



AI-BOOST

Delivering the next level of European
AI Open competitions

APPLY AI STARTUP AWARD

CALL FOR EXPERTS - EVALUATORS

AI-BOOST CONSORTIUM

| # | Participant organisation name | Short name | Country |
|---|---|------------|----------|
| 1 | ZABALA INNOVATION CONSULTING, S.A. | ZABALA | Spain |
| 2 | F6S NETWORK IRELAND LIMITED | F6S | Ireland |
| 3 | CINECA CONSORZIO INTERUNIVERSITARIO | CINECA | Italy |
| 4 | INESC TEC- INSTITUTO DE ENGENHARIA DE SISTEMAS E COMPUTADORES, TECNOLOGIA E CIENCIA | INESC TEC | Portugal |
| 5 | UNIVERZITA PAVLA JOZEFA SAFARIKA V KOSICIACH | UPJS | Slovakia |
| 6 | 28DIGITAL | 28DIGITAL | Hungary |
| 7 | UNIVERSIDAD POMPEU FABRA | UPF | Spain |

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1 ABOUT THE AWARD

The Apply AI Startup Award aims to recognise innovative European startups and scaleups developing AI solutions in the strategic sectors covered by the Apply AI Strategy. The award is designed to showcase companies that combine strong technological capability with real market traction and clear relevance for Europe. It is intended to highlight AI companies that can become major European success stories while contributing to competitiveness, technological sovereignty and societal benefit.

2 INVITATION FOR EVALUATORS

We cordially invite experts with experience in innovative startups and scaleups, as well as in the development of AI models or systems in at least one of the Apply AI sectors, to express their interest in becoming evaluators for the Apply AI Startup Award.

The relevant sectors include

- healthcare and pharmaceuticals
- robotics
- manufacturing, engineering and construction
- defence, security and space
- mobility, transport and automotive
- electronic communications
- energy
- climate and environment
- agri-food
- cultural and creative sectors and media
- the public sector

As an evaluator, you will play a crucial role in:

- assessing the written applications submitted by eligible applicants;
- scoring applications against the published Phase 1 award criteria;
- providing clear comments to justify the scores awarded;
- participating in internal evaluation discussions, if required;
- contributing to the establishment of the ranking for the selection of the Top 10 finalists.

3 WHAT DO YOU GET IN RETURN?

The selected external experts will be paid for their time and work in the evaluation process. A contract will be signed between the evaluator and the coordinator of the AI-BOOST project (ZABALA).

- Each external expert is expected to evaluate up to 15 proposals;

- Each external expert will **receive 60€** per full application evaluated;
- Evaluators will have **10 business days** to complete the whole evaluation process.

4 ELIGIBILITY

Registration is open to experts from EU Member States and, where applicable, countries associated to Horizon Europe.

We are looking for experts who meet the following profile:

- proven experience with innovative startups and scaleups¹;
- proven experience in the development of AI models or systems in at least one of the Apply AI sectors;
- strong proficiency in English, especially in writing and reading, is mandatory.
- not be in a situation of conflict of interest and must inform the AI-BOOST consortium of any conflict that may arise after expressing their interest to become evaluators.

5 EXCLUSION

Persons who are subject to EU administrative sanctions (i.e., exclusion or financial penalty decision)¹² or in one of the following exclusion situations that bar them from receiving EU funds can NOT work as experts:

- bankruptcy, winding up, court-ordered administration, arrangement with creditors, suspension of business activities or similar procedures
- in breach of social security or tax obligations
- guilty of grave professional misconduct³
- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#)

¹ [44501901-103d-4997-a944-726589177050_en](#)

² See Article 136 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2018/1046 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 18 July 2018 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union, amending Regulations (EU) No 1296/2013, (EU) No 1301/2013, (EU) No 1303/2013, (EU) No 1304/2013, (EU) No 1309/2013, (EU) No 1316/2013, (EU) No 223/2014, (EU) No 283/2014, and Decision No 541/2014/EU and repealing Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 ('EU Financial Regulation') (OJ L 193, 30.7.2018, p. 1).

³ Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.

- have created an entity under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin.

Experts will also be refused if it turns out that⁴:

- during the contract award procedure, they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information.
- they are in a conflict of interest.

6 EVALUATION PROCESS

The evaluation process is divided into the following steps:

1. Administrative and Eligibility Check

All submitted applications will first be reviewed by appointed members of the AI-BOOST consortium in order to verify admissibility and compliance with the eligibility criteria. Applications that do not pass this screening will not proceed further in the evaluation process.

2. Phase 1 – Written Evaluation and Selection of the Top 10

Eligible applications will be assessed on the basis of the written application only. Each eligible application will be assigned to external evaluators, who will carry out an individual assessment and provide scores and comments for each applicable criterion. After completion of the evaluation, the results will be consolidated and a final ranking list will be established on the basis of the final weighted scores. The 10 highest-ranked companies will be selected as finalists and invited to Phase 2. Only one company per Member State may be selected for the Top 10. A reserve list may also be established

3. Phase 2 – Pitching Event and Selection of the Top 3

The Top 10 finalists will participate in an online pitching event. During this phase, a separate jury will assess each finalist on the basis of both the pitch and the initial written application. After completion of the pitching event, the judges will hold a closed consensus meeting in order to consolidate the results and establish the final ranking of the Top 10 finalists. The three highest-ranked companies will be selected as winners. A reserve list may also be established.

Scope of participation of the external evaluators under this Call for Experts

The experts selected through this call will participate **exclusively in Phase 1** of the Apply AI Startup Award evaluation process, that is, the written evaluation and selection of the Top 10 finalists. Their work will therefore be limited to:

- the individual evaluation of eligible written applications;
- the scoring of applications against the published Phase 1 award criteria;

⁴ See Article 141 EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

- the provision of comments supporting the scores awarded;
- where required, participation in discussions related to the consolidation of Phase 1 results.

The experts selected through this call will **not** participate in Phase 2 of the award process, including the pitching event, the Phase 2 jury deliberations, or the final selection of the three winners.

For more details on the evaluation process, check the Guidelines for Applicants.

7 TIMELINE

- **Call for Evaluators:** The opening of the call is 25th June 2026.
- **Submission Deadline:** submitted electronically via F6S Platform (accessible <https://www.f6s.com/evaluators-call-for-apply-ai-award>) before Friday, 17th July 2026, 17:00 Brussels time.
- **Evaluation Period:** The whole evaluation process will take from the 22nd of July 2026 to the 1st of September 2026.

However, specific timeline will be provided to the selected external evaluators.

8 HOW TO APPLY?

Applicants are invited to register, create a user profile, and complete the full application form, prepare the required supporting documents, and submit them via the F6S platform:

<https://www.f6s.com/evaluators-call-for-apply-ai-award>

The F6S platform accessible through AI-BOOST website (<https://aiboost-project.eu/apply-ai-startup-award/>).

All proposals must be fully completed and submitted via F6S platform before the deadline (see point 7)

Main steps required:

- Registration via F6S platform
- Dully complete the application form (all mandatory fields must be completed) available at <https://www.f6s.com/evaluators-call-for-apply-ai-award>
- Attach your CV
- Submit the application form before the deadline.

9 SELECTION CRITERIA FOR EVALUATORS

The selection of evaluators will be based on the following criteria:

- proven expertise in AI development and deployment, startup and scaleup creation or in AI applications for at least one of the strategic sectors covered by the award;

- Ability to commit to the assessment timelines and participate actively.
- Demonstrable experience in evaluating technical projects or research proposals (bonus points).
- ability to assess applications in English with a high degree of clarity, objectivity and consistency
- demonstrable experience in evaluating innovation projects, startup competitions, investment cases, research proposals, or similar initiatives (bonus points)

Additional consideration may be given to experts with experience at the intersection of AI technology, sectoral impact, and European market deployment.

We look forward to your expertise and contribution in shaping the future of AI in Europe. Together, let's embark on a journey to recognize and reward innovative startups and scaleups that have the potential to redefine the AI landscape.

For any inquiries related to the application process, please contact info@aiboost-project.eu.

AI-BOOST & European AI Office

APPENDIX A: APPLICATION FORM

(A) PERSONAL DETAILS

- Full Name: _____
- Date of Birth: dd/mm/yyyy
- Nationality: _____
- Current Organization: _____
- Position/Title: _____
- Email Address: _____@_____.
- Contact Number: _____

(B) EXPERTISE DETAILS

- Primary Area of Expertise: (choose one or more):
 - AI technologies and applied AI
 - Startup / scaleup growth and investment readiness
 - Sectoral innovation expertise
 - AI deployment
 - Evaluation of innovation proposals
- Years of Experience in Chosen Area: _____
- List of Relevant Publications/Projects: (Attach additional sheets if necessary)
 1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____

(C) TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERTISE

Please mark the statements that align with your background and expertise.

- **Startup and Scaleup Expertise:** I have worked with, advised, invested in, supported, or assessed innovative startups and/or scaleups, including their growth, market positioning, scaling strategy, or investment readiness.
- **AI Models and Systems Development:** I have been involved in the design, development, training, deployment, or assessment of AI models or AI-based systems.
- **Sector Expertise:** I have professional or technical expertise in at least one of the Apply AI sectors, such as healthcare and pharma; robotics; manufacturing, engineering and construction; defence, security and space; mobility, transport and automotive; electronic communications; energy; climate and environment; agri-food; cultural and creative sectors and media; or the public sector.

- **Research Contributions:** I have authored or co-authored academic, technical, or industry publications related to artificial intelligence, innovation, startup ecosystems, or one or more of the Apply AI sectors.
- **Conference Engagements:** I have been an invited speaker, panelist, presenter, or moderator at conferences, seminars, or events focused on artificial intelligence, innovation, startup ecosystems, or sector-specific technological development.
- **Project or Venture Oversight:** I have led or been a significant part of teams managing innovation projects, AI developments, startup or scaleup growth processes, or the deployment of technological solutions from concept to market uptake.
- **Project Evaluation:** I have experience reviewing or evaluating projects, proposals, applications, startups, innovation initiatives, or research activities.
- **Policy or Strategic Relevance:** I have experience assessing how technologies, companies, or innovation initiatives align with broader strategic priorities, such as competitiveness, sovereignty, industrial leadership, sustainability, or public value in Europe.

(D) STATEMENT OF INTEREST

In a brief paragraph, please explain why you consider yourself a suitable candidate for this evaluator panel and your motivation to participate.

[maximum 800 characters]

(E) CONFLICT OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

Please declare any affiliations, past or present, with potential contest participants, or any other information that might pose a conflict of interest (if applicable):

[List]

(F) CV ATTACHMENT

Please attach an updated CV highlighting your expertise and relevant experience. Ensure it includes your educational background, professional experiences, awards, honors, and other relevant details.

(G) ACCEPTANCE OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Absence of conflict of interest*

- I declare that I have not submit, nor am I to my knowledge involved in any proposal currently under evaluation or submitted for evaluation under the Apply AI Startup Award

Acceptance of Data Privacy Policies*

- I understand and accept, F6S Data privacy policy and that the data collected in this form will be used by the AI-BOOST Consortium to manage expressions of interest of evaluators

Acceptance of Non-binding and no commitment from AI-BOOST*

- I understand and accept that this expression of interest to participate to the Apply AI Startup Award as an external evaluator is NOT binding and does NOT constitute any commitment for the AI-BOOST Consortium.