

Rules & Regulations for EU TalentOn Brest 2026

The European Union Contest for Early-Career Researchers

§ 1 – Idea & Objectives

1. Purpose: EU TalentOn Brest 2026 challenges young bright minds to develop creative, scientific solutions to global challenges, fostering collaboration between academia, industry, and society.
2. Target Audience: Open to early-career researchers aged 21–35 from all academic disciplines (science, technology, art, humanities, etc.) across Europe and associated countries.
3. Mission Arenas: Participants will address challenges linked to the 5 EU Missions of Horizon Europe:
 - Adaptation to Climate Change
 - Cancer Prevention and Care
 - Restore Our Ocean and Water
 - 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities
 - A Soil Deal for Europe
4. Organiser: The 2026 edition of EU TalentOn is organized in Brest, France, as part of the European project *Science Comes to Town*, a Horizon Europe Program, 100% funded by the European Commission, by Technopôle Brest-Iroise.

§ 2 – Timeline

Phase	Dates
Open Call for Applicants	March 9–April 30, 2026
Application Evaluation:	May 1–June 15, 2026
Administrative review	May 1–May 3
Peer review	May 6–May 24
Expert evaluation	June 1–June 22
Finalists announcement	End of June
Teaming & Online Meetings	July–August 2026
Contest Finale in Brest	September 7–11, 2026

§ 3 – Application Process

1. Eligibility:

- age of 21-35 years, i.e. year of birth 1991-2005;
- first-time participating
- affiliated with a European academic, research, or professional institution in one of the countries below, or be temporarily unaffiliated (e.g., between contracts or academic programs), provided that their primary place of residence remains in one of the countries below:
EU Countries: 1. Austria 2. Belgium 3. Bulgaria 4. Croatia 5. Republic of Cyprus 6. Czech Republic 7. Denmark 8. Estonia 9. Finland 10. France 11. Germany, 12. Greece 13. Hungary 14. Ireland 15. Italy 16. Latvia 17 Lithuania 18. Luxembourg 19. Malta 20. The Netherlands 21. Poland 22. Portugal 23. Romania 24. Slovakia 25. Slovenia 26. Spain 27. Sweden.
Non-EU countries associated to Horizon Europe: 1. Albania, 2. Armenia, 3. Bosnia and Herzegovina, 4. Egypt, 5. Faroe Islands, 6. Georgia, 7. Iceland, 8. Israel, 9. Kosovo, 10. Moldova, 11. Montenegro, 12. North Macedonia, 13. Norway, 14. Serbia, 15. Switzerland, 16. Tunisia, 17. Türkiye, 18. Ukraine, 19. United Kingdom.

Applicants will confirm adherence to all three criteria during the application process. They will be asked to provide proof of age and affiliation only by individual request by the organiser (identity card/passport; a certificate from a university/research institution) once they have been selected to participate to the finale week in Brest, France.

Participants who require a visa or any other authorization to enter France must independently complete all administrative, legal, and consular procedures required by the competent authorities.

The organiser does not assume responsibility for visa applications, consular appointments, or entry authorizations. The organiser may, upon request, issue an invitation letter for the sole purpose of supporting the participant's visa application. The provision of such a letter does not constitute visa sponsorship, nor does it imply any guarantee that a visa will be granted. The organiser shall not be held liable for any inability of a participant to attend the competition due to visa refusal, delays, or administrative issues.

2. Application forms (including potential attachments provided by candidates) will be collected only through online form at <https://eutalenton.awardsplatform.com/>. Data and/or documents submitted through any other format or platform will be discarded.

3. The form will include:

- basic information such as name, date of birth, contact data and affiliation to a European organization/institution;
- education and area of scientific expertise, including selected relevant scientific achievements;
- the selection of preferred 1 (or 2) of the 5 Mission Arenas;
- 4 motivational questions that will be reviewed during the evaluation process:
 - What is your motivation to join the EU TalentOn competition?
 - What is your perspective on the most important open issues related to the Mission Arena(s) that you have selected?
 - Explain how your scientific background makes you a perfect person to participate in EU TalentOn within the Mission Arena that you have selected?
 - Tell us what makes you proud of your academic and/or professional journey to date.
- statements & consents.

Evaluation Process:

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Research Executive Agency. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.



- Administrative review (by the EU TalentOn team): Checks eligibility.
- Peer Review: Applications are anonymized and reviewed by other applicants
 - All eligible applicants for EU TalentOn 2026 receive a notification on May 6, 2026 inviting them to review 5 applications from a different Mission Arena. For privacy reasons, the applications will be anonymized, and the Peer Reviewers will only be able to review the answers to the Motivational questions. They will be asked to give a score per answer on a scale from 1 to 10, 10 being the highest score and the most relevant an application can be.
 - Each application will receive a total (peer review) score which will be an unweighted arithmetic mean of the total scores from individual peer reviews
- Expert Evaluation: Top applications (around 300 applications) are reviewed by experts.
- Final Selection: 100 participants are selected based on scores, ensuring balanced representation across Mission Arenas. The Organiser will select around 20 applicants to be placed on a waiting list to have substitutes in case one or more of the 100 finalists cannot participate or cancel their participation in the finale week in September in Brest.
Participants on the waiting list may be contacted to replace a selected participant in the event of withdrawal or unavailability. Any such notification will be made no later than one week before 7 September.

Following the announcement of the 100 finalists, selected participants will be required to provide valid identification documents. Such documents must be submitted no later than 30 June 2026 in order for the organiser to proceed with travel arrangements. Participants who require a visa to enter France must inform the organiser no later than July 15 2026 that all necessary visa and entry formalities have been completed and that they will be able to enter French territory for the final week taking place in September. Failure to comply with these deadlines may result in the forfeiture of the participant's place, without liability on the part of the organiser.

Teaming:

- Participants are grouped into teams of 4–5 members
- Teams are formed based on preferences and randomization during an online meeting.

§ 4 – Contest Finale Week

Venue & Logistics:

- Location: Brest, France (venues to be announced).
- Organiser Covers:
 - Travel (train/coach/plane tickets).
 - Accommodation (single rooms).
 - Catering (vegetarian options; dietary requirements accommodated).

Participants may arrive no earlier than 2 days prior to the welcoming day (September 6, 2026) and leave no later than 2 days after the leaving day (September 12, 2026). The organizer will not cover the hotel nights and meals before September 6, 2026 (checkin day) and after September 12, 2026 (checkout day)

Activities:

- Teamwork to develop proposals.
- Workshops, lectures, and networking events.

Deliverables:

Each team must prepare:

- Written Proposal of maximum 5 pages not including the cover page and annexes:
- Addressing:
 - Problem statement.
 - Relation to the Mission Arena.
 - Proposed solution and feasibility
 - Cost analysis and implementation plan/how the solution could address a current issue
- Pitch: 180sec presentation to "sell" the proposal.

Evaluation Criteria:

Excellence. The Excellence criterion assesses how clearly the target problem is defined, how it relates to the selected Mission Arena and whether the innovation



solves it compellingly. It evaluates the project's breakthrough nature and novelty beyond the state of the art, including disruptive potential in its use case, while ensuring that expected qualitative and quantitative performance improvements are realistic and credible.

Impact. The Impact criterion evaluates the project's potential for transformative long-term effects on the economy, environment, and society. It assesses the potential to disrupt or generate new markets and to involve key actors.

Implementation. The Implementation criterion evaluates the team's capability, capacity, and motivation to develop the technology and execute market-related activities. It checks whether risks hindering validation or market success are mitigated, and ensures the workplan, partner selection, and resource allocation are well-justified and effective.

Pitching. The proposal must be presented in a convincing fashion. One of the purposes of EU TalentOn is to invite the participants to be bold and entrepreneurial. The content and quality of the pitch are especially important for that criterion. These aspects will be assessed during the closed-doors presentations to the Jury on Friday 11 September.

Jury:

- Experts from academia and industry, representing, when possible, the partner cities of Science Comes to Town and of the SEA-EU Alliance.
- Each Mission Arena has its own jury.
- Final scores are unweighted means of individual evaluations.

§ 5 – Prizes

Prize	Amount (EUR)	Notes
Main Prize (EU TalentOn Winner)	12,000	Awarded by jury vote after deliberations
1st Prize per Mission Arena	8,000	Based on jury assessment.
2nd Prize per Mission Arena	5,000	Based on jury assessment.
Alumni Award	3,000	Awarded by the Mission Arena Experts

Prizes are divided equally among team members.

Other prizes, of different forms, may be added to this list in the coming weeks.

§ 6 – Intellectual Property & Confidentiality

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Participants retain full IP rights to their proposals.

All information about projects must be kept confidential during and after the contest. The participants will be invited to submit a summary of their proposals that can be published on the project website and in news articles for communication purposes.

§ 7 – Final Provisions

The organizer reserves the right to:

- Verify participant eligibility.
- Exclude participants who fail to meet criteria.
- Modify these regulations if necessary.

All matters not covered herein are subject to French/EU law.

§ 8 – Sustainability & Practicalities

- Travel: Preference for trains when it is feasible and not exceeding 14-hour long trips.
- Accommodation: Single hotel rooms
- Dress Code: Casual; formal wear encouraged for pitches/award ceremony.
- Insurance: Participants must have health and travel insurance.