**PRESS RELEASE**

**Female Tunisian innovators take third place in Young Inventors Prize 2024 with smart wheelchair technology**

* **Khaoula Ben Ahmed, Ghofrane Ayari, Souleima Ben Temime, and Sirine Ayari came in third place for the ‘Young Inventors Prize’ of the European Inventor Award 2024 out of three finalists**
* **The European Patent Office (EPO) highlights the young Tunisian inventors for enhancing mobility and autonomy for wheelchair users**
* **Their groundbreaking wheelchair control system, MOOVOBRAIN, offers unprecedented autonomy to users with severe mobility limitations**

**Munich, 9 July 2024** – The European Patent Office (EPO) today awarded the Tunisian team comprising Khaoula Ben Ahmed, Ghofrane Ayari, Souleima Ben Temime, and Sirine Ayari third place in the Young Inventors Prize at the European Inventor Award 2024. **The team received a prize of 5,000 EUR for their pioneering work on a smart wheelchair control system that significantly improves mobility for the disabled.** The team from Tunisia was one of three finalists, with Dutch scientist Rochelle Niemeijer taking first place and winning 20,000 EUR and Ukrainian inventor Valentyn Frechka securing second place and 10,000 EUR.   
  
The team's invention, MOOVOBRAIN, empowers users with disabilities to control wheelchairs using brain signals and voice commands, enhancing their independence and mobility. This technology not only signifies a **major leap in assistive devices but also reflects the team's commitment to inclusivity and innovation in medical technology.**

*"Winning a place in the Young Inventors Prize is a dream come true for all of us. We are deeply humbled and incredibly grateful for this honour. This recognition is not just an achievement for our team, but a testament to the power of collaboration, perseverance, and passion,*” say the team. “*It inspires us to keep pushing boundaries and to continue making a positive impact through innovation to change the life of people with disabilities around the world.*”

**A testament to young innovation**

The smart control system developed by the team uses sensors and software that interpret the user's gestures, allowing for precise and intuitive wheelchair navigation. This technological advancement is particularly vital in environments where joystick or button controls may be cumbersome or inaccessible. Motivated to help by alarming [World Health Organization](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240074521) (WHO) statistics, which estimate that approximately 80 million people globally may require wheelchairs, the team is working hard to address this growing need.

Khaoula Ben Ahmed encourages persistence and passion in pursuit of technological advancements, especially for women and girls in STEM; *"For women and girls out there, just don't give up. You need to have an internal motivation to continue, so find it before you start. It helps when you have a reason for doing what you are doing. Once you have an internal motivation, nothing will stop you after that."*

**All the winners of the 2024 edition of the European Inventor Award were announced at a hybrid ceremony today** in Malta. You can stream the ceremony [online](https://www.epo.org/en/news-events/european-inventor-award/streaming?mtm_campaign=EIA2024&mtm_keyword=pressrelease&mtm_medium=press).

[Find out](https://www.epo.org/en/news-events/european-inventor-award/meet-the-finalists/khaoula-ben-ahmed-ghofrane-ayari-souleima?mtm_campaign=EIA2024&mtm_keyword=pressrelease&mtm_medium=press) more about the invention’s impact, the technology and the inventors’ stories.

**Next generation of the Young Inventors Prize in 2025 to take place in Iceland**

During today's ceremony in Malta, the European Patent Office (EPO) was excited to announce a new concept for the award, starting in 2025. From next year onward, the award will be held biennially, with the upcoming edition focusing on young innovators below 30 years-old whose inventions address one or more United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). An independent jury of former finalists will evaluate the entries, ensuring a fair and insightful selection process that honours the innovative spirit and achievements of the next generation of inventors. The 2025 edition will be celebrated in Iceland, marking the first of these newly biennial-focused awards, and the [nominations period](https://www.epo.org/en/news-events/young-inventors-prize/nominations?mtm_campaign=EIA2024&mtm_keyword=pressrelease&mtm_medium=press) for all technological fields remains open from today until the end of September.

In alternating years, starting in 2026, the EPO will return to the original concept of the European Inventor Award, featuring its traditional categories of ‘Industry’, ‘Research’, ‘SMEs’, ‘Non-EPO countries’, ‘Lifetime Achievement’ and ‘Popular Prize’.

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**About the inventors**  
  
Khaoula Ben Ahmed and her teammates, Ghofrane Ayari, Souleima Ben Temime, and Sirine Ayari, began their journey at the Higher Institute of Medical Technologies of Tunis, where they were initially inspired to develop their project. It was during their time here that they conceptualized and began the development of the MOOVOBRAIN system.

The team's educational experience in medical technology provided them with the necessary skills to create an interface that could accurately interpret neural inputs into actionable commands for mobility-impaired users. This foundation was crucial as they pursued the development of a technologically sophisticated and user-friendly wheelchair control system.

**About the European Inventor Award**

The European Inventor Award is one of Europe's most prestigious innovation prizes. Launched by the EPO in 2006, the award honours individuals and teams, who have come up with solutions to some of the biggest challenges of our time. The finalists and winners are selected by an independent jury comprising former Award finalists. Together, they examine the proposals for their contribution towards technical progress, social and sustainable development, and economic prosperity. All inventors must have been granted a European patent for their invention.

**About the EPO**

With 6,300 staff members, the [European Patent Office (EPO)](https://www.epo.org/?mtm_campaign=EIA2023&mtm_keyword=EIA-pressrelease&mtm_medium=press&mtm_group=press) is one of the largest public service institutions in Europe. Headquartered in Munich with offices in Berlin, Brussels, The Hague and Vienna, the EPO was founded with the aim of strengthening co-operation on patents in Europe. Through the EPO's centralised patent granting procedure, inventors are able to obtain high-quality patent protection in up to 45 countries, covering a market of some 700 million people. The EPO is also the world's leading authority in patent information and patent searching.