCESS

Applications will be evaluated by a Technical Panel of experts, hereinafter referred to as the 'Panel', appointed by the Foundation.

By June 10, 2026, the Panel will select between 3 and 6 companies from among the applications received to advance to the Final Stage of the Award. The Final Stage will be held on June 18, 2026, at a time and place to be communicated to the selected companies.

During the Final Stage, the 6 selected companies will be evaluated based on a pitch presentation lasting no longer than 20 minutes that the companies will deliver to the Panel. It will also be based on the responses provided during any Q&A session.

The winning company will be selected by vote of the Panel.

In evaluating the candidates, the Panel will consider the following criteria:

- quality and credibility of the project;
- innovation and strength of the solution;
- market appeal and business scalability;
- impact in addressing future challenges.

The Panel expressly reserves the right to select more than one winning company, as well as to determine that no company is worthy of selection.

All decisions by the Panel are final and are not subject to any appeal.

6. AWARD

The winning company shall be granted the right to participate in the Third Annual Rome Conference on AI, Ethics, and Governance, as well as credits for the use of artificial intelligence models, if made available by the sponsors, in accordance with the terms and procedures to be communicated to the companies selected to advance to the Final Stage. The winning company may also receive other benefits as determined by the Panel and/or the Organizer.

7. COMMUNICATIONS

The Organizer reserves the right to contact the winners and any third parties identified by them using the contact information available to the Organizer.

8. EXCLUSION FROM THE SCOPE OF ITALIAN PRESIDENTIAL DECREE NO. 430/2001

Pursuant to Article 6 of Italian Presidential Decree No. 430 of 2001 (“*Regulation on the comprehensive revision of the rules governing prize contests and prize operations, as well as local games of chance, pursuant to Article 19, paragraph 4, of Law No. 449 of December 27, 1997*”), this initiative does not constitute a prize contest or prize promotion, because it is intended for the presentation of commercial or industrial projects or studies in which the award granted to the author constitutes recognition of personal merit or, in any event, an incentive awarded in the public interest.

9. LIABILITY AND GENERAL CONDITIONS

The Organizer shall have no liability in connection with the conduct of the initiative and/or the granting of the Award.

Each participant agrees to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless the Organizer from and against any and all losses, costs, damages, liabilities, or adverse consequences — including any sanctions imposed by competent authorities — arising out of or relating to the participant’s actions or any violation of these Rules.

The Organizer reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to modify or cancel the initiative, without prior notice and without any liability or claims arising from such decision.

No purchase or sale of products marketed by the Organizer and/or related to the *Third Annual Rome Conference on AI, Ethics, and Governance* is required in order to participate in this initiative.

Participation in the initiative is free of charge.

10. GOVERNING LAW

This initiative and this Call shall be governed by Italian law.

Any dispute concerning the interpretation, application, enforceability, and/or validity of this Call shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the Court of Rome, to the exclusion of any other court of concurrent jurisdiction.

Rome, April 24, 2026