



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

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European Prize for Women Innovators 2026 celebrates visionary women

Today, the European Commission revealed the winners of the 12th edition of the [European Prize for Women Innovators](#) at the [European Innovation Council \(EIC\) Summit](#) in Brussels. The award honours the groundbreaking contributions of women entrepreneurs whose innovations are driving progress and strengthening Europe's competitive edge in the global economy.

From pioneering advancements in healthcare and sustainability to revolutionising space technology and digital traceability, this year's finalists exemplify the transformative power of women-led innovation.

The prize showcases the remarkable achievements of winners and runners-up across three categories:

1) EIC Women Innovators, for exceptional women founders and co-founders from EU Member States and Associated Countries of Europe's multi-billion-euro programme [Horizon Europe](#) – €100,000 prize for the winner, €70,000 and €50,000 for two runners-up respectively.

- **Winner: Katerina Spranger** (Ukraine/UK), founder and CEO of [Oxford Heartbeat](#), harnessing artificial intelligence to enhance the safety and precision of brain aneurysm treatments.
- **2nd place: Elena Heber** (Germany), co-founder and Managing Director of [HelloBetter](#), expanding access to mental health care through clinically validated digital therapies and AI-driven solutions.
- **3rd place: Judit Camargo Sanromà** (Spain), founder and CEO of [Roka Furadada](#), tackling the growing threat of skin cancer with eco-friendly cosmetic ingredients that deliver high-performing UV protection while safeguarding marine ecosystems.

2) EIC Rising Innovators, for promising young women innovators under 35 – €50,000 prize for the winner, €30,000 and €20,000 for two runners-up respectively.

- **Winner: Marta Oliveira** (Belgium), co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of [ATMOS Space Cargo](#), enabling reusable space capsules to safely return materials from orbit unlocking new research opportunities.
- **2nd place: Judit Giró Benet** (Spain), founder of [The Blue Box](#), developing a non-invasive urine-based test to improve early breast cancer detection, particularly for women underserved by traditional screening methods.

- 3rd place: **Carin Lightner** (Switzerland), co-founder and CEO of [Enantios](#), accelerating drug discovery through faster and more precise analysis of complex molecules, paving the way for next-generation medicines.

3) EIT Women Leadership, for exceptional members of the [European Institute of Innovation and Technology](#) - EIT Community - €50,000 prize for the winner, €30,000 and €20,000 for the two runners up respectively.

- **Winner: Ella Frances Cullen** (Portugal), co-founder and Chief Marketing Officer of [Minespider](#), revolutionising supply chain transparency with a blockchain and AI platform delivering digital product and battery passports and promoting sustainability and compliance.
- **2nd place: Stefania Raimondo** (Italy), co-founder of [Navhetec](#), advancing plant-based nanomedicine by extracting bioactive particles from citrus juice to develop high-efficacy health products with novel functionalities.
- **3rd place: Neide Vieira** (Portugal), co-founder and Chief Operating Officer of [IPLEXMED](#), accelerating diagnosis infectious diseases diagnosis with graphene-based biosensors that enable portable, rapid, and lab-grade testing.

Background

Jointly managed by the [European Innovation Council and SMEs Executive Agency \(EISMEA\)](#) and [the European Institute of Innovation and Technology \(EIT\)](#), the European Prize for Women Innovators underscores the vital contribution of women entrepreneurs in shaping Europe's innovation ecosystem and its long-term competitiveness. Now in its 12th edition, the prize not only celebrates their achievements but also inspires the next generation of women and girls to pursue careers in innovation, science and entrepreneurship.

The prize is awarded to women from the EU and Horizon Europe associated countries whose disruptive innovations are delivering tangible benefits for society and the planet. It aims to highlight their achievements and encourage more women and girls to pursue careers in innovation and entrepreneurship.

More information

[EIC website](#)

Quote

Ekaterina **Zaharieva**, Commissioner for Startups, Research and Innovation, said: *"The European Prize for Women Innovators recognises the bold ideas and leadership of women who are transforming innovation into real-world impact. This year's finalists and winners show how entrepreneurship and diversity go hand in hand in strengthening Europe's innovation capacity. Their achievements are an inspiration for the next generation of innovators across Europe."*