



CALL FOR PAPER

CONTEXT

The 2026 edition of SPS Italia aims to promote emerging Start-ups whose entrepreneurial goals are clearly linked to innovation and technology. These Start-ups should focus on developing and creating new projects, creative ideas, services and products applicable in technological and industrial manufacturing contexts - solutions capable of generating a positive societal impact and driving the evolution of sustainable business models.

Within this framework, the *SPS Italia UP Challenge* returns for its third edition: a competition entirely dedicated to Start-ups, designed to provide them with visibility at the trade fair and reward the most promising project in the manufacturing sector.

The *SPS Italia UP Challenge* offers emerging companies the chance to showcase what they do and meet new clients and potential partners.

The 3 finalist Start-ups will have the opportunity to participate free of charge in SPS Italia 2026 (taking place from May 26th to 28th at Fiere di Parma) with a fully equipped booth in the Start-up Area, enabling them to experience the full scope of the fair: this is a valuable opportunity to engage with companies, stakeholders and industry players through networking, business matching and knowledge sharing activities, as well as to gain visibility beyond the fair itself through sector-specific and general media outlets and communication channels.

The winner of the Challenge will be announced during a dedicated event at the fair in May 2026 and will be awarded on stage with a prize.

Submit your application by Friday, February 6th, 2026 by filling out the online form and joining the *SPS Italia UP Challenge*.

CALL REQUIREMENTS

To participate in the Challenge, Start-ups must meet the following criteria:

- have been established for no more than 5 years;
- be headquartered in a European Union Member State or in another European Economic Area Country;
- have annual revenue of less than €5 million;
- have a corporate purpose involving the development and/or creation of new projects, creative ideas, services and products in technological and applicative manufacturing domains.

Companies may participate in the Challenge if they *have a marketable product*. In terms of technological focus, the Challenge is open to Start-ups working in: *frontier/deep tech, including but not limited to artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, deep learning, machine learning, quantum computing, blockchain, biotechnology, new materials, human-machine interaction, wearables, collaborative robotics, digital twin, industrial metaverse*.

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If submitting an application-based project, it must clearly be based on digital technologies that are applicable in manufacturing and bring innovation in areas such as: *production, logistics, material handling, maintenance, energy management, asset management, quality control, data security, worker safety*.

Bonus points may be awarded for:

- projects that demonstrate impact on environmental or social sustainability, including case studies aimed at improving sustainability parameters in manufacturing;
- projects that contribute to the evolution of business models.

Take part in the Challenge and showcase your entrepreneurial project designed for the manufacturing sector.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

Participating in the *SPS Italia UP Challenge* is easy!

If you have a technological solution or innovative application in the manufacturing sector that meets the eligibility requirements above, simply complete the online application form and provide a detailed description of your project.

Explain how your idea contributes to improving environmental or social sustainability in manufacturing or how it supports the evolution of business models.

The call closes on Friday, February 6th, 2026.

EVALUATION COMMITTEE AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Submitted projects will be evaluated by a committee of industry experts, representing technology providers, end users, OEMs, institutional entities, and media organizations.

The committee will select the 3 finalists based on the following criteria:

Feasibility and implementability of the project

Relevance to context and market needs

Level of innovation, originality and defensibility

Positioning and size of the customer base

Business potential and economic sustainability

Completeness and integrity of the provided documentation.

STRUCTURE OF THE CALL

- The application deadline is Friday, February 6th, 2026, via the online form.
- Once submitted, projects will be evaluated, and 3 finalists will be selected by the committee based on the criteria above.
- SPS Italia will announce the 3 finalist Start-ups, who will be invited to the fair with a free booth and the chance to pitch their project live at a dedicated event in front of the jury and fair attendees.
- The pitch presentation and award ceremony will take place on one of the three event days: May 26th - 28th, 2026.
- Each pitch can be delivered by up to two people and will last 5 minutes, followed by 5 minutes of Q&A from the jury.
- At the end of the event, the winner will be announced.

THE OPPORTUNITIES

By joining the *SPS Italia UP Challenge* - the leading competition for innovative projects in industrial technologies and applications - Start-ups will gain the opportunity to promote their ideas within SPS Italia's innovation ecosystem. This is an excellent opportunity to connect and collaborate with industry experts, sponsors and entrepreneurs, build partnerships and expand your professional network.

Finalist Start-ups will pitch their project in front of an audience of major players from the tech and manufacturing sectors, as well as innovation and entrepreneurship experts: potential industrial and financial partners who can support the growth of the most promising initiatives.

The 3 selected finalists will be entitled to:

- participate free of charge with a fully equipped stand in the Start-up Area of SPS Italia 2026 (May 26th - 28th, Fiere di Parma)
- present a 5-minute pitch at the fair event
- connect with strategic partners
- gain visibility through media and communication channels associated with SPS Italia (website, articles, video interviews, SPS Real Time, social media)
- become part of the global SPS network.

The winner will be awarded on stage at the SPS Italia Arena with a prize.

FORM AND REGULATIONS

To participate in the *SPS Italia UP Challenge*, you must complete the following online form by Friday, February 6th, 2026:

<https://forms.gle/oeV2BagrdEMGC6DTA>

For more information and full details, please refer to the Regulations, which must be reviewed and followed.