**CALL FOR PROPOSALS RULES**

**Ibagué Startup Europe Awards by Nova Next Summit 2025**

**Glocal Circular Economy Summit – Red Nova Summit**

**INDEX**

[INTRODUCTION 3](#_Toc204855551)

[WHAT IS STARTUP EUROPE? 3](#_Toc204855552)

[WHAT ARE THE STARTUP EUROPE AWARDS (SEUA)? 3](#_Toc204855553)

[GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE CALL 3](#_Toc204855556)

[CHALLENGES 4](#_Toc204855557)

[WHO CAN PARTICIPATE? 7](#_Toc204855558)

[PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS: 7](#_Toc204855559)

[APPLICATION SUBMISSION: 8](#_Toc204855560)

[SELECTION PROCESS: 8](#_Toc204855561)

[AWARD JURY: 8](#_Toc204855562)

[AWARD: 8](#_Toc204855563)

[IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE: 9](#_Toc204855564)

[PARTICIPANTS OBLIGATIONS: 9](#_Toc204855565)

[OWNERSHIP OF THE PROJECTS: 9](#_Toc204855566)

[GENERAL DATA PROTECION REGULATION (GDPR): 9](#_Toc204855567)

# INTRODUCTION

## WHAT IS STARTUP EUROPE?

Startup Europe is an initiative of the European Commission aimed at connecting high – tech startups, scaleups, investors, accelerators, corporate, networks, universities, and media outlets.

## WHAT ARE THE STARTUP EUROPE AWARDS (SEUA)?

## The Startup Europe Awards (SEUA) are a methodology promoted by DG CONNECT of the European Commission and implemented by the Finnova Foundation in collaboration with Startup Europe and with the institutional support of the European Parliament, the European Committee of the Regions, and the European Economic and Social Committee.

## SEUA is an open innovation tool designed to identify disruptive startups, promoting public-private collaboration and raising awareness about the importance of self-entrepreneurship as a driver of employment. In addition to fostering alliances that help meet the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the European Green Deal actions, SEUA contributes to the circular economy and the fight against climate change.

## Our mission is to help entrepreneurs succeed and facilitate their access to European funding through calls that align with their projects (LIFE, COSME, HORIZON Europe, EIC, etc.). These awards are an extremely useful tool to promote knowledge exchange, add value to the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and help startups grow and position themselves in the market.

# The goal of the Startup Europe Awards is to boost sustainable entrepreneurship in the fields of circular economy, sustainability, mobility, and climate change mitigation in urban environments. In addition, they aim to provide national and international visibility to ideas that drive and consolidate the structure and growth of the circular economy, based on the development of smart and green cities to improve their competitiveness and social impact through technological innovation strategies.

# GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE CALL

The **Ibagué Startup Europe Awards by Nova Next Summit 2025 call** invites entrepreneurs, startups, SMEs, and innovation agents from Latin America and Europe to submit their projects with high social, environmental or technological impact. This initiative seeks to identify and reward disruptive solutions that address urban challenges in the areas of **circular economy, environmental sustainability, waste management, water, clean energy, and social housing,** with special attention to the context of Ibagué and its transition toward a more resilient and sustainable urban model.

Promoted by the European Commission and implemented by the Finnova Foundation, the SEUA provides a unique platform for the entrepreneurs to present their projects and connect with investors, business leaders, and industry experts.

This call opens the door to interregional cooperation, talent development, and the international projection of ideas with the potential to transform cities. The call will unfold in two stages:

**The Semi-final**, which will take place during the **Pre-Summit** from **Tuesday, 4 November to Thursday, 6 November 2025**.

**The Final**, which will be held at the **Summit** in **hybrid format** from **21 to 23 April 2026**.

## CHALLENGES

1. **Wastewater.** Innovation in the management of wastewater and sewage sludge. Projects that propose new methods for treatment, reuse, or recovery of these residues.

Solutions aimed at optimizing the collection, treatment, and recovery of organic waste will be awarded, transforming it into useful resources. Projects may include initiatives that promote its conversion into energy (biogas, composting, anaerobic digestion), agricultural inputs, reusable materials, or any initiative that fosters the circular economy and reduces the environmental burden of biodegradable waste.

**Target audience:** Startups, SMEs, universities, technology canters, and public or mixed entities with implemented or developing projects that have an impact on improving local sustainability.

Exemple:

🌱 **Project:** LIFE Ecodigestion 2.0 – <https://www.lifecodigestion.com/>

* **Objective:** To convert organic waste —such as biodegradable fractions of municipal waste, sewage sludge, and agri-food by-products— into biogas through anaerobic digestion processes applied in wastewater treatment plants (WWTPs).
* **Funding:** LIFE programme of the EU (~€970,000), led by Global Omnium (Spain), with participation from the Finnova Foundation (Belgium) and Águas do Centro Litoral (Portugal).
* **Impact and benefits:**
  + **Renewable energy:** Production of biogas for self-consumption in treatment plants.
  + **Circular economy:** Waste recovery and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.
  + **Scalability:** Technology designed to adapt to various WWTP infrastructures, aiming for replicability.

1. **Urban Waste Management.** Development of new materials derived from waste, oriented towards sustainable and energy-efficient construction, especially in the HORECA (hotels, restaurants, and cafés) sector and and public buildings, with the goal of reducing construction and maintenance costs.

This category aims to promote the development and use of innovative materials derived from waste (plastics, construction debris, organic, industrial, textiles, etc.) for sustainable construction. Priority will be given to solutions targeting social housing and public buildings that enhance energy efficiency, reduce environmental impact, and lower construction and maintenance costs.

**Target audiencie:** Startups, SMEs, universities, technology canters, and public or mixed entities with implemented or developing projects that have am impact on improving local sustainability.

🏗️ **Emmedue Advanced Construction System** – <https://www.mdue.it/en/>

**1. What is it?**

An innovative modular earthquake-resistant construction system, based on expanded polystyrene (EPS) panels fixed between galvanized steel meshes and coated on site with micro-concrete. With over 35–40 years of experience and more than 1 million buildings constructed worldwide, it stands out as an efficient alternative to traditional building methods.

**Main advantages:**

* **Fast installation:** Modular panels allow for quick assembly, reducing both construction time and costs.
* **Architectural versatility:** Suitable for load-bearing walls, partitions, floors, staircases, and even curved shapes, adapting to a wide variety of projects.
* **Thermal and acoustic insulation:** Provides high thermal comfort and energy efficiency; can reduce energy consumption by up to 65% over the building’s lifetime.
* **Structural safety:** Certified to withstand earthquakes, cyclones (winds up to 106 km/h), fire (ReI 120–150), and heavy loads.
* **Reduced environmental impact:** Lowers CO₂ emissions by up to 40% during construction and up to 65% during use, thanks to excellent insulation and eco-responsible EPS processing.
* **Compatibility with other systems:** Can be integrated with concrete, steel, or timber structures and supports a wide range of finishes (paint, stone, ventilated façades).

1. **WASTE2PROPTECH.** Innovative systems for the efficient and environmentally friendly management of wastewater and sewage sludge, promoting initiatives such as greywater reuse, biogas generation for self-consumption, and biofertilizer production.

Proposals will be recognized that present efficient systems—both economically and environmentally—for the management of wastewater and sludge from treatment plants. These may include solutions such as the reuse of greywater for urban applications (irrigation, cleaning, cooling), the generation of biogas for self-consumption, the production of biofertilizers, or the implementation of technologies that reduce energy consumption and enhance water circularity.

**Target audience:** Startups, SMEs, universities, technology centers, and public or mixed entities with with projects applicable to urban or peri-urban environments.

**Transforming fashion waste into innovative materials for sustainable constructions.**

We are committed to recovery of textile and footwear waste as raw materials to develop nw products for the construction and urban planning sectors. These waste materials can be transformed into thermal and acoustic insulation, recycled plastics, concrete and pavement components, as well as solutions for social housing.

In addition, we are advancing the development of fire- resistant materials with elastic and sound-absorbing properties, capable of improving quality of life in cities by reducing urban noise and extending the lifespan of asphalt and streets. A true commitment to circular economy applied to real estate- turning fashion waste into innovation that serves collective wellbeing.

🌿 **RES4CITY: Sustainable Urban Innovation** – <https://www.res4city.eu/>

**RES4CITY** is a project funded under the Horizon Europe programme with a budget of €2.5 million. Its aim is to promote the development of renewable energies and sustainable technologies in urban environments. Within this framework, the RES4CITY STARTUP EUROPE ACCELERATHONhas been created, seeking innovative solutions for challenges such as land management, hydrogen production, greywater reuse, and the optimisation of electric vehicle charging. This integrated approach can be highly relevant for projects aiming to combine diverse sustainable solutions in urban contexts.

## WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

The call is open to startups, SMEs, scale-ups, spin-offs, universities, research canters, students, individual entrepreneurs, and corporations, both public and private, that carry out their activities or projects in sectors related to waste management, sustainable construction, energy efficiency, and water treatment.

Initiatives from the European Union, Latin America, and other international regions may apply, as long as they present innovative solutions that address the challenges defined in the call and contribute to a more sustainable, circular, and resilient urban model.

## PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS:

1. This call is aimed at startups, SMEs, scale-ups, companies, innovation canters, and the entities operating in the environmental sector that demonstrate proven innovation capacity at the local, regional, or international level with a special focus on urban context. Proposals must offer concrete and innovative solutions to the main challenges facing today´s society, contributing to collective well-being and sustainability through a collaborative approach involving the public sector, private sector, and civil society.
2. Participants profiles must be linked to sector such as:

* **Smart and sustainable cities**
* **Environmental technologies**
* **Circular economy**
* **Sustainable urban mobility**
* **Green architecture and urban planning**
* **Energy efficiency and renewable energies**
* **Water and waste management**
* **Development of technologies applied to the transformation of the traditional economy.**

Special consideration will be given to projects with a comprehensive approach, scalability, technical and financial feasibility, and alignment with the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** and the **European Green Deal**.

## APPLICATION SUBMISSION:

The deadline for submitting applications is **Wednesday, October 1st, 2025, at 11.59 p.m.**

To apply, candidates must complete the form available on the **Startup Europe Awards** website and on the official website of the **Ibagué Startup Europe Awards by Nova Next Summit 2025**:

[**https://form.jotform.com/251823908522357**](https://form.jotform.com/251823908522357)

### **CANDIDATE SELECTION PROCESS FOR THE SEMIFINAL**

After the application submission deadline on **1 October 2025**, all applications will be evaluated by the expert committee based on the following criteria, scored out of 100 points:

* **Feasibility** – up to 30 points
* **Response to challenges** – up to 25 points
* **Innovation** – up to 30 points
* **Internationalization** – up to 5 points
* **Investment potential and business model viability** – up to 10 points

Once the expert committee has evaluated the applications, participants will be informed via email on **24 October 2025** about those selected for the semifinal, so they can prepare their **Elevator Pitch** for the second stage of the SEUA finals.

**CANDIDATE SELECTION PROCESS FOR THE SEMI-FINAL**

Once the applications have been evaluated, on **24 October 2025** participants will be informed about which projects have been selected to advance to the **semifinal stage**.

The semifinalist projects will be required to prepare an **Elevator Pitch**, to be presented during the **Circular Economy Pre-Summit**, taking place on **4–5 November 2025**.

This phase will be held in a **hybrid format**:

* **In person**, for participants able to travel and attend the Pre-Summit.
* **Online**, for those unable to attend in person.
* The Elevator Pitch must be presented as a **video of no more than 2 minutes**, clearly explaining the project.

**ELEVATOR PITCH**

An elevator pitch is a very brief presentation—**2 to 5 minutes**—to explain an **idea, product, company, or opportunity** with the aim of **generating immediate interest.** The name comes from the notion that it should fit into the time of an elevator ride with someone important: just enough to **capture attention and motivate them to want to learn more.**

**Elements of a strong elevator pitch**

Semifinalists should structure their presentations around the following key elements:

1. **Impactful opening / hook** – Something that grabs attention immediately (a surprising fact, a question, a clear, relatable problem, etc.).
2. **Problem statement** – Define the need, pain point, or market opportunity, and why it matters.
3. **Proposed solution** – What you do (project, company, product) to solve the problem; what makes your approach unique or different.
4. **Added value / competitive advantage** – Why your solution is better than existing alternatives (e.g., innovation, efficiency, lower cost, ease of use, superior experience, scalable strategy).
5. **Target audience / market** – Who benefits or buys; who your customers or beneficiaries are; potential market size or reach.
6. **Business model / how you generate value** – Briefly, how you plan to make money or ensure financial/sustainability viability.
7. **Call to action (CTA)** – What you seek at the end (investment, partnerships, meetings, customers, etc.)—a concrete next step.
8. **Strong close** – A powerful summary or memorable line that reinforces your value proposition and motivates the listener to learn more.

**FINALIST SELECTION PROCESS**

* A limited number of finalist startups will be selected, from which the jury will choose the winners in each category.
* Finalist startups will receive specialized training, valued at €400, aimed at preparing their proposals and strengthening their presentation skills. Attendance to this training is mandatory; in case of non-completion, the startup will be required to pay €300.
* Among the three winning categories, only one startup will be selected to enter an **acceleration process**, with the aim of turning its project into an initiative with a budget of up to €400,000.

Elevator Pitches will be evaluated by a jury, who will assess aspects such as innovation, impact, feasibility, sustainability, and the project’s communication effectiveness.

Projects that reach the finalist stage will be announced later and will advance to the **final phase of the competition**.

### **FINALIST SELECTION PROCESS**

Following the Expert Committee’s assessment, the committee will have **until 1 February** to complete the evaluation of the criteria. **Two weeks later**, the SEUA organization will contact the **winning projects**, which will be invited to the **Awards Ceremony at the Summit**. After selecting the Semi-final winners, the **finalists** will advance to the next stage, where their projects will be evaluated by the Expert Committee based on the following criteria, for a total of **100 points**:

* **Elevator Pitch** (up to **60** points)
* **Submission of a document linking the project to the Summit’s Glocal perspective and themes** (up to **40** points)

## AWARD JURY:

The jury, formed through public- private collaboration, will consist of representatives from public administrations, universities, local media, and technology experts.

## AWARD:

The winning company (first place) in each of the challenges will receive the following from Finnova and its accelerator**, Startup Europe Accelerator**:

**1. Mentoring**

* Finnova will provide mentoring, either through a videoconference or an in person meeting, on different European funding opportunities that may be suitable to turn the company’s proposal into a European project.

*\*this mentoring does not include the writing of submission of the proposal.*

**2. Training course on European funds**

* Finnova will grant the company access to an online course on European funding through the EU- Training Platform

(*License currently valued at 400€)*

**3. Visibility**

* Finnova will promote the project through its social media channels and other available media platforms.

**4.** **Invitation to participate**

* The winners will be invited to participate in the first Glocal circular economy Summit – NOVA NEXT SUMMIT in Ibagué, Colombia del 21 al 23 de abril de 2026. The company responsible for travel and accommodation logistics will contact each of the winners to coordinate the details.

## IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE:

* **Deadline for application submission:** Wednesday, October 1st, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. CEST
* **Award ceremony for winning startups.**
  + The prizes will be given in two different stages:
    - Firstly, a semifinal will be held online during the 1st International Circular Economy Pre-Summit- Red Nova Summit in which the selected projects will do an elevator pitch. From Tuesday, November 4th to Thursday, November 6th, 2025
    - The final will take place in person, from April 21st to April 23rd, during the International Circular Economy Summit- Red Nova Summit where the winners will be announced.

## PARTICIPANTS OBLIGATIONS:

Participation in this contest implies full acceptance of the rules and the participation guidelines for Fairs and Events established by the Finnova Foundation.

By accepting these rules, participants in the Starup Europe Awards authorize Finnova to invite specialized and/or general media to cover the activities carried out during the acceleration process.

They also authorize the dissemination and publication of their image, name, and surname(s) of the ream members, as well as references to the project through media and social networks.

## OWNERSHIP OF THE PROJECTS:

The intellectual and industrial property rights of the submitted initiatives belong to the authors of the respective projects and their contents.

All participants in the call guarantee the originality of the projects submitted and confirm that they do not infringe any laws or third-party rights.

## GENERAL DATA PROTECION REGULATION (GDPR):

In accordance with the provisions of Organic Law 3/2018, of December 5, on the Protection of Personal Data and Guarantee of Digital Rights, and the European General Data Protection Regulation, you are hereby informed that your data will be included in a file entitled **"Ibagué Startup Europe Awards by Nova Next Summit"**, owned by the Finnova Foundation.

The purpose of data processing is to manage and respond to your inquiry, suggestion, information request, or the services you request through this form.

By checking the corresponding box, you freely, specifically, and unequivocally agree to your data being processed in accordance with the purposes outlined in this form.

Data may be shared when necessary for the development of the legal relationship between the parties, as well as in cases provided for by law.

You have the right to access, rectify, delete, and object to the processing of tour data by sending request to [digital@finnova.eu](mailto:digital@finnova.eu) , always including a copy of your ID and indicating “Ref. GDPR Request” in the subject line. In the event of any data changes, you must notify this same address; otherwise, the organization shall bear no responsibility.

Finnova Foundation will under no circumstances cover travel, accommodation, or subsistence expenses for participants, finalists, or winners, as these costs are the sole responsibility of the company organizing the Glocal Circular Economy Summit.