



THE
COSMETIC
VICTORIES



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Chartres, April 3rd, 2026
Press release

Sustainable cosmetics: six innovations set to shape THE COSMETIC VICTORIES 2026

For its 11th edition, THE COSMETIC VICTORIES reaches a new milestone by introducing, for the first time, a central theme: *“Scientific progress powering a sustainable cosmetics industry.”* Selected from 93 applications submitted from 21 countries, the six finalist projects highlight the pivotal role of research and innovation in driving the environmental transformation of the cosmetics sector. Bio-based ingredients, biomimicry, biotechnologies and resource optimisation: the 2026 edition showcases tangible scientific breakthroughs with the potential to deliver lasting impact across the entire value chain.

A 2026 edition focused on responsible, future-proof innovation

This year, candidates explored a wide range of topics including sustainable products, eco-design, life-cycle assessment, traceability, reduction, reuse and regeneration, water stewardship, waste treatment, recycling, biodegradability, energy optimisation, biomass utilisation and biomimicry. An international jury of academic researchers reviewed the 93 applications submitted from 21 countries and selected the six finalist projects that best address the sustainability challenges facing the cosmetics industry. All shortlisted candidates proposed major scientific advances applicable across the full value chain, from the use of natural ingredients to enhance product performance, to the regulation of immune memory, and a deeper understanding of products' environmental impact. This 2026 selection confirms the central role of science in shaping the cosmetics of tomorrow, in line with COSMETIC VALLEY's new regeneration-driven strategy.

Members of the 2026 International Scientific Jury

Joanna MARTO, Professor – University of Lisbon – Portugal

Konrad TERPILOWSKI, Department of Interfacial Phenomena – Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin – Poland

Laurent BILLON, Institute of Analytical Sciences and Physical Chemistry for the Environment and Materials IPREM UMR5254 – CNRS – France

Lourdes MOURELLE, Professor – University of Vigo – Spain

Majella LANE, UCL Skin Research Group – School of Pharmacy, University of London – United Kingdom

Neti WARANUCH, Cosmetics and Natural Products Research Center (CosNat) – Naresuan University – Thailand

Normand VOYER, Chemurgy – Laval University – Quebec, Canada

Paola PERUGINI, Efficacy in vivo testing, Active delivery systems, Packaging evaluation – University of Pavia – Italy

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Wen-yin CHEN, Precision Healthcare and Nutrition Technology Laboratory – Industrial Technology Research Institute (ITRI) – Taiwan

Yuji YAMASHITA, Associate Professor Cosmetic Science Laboratory – Faculty of Pharmacy Chiba Institute of Science – Japan

Zorita DIACONEASA, Department of Chemistry, Biochemistry and Molecular Biology – University of Agricultural Sciences and Veterinary Medicine of Cluj-Napoca – Romania

Projects were assessed on the scientific quality of the work, the significance of the scientific challenges overcome, research effort, level of innovation for the sector, and positive environmental impact.

The 3 finalists in the Academic Research category are:

- **EmuLig : A Multifunctional Lignin-Based Emulsifier for Sustainable Cosmetic Formulations, Polytechnic Institute of Braganza - Portugal**

This project addresses the topic of sustainable cosmetic ingredients by transforming lignin, a renewable and abundant by-product of the pulp and biorefinery industries, into EmuLig, a multifunctional, high-performance emulsifier. Produced by a proprietary green process, EmuLig offers stabilizing, antioxidant, SPF-stimulating and thickening properties, replacing fossil and synthetic ingredients. It supports a circular value chain and reduces the environmental footprint of cosmetic formulations.

- **From Biology to Beauty: Primary Cilia-Controlled Cosmetics for Immune Memory Regulation and Sustainable Innovation, University of Osaka - Japan**

This project demonstrates that primary cilia, which govern immune memory, cause chronic inflammation of the skin that can lead to atopic dermatitis or psoriasis. Botanical active ingredients (silymarin and cucurbitacin IIA) have been identified that suppress ciliogenesis while strengthening the skin barrier. Targeting immune memory, not symptoms, represents a paradigm shift in skincare. This approach brings efficiency while reducing the chemical, medical and skin burden, and decreasing the use of resources in production and the supply chain, thanks to the botanical actives used, to support "sustainability" in cosmetics.

- **Nature's Blueprint on Skin: A Next-Generation Cosmetic Solution, University of Pau - France**

The project is developing a one-step biomimetic approach to protect human skin from UV rays by replicating the photoprotection mechanism observed on plant leaves. The work focuses on the optical diffusion capacity of a structured wax film of plant origin on the surface of the skin (ex-vivo). The work provides fundamental insights using cosmetic-friendly organic solvents, as part of the development of targeted water-based formulations for skin care as a sustainable solution in cosmetics.

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The 3 finalists in the Industrial Innovation category are:

- **Development of a range of functional agents made from duckweed sourced in France, Lemnalabs - France**

Lemna Labs is developing a range of cosmetic functional agents (emulsifiers, gelling agents, foaming agents) based on lentils, as a sustainable alternative to palm and soy derivatives. Made from an abundant local biomass, these biodegradable ingredients offer great performance at low doses. The project builds a sovereign supply chain, with a low environmental and social impact, for the clean beauty industry.

- **Sustainable Multifunctional Biosurfactants from Circular Bio-Resources for Cosmetic Formulations, SurfactInnov - Portugal**

At SurfACT, microorganisms are used as factories to produce multifunctional biosurfactants with great potential for cosmetic applications. Sustainability is a key aspect both at the process level, through the use of agro-industrial residues as substrates for cell growth, and at the product level, by providing ingredients with low ecotoxicity and high biodegradability. Through bioprocess optimization and formulation development, SurfACT aims to introduce these molecules to the cosmetics sector, accelerating the ecological transition and reducing the dependence on petrochemical materials.

- **Microbial Exopolysaccharides, Cellugy - Denmark**

Cellugy develops biofabricated microbial exopolysaccharides (EPS) as sustainable, high-performance rheology modifiers for cosmetics. These biodegradable, fossil-free ingredients replace petrochemical-based additives, reducing microplastics and environmental impact. EPS enhance texture, stability, and skin benefits, aligning with scientific progress powering sustainability in cosmetics by enabling simplified, multifunctional formulations without compromising efficacy.

Meet on April 13, 2026 in Paris for the official ceremony:

The six finalists will present their projects at a prestigious ceremony held at the Maison des Polytechniciens, before an industrial jury composed of leading players in the fragrance and cosmetics industry, including: Caudalie, CHANEL, CLARINS, COTY, Estée Lauder, LA FRENCH BEAUTY, Groupe Rocher, HERMÈS, LES SECRETS DE LOLY, L'Oréal, LVMH Recherche, NAOS Group, NUXE, PUIG, SHISEIDO, Sisley and SOTHYS.

Two awards will be presented: the Academic Research Award and the Industrial Innovation Award, each endowed with €10,000 and tailored support from COSMETIC VALLEY.

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About The Cosmetic Victories

Created by **COSMETIC VALLEY** in 2015 and supported by a dedicated endowment fund in partnership with **ESSEC**, the international competition **THE COSMETIC VICTORIES** was initially designed to identify promising start-ups, support innovative projects and foster research. Today, the competition addresses specific industry challenges through the introduction of a central theme for future editions.

Open to all innovative project leaders aligned with the theme "*Scientific progress powering a sustainable cosmetics industry*," the competition awards two prizes:

- **Academic Research Award** (young graduates, PhD candidates, post-doctoral researchers, scientists)
- **Industrial Innovation Award** (industrial players, start-ups and innovative SMEs)

Six finalist projects (three per category) are selected by two committees composed of international scientific experts and industry professionals. Projects must demonstrate innovation or research applicable to the entire fragrance-cosmetics value chain: ingredients, formulation, testing, processes, packaging, chemistry, biotechnology, digital, distribution, new products and services. Innovations may originate within the cosmetics sector or result from technology transfer from other industries.

Each of the two winners will receive **€10,000** and tailored support from **COSMETIC VALLEY**. The growing international reach of applications, the high scientific standard of submitted projects and the calibre of the selection committees and juries all contribute to strengthening the global reputation of the French cosmetics industry.

www.thecosmeticvictories.com

About COSMETIC VALLEY « Beating heart of the world cosmetics industry »

COSMETIC VALLEY is the world's leading fragrance and cosmetics network and the coordinator of the French cosmetics industry. The association brings together all areas of expertise, from plant cultivation to finished products. Its mission is to promote France's excellence through innovation, exports, business development, employment and training; to enhance the visibility and attractiveness of research laboratories, companies and regions; and to share key challenges and opportunities in support of the sector's economic growth.

As a leading competitiveness cluster, COSMETIC VALLEY drives public-private R&D partnerships across the fragrance and cosmetics value chain. Representing more than 6,300 establishments of all sizes (85% SMEs and mid-caps, alongside all global leaders), the sector accounts for nearly 226,000 jobs, an estimated €71 billion in turnover, and more than 1,000 patents filed each year. France remains the world's leading exporter of perfumes and cosmetics, with €22.4 billion in exports in 2025.

COSMETIC VALLEY's signature, "FRANCE CARES FOR YOUR SKIN," embodies the values of a sector rooted in emotion, intimacy and universality, driven by strong ambitions for scientific progress and environmental responsibility. Cosmetics: an industry of heritage—and of the future.

www.cosmetic-valley.com

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