

FORUM MED AI

Mediterranean Forum
on Artificial Intelligence

FORUM MED AI RESEARCH PRIZE

RECOGNISING AI
RESEARCH ADDRESSING
MEDITERRANEAN
CHALLENGES.

November 5, 2026 · Palais du Pharo · Marseille

1. GENERAL CONTEXT

The **FORUM MED AI Research Prize** is part of the [Mediterranean Forum on Artificial Intelligence](#) (FORUM MED AI) and its third edition vision: to shape the Mediterranean third way for artificial intelligence. It aims to **identify and showcase research projects leveraging AI to address the social, environmental and economic challenges of the Mediterranean region**, while strengthening links between research and socio-economic stakeholders.

The Research Prize is part of **Sila - the France-Mediterranean Initiative for Artificial Intelligence**, funded by the **French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE)** through the **Fonds Équipe France (FEF+)** and implemented by **Expertise France**, and is organised as part of the third edition of **FORUM MED AI 2026**, initiated by the **Interministerial Delegation for the Mediterranean (DIMED)**. The Prize is led by **Expertise France**, the **Research Institute for Development (IRD)** and **ANIMA Investment Network**.

Through a regional cooperation approach, the Prize highlights projects developed from within the Mediterranean and encourages connections between research, innovation and investment ecosystems across the five countries of implementation of the Sila initiative: **Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia**.

2. ABOUT THE PRIZE

The **FORUM MED AI Research Prize** recognises innovative research projects using artificial intelligence whose lead applicant or affiliated organisation is based in Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco or Tunisia.

Jointly organised by **Expertise France**, the **Research Institute for Development (IRD)** and **ANIMA Investment Network**, the Prize aims to showcase scientific excellence, strengthen links between research and socio-economic stakeholders, and support the emergence of solutions addressing challenges faced by Mediterranean countries. It comprises two categories: the Social Innovation Prize and the Economic Innovation Prize. Applicants submit a single application and are not required to choose a category.

Six applications will be selected. The selected applicants will receive targeted support to strengthen the presentation and promotion of their project, before presenting it at **FORUM MED AI 2026**, on 5 November 2026 at the Palais du Pharo in Marseille, to an international audience from the research, innovation and investment communities.

3. THE TWO CATEGORIES

3.1 Social Innovation Prize

Funded by IRD, this prize recognises a project that uses artificial intelligence to address an issue of general interest and generate a social or environmental impact, particularly in the fields of health, education, the environment, water, agriculture, the sea and coastal areas, sustainable development or inclusion.

3.2 Economic Innovation Prize

Funded by the French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (MEAE), this prize recognises a project that uses artificial intelligence to develop a solution with strong economic potential, particularly in terms of research valorisation, technology transfer, industrialisation, business creation or value creation, including in the agricultural and agri-food sectors as well as in maritime activities and the blue economy.

One winner will be selected in each of the two categories, with each winner receiving a **Prize of €5,000**. The prize money covers purchases, services, subcontracting and computing time, excluding personnel costs. The award ceremony will take place on 5 November 2026 at the Palais du Pharo in Marseille.

4. ELIGIBILITY

4.1 Eligibility conditions

- **Geographic anchoring:** the applicant, or the organisation to which they are affiliated, must be based in one of the five eligible countries: Algeria, Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco or Tunisia.
- **Field:** the project must be built on a concrete application of artificial intelligence, developed or under development, rather than on the mere use of existing tools.
- **Maturity:** no technology readiness level is required; projects are eligible regardless of their TRL.
- **Submission:** applications must be submitted by 11.59 p.m. (Paris time, UTC+2) on 21 September 2026 on the online submission platform and include all requested documents. Applications submitted after this deadline will not be considered.

The eligibility conditions are the same for both categories and a single application form is used. Applicants do not choose a category when submitting: each project is assigned to one of the two categories — Social Innovation Prize or Economic Innovation Prize — by the jury at the evaluation stage.

4.2 Eligible profiles and organisations

- **Researchers and academic staff engaged in research.**
- **PhD students and postdoctoral researchers.**

- Research teams and laboratories.
- Universities and higher education institutions.
- Innovative start-ups and research spin-offs.

5. EVALUATION CRITERIA

CRITERION
Scientific quality and innovation
Relevance to Mediterranean challenges and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
Frugality, sovereignty and ethics
Criterion specific to the category assigned by the jury
Team and feasibility

PLEASE NOTE: *applications led or co-led by women are particularly encouraged.*

Jury governance. The jury brings together representatives of Expertise France, the Research Institute for Development (IRD) and ANIMA Investment Network, together with qualified figures from the research, innovation and investment communities, chosen for their expertise in artificial intelligence and their knowledge of the Mediterranean region. Its members are appointed jointly by the three partner organisations and the final composition is published on the call page.

The jury assigns each project to one of the two categories, deliberates in private on the basis of the evaluation grid and selects one winner per category; its decisions are final and not open to appeal. The composition of the jury, the arrangements for appointing its members and the rules governing its deliberations are set out in the rules of the call.

6. APPLICATION PROCESS

Applications must be submitted exclusively on the platform by 11.59 p.m. (Paris time, UTC+2) on 21 September 2026. A single bilingual application form is used for both prize categories and does not require applicants to choose between them. Only complete and eligible applications will be evaluated. The six selected applicants will be chosen solely on the basis of their applications, with no selection interview. The rules, application form, evaluation grid and practical arrangements will be published when the call officially opens.

7. TIMELINE

STEP	TIMELINE
Call opens	21 August 2026
Application deadline	21 September 2026 · 11.59 p.m. (Paris time, UTC+2)
Application review	Second half of September 2026
Selection of the six applicants (based on applications)	End of September 2026
Online preparation workshop for selected applicants	October 2026 · Date to be communicated to the finalists
Final pitch of the six selected applicants	5 November 2026
Award ceremony · FORUM MED AI 2026, Palais du Pharo, Marseille	5 November 2026

8. PRACTICAL INFORMATION

In October 2026, the six selected applicants will take part in a **one-day online preparation workshop**. The workshop is designed to equip them for the final pitch: structuring their presentation in a short format, articulating their value proposition clearly and addressing an audience that brings together researchers, entrepreneurs, investors and public decision-makers.

The Prize partners will support applicants in developing their pitch deck, refining their business model, and strengthening their value proposition for investors. They will also help applicants communicate their scientific innovation clearly and effectively to a non-specialist audience, while preserving its scientific rigour. Each applicant will receive tailored, individual feedback on their presentation.

All selected applicants are expected to take part in the preparation workshop and in the Forum. Where an applicant is prevented from doing so for reasons beyond their control, in particular a visa refusal, an inability to travel or an event of force majeure, suitable arrangements will be considered with the organisers, without calling into question the benefit of their selection.

Selected applicants must be available to travel to Marseille and take part in the final, held on **5 November 2026 at the Palais du Pharo**, as part of the Mediterranean Forum on Artificial Intelligence (FORUM MED AI). They will present their project to a jury of experts and an international audience. After the pitches, the jury will deliberate in private and select one winner in each category.

For selected applicants residing outside France, **Expertise France will cover air travel and accommodation in Marseille**. Expertise France will also provide the official letter of invitation and will assist, where necessary, with visa application procedures. However, the issuance of visas remains subject to the decision of the competent consular authorities.

Beyond the award ceremony, **selected applicants and winners are associated with the collaborative dynamic of the Mediterranean AI network**: introductions to the laboratories, companies and investors present at the Forum, participation in the networking activities of the Sila initiative and follow-up on the promotion of their project by IRD and ANIMA Investment Network in the months following the event.

9. KEY PARTNERS

Expertise France



As a public agency, **Expertise France** is the interministerial operator for international technical cooperation and a subsidiary of the French Development Agency (AFD) Group. The second-largest agency of its kind in Europe, it designs and implements projects that sustainably strengthen public policies in developing and emerging countries. Governance, security, climate, health, education... Expertise France operates across key areas of development and works alongside its partners to contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. *For a world in common.*

[Website](#)

Research Institute for Development (IRD)



The **Research Institute for Development (IRD)** contributes to strengthening the resilience of societies in the face of global change. It operates in more than 50 countries across Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, as well as in mainland France and France's overseas territories. Its research activities address concrete priority needs, including climate change mitigation and adaptation, the fight against poverty and inequalities, biodiversity conservation, access to healthcare, and the consideration of social dynamics. Research priorities are developed together with local stakeholders and communities. Through long-term partnerships, its teams bring together perspectives, disciplines and knowledge to develop robust, high-impact solutions.

[Website](#)

ANIMA Investment Network



Established in 2006 as part of the Barcelona Process / Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, **ANIMA Investment Network** brings together 70 member organisations across 20 countries, as well as more than 400 experts and partners. Its mission is to promote economic development between Europe, the Middle East and Africa, and to foster sustainable partnerships through advisory services, capacity building, networking and project development.

[Website](#)

10. CONTACT AND PERSONAL DATA

10.1 Point of contact

Any question relating to the call for applications may be sent to :
aymen.bouazizi@expertisefrance.fr

10.2 Protection of personal data

Data controller. The personal data collected in the context of this call is processed by Expertise France, acting as data controller.

Purposes and legal basis. This data is processed solely for the purposes of managing applications, running the evaluation process, organising the logistics of the Forum and communicating about the Prize. The legal basis for the processing is the performance of a task carried out in the public interest.

Recipients. The data is accessible, within the limits of their respective responsibilities, to the teams of Expertise France, the Research Institute for Development (IRD) and ANIMA Investment Network, as well as to the members of the jury involved in the evaluation process, who are bound by a confidentiality undertaking. Apart from these recipients, no data is disclosed to any third party.

Retention period. The data is retained for 24 months from the closing date of the call, after which it is deleted or archived in accordance with applicable rules.

Applicants' rights. In accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) and French Act No. 78-17 of 6 January 1978, as amended, each applicant has the right to access, rectify or erase their personal data, restrict or object to its processing and, where applicable, exercise their right to data portability through [dedicated online form](#). Each applicant also has the right to lodge a complaint with the CNIL, the French data protection authority.