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Vienna, August 2026

The Zero Project announces the Zero Project Awards 2027 Shortlist

159 innovative solutions from 59 countries across six continents have been shortlisted for the Zero Project Awards 2027. In addition, 10 inclusive arts initiatives from 9 countries have been shortlisted for this year's Zero Project Arts Awards. The call for nominations focused on the topics of Independent Living, Political Participation, and Assistive Technology (AT).

Vienna, August 25, 2026 — The Zero Project is an initiative committed to advancing the global implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Accordingly, the Call for Nominations for the Zero Project Awards 2027 aimed to identify innovative solutions in the fields of Independent Living, Political Participation, and Assistive Technology (AT).

The Zero Project Awards 2027 Shortlist

The Call for Nominations for the Zero Project Awards 2027 (#ZeroCall27) ran from mid-May to the end of June 2026. In total, the Zero Project received 615 nominations from 94 countries, which is an unprecedented number (the previous record was 586 nominations in 2025/2026).

Between the end of June and mid-August, the first stage of the selection process involved more than 400 hours of review by the Zero Project's research team and experts from the global Zero Project Network. On average, 15 experts from at least three different continents participated in each of the peer review sessions. This stage included checking each of the 615 nominations against formal criteria, requesting additional information from around half of all organizations, and conducting peer review in dedicated sessions.

The result of this first stage of the selection process is the #ZeroCall27 Shortlist which consists of 159 innovative solutions from 59 countries and all sectors of society:

Sector	Number of shortlisted solutions
Public sector	21
Business sector	11
Civil society	84
Technology (cross-sectoral)	43

159 good practices and policies – 59 countries – 6 continents

World region	Number of shortlisted solutions
Africa	15
Asia Pacific	41
Australia and Oceania	4
Europe	59
Latin America and Caribbean	20
North America	20

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Top 5 ranking countries

The top-ranking countries by number of nominations (countries of domicile):

	Country	Number of shortlisted solutions
1	United States of America	16
2	India	13
	United Kingdom	13
3	Pakistan	8
4	Brazil	7
	Spain	7
5	Austria	6

Diverse approaches and solutions

This year's research output highlights a rise in projects led and ideated by women with disabilities. The shortlist also reveals a high number of local, community-based, small-scale projects designed for quick and easy replication.
The curb-cut effect is evident across sports, play, and technology, producing solutions that remove barriers for everyone, not just persons with disabilities.

While artificial intelligence is increasingly utilized by innovators, the standout feature of these projects is their human-centric approach—where AI complements rather than drives the solutions, and persons with disabilities directly lead the development of the tools they need and want.
Furthermore, there is a broad diversity of Assistive Tech and ICT innovations across all world regions—such as sign language avatars on public screens and orientation systems for the blind and visually impaired that combine app guidance with haptic signals.

Finally, political participation coverage has expanded geographically, marked by strong representation from Central Asia. Notably, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are represented on the shortlist for the first time.

Zero Project Arts Awards

Inclusive Arts was a thematic focus in relation to Independent Living this year: 38 nominations from the arts and culture sector were received. They were evaluated in a specialized selection process—including peer review by the Zero Project Inclusive Arts Community. Ten initiatives have now been shortlisted for the Zero Project Arts Awards 2027.

The shortlisted initiatives come from nine different countries of domicile across four different continents: Austria, Azerbaijan, Egypt, India, Japan, Poland, Spain, United Kingdom, and United States of America. The United Kingdom is represented twice.

Next steps in the selection process

The Zero Project Team, alongside its close partners and cross-sector network, will continue evaluating shortlisted solutions through September and October using extensive peer review and factchecking.

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This year, over 650 global experts signed up to join the peer review process, continuing a steady year-over-year growth in community engagement. This voluntary participation by the global disability innovation community provides a thorough validation of good practices and policies. It also fosters knowledge transfer among experts, innovators, practitioners, academics, and policymakers as they evaluate diverse approaches and implementation methods.

The shortlisted inclusive arts initiatives will also be further evaluated and fact checked in a specialized, parallel process.

While around 70 innovations are ultimately recognized through an award on the International Day of Persons with Disabilities and at the Zero Project Conference 2027 (February 10-12, United Nations Office at Vienna), the nomination and selection processes themselves represent a continuation of an annual community-guided research effort driven by a global network of experts.

Globally, inclusion efforts face headwinds from shifting political priorities alongside escalating humanitarian and climate crises. The community's engagement in the Zero Project's research is a clear indication that despite these systemic challenges, cross-border collaboration and disability innovation remain highly resilient.

Browse through the #ZeroCall27 Shortlist on zeroproject.org/zerocall27-shortlist.

Further information:

- #ZeroCall27 Shortlist: https://zeroproject.org/zerocall27-shortlist
- Zero Project Awards 2027: https://zeroproject.org/zerocall27
- Zero Project Conference 2027: https://zerocon27.zeroproject.org

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About the Essl Foundation

The Essl Foundation MGE gemeinnützige Privatstiftung is an Austrian Foundation established in 2007 by Martin and Gerda Essl, and their children, for social purposes and scientific research. Its mission is to support social innovation, social entrepreneurship and persons with disabilities.

About the Zero Project

Worldwide, the Zero Project finds and shares solutions that improve the daily lives and legal rights of all persons with disabilities, as intended and encouraged by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

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