

#Disclaimer: This background note is intended for information purposes only and highlights certain aspects of the EU TalentOn contest. It is not binding and does not prevent the organisers to further develop or refine the concept of EU TalentOn in collaboration with the European Commission.

BACKGROUND NOTE – EU TALENTON

A. EU TalentOn: European Union Contest for early-career researchers

The idea of EU TalentOn is to challenge young bright minds to shape the future, by giving them a chance to participate in an open competition for creative scientific solutions to major global challenges.

EU TalentOn is an event for early-career researchers from all across Europe, aged 21 to 35 years, representing all disciplines of science. In this competition, they are invited to come up with solutions to major challenges in the world of today and tomorrow.

EU TalentOn aims to bridge the gap between research, science and industry, promoting thinking that is innovative and out-of-the box, while remaining scientific and translatable into concrete results.

The participants take on challenges linked to the 5 EU Missions of Horizon Europe - 5 Mission Arenas of EU TalentOn :

- Adaptation to Climate Change
- Cancer
- Restore our Ocean and Waters
- 100 Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities by 2030
- A Soil Deal for Europe

B. Host organiser responsibilities and expenses

The competition is funded with support from the European Commission under the Horizon Europe Programme. The grant covers all expenses related to the travel and accommodation of the participants, as well as all costs pertaining to the organisation of the event, including but not limited to the venue and jury members.

The host organiser is encouraged to mobilise additional resources to support the event, including monetary and in-kind sponsorships.

C. Indicative timeline

The contest takes place in the third quarter of the year, customarily in early autumn, in order to not disrupt the academic activity of potential applicants and according to the jury's availability.

The indicative timeline that organisers should follow should take into consideration the following aspects:

- The application process should be open for an amount of time sufficient to for potential applicants to get to know the event and complete their application. Usually, applications open between 9 and 7 months before the event.
- The selection procedure should last an appropriate amount of time to ensure that the process described below (see section D). Selection usually concludes between 4 and 3 months before the event, when results are officially communicated to successful and unsuccessful applicants.
- 2 months before the competition, the teaming of selected participants takes place during a meeting online.
- 1 months before the competitions, teams are officially announced and presented through the event's channels (website, social media, etc.)
- The competition lasts 4 to 5 days, usually from Monday to Friday.

D. Selection of participants

Criteria

In order to be eligible to apply for the EU TalentOn, the criteria are:

- age of 21-35 years at the time of the contest,
- Living, working or studying in one of the 27 EU Member States or non-EU countries associated with Horizon Europe.

Applicants will confirm adherence to both criteria during the application process. They will be asked to provide proof of age and a document certifying that they are living, working or studying in a Member State of the EU or a Horizon Europe associated country.

Application form

Application forms will be collected only through a dedicated online form.

Guiding questions that could be included in the application form:

- basic information such as name, date of birth, contact data and affiliation;
- education and area of scientific expertise, including selected relevant scientific achievements;
- the selection of 1 of the 5 Mission Arenas;
- Questions related to the applicant's motivation for participating in EU TalentOn, their perspective on the key open issues within their chosen Mission Arena, their suitability for intensive teamwork under time pressure, and how their scientific background aligns with the objectives of the Mission Arena.
- statements and consent.

Evaluation process

All applications will go through 3 stages of evaluation:

- Internal evaluation
 - o This will be performed by the EU TalentOn team to check eligibility and other basic formal criteria.

- Peer evaluation
 - This will be performed by other EU TalentOn applicants (called for this purpose “peer reviewers”). Each peer reviewer will receive between 3 and 6 application forms submitted by other applicants. The forms will be anonymised and will come from applicants to other Mission Arenas, so that there is no incentive to unfairly judge potential competitors. Each application will be scored through an online grading system according to a standardised form.
 - Each application will receive a total (peer review) score which will be an average of scores from individual peer reviews.
 - Failure to provide peer reviews within the set deadline will result in disqualification of the peer reviewer from the application process.
- Expert evaluation
 - The best-graded applications, up to three times the number of applicants sought, will be sent for expert evaluation. The application forms will be anonymised. Each expert will grade applications through an online grading system according to a standardised form.
 - Each application will be reviewed by three different experts and will receive a total (expert) score which will be an average of scores from individual experts.

Results selection procedure

At least 100 applicants will be selected, equally distributed among Mission Arenas.

E. Team Formation

Each team will consist of 3-5 participants and 1 buddy. All teams should have the same number of members. Participants will be grouped into teams by the organisers, based on the result of an online teaming exercise. During the teaming exercise, participants will have the chance to introduce themselves to other people in their own Mission Arena, and provide organisers with an (confidential) list of preferred team members. The composition of the teams will be decided based on their preference and, if necessary, randomisation. The teams should be as much as possible gender-balanced and geographically and socially inclusive.

The function of buddies is to help participants with practical issues such as moving around the campus, arranging materials, reminding about important points in the programme and other support during the contest. The buddy's role is not to influence, or interfere with the co-creation process, as the final idea and implementation plan should be fully developed by the team participants.

F. Contest

The EU TalentOn contest will be an event held in a single European city.

The main purpose of the competition is to give participants time to develop their ideas into a proposal that will be later presented to the jury. Participants will be given opportunity to participate in additional lectures/workshops to help them in their work and in a number of network events.

The teams will be mentored by experts from various fields and sectors, including but not limited to academia, business, and public authorities.

Each team will be responsible to complete a written form in which they will present their proposal. Each team will have to answer questions related to the specific problem they are addressing, its relevance to the selected Mission Arena, their proposed solution, how it compares to existing alternatives, its feasibility including a tentative cost analysis, and their plan for implementation.

The document template will be made available to competition participants.

Public pitch that briefly presents all the key elements of the proposal in a convincing way. The purpose of the pitch is to “test” the proposal to general audience.

Expert pitch that presents the idea in a convincing way to the jury members. Jury members can also take the opportunity to ask questions about either the expert pitch or the written proposal.

Each Mission Arena will have its own jury.

Participants will be informed at the start of the competition about the evaluation criteria, which are based on Horizon Europe’s criteria: excellence, impact, and implementation. Organisers, subject to approval from the Commission, may consider additional criteria, such as pitch quality, the appeal of the idea, and teamwork.

Each member of the jury will grade each proposal according to a standardised form. The process for selecting the winners of each Mission Arena and the overall EU TalentOn winner must be agreed upon with the European Commission.

G. Prizes

The total prize fund financed through the grant shall be EUR 100 000, distributed among the Main Prize, the First Prize for each Mission Arena, the Second Prize for each Mission Arena, and any additional Special Prizes.

Each prize will be divided equally among each person in the winning team and paid to each person separately.

Subject to the approval of the European Commission, the organisers may additionally offer sponsored prizes that are not financed through the grant.

H. More information

Contest website: https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/eu-talenton_en

Highlight videos:

Leiden 2022: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9ZK8Mn23HaA&t=2s>

Katowice 2024: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FRiTPvGIB-M>