

PRESS RELEASE

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Sixth class of SpaceFounders open for submissions

SpaceFounders, the European accelerator programme for space start-ups created by CNES through its Connect by CNES initiative, in partnership with Bundeswehr University Munich (UniBw) and the Italian space agency ASI, is seeking candidates for its next cohort of 15 start-ups. Submissions are called for on line from 10 to 31 March 2025 at www.spacefounders.eu.

The 15 laureates will be announced mid-June. The programme of face-to-face and virtual coaching will run from September to December 2025 in Toulouse, Munich and Turin, three European cities with a vibrant space ecosystem. Entrepreneurs will get the opportunity to focus on two fundamental domains: structuring of business growth (sales, teams, management, industrial scale-up and export markets) and non-dilutive (major European calls for projects) and dilutive (deep tech risk capital) funding. They will also be given numerous tours of industrial facilities and attend business meetings in Europe, thanks notably to SpaceFounders partners the European Space Agency (ESA), German space agency DLR, the European Innovation Council (EIC), Thales Alenia Space, Airbus Defence & Space, Beyond Gravity and Safran. And they will have access to the alumni network encompassing 55 of Europe's leading space firms, who will be sharing their experience, forging commercial relationships and offering mentoring with top people from the world of investment and the space industry.

Since its inception, SpaceFounders has supported 55 companies, 24 of them French or with a subsidiary in France, and facilitated 180 rounds of funding, including €91 million from French firms. This support for commercial growth in Europe combined with a clear public and private funding strategy is driving the burgeoning French space ecosystem.

2024 proved a stellar year for SpaceFounders laureates:

- Ion-X, which is developing ion thrusters for satellites and was a laureate of the programme in 2023, completed a funding round of €13 million to boost its growth. It also sent its first thruster into orbit last January for ESA's EDISON mission.
- Constellation Global, a laureate of the fourth SpaceFounders class, is developing a telecommunications constellation to beam down low-latency broadband Internet services from space. It completed a funding round of €9.3 million to build and launch its first two satellites.

The SpaceFounders programme is open to the best and brightest European space entrepreneurs, including from the United Kingdom and Switzerland. It encompasses all areas of space, from upstream (satellites, orbital systems, constellations, in-orbit services, propulsion, launchers and space surveillance) to downstream (uptake of Earth-observation data, telecommunications and navigation services for markets on Earth), as well as cross-cutting technologies with applications for space, such as fabrication, artificial intelligence, industrial robotics and components. The programme also applies to firms that have already developed a pre-commercial product or are seeking seed or Series A funding.

About SpaceFounders

SpaceFounders is an accelerator for European space start-ups dedicated to identifying and accompanying future space champions, with a mission to help them become industry leaders and extend their impact on Europe's space industry. Initiated in 2021, SpaceFounders is a joint endeavour of the French space agency CNES, Bundeswehr University

Munich (UniBw) and the Italian space agency ASI. It is supported by prestigious European space institutions such as the European Space Agency (ESA), German space agency DLR and the European Innovation Council (EIC), and by a top-tier industrial consortium of leading players like Thales Alenia Space, Airbus Defence & Space, Beyond Gravity and Safran. SpaceFounders France also invests in start-ups that have achieved a proven track record since the start of the accelerator programme.

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