

H.E.R.O.

HARMONIC EURO-AFRICAN RAMP-UP ORBIT

KENYA EDITION 2026

Terms & Conditions

Promoted and organized by Harmonic Innovation Group S.p.A. Società Benefit and BeEntrepreneurs APS

Introduction

This document outlines the guidelines and phases of the "Harmonic Euro-African Ramp-up Orbit - Kenya Edition 2026" program (hereinafter "H.E.R.O." or "the Program"), a contest dedicated to East African startups, promoted by Harmonic Innovation Group S.p.A. Società Benefit and organized by BeEntrepreneurs APS (hereinafter "the Association").

Harmonic Innovation Group S.p.A. Società Benefit (hereinafter "Harmonic") has its registered office in Largo di Torre Argentina 11, 00186 Rome (RM), Italy, VAT 16274141007. Harmonic is an Italian holding pioneering a human-centred model of development known as "harmonic innovation" - a global platform connecting research centres, investment funds, enterprises, and institutions around a shared ethical vision of sustainable and balanced growth. H.E.R.O. is Harmonic's most direct expression of this vision on the African continent.

BeEntrepreneurs APS is an Italian non-profit association (Associazione di Promozione Sociale), registered with the National Unique Register of the Third Sector (RUNTS), with its registered office in Via P. Faccini, 40128 Bologna, Italy, Tax Code 91430080373, VAT 03961991209. Since 2017, BeEntrepreneurs has operated as an open platform for cooperative innovation focused on the African ecosystem, delivering programs in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Congo, Tanzania, and Morocco.

The name H.E.R.O. reflects the program's fundamental architecture:

- **Harmonic:** A commitment to balanced growth, where African innovation integrates synergistically with European know-how and infrastructure.
- **Euro-African:** Harmonic and BeEntrepreneurs act as privileged gateways to Europe, facilitating partnerships, investments, and market access for East African startups.
- **Ramp-up:** The program provides concrete tools for accelerated growth, with a focus on internationalization and business model adaptation for the Italian and European market.
- **Orbit:** H.E.R.O. is not a linear program with an endpoint. Participants enter a permanent orbit of investors, mentors, and corporate partners in Italy and Europe.

The main objective of H.E.R.O. is to identify and support early-stage startups with a potential positive socio-economic impact in Kenya and the East African region, providing training, mentoring, networking, and access to an international ecosystem. Selected startups participate in a one-week residential bootcamp in Nairobi in August 2026. The 3 winning teams are awarded a fully funded Italian Roadshow in November 2026.

Program Objective

H.E.R.O. aims to:

- Identify and select high-potential East African startups with the ambition and capacity to scale internationally;
 - Provide selected startups with training, mentoring, networking, and access to an international ecosystem grounded in the principles of harmonic innovation;
 - Foster balanced, synergistic connections between East African and Italian/European innovation ecosystems;
 - Support the internationalization of African startups toward the Italian and European market, with a focus on business model adaptation and investor readiness;
 - Enable selected founders to enter a permanent orbit of investors, mentors, and corporate partners in Italy and Europe;
 - Promote a human-centred, ethical, and collaborative approach to entrepreneurship, innovation, and sustainable development.
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Recipients and Eligibility

H.E.R.O. is open to established entities, as well as individual candidates or teams. To be eligible, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- All team members must be over the age of 18;
- The startup must be incorporated as a legal entity;
- The startup must be based or primarily operating in East Africa;
- The startup must have a working product or validated prototype;
- Both pre-revenue and early-revenue startups are eligible;
- The startup's activities must promote social and/or sustainable innovation within their business model;
- The presence of diversity within the team will be positively evaluated.

The Program organizers reserve the right not to admit applications that are inconsistent with the initiative's spirit and objectives.

Target Sectors

H.E.R.O. seeks startups addressing significant challenges for the growth of East Africa, in sectors including but not limited to:

- AgriTech
- HealthTech
- FinTech & ICT
- EdTech
- CleanTech & Climate

- Blue Economy
 - Logistics & Port Management
 - Tourism & Hospitality
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Participation Methods

To participate in H.E.R.O., interested startups must complete the application form available at the official website: <https://startupafricaroadtrip.com/hero-kenya-2026/>

The application form must be completed by the application deadline of July 8, 2026. Applications must include:

- Pitch Deck (mandatory)
- Business Plan (optional)
- Prototype or proof of concept (optional)
- Visual explanations or demo video (optional)

The application form will request detailed information about the team, the project, and the startup, including insights into revenues, customers, product development stage, and overall vision - including the startup's ambition and readiness for internationalization toward Italy and Europe.

Timing and Program Phases

The program is divided into the following phases:

Phase 1 - Call for Applications (May – July 2026)

Applications can be submitted from May 19, 2026 (official H.E.R.O. launch at GITEX Africa, Nairobi) and no later than July 8, 2026, directly on the official platform at <https://startupafricaroadtrip.com/hero-kenya-2026/>.

Phase 2 - Selection (July 2026)

A selection committee composed of members from BeEntrepreneurs APS and Harmonic Innovation Group will review all submissions and shortlist the top 20 startup finalists to be invited to the bootcamp in Nairobi. The committee may arrange one-to-one calls with applicants during this phase. Results will be communicated to all applicants by July 31, 2026.

Phase 3 - Residential Bootcamp in Nairobi (August 3–7, 2026)

The 20 selected startups will participate in a one-week residential bootcamp in Nairobi, Kenya, from August 3 to 7, 2026. The bootcamp includes:

- Vertical workshops: value proposition, business modelling & sales, go-to-market strategy, fundraising & financials, pitching and public speaking;
- 1:1 mentoring sessions with local and international experts;
- Investor panels and networking opportunities with ecosystem stakeholders;
- Photo and video documentation of the event.

At the end of the bootcamp, a Demo Day will be held on August 7, 2026, hosted at the Residence of the Italian Ambassador in Nairobi. All 20 finalists will pitch in front of a panel of judges comprising investors, institutions, and ecosystem stakeholders (approximately 80–100 guests). The 3 winning startups will be officially announced at the conclusion of the Demo Day.

Phase 4 - Italian Roadshow (November 2026)

The 3 H.E.R.O. winning startups will participate in a fully funded Italian Roadshow of approximately 5 days, with stops in Catanzaro, Rome, and Milan. The roadshow includes:

- Curated 1:1 meetings with venture capitalists, angel investors, and potential Italian commercial partners, matched to each startup's sector and stage;
- Participation in public pitch events and innovation forums;
- Dedicated visibility within the Italian and European innovation ecosystem;
- Access to the Harmonic Innovation Ecosystem network and the permanent H.E.R.O. orbit of investors, mentors, and partners across Europe.

Travel, accommodation, and logistics for the Italian Roadshow will be fully covered by the Program organizers for the winning startup representatives. The winning founders will be supported for visa applications and travel logistics.

Evaluation Criteria

Applications submitted by the deadline and according to the procedure described will be evaluated by the Selection Committee. Startups will be assessed based on the following criteria:

Application Screening (Phase 2)

- **Innovation and Originality:** The degree to which the idea is innovative and stands out from existing solutions in the market.
- **Social and Environmental Impact:** The project's ability to improve social and environmental conditions in the East African context, generating value for local communities.
- **Feasibility:** Competitiveness and robustness of the business model, including the evaluation of the team's capacity and progress to date.
- **Scalability and Internationalization Potential:** The startup's capacity for growth and replicability, with specific attention to readiness or ambition to enter Italian and European markets.
- **Financial Sustainability:** The project's ability to be financially sustainable in the long term.
- **Alignment with Harmonic Innovation Principles:** The extent to which the startup's model reflects a human-centred, ethical, and sustainable approach to growth.

Demo Day - Final Selection of 3 Winners (Phase 3)

- **Team:** Composition, complementarity, and execution capacity of the founding team.
 - **ESG:** Environmental, Social, and Governance dimensions embedded in the business model.
 - **Pitch Execution:** Clarity, persuasiveness, and quality of the pitch presentation.
 - **Business Sustainability:** Robustness and credibility of the business model and financial projections.
 - **Euro-African Synergy Potential:** The startup's capacity to leverage Italian and European networks, investors, and markets - and to contribute meaningfully to the H.E.R.O. permanent orbit.
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Program Costs

Participation in H.E.R.O. is completely free of charge for all selected startups. The Program provides training, mentorship, and access to a network of investors and partners at no cost. However, participants should note the following:

- Startups not based in Nairobi will be responsible for covering their own travel and accommodation expenses to reach the bootcamp in Nairobi, Kenya.
 - Lunch and refreshments throughout the bootcamp week will be provided by the organizers.
 - Participants traveling from abroad will be responsible for obtaining the necessary visas for Kenya. The Association will provide administrative support upon request.
 - The Italian Roadshow for the 3 winning startups is fully funded: international flights, accommodation, meals, and logistics are covered by the Program organizers.
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Communication and Branding

By applying, participants agree to the potential use of their startup name, logo, and summary description in Program communications, including press releases, social media, event materials, and impact reports. Participants who do not wish to be featured may notify the organizers in writing at info@beentrepreneurs.org.

Data Protection and Privacy

BeEntrepreneurs APS processes all personal data submitted through the application in accordance with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR) and applicable Italian legislation. Personal data will be used solely for the purposes of managing the selection process and Program activities, and will not be shared with third parties outside of the program's official partners without explicit consent.

Applicants have the right to access, rectify, or request deletion of their data at any time by writing to: info@beentrepreneurs.org.

Disclaimers and General Conditions

Harmonic Innovation Group and BeEntrepreneurs APS reserve the right to:

- Modify the Program timeline, format, or location in case of force majeure events (including but not limited to natural disasters, pandemics, acts of terrorism, or governmental restrictions);
- Not admit applications that are inconsistent with the spirit and objectives of the initiative;
- Request additional information or documentation from applicants during the selection process.

Participation in H.E.R.O. implies full acceptance of these Terms & Conditions. The organizers are not liable for any damage or loss that may be suffered by participants in connection with their participation in the Program.

Information and Contacts

For any information regarding these Terms & Conditions, the application process, or the Program, please contact:

BeEntrepreneurs APS

Email: info@beentrepreneurs.org

PEC: beentrepreneurs@pec.it

Website: <https://startupafricaroadtrip.com/hero-kenya-2026/>