



2027

European Small & Mid-Cap
Innovation Awards

Terms of Reference



CONTENTS

1. Introduction	2
2. Operating structure	3
3. Award categories	3
4. Eligibility criteria	3
5. Selection criteria	4
6. Rules	5
7. Communications	6
8. Awards ceremony	6
9. Timeline	6

1. INTRODUCTION

The European Small and Mid-Cap Innovation Awards, organised by the Federation of European Securities Exchanges (FESE), build on the legacy of the European Small and Mid-Cap Awards established in 2013 by the European Commission, European Issuers and FESE. The European Small and Mid-Cap Innovation Awards recognise outstanding European SMEs and mid-caps that have successfully accessed public capital markets via an Initial Public Offering (IPO) and leveraged their listing to drive innovation, growth and international expansion.

By showcasing innovative listed companies from across Europe, the Awards promote the role of public equity in helping them raise capital and strengthen their market position and scale. They also highlight the vital contribution that dynamic SMEs and mid-caps make to strengthening Europe's competitiveness, fostering innovation and supporting long-term economic growth.

This document is designed to provide stock exchanges with detailed information on how to participate in the European Small and Mid-Cap Innovation Awards. While participation is expected to deliver important benefits to the companies, investors and markets served by the stock exchanges by promoting a company segment crucial to economic growth, it does require an investment of resources and compliance with the rules described in this document. Therefore, each stock exchange is free to decide whether to participate.

The fact that an exchange has (or is planning to introduce) an existing award for SMEs does not

prevent an exchange from participating in the European Small and Mid-Cap Innovation Awards, as long as the exchange keeps its branding/public relations separate from the European Small and Mid-Cap Innovation Awards and otherwise complies with the rules set out in this document.

It should be noted that each licensed stock exchange within the EU Member States and countries with an official EU candidate status (as well as the UK) can put forward nominations to the Awards. Stock exchange groups with exchanges in multiple countries can nominate up to three companies per licensed entity (one nomination per Awards category).

Your role as a participating stock exchange will be to:

- Inform the FESE Secretariat in writing of your participation in the Awards;
- Identify nominees among small and mid-caps listed at your stock exchange that comply with the Eligibility Criteria (explained hereunder);
- Seek formal agreement from the small and mid-cap companies for their nomination to the Awards and ask permission for company information to be shared with the FESE Secretariat, and the Awards Jury;
- Evaluate/score nominees according to the Selection Criteria (explained hereunder); and
- Submit one nominee (a company can be nominated for only one category, not for multiple) per category via the enclosed application form to the FESE Secretariat.

It should be noted that each participating stock exchange is free to create its own selection procedures, so long as this supports the framework of the Awards. We kindly ask each participating exchange to notify the FESE Secretariat of any additional selection procedures used and to provide clarification on these procedures if needed.

2. OPERATING STRUCTURE

2.1 FESE SECRETARIAT

FESE will receive the nominations. Questions can be asked to info@fese.eu.

2.2 PRE-SELECTION

The Jury will evaluate all the nominees and agree on a short-list of three nominees for each category.

The selection process is summarised below:

1. Nominees should be sent to info@fese.eu before Friday 4th December 2026.
2. Nominees meeting the eligibility criteria will be taken forward for evaluation by the Jury;
3. The Jury will meet by late March 2027 to agree on a total of 9 short-listed nominees and the eventual winners within each category.

2.3 INDEPENDENT JURY

A high-level Jury (previously selected by the European Commission) - representing the fields of academia, capital markets, the investment community, the business community and financial media with a majority from a geographically representative sub-set of European countries - will be responsible for selecting the winners of the European Small and Mid-Cap Innovation Awards. The Jury will apply the following principles in its selection process:

- The companies that meet the criteria the best will be selected for each category.
- To ensure the promotional effect of the Awards, the Jury will strive to ensure that the three companies chosen for each category come from at least two different exchanges, and that the 9 companies that form the short list come from at least 5 different countries. Where possible, greater diversity will be sought.

2.4 AWARDS CEREMONY

The Awards will be hosted during the FESE Gala Dinner, the evening before the FESE Convention 2027, in Brussels.

3. AWARDS CATEGORIES

The European Small and Mid-Cap Innovation Awards will consist of 3 categories:

- Rising Star Award
- Excellence Award
- International Star Award

4. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Who can take part in the 'European Small and Mid-Cap Innovation Awards' Competition?

- Companies that meet the definition of small or mid-cap with a market capitalisation of at most €1 billion at the date of Initial Public Offering (IPO);
- Companies nominated by a participating stock exchange within the EU 27 Member States and
- Companies that were publicly listed on a Regulated Market or MTF operated by one of the participating exchanges between **01.08.2024** and **31.07.2026**. In exceptional cases, companies that have been listed for longer may be considered where they have undergone a significant transformation, demonstrating a new growth trajectory and innovation profile comparable to that of a recent IPO.

Companies should demonstrate:

- **a minimum free float of 10%**, in line with the requirements introduced under the EU Listing Act and reflected in Article 51a(4) MiFID II.
- trading activity on at least one-third of trading sessions between its admission to trading and 30.09.2026.

These calculations will be based on verifiable exchange data from a recognized source within the EU 27 Member States / participating stock exchanges. Dual listing is allowed if it involves fundraising.

- Companies that have not won the first place in any of the categories in the Small and Mid-Cap Awards 2025. To the extent possible, exchanges are encouraged to put forward companies that have not been shortlisted before; however, having been short-listed (without having won the first place) does not disqualify a company from being nominated again.

5. SELECTION CRITERIA

Winning companies in all three categories should be profitable in the long run, both in terms of share price and underlying company fundamentals, demonstrate accurate and timely disclosure of corporate information to shareholders and regulatory bodies, sharing any recently reported information that may affect the material standing of the company, and adhering to corporate governance and benefiting their broader stakeholders. To this end, the evaluation panel will take into consideration each nominee's corporate reputation and standing within its community and markets.

For the purposes of assessment, **innovation** refers to the successful development and implementation of a new or significantly improved product, service, technology, process, or business model that creates value, differentiates the company in the market, and contributes to its growth and competitiveness. It could be demonstrated through indicators such as patents, proprietary technologies, operational improvements, market disruption, or other measurable contributions.

The concept of innovation should be interpreted broadly and may arise across a wide range of sectors, including but not limited to digital technologies, fintech, healthtech, biotech, climate technology, advanced manufacturing, and intelligent energy solutions, among others.

*Data collected under the headings marked * should refer to the date of floatation and compare to the data of 30.09.2026.*

RIISING STAR AWARD

A recently listed company with up to €200m capitalisation that demonstrates strong post-IPO performance and growth potential including through innovative or digital business practices or processes.

- Strong post-IPO performance within the subgroup of SMEs with up to €200m capitalisation in relation to growth in market share, sales, employment and long-term growth

- Share price performance with a long-term perspective*
- Evidence of innovation, business transformation, or market differentiation
- Company's plans to improve and scale-up the innovation
- Effective use of capital markets to support growth and development, including secondary or follow-on equity issuances, debt issuance, or other forms of market-based financing.
- Overall reputation: how is the company viewed by peers/analysts/other companies?

EXCELLENCE AWARD

A recently listed company that has placed innovation at the core of its strategy, achieved significant impact and successfully translated it into sustained commercial growth, market impact and long-term value creation.

- Demonstrated degree of innovation in product, service or business model
- Integration of innovation in company's long-term business strategy
- Measurable impact of innovation on the company's commercial performance, competitiveness or market position
- Effective use of capital markets to support growth and development, including secondary or follow-on equity issuances, debt issuance, or other forms of market-based financing
- Market share, sales, employment and long-term profit growth*
- Share price performance with a long-term perspective*
- Overall reputation: how is the company viewed by peers/analysts/other companies?

INTERNATIONAL STAR AWARD

A recently listed company that has successfully leveraged public capital markets and innovation to support its international expansion, strengthen its cross-border presence, and enhance its competitiveness in European and global markets.

- Geographic diversification beyond the EU Single Market through e.g. the establishment of subsidiaries, partnerships, or production facilities abroad

- Sound internationalisation strategy
- Market share, sales, employment and long-term profits attributable to international activity*
- Demonstrated ability to scale products, services or business models across multiple markets
- Share price performance with a long-term perspective*
- Evidence that innovation, business transformation, or market differentiation has supported international growth
- Effective use of capital markets to support growth and development, including secondary or follow-on equity issuances, debt issuance, or other forms of market-based financing
- Recognition and reputation in international markets among customers, peers, investors or analysts

FESE website (<https://www.fese.eu/eusmallandmidcapinnovationaward>). One application should be submitted for each nominated company.

6. Only fully completed application forms will be accepted. Additional material or accompanying documents will not be accepted after the deadline.
7. Stock exchanges should evaluate, on the basis of their companies, for which of the categories they wish to submit an application. It is recommended, but not mandatory, to submit a nominee for each award category.
8. Each stock exchange may submit only one application per award category.
9. The Jury reserves the right, if deemed appropriate, to reassign a nomination to another category with the agreement of the stock exchange that has submitted the nomination. All decisions rendered by the Jury will be final.

6. RULES

The rules governing the application procedure are outlined below:

1. Participation for companies in the European Small and Mid-Cap Innovation Awards is free of charge.
2. Stock exchanges must select nominees according to the Eligibility and Selection Criteria highlighted as per points 4 and 5 of this document. The selection process and methodology followed should be available for review on request.
3. The deadline for clarifications and queries to be addressed to the FESE Secretariat is Monday 16th November 2026.
4. Nominations (one per 3 open category, per licensed stock exchange) must be submitted to the FESE Secretariat by e-mail (info@fese.eu) by participating stock exchanges before the deadline of Friday 4th December 2026) - please see section 9 on timeline.
5. Nominations must be submitted exclusively in **English** and using the application form downloadable on the

6.1. SELECTION PROCESS BY EACH STOCK EXCHANGE / OTHER ORGANISATIONS

After the identification of nominees listed at your stock exchange that comply with the Eligibility Criteria, the stock exchange / the appointed organisation for your country should evaluate/ score nominees according to the above-mentioned Selection Criteria.

6.2. NOMINATIONS

All nominations should be sent, directly and confidentially, using the application form to the FESE Secretariat by the respective participating stock exchange or the appointed organisation. Acknowledgement of receipt will be sent by return e-mail to the stock exchanges and nominated companies. The Application Package should be complete and may also include any other useful information, in English, which may support the application.

Upon receiving the nominations from the stock exchanges, the FESE Secretariat will crosscheck each application against the established Eligibility Criteria. Those applications meeting the Eligibility Criteria will be taken forward to the Jury.

6.3. JURY REPORT

Once the Jury has made its final selection, it will be asked to produce a short text explaining its decision, which, if requested can be shared with the stock exchanges. Stock exchanges will also be informed of when this information can be made publicly available (to ensure coherent marketing and ensure confidentiality until the end of the Awards ceremony in June 2027). Following the drafting of the Jury report, the FESE Secretariat will contact the participating stock exchanges and shortlisted companies to inform them about their selection and invite them to attend the Awards Ceremony.

7. COMMUNICATIONS

The following are the currently planned public communication milestones, other activities/ actions might be added and will be announced accordingly:

TIMING	MILESTONE
5 th Oct 2026	Launch of the 2027 Awards
4 th Dec 2026	Deadline for applications
April 2027	Announcement of the Shortlist (include list of all companies). Invitation to register to the Ceremony
22 nd June 2027	Announcement of the winners at the Ceremony in Brussels, Belgium
End June 2027	Post-event press action and public campaign

8. AWARDS CEREMONY

The winners in each of the three categories will be announced on 22nd June 2027 in Brussels, Belgium at the European Small and Mid-Cap Innovation Awards Ceremony, the evening before the FESE Convention.

The Awards Ceremony will be an event with high-level participation from across Europe's capital markets and innovation ecosystem, including representatives of the shortlisted companies, European policymakers, securities exchanges, investors, listed companies and other key market stakeholders. The event will be organised by FESE. The winning companies, the exchanges, and all shortlisted of the three categories will be invited.

A professional photographer will be on-site to capture images of the Awards ceremony to be

distributed to the press including dailies, weekly magazines and online press.

Information about the Awards will be released in the media including social networks throughout the Awards Competition and Ceremony. Press releases will be distributed to reach an increased number of media outlets throughout Europe.

The recognised concept and success of the winners and short-listed nominees will be promoted through press agencies and additional media. Particular attention will be paid to the media in the countries where the winners and short-listed nominees come from.

We recommend that exchanges keep the FESE Secretariat informed of any public relations activity in relation to the exchanges' own awards to ensure that promotional activity for the forthcoming Awards is aligned with the activity, if any, of the participating exchange.

Promotion of the European Small and Mid-Cap Innovation Awards will be coordinated by the FESE Secretariat. We therefore kindly ask exchanges to refrain from undertaking any press/public relations activity in relation to the companies that have become short-listed until the short list is made public in April.

9. TIMELINE

TIMING	MILESTONE
5 th Oct 2026	Launch of the 2027 Awards
Oct - Nov 2026	Collecting applications from stock exchanges and screening eligibility
4 th Dec 2026	Deadline for applications
Jan - Mar 2027	Preparation of all documents for the Jury Jury deliberations
Mar 2027	Jury Meeting
Apr 2027	Announcement of the Shortlist
Apr - May 2027	FESE continues communications and answer queries on attendance at the ceremony
22 nd June 2027	Awards Ceremony Press release to announce the winners