



**STARTUP
EUROPE**



CALL FOR PROPOSALS RULES

Ibagué Startup Europe Awards by Nova Next Summit 2025

Glocal Circular Economy Summit – Red Nova Summit



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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:

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 centers, and public or mixed entities with implemented or developing projects that have an impact on improving local sustainability.

Example:

 **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 ACCELERATHON has 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.

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

Example:

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.

3. **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 projects applicable to urban or peri-urban environments.

Example:

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

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).

WHO CAN PARTICIPATE?

The call is open to startups, SMEs, scale-ups, spin-offs, universities, research centers, 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 centers, 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 **Friday, February 27th, 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>

CANDIDATE SELECTION PROCESS FOR THE SEMIFINAL

After the application submission deadline on **27 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

The committee of experts will have 15 days to evaluate the projects from the end of the registration deadline; therefore, the winners will be notified 20 days after the registration closes.

WINNER SELECTION PROCESS

- The winner will be selected according to the criteria established by the committee of experts, and one winner will be selected per topic.
- The winning startups will receive specialized training, valued at €400, aimed at preparing their proposals and strengthening their presentation skills. This training is mandatory; if it is not completed, the startup will be required to pay €300.
- The three projects selected as the winners from each category will enter an acceleration programme, with the aim of turning their project into an initiative with a budget of up to €400,000.

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, through a videoconference 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:** Friday, February 27th, 2025, at 11:59 p.m. (UTC-05:00)

- 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 Startup 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 team 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 PROTECTION 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 your data by sending request to 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.