



**Rete Nazionale
degli Incubatori Universitari
e delle Start Cup Competition**

**PNICube network for the
entrepreneurial valorization of
university research**

PNICube

Network of local networks for innovative entrepreneurship from research

Founded in 2004, PNICube is the **italian Association** of Universities, academic Incubators and regional Start Cups. PNICube's mission is to pursue the **entrepreneurial valorization of research** through a wide-ranging, local and national, **generative pathway** of innovative entrepreneurship **which main protagonists are researchers and university students**.

Unique in Italy and Europe, the PNICube network has **58 associate members**, including **Universities, academic Incubators, and other organizations** that promote innovation and entrepreneurship. Through **17 regional Start Cups**, PNICube involves **18 italian Regions** and it is aimed at promoting the creation and development of **knowledge-intensive, high social impact enterprises for sustainable progress**. *A network of networks for sustainable progress.*

In its 21 years of existence, the PNICube network has generated **1.166 innovative start-up projects** from **Universities and Public Research Organizations-PROs** (an average of more than 50 per year), distributed by innovation categories as follows: 408 Life Sciences-MedTech; 350 ICT; 245 CleanTech & Energy; 163 Industrial. To date, **almost 60% are operating in the markets**.

The OECD has recognized PNICube as a **best practice** for the sustainable development of Italy and its regions. Indeed, the OECD acknowledges the PNICube's ability to **connect local networks** in which universities, businesses, investors, and public administrations work together (Report 2019, [Supporting Entrepreneurship and Innovation in Higher Education in Italy](#)).

PNICube pursues its mission through two important initiatives: the **National Innovation Award-PNI** and the **Italian Master Startup Award-IMSA**.

PNICube Network Purposes

Promoted by the Conference of Italian University Rectors (CRUI), the main purpose of PNICube is **to foster the creation of start-ups/spin-offs from research for sustainable development, through the combination of 5 key sub-objectives.**



Fostering the creation of research start-ups/spin-off



Informing and promoting engagement initiatives directed at the academic community



Encouraging the creation of university incubators



Exchanging experiences among members and fostering mutual collaboration



Acquiring resources directed toward enterprise creation activities



Promoting and supporting members in international collaborations

Regional Start Cups

Local networks for entrepreneurship from research



Regional Start Cups are **Business Plan Competitions associated with PNI Cube**, they are **activated on yearly basis by Universities and Academic Incubators in collaboration with PROs**. They support and reward the best innovative business projects that originate from regional research systems within universities and PROs, by stimulating the emergence of knowledge-intensive start-ups.

Regional Start Cups imply the collaboration of Universities, academic Incubators, enterprises, investors and local public administrations over the territories.

The winning projects of the regional Start Cups participate in the national **PNI** competition.

Young start-ups from the regional Start Cup circuit operating in the markets participate in the national **IMSA** competition.

Start Cup 2024

The 18 Regions involved in 2023 through 17 regional Start Cups:

Abruzzo, Apulia, Calabria, Campania, Emilia-Romagna, Friuli Venice Julia, Lazio, Liguria, Lombardy, Marche, Molise, Piedmont and Aosta Valley, Sardinia, Sicily, Trentino South Tyrol, Tuscany, Veneto.

National Innovation Award - PNI



The National Innovation Award - PNI is the most extensive and widespread **Business Plan Competition** in Italy. Each year, it rewards the best innovative business projects by selecting them among the winners of the regional Start Cups.

The innovation sectors, established in the PNI Regulation, are related to four award categories **“Cleantech & Energy”**, **“Life Sciences-MED Tech”**, **“ICT”**, **“Industrial”**.

The initiative engages researchers and university students, connecting them with enterprises, financial organizations and the world of innovation.

Prizes edition 2025



- **25.000€ to be awarded to the first-place winner in each of the 4 innovation categories**
- **Awards and special mentions** supported by associate members and partners of the PNICube Association

Total prize money

1.500.000€: 500,000€ and 1 million € in **services** offered by the **PNICube network** along the entire path from the regional Start Cups to the final PNI challenge

Italian Master Startup Award - IMSA



The Italian Master Startup Award - IMSA, established in 2007, is the only **national-based Competition** that rewards the market achievements of young enterprises with high knowledge content originating from Universities and Public Research Institutions which are promoters of the regional Start Cups associated with the **PNICube network**.

The Award is organized on yearly basis by the PNICube Association in collaboration with one of its associate members, which hosts the award ceremony.

Purposes

- Giving **visibility to innovative enterprises** that have achieved significant social and economic results during the early years of their lifecycle;
- **Tracking the results obtained** through business plan competitions and incubation activities carried out by the Association's members and its institutional partners.

The PNICube Board of Directors 2023 - 2025

1. *Paola M. A. Paniccia* - University of Rome Tor Vergata (**President**)
2. *Giuseppe Scellato* - I3P Incubator Politecnico of Turin (**Secretariat**)
3. *Massimiliano Ambra* - Rome Biomedical Campus University Foundation
4. *Giulio Antonini* - University of L'Aquila
5. *Bernardo Balboni* - University of Modena and Reggio Emilia
6. *Chiara Benente* - University of Turin
7. *Enrico Bracci* - University of Ferrara
8. *Gilda Carravetta* - University of Calabria
9. *Francesco Ferrante* - University of Cassino and Southern Lazio
10. *Alessandro Grandi* - Almacube srl (**Past President**)
11. *Renato Passaro* - University of Naples Parthenope
12. *Evaristo Ricci* - University of Florence
13. *Marcantonio Ruisi* - University of Palermo

PNICube's associate members



Rete Nazionale degli Incubatori Universitari e delle Start Cup Competition

Abruzzo Region



Apulia Region



Basilicata Region



Calabria Region



Campania Region



Emilia Romagna Region



Friuli Venezia Giulia Region



Lazio Region



Liguria Region



Lombardy Region



Marche Region



Molise Region



Piedmont Region



Sardinia Region



Sicily Region



Trentino South Tyrol Region



Tuscany Region



Umbria Region



Veneto Region



Partnership e Sponsorship

Partner



Sponsor



Collaborations and Institutional Partnerships

Over time, the PNICube network has developed important **synergies with Institutions and Organizations committed to promoting entrepreneurship and innovation**, with particular reference to young people, women and "Made in Italy".

In the past year, collaborations and institutional partnerships have been established with:

- **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI)**
- **Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (MIMIT)**
- **Ministry of University and Research (MUR)**
- **Invitalia**
- **Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS)**
- **Italian Embassy to the Holy See**
- **French Embassy in Italy**
- **Pépité France-Pôles Étudiants pour l'Innovation, le Transfert et l'Entrepreneuriat**
- **Conference of Italian Universities Rectors (CRUI)**
- **Lazio Region**
- **Municipality of Rome**

under the patronage of



Collaborations and Institutional Partnerships

The most recently institutional collaboration initiatives launched:

- Participation in the Commission's work for the evaluation of projects submitted to the call promoted by the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MAECI)** for the awarding of the Prize "Innovation that speaks Italian – Italian technological start-ups operating abroad".
- Participation in the works of the "Italia Startup Visa" technical Committee, established at the **Ministry of Enterprises and Made in Italy (MIMIT)**.
- Sponsorship and collaboration with **Ministry of Universities and Research (MUR)**.
- Protocol with **Invitalia** aimed at putting in place coordinated actions to support, with incentives, information/promotion activities and targeted services to foster the birth and development of high-innovation enterprises. **Addendum to the agreement protocol** whose objective is to give continuity and power to the support actions for aspiring women researchers and entrepreneurs.
- Sponsorship and collaboration with **Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development (ASviS)** aimed at promoting start-up projects that implement solutions strongly oriented to sustainable development goals;
- Sponsorship and collaboration with the **Italian Embassy to the Holy See**, aimed at promoting the PNICube network's start-ups that, in different innovation sectors, realize solutions for the quality of life strongly oriented to environmental sustainability and integral ecology.
- Sponsorship and collaboration with the **French Embassy in Italy**, aimed at promoting the development of the PNICube network's start-ups through the "International mobility program"; which, in turn, is designed to foster the mobility of Italian students and young researchers aspiring entrepreneurs under the implementation of the Treaty between Italy and France for enhanced bilateral cooperation ("Quirinal Treaty").
- Cooperation with **Pépité France-Pôles Étudiants pour l'Innovation, le Transfert et l'Entrepreneuriat** aimed at fostering the mobility of students and young researchers aspiring entrepreneurs from the two countries through the above-mentioned "International mobility program".
- Sponsorship and collaboration with **the Israel Embassy in Italy** aimed at supporting the innovation and internationalization of the PNICube network's start-ups, also by awarding of special Mentions and Prizes and the implementation of best practices.
- Sponsorship and collaboration with **Conference of Italian Universities Rectors (CRUI)**.
- Sponsorship and collaboration with **Lazio Region**.
- Sponsorship and collaboration with **Municipality of Rome**.

under the patronage of



PNICube's Results and Impact

In its 21 years of existence, the PNICube network has generated **1.166 projects of innovative start-ups** from Universities and Public Research Institutions (an average of more than 50 per year), distributed by the innovation categories in the competition as follows:

- 408 in the Life Sciences-MedTech sector;
- 350 in the ICT sector;
- 245 in the CleanTech & Energy sector;
- 163 in the Industrial sector.

To date, almost 60% are operating in the markets.

The generative capacity of the Network over the past four years (2020-2023):

- With the involvement of about **9.173 researchers** aspiring entrepreneurs, more than **2.905 business ideas** participated in the regional Start Cups, of which 264 made it to the PNI final;
- The **Technology Readiness Level (TRL)** indicates a technology maturity level averaging 4/5;
- More than **60 young innovative start-ups operating in the markets** (from Universities and Public Research Institutions associated with the network) applied for the IMSA Award. Of these, 50% were selected for the Award final.

Following the most advanced approaches on entrepreneurship education (including the recent European frameworks of EntreComp (2016) and GreenComp (2022), which are strongly connected to the SDGs of the 2030 Agenda), the PNICube network represents a concrete opportunity to disseminate and strengthen a culture of enterprise and innovation that combines technical skills and values, with a focus on the values of health, respect for natural ecosystems, combating climate change, responsible technological innovation, personal fulfillment, dignity of labor, and social justice, for a sustainable development from all perspectives.

The past four editions of PNI e IMSA



PNI organizers:



IMSA organizers:

2021



2022



2023



2024



PNI 2022 - Aquila

The twentieth edition of PNI was organized in L'Aquila by the **University of Aquila** in collaboration with the **Gran Sasso Science Institute** e **Innovalley** on **Thursday, December 1st** and **Friday, December 2nd**.



The 2022 edition was attended by

- 15 Start Cups
- 717 business ideas proposed by 1891 aspiring entrepreneurs
- 230 Business Plans

Alla Fase finale:

- 65 projects, regional Start Cups winners
- 48% supported by patents
- Avarege TRL 4/5
- 294 researchers aspiring entrepreneurs

PNI 2022 News

Special Award Climate Change

PNI 2023 - Milan

The twenty-first edition of PNI 2023 was organized in collaboration with **University of Milano-Bicocca, Polytechnic of Milan, Bocconi University** and **University of Milan**, coordinated by the public-private ecosystem "**MUSA**" (Multilayered Urban Sustainability Action) and Lombardy Region. PNI 2023 was held in Milan, at Palazzo Lombardia, on **Thursday, November 30th** , and **Friday, December 1st** .

The 2023 edition was attended by:

- 16 Start Cups
- 605 business ideas proposed by 2723 aspiring entrepreneurs
- 180 Business Plans

To the final Round:

- 71 projects, regional Start Cups winners
- 44% supported by patents
- Avarege TRL 4/5
- 351 researchers aspiring entrepreneurs



PNI 2023 News

Special Award for "Best Social Innovative Startup" and "Best Women's Innovative Startup"

IMSA 2021 Award - Naples



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23 SETTEMBRE 2021
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IMSA 2021
IL FUTURO DELLA TUA STARTUP È ORA

Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II
Polo Tecnologico di San Giovanni a Teduccio - Aula magna

Le iscrizioni sono aperte fino al 29 luglio 2021

   

Per iscrizioni e informazioni: www.pnicube.it/premioimsa2021-napoli

The **IMSA 2021 Award**, the fifteenth edition, was organized by PNICube in collaboration with the **University of Federico II** and with the support of the traveling innovation fair Innovation Village (www.innovationvillage.it) and the European Council for Small Business (www.ecsb.org).

The event was held on **September 23rd** at the Polo Tecnologico in San Giovanni a Teduccio, Naples, with the participation of **13 startups**.

IMSA 2022 Award - Turin



The IMSA 2022 Award Final took place from the main stage of **Italian Tech Week**, the largest Italian event on technology, on **September 30th** at OGR-Officine Grandi Riparazioni in Turin. The event was live streamed on Repubblica, La Stampa, Live Now, and was attended on site by 200 people and **8 finalist startups**.

IMSA 2023 Award - Turin



The banner features the IMSA 2023 logo on the left, with '2023' in purple and 'IMSA' in blue. Below 'IMSA' is the text 'ITALIAN MASTER STARTUP AWARD'. To the right of the logo is a large yellow and blue graphic element. Further right are logos for PNI CU3E, I3P INCUBATORE POLITECNICO DI TORINO, and ITALIAN TECH WEEK. The date and location are prominently displayed: 'GIOVEDÌ 28 SETTEMBRE 2023' and 'TORINO / OGR OFFICINE GRANDI RIPARAZIONI'. At the bottom, a row of logos includes nobento, iVISION, INVITALIA, Avnire.it, Osif, ASSOCIAZIONE GAMMADONNA, Search On, ASYS, and others.

The IMSA 2023 Award Final took place from the main stage of **Italian Tech Week**, the largest Italian event on technology, on **September 28th** at OGR-Officine Grandi Riparazioni in Turin.

The event was live streamed on Repubblica, La Stampa, Repubblica, Secolo XIX, Huffington Post, and was attended on site by 400 people and **10 finalist startups**.

IMSA 2024 Award - Turin



The IMSA 2024 Award Final took place as part of the Side Events of **Italian Tech Week**, the largest Italian event on technology, on **September 25th** at I3P, the Innovative Enterprise Incubator of the Politecnico of Turin.

The event was live streamed on [PNICube's Facebook page](#) and was attended on site by 200 people and **11 finalist startups**.

For keeping in touch



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www.pnicube.it



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For further information contact to:
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**Thanks for your
attention**