#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.

The EU TalentOn is an event for young academics from all across Europe, aged 21 to 35 years, representing all disciplines of academia, including science and technology, art and humanities. In this competition, they are invited to come up with solutions to major challenges in the world of today and tomorrow.

The EU TalentOn aims to bridge the gap between young academic talent, science and industry, promoting thinking that is creative and appealing, while remaining scientific and realistic.

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 Water,
- Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities,
- 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 can mobilise additional resources to support the event, including monetary and in-kind sponsorships.

## C. General timeline

The contest is held in mid-September. This time of year was selected as the most convenient to bring young academics and the jury together, and the least disruptive to the academic year for all those involved.

- 6 months before the competition: Open call for applicants
- 4 months before the competition: Application evaluation process and selection of participants
- 2 months before the competition: Teaming of participants and within-team online meetings
- 1 month before the competition: Public presentation of teams
- The competition: 4-5 day

# **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,
- affiliation with a university or research institution situated within 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 affiliation only by individual request by the organiser (identity card/passport; a certificate from a university/research institution).

## **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;
- 4 questions:
  - o What is your motivation to participate in EU TalentOn?
  - What is your perspective on the most important open issues related to the Mission Arena that you have selected?
  - Why do you believe that you are the right person to participate in a project like EU TalentOn, that will specifically involve a very intensive period of teamwork under time pressure?
  - Explain how your scientific background makes you a perfect person to participate in EU TalentOn within the Mission Arena that you have selected?
- statements and consent.

#### **Evaluation process**

All applications will go through 3 stages of evaluation:

- Internal evaluation
  - 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 at least 5 application forms submitted by other applicants. The forms will be anonymized 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 unweighted arithmetic mean of the total scores from individual peer reviews.
- o 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, whose number will be selected based on the total number of applications, will be sent for expert evaluation. The application forms will be anonymised. Each expert will grade 3 applications through an online grading system according to a standardised form.
- Each application will receive a total (expert) score which will be an unweighted arithmetic mean of the total scores from individual experts.

### Results selection procedure

The final number of participants will be selected based on the highest total scores and the number of applications within each Mission Arena.

## **E. Team Formation**

Each team will consist of 3-5 participants and 1 buddy. Participants will be grouped into teams, based on the result of an online meeting, organised shortly after participants are selected. During the meeting, participants will have the chance to introduce themselves to other people in their own Mission Arenas, and provide organisers with an (unpublished) list of preferred team members. The composition of the teams will be decided based on their preference and, if necessary, randomisation.

The function of buddies, is to help participants with issues such as moving around the campus, arranging materials, reminding about important points in the programme and other support during the contest.

## 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 also be given opportunity to participate in additional lectures/workshops to help them in their work and in a number of network events.

Each team will be responsible to prepare two forms of presenting their proposal:

- Written proposal that answers the following questions:
  - 1. What is the specific problem that you are solving?

- 2. How does this problem relate to the selected Mission Arena?
- 3. What is the solution that you propose?
- 4. Are there other solutions to this problem? Why is your solution better?
- 5. Is your solution feasible? Can you present a tentative cost analysis? How would you implement this solution?

The document template will be made available to competition participants.

- <u>Public pitch</u>. It is a public presentation of 3-5 minutes that briefly presents all the key elements of the proposal in a convincing way. The purpose of the pitch is to "sell" the proposal to an audience of experts.

The written proposal and the public pitch will be evaluated by a jury composed of experts in relevant fields of science, representing the European community of scientists. Each Mission Arena will have its own jury and in each case a Head Jury will be selected.

The participants will be informed that their proposal must be <u>scientific</u>, <u>creative</u>, <u>feasible</u> and <u>convincing</u>. Therefore, the following criteria will be taken into consideration by the jury:

- <u>Scientific merit</u>. The proposal must be scientifically sound and relate to an actual problem within the given Mission Arena.
- <u>Creativity</u>. The purpose of EU TalentOn is to promote novel, out-of-the-box thinking, including ideas that are unusual or thought-provoking.
- <u>Feasibility</u>. The proposal, while creative, must be feasible. For instance, the proposal cannot be based on highly unrealistic or outright impossible technologies. However, for the contest to promote creative problem-solving, the jury will be invited to understand this term liberally.
- <u>Appeal</u>. 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.
- **5.** Each member of the jury will grade each proposal according to a standardised form. Based on their evaluation of 4 criteria, each proposal will receive a total score. Unweighted means will be calculated from these total scores from individual jury members, to give the final score. Prizes will be awarded based on these final scores.

## G. Prizes

The total prize fund financed through the grant shall be EUR 80 000, 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.

The prizes will be awarded on the basis of the final results obtained based on the jury of each Mission Arena assessments.

The prize will be awarded by a Jury consisting of 5 members, each of whom will represent one of the 5 Mission Arenas. The selection will be made as a result of a moderated discussion.

The prize will be awarded as a result of voting by: competition participants, organizers and guests.

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: <a href="https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/eu-talenton\_en">https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/funding/funding-opportunities/eu-talenton\_en</a>

Highlight video of 2022 edition in Leiden:

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

EU TalentOn 2024 in Katowice: <a href="https://eutalenton2024.eu/">https://eutalenton2024.eu/</a>