

Krakow awarded the title of Top European City Ecosystem for Startups

Krakow has been awarded the “Top European City Ecosystem for Startups” title, granted as part of the first edition of the European Startup Ecosystem Awards, organized by Wolves Summit 2026. The official awards ceremony took place on April 22 in Warsaw and brought together representatives of European innovation ecosystems, public institutions, investment funds, and organizations supporting startups.



Fot. Wolves Summit

Out of 52 submitted nominations, an international jury selected winners in individual categories – the title of “Top European City Ecosystem for Startups” was awarded to the City of Krakow.

A new feature of this year’s edition was the European Startup Ecosystem Awards, which for the first time recognized not only startups, but also cities, institutions, and organizations actively supporting innovation. The awards were granted in the following categories:

- Top Accelerator: NATO DIANA Estonian Accelerator
- Top European Angel Network: Business Angels Deutschland (BAND)
- Top European City Ecosystem for Startups: City of Krakow
- Top European CVC Fund: Sigma Software Labs
- Top Incubator: JIC

- Top Law Firm for Startups: Cytowski & Partners
- Technology Park for Startups: Tehnopol Science and Business Park (Estonia)

An award for the city as a measure of ecosystem maturity

The distinction awarded to Krakow confirms the city's consistency, stability, and its ability to build an environment in which innovation can thrive.

During the award ceremony, Dominika Walec – the Mayor of Krakow's Plenipotentiary for Cooperation with the Business Community – emphasized that this success is the result of many years of consistent development across multiple knowledge-based sectors. She pointed, among others, to the strong life sciences sector in Krakow, as well as the city's efforts to build competitive advantages in cutting-edge fields such as artificial intelligence and the space industry.

For founders and investors, environments that offer not only access to capital but also a strong base of expertise, collaboration with academia, stable institutional frameworks, and regulatory predictability are becoming increasingly important. In this context, the role of cities has grown significantly: they concentrate talent, universities, research centers, industry initiatives, and early markets for new solutions. Increasingly, they also determine where startups choose to stay long-term, not just where they begin.

Wolves Summit as an ecosystem barometer

For years, Wolves Summit has built its position as an event focused on creating real connections between startups and investors. This year's edition in Warsaw, held on April 21–22, brought together 328 founders, investors (VCs, business angels, and CVCs), and key ecosystem participants from over 37 countries.

A distinctive element of the conference remains pre-arranged one-on-one meetings. Over the course of two days, participants held 1,988 such meetings, making them the true core of the event – a place where ideas are confronted with the market and business relationships can continue beyond the conference itself.

At the same time, the competition jury selected five companies recognized as Top European Startups as part of the Great Pitch Competition. From over 200 applications, teams were chosen that – in addition to prestige – received concrete opportunities for further growth: participation in global

competitions, access to international accelerators, and fundraising programs in Europe and the United States.

Long-term cooperation as the foundation of growth

For startups and investors, such a distinction is a clear signal. It shows that a given city does not base its strategy on one-off initiatives but on the long-term development of conditions for growth. For local technology companies, it confirms that developing in Krakow makes sense not only at the early stage but also during scaling and international expansion.

In mature ecosystems – and Krakow is becoming one – key factors today include cross-sector collaboration, the ability to attract and retain talent, and openness to international partnerships, including those beyond Europe.

The startup ecosystem through the eyes of practitioners

The distinction awarded to Krakow by Wolves Summit is not a ranking based on numbers, but an assessment of ecosystem quality from the perspective of practitioners: founders, investors, and organizations supporting innovation. Krakow's success confirms that consistent efforts carried out over many years are now gaining recognition on the European stage.

In the startup world, stability is rarely highlighted as a value. Yet it is precisely this stability – combined with openness and collaboration – that increasingly determines where innovation can develop sustainably.

Krakow – recognized in Warsaw and among a European community – shows that this path is not only possible, but effective.