



#SOFTInnovationPrize

# Euratom Research and Training Programme

## Call for a prize – Rules of Contest

SOFT Innovation Prize

(EURATOM-2021-SOFT-Prize)

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**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**  
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**C.4 – EURATOM Research**

## **CALL FOR APPLICATIONS – RULES OF CONTEST**

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## 0. Introduction

This is a call (contest)<sup>1</sup> for an EU **SOFT Innovation Prize** in the field of fusion research and innovation under the under the **Euratom Research and Training Programme**.

The regulatory framework for this EU Funding Programme is set out in:

- Regulation 2018/1046 ([EU Financial Regulation](#))
- the basic act (Euratom Regulation 2021/765<sup>2</sup>)

The call is launched in accordance with the 2021-2022 Euratom Research and Training Work Programme<sup>3</sup> and will be managed by **European Commission, Directorate-General for Research and Innovation (DG RTD)**.

We invite you to read the **call documentation** on the Funding & Tenders Portal Topic page carefully, and in particular these Rules of Contest and the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal Online Manual](#).

These documents provide clarifications and answers to questions you may have when preparing your application:

- the [Call Document](#) (Rules of Contest) outlines the:
  - background, objectives, scope, activities that can be funded and the expected results (sections 1 and 2)
  - available budget and timetable (sections 3 and 4)
  - admissibility and eligibility conditions (including mandatory documents; sections 5 and 6)
  - criteria for exclusion (section 7)
  - evaluation and award procedure (section 8)
  - award criteria (section 9)
  - other conditions (section 10)
  - how to submit an application (section 11)
- the [Online Manual](#) outlines the procedures to register and submit applications online via the EU Funding & Tenders Portal ('Portal').

You are also encouraged to visit the [SOFT Prize](#) to consult the list of prizes funded previously.

## 1. Background

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<sup>1</sup> For ease of reference and consistency on the Funding & Tenders Portal, the terms 'call', 'project' and 'participant' are used as equivalent to 'contest', 'application' or 'contestants/applicants'.

<sup>2</sup> Council Regulation (Euratom) 2021/765 of 10 May 2021 establishing the Research and Training Programme of the European Atomic Energy Community for the period 2021-2025 complementing Horizon Europe – the Framework Programme for Research and Innovation and repealing Regulation (Euratom) 2018/1563 (OJ L 167I).

<sup>3</sup> Commission Implementing Decision C(2021) 4201 final of 1 July 2021 concerning the adoption of the work programme for 2021-2022 and the financing decision for the implementation of the Euratom Research and Training Programme.

Fusion research encompasses innovation in the domains of physics and technology over a wide variety of specialisations. Fusion researchers are constantly challenging the scientific state-of-the-art and improving the technology thereby creating the conditions for innovation, much of which can be exploited in other science and industrial sectors for the benefit of society. The fundamental basis of the Euratom Programme is the drive and support for innovation across the product development chain from research to market. In this context the researcher plays a critical role.

## 2. Objectives – Themes and priorities – Activities– Expected results

### Objectives

The SOFT Innovation Prize is named after the biennial Symposium on Fusion Technology (SOFT) during which the recipients of the prize are presented. The SOFT Innovation Prize is being offered to highlight and reward excellence in innovation that can be found in fusion research as well as the quality of the researchers and industries involved. Following the success of first four editions of the SOFT Innovation Prize awarded by the Commission under Euratom Research and Training Programme 2014-2020 (in 2014, 2016, 2018 and 2020), the European Commission is holding the contest again in association with the next Symposium on Fusion Technology (SOFT) in 2022.

There are no specific categories for this prize. Contestants are free to submit an application concerning any physics or technology innovation that has been developed in magnetic confinement fusion research and that has market potential or has been taken up (or recognised) by industry to be further developed for the market.

### Expected results

By awarding the 'SOFT Innovation Prize', the Commission will showcase innovations in this research sector giving visibility to the most dynamic, forward-looking and innovative researchers, research teams or industrial contestants. This visibility will provide greater potential for valorisation of the research, and the contest will stimulate the research community globally and in the EU to develop a stronger innovation and entrepreneurial culture in fusion research.

## 3. Available budget

The prize budget is:

1st Prize: EUR 50 000, 2nd Prize: 30 000, 3rd Prize: EUR 20 000.

## 4. Timetable and deadlines

Timetable and deadlines	
Call opening:	15 September 2021
<u>Deadline for submission:</u>	<b><u>18 January 2022 – 17:00:00 CET (Brussels)</u></b>
Evaluation:	February 2022
Information on evaluation results/ award:	September 2022

## 5. Admissibility and documents

Applications must be submitted before the **call deadline** (see *timetable section 4*).

Applications must be submitted **electronically** via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System (accessible via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section). Paper submissions are NOT possible.

Applications (including annexes and supporting documents) must be submitted using the forms provided *inside* the Submission System (⚠ NOT the documents available on the Topic page — they are only for information).

Applications must be **complete** and contain all the requested information and all required annexes and supporting documents:

- Application Form Part A — contains administrative information about the applicant organisations (*to be filled in directly online*)
- Application Form Part B — contains the technical description of the application (*to be downloaded from the Portal Submission System, completed and then assembled and re-uploaded*) and should include:
  - a technical description of the innovation
  - a state-of-the-art assessment of the innovation
  - an account, in general terms, of the market potential for the exploitation of the innovation

Your application must be **readable, accessible, printable**.

Applications are limited to maximum **15 pages** (Part B). Evaluators will not consider any additional pages.

You may be asked at a later stage for further documents (*for legal entity validation, bank account validation, ethics review, declaration of honour, etc*).

 For more information about the submission process (including IT aspects), consult the [Online Manual](#).

## 6. Eligibility

### [Eligible participants \(eligible countries\)](#)

In order to be eligible, the applicants must:

- be legal entities (natural persons, public or private bodies<sup>4</sup>)
- be researchers or research teams funded under the Euratom Research and Training Programme, researchers or research teams working for a national programme in an ITER partner country<sup>5</sup> or in any third country that has a bilateral

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<sup>4</sup> For the legal definition, see Article 156 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>5</sup> ITER partner country: China, the European Union, India, Japan, Korea, Russia and the United States. All EU member states are automatically included in the ITER partner countries. The United Kingdom will continue to participate in ITER post-Brexit through its membership in Fusion for Energy, the body of the European Union responsible for the EU's contribution to ITER.

fusion cooperation agreement with Euratom in force<sup>6</sup> or industrial participants participating in ITER<sup>7</sup>. Example of proof: the Commission may request substantiating documents such as contracts, etc.

- The researcher, research team or industrial participant must obtain permission from the owner of the Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) to submit an application and provide supporting documentation. The owner of the IPR should comment on the state of the IPR, i.e. free or contractually embedded, and name of possible contractor(s).

Applicants must register in the [Participant Register](#) — before the call deadline — and will have to be validated by the Central Validation Service (REA Validation). For the validation, you will be requested to upload documents showing legal status and origin.

### *Specific cases*

Entities without legal personality — Entities which do not have legal personality under their national law may exceptionally participate, provided that their representatives have the capacity to undertake legal obligations on their behalf, and offer guarantees for the protection of the EU financial interests equivalent to that offered by legal persons<sup>8</sup>.

EU bodies — EU bodies (with the exception of the European Commission Joint Research Centre) can NOT apply.

Countries currently negotiating association agreements to the Euratom Programme 2021-2025 — Applicants from third countries negotiating association to the Euratom Programme 2021-2025 will be treated as entities established in an Associated Country, provided that the Euratom association agreement with the third country concerned applies at the time of the prize award.

EU restrictive measures — Special rules apply for certain entities (*e.g. entities subject to [EU restrictive measures](#) under Article 29 of the Treaty on the European Union (TEU) and Article 215 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU)*<sup>9</sup> and entities covered by Commission Guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#)<sup>10</sup>). Such entities are not eligible to participate in any capacity.

 For more information, see [Rules for Legal Entity Validation, LEAR Appointment and Financial Capacity Assessment](#).

### *Eligible activities*

Eligible activities are the ones set out in section 2 above.

### *Ethics and values*

Activities must comply with the highest ethical standards and the applicable EU, international and national law on ethical principles.

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<sup>6</sup> Third country that has a bilateral fusion cooperation agreement with Euratom: Switzerland, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Brazil.

<sup>7</sup> These could be companies that have worked as a contractor or subcontractor or have received a grant from the ITER Organization or any of the Domestic Agencies of the Parties to the ITER Agreement while working on the ITER project. For more information about the ITER Organization and the ITER project see: [www.iter.org](http://www.iter.org)

<sup>8</sup> See Article 197(2)(c) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>9</sup> Please note that the EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the [EU Sanctions Map](#).

<sup>10</sup> Commission guidelines No [2013/C 205/05](#) on the eligibility of Israeli entities and their activities in the territories occupied by Israel since June 1967 for grants, prizes and financial instruments funded by the EU from 2014 onwards (OJEU C 205 of 19.07.2013, pp. 9-11).

Moreover, they must respect basic EU values (such as respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights, including the rights of minorities).

The activities must comply with:

- ethical principles (including the highest standards of research integrity) and
- applicable international, EU and national law

and may not:

- aim at human cloning for reproductive purposes,
- intend to modify the genetic heritage of human beings which could make such changes heritable (with the exception of research relating to cancer treatment of the gonads, which may be financed), or
- intend to create human embryos solely for the purpose of research or for the purpose of stem cell procurement, including by means of somatic cell nuclear transfer.

Moreover activities must have an exclusive focus on civil applications and no prize can be awarded for activities carried out outside the EU, if they are prohibited in all Member States.

Applications involving ethics issues will have to undergo an ethics review to authorise funding and may be made subject to specific ethics requirements.

### Security

Applications involving EU classified information must comply with Decision [2015/444](#)<sup>11</sup> and its implementing rules<sup>12</sup>. Applications that are too security-sensitive cannot be awarded a prize.

## 7. Exclusion

Applicants which are subject to an **EU exclusion decision** or in one of the following **exclusion situations** that bar them from receiving EU funding can NOT participate<sup>13</sup>:

- bankruptcy, winding up, affairs administered by the courts, arrangement with creditors, suspended business activities or other similar procedures (including procedures for persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- in breach of social security or tax obligations (including if done by persons with unlimited liability for the applicant's debts)
- guilty of grave professional misconduct<sup>14</sup> (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)

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<sup>11</sup> Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/444 of 13 March 2015 on the security rules for protecting EU classified information

<sup>12</sup> Commission Decision (EU, Euratom) 2015/443 of 13 March 2015 on Security in the Commission.

<sup>13</sup> See Articles 136 and 141 EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

<sup>14</sup> Professional misconduct includes: violation of ethical standards of the profession, wrongful conduct with impact on professional credibility, false declarations/misrepresentation of information, participation in a cartel or other agreement distorting competition, violation of IPR, attempting to influence decision-making processes or obtain confidential information from public authorities to gain advantage.



- committed fraud, corruption, links to a criminal organisation, money laundering, terrorism-related crimes (including terrorism financing), child labour or human trafficking (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- shown significant deficiencies in complying with main obligations under an EU procurement contract, grant agreement, prize, expert contract, or similar (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- guilty of irregularities within the meaning of Article 1(2) of Regulation No [2988/95](#) (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize)
- created under a different jurisdiction with the intent to circumvent fiscal, social or other legal obligations in the country of origin or created another entity with this purpose (including if done by persons having powers of representation, decision-making or control, beneficial owners or persons who are essential for the award/implementation of the prize).

Applicants will also be refused if it turns out that<sup>15</sup>:

- during the award procedure they misrepresented information required as a condition for participating or failed to supply that information
- they were previously involved in the preparation of the call and this entails a distortion of competition that cannot be remedied otherwise (conflict of interest).

## 8. Evaluation and award procedure

Applications will be subject to a formal evaluation by a **jury**.

If there are more than 40 of applications, there will be a **pre-selection** to select the best 20 to pass to jury review. Otherwise, all applications will pass directly to jury review.

The pre-selection panel and jury usually have a different composition, but jury members may participate in the pre-selection panel.

The pre-selection panel/jury will evaluate each application against the award criteria.

For applications with the same score, the pre-selection panel/jury will determine a **priority order** according to the following approach: The score for the criterion No 2 will be given a weight of 2 and the score for criterion No 3 will be given a weight of 1.5. If two or more applications still tie for any rank or category, the prize will be equally divided and awarded to all applications with the same score. If two or more applications tie for the first or subsequent ranks, the prize will be equally divided and awarded to all applications with the same score.

On the basis of the evaluation by the jury (and after the mandatory checks: *ethics review, security scrutiny, legal entity validation, non-exclusion, double funding and plagiarism, etc*), the awarding authority will decide on the award of the prize.

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<sup>15</sup> See Article 141(1) EU Financial Regulation [2018/1046](#).

All applications will be informed about the evaluation result (**evaluation result letter**). Successful applications will be awarded the prize; the not successful ones will be rejected.

If you believe that the evaluation procedure was flawed, you can submit a **complaint** (following the deadlines and procedures set out in the evaluation result letter). Please note that notifications are deemed to have been accessed (and received) 10 days after sending and that deadlines will be counted from then (see also [Funding & Tenders Portal Terms and Conditions](#)).

## 9. Award criteria

If admissible and eligible, the applications will be evaluated and ranked against the following **award criteria**:

- **Originality and replicability:** The extent to which the idea is innovative, original and a first-of-a-kind use of the technology in industry or in the domain of application. The description should be clear, logically presented and well-illustrated.
- **Technical excellence:** The extent to which the innovation is demonstrably state-of-the-art and based on excellent science and engineering.
- **Economic impact and exploitation of the innovation:** The extent to which the submission demonstrates understanding and awareness of the relevant innovation aspects, including market potential, needs and business opportunities.

Award criteria	Minimum pass score	Maximum score
Originality and replicability	4	7
Technical excellence	4	7
Economic impact and exploitation of the innovation	4	7
<b>Overall (pass) scores</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>21</b>

Maximum points: 21 points.

Individual thresholds: 4/7 points.

Overall threshold: 12 points.

Applications must pass both the individual thresholds AND the overall threshold. The prize will be awarded to three applications with the best scores. First, second and third prize will be awarded. Other applications will be rejected.

## 10. Other conditions

### Payment arrangements

The prize money will be paid to the prize winners after the award ceremony, provided all

the requested documents have been submitted. In case of a group of winners, the payment will be made to the lead applicant.

Communication — Dissemination — Visibility of funding

Prize winners must promote the prize and its results, by providing targeted information to multiple audiences (including the media and the public) in a strategic and effective manner.

Communication activities related to the prize (*including media interviews, press statements, presentations, etc., in electronic form, via traditional or social media, etc.*), must acknowledge EU support and display the European flag (emblem) and funding statement (translated into local languages, where appropriate):



Funded by the  
European Union



Co-funded by the  
European Union



Funded by the  
European Union



Co-funded by the  
European Union

The emblem must remain distinct and separate and cannot be modified by adding other visual marks, brands or text.

Apart from the emblem, no other visual identity or logo may be used to highlight the EU support.

When displayed in association with other logos (*e.g. of winners or sponsors*), the emblem must be displayed at least as prominently and visibly as the other logos.

For the purposes of these obligations, the winners may use the emblem without first obtaining approval from the awarding authority. This does not, however, give them the

right to exclusive use. Moreover, they may not appropriate the emblem or any similar trademark or logo, either by registration or by any other means.

Any communication or dissemination activity related to the prize must use factually accurate information.

Moreover, it must indicate the following disclaimer (translated into local languages where appropriate):

“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 European Commission, DG RTD. Neither the European Union nor the awarding authority can be held responsible for them.”

### IPR – Rights of use

The awarding authority does not obtain ownership of the results produced in the context of the prize.

The awarding authority has the right to use non-sensitive information relating to the prize and materials and documents received from the winners (*such as pictures or audio-visual material, in paper or electronic form*) for information, communication, dissemination and publicity purposes.

Photos and videos taken by the awarding authority either in preparation of the award ceremony or during the award ceremony are the sole property of the awarding authority.

### Additional communication, dissemination and exploitation obligations

The prize winners must comply with the following additional obligations:

- Communication activities must include the following text: “This person was winner of the SOFT Prize from the 2021-2022 Euratom Research and Training Programme”

### Checks, audits and investigations

The awarding authority, the European Commission, the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF), the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) and the European Court of Auditors (ECA) may carry out checks, audits and investigations in relation to the prize.<sup>16</sup>

### Withdrawal of the prize – Recovery of undue amounts

The awarding authority may withdraw the prize after its award and recover all payments made, if it finds out that:

- false information, fraud or corruption was used to obtain it
- the prize winners were not eligible or should have been excluded or

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<sup>16</sup> For the powers of OLAF, EPPO and ECA, see Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 883/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 September 2013 concerning investigations conducted by the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) and repealing Regulation (EC) No 1073/1999 of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Regulation (Euratom) No 1074/1999 (OJ L 248, 18/09/2013, p. 1), Council Regulation (Euratom, EC) No 2185/1996 of 11 November 1996 concerning on-the-spot checks and inspections carried out by the Commission in order to protect the European Communities' financial interests against fraud and other irregularities (OJ L 292, 15/11/1996, p. 2), Council Regulation (EU) 2017/1939 of 12 October 2017 implementing enhanced cooperation on the establishment of the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (‘the EPPO’) and Article 287 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU) and Article 257 of EU Financial Regulation 2018/1046.

- the prize winners are in serious breach of their obligations under these Rules of Contest.

## 11. How to submit an application

All applications must be submitted directly online via the Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Submission System. Paper applications are NOT accepted.

You can access the Portal [here](#), or by clicking 'Apply now' on the official prize webpage.

Submission is a **2-step** process:

### a) create a user account and register your organisation

To use the Submission System (the only way to apply), all participants need to [create an EULogin user account](#).

Once you have an EULogin account, you can [register your organisation](#) in the Participant Register. When your registration is finalised, you will receive a 9-digit participant identification code (PIC).

### b) submit the application

Access the Electronic Submission System via the Topic page in the [Search Funding & Tenders](#) section.

Submit your application in 3 parts, as follows:

- Part A includes administrative information about the applicant organisations. Fill it in directly online
- Part B (description of the action) covers the technical content of the application. Download the mandatory word template from the Submission System, fill it in and upload it as a PDF file
- Annexes (if any; *see section 5*). Upload them as PDF files.

The application must keep to the **page limits** (*see section 5*); excess pages will be disregarded.

Documents must be uploaded to the **right category** in the Submission System otherwise the application might be considered incomplete and thus inadmissible.

The application must be submitted **before the call deadline** (*see section 4*). After this deadline, the system is closed and applications can no longer be submitted.

Once the application is submitted, you will receive a **confirmation e-mail** (with date and time of your application). If you do not receive this confirmation e-mail, it means your application has NOT been submitted. If you believe this is due to a fault in the Submission System, you should immediately file a complaint via the [IT Helpdesk webform](#), explaining the circumstances and attaching a copy of the application (and, if possible, screenshots to show what happened).

Details on processes and procedures are described in the [Online Manual](#). The Online Manual also contains the links to FAQs and detailed instructions regarding the Portal Electronic Exchange System.

## 12. Help

Additional information can be found:

- [Online Manual](#)
- [SOFT Prize](#)
- [Portal FAQ](#) (for general questions).

Please also consult the Topic page regularly, since we will use it to publish call updates.

### *Contact*

For individual questions on the Portal Submission System, please contact the [IT Helpdesk](#).

Non-IT related questions should be sent to the following email address: [RTD-FUSION@ec.europa.eu](mailto:RTD-FUSION@ec.europa.eu)

Please indicate clearly the reference of the call and topic to which your question relates (*see cover page*).

## 13. Important



### IMPORTANT

- **Don't wait until the end** — Complete your application sufficiently in advance of the deadline to avoid any last minute **technical problems**. Problems due to last minute submissions (*e.g. congestion, etc.*) will be entirely at your risk. Call deadlines can NOT be extended.
- **Consult** the Portal Topic page regularly. We will use it to publish updates and additional information on the call (call updates).
- **Funding & Tenders Portal Electronic Exchange System** — By submitting the application, all applicants **accept** to use the electronic exchange system in accordance with the [Portal Terms & Conditions](#).
- **Registration** — Before submitting the application, all applicants must be registered in the [Participant Register](#). The participant identification code (PIC) (one per applicant) is mandatory for the Application Form.
- **Joint applications** — Joint applications by a group of applicants are admitted. In this case, you must appoint a lead applicant (coordinator) to submit the application and represent you towards the awarding authority. All applicants will be jointly responsible and must all fulfil and respect the conditions set out in these Rules of Contest.
- **No double funding** — There is a strict prohibition of double funding from the EU budget. Applications that have already received an EU prize cannot receive a second prize for the same activities.
- **Resubmission** — Applications may be changed and re-submitted until the deadline for submission. For first past the post prizes with cut-off dates, applications can be changed and re-submitted until the cut-off date; the re-submission may however let you use your position as first in place.
- **Rejection** — By submitting the application, all applicants accept the call conditions set out in these Rules of Contest (and the documents they refer to). Applications that do not comply with all the call conditions will be **rejected**. This applies also to applicants: All applicants need to fulfil the criteria; if any one of them doesn't, they must be replaced or the entire application will be rejected.
- **Cancellation** — The awarding authority may cancel the contest or decide not to award the prize — without any obligation to compensate participants (*e.g. no applications, jury cannot determine winner, winner is not eligible or must be excluded, objectives have already been achieved, etc*). In this case, you will be informed via a call update.
- **Language** — You can submit your application in any official EU language. However, for reasons of efficiency, we strongly advise you to use English. If you need the call documentation in another official EU language, please submit a request within 10 days after call publication (for the contact information, see *section 12*).

- **Transparency** — In accordance with Article 38 of the [EU Financial Regulation](#), information about EU prizes awarded and the winners (name, address and amount awarded) is published each year on the [Europa website](#).

The publication can exceptionally be waived (on reasoned and duly substantiated request), if there is a risk that the disclosure could jeopardise your rights and freedoms under the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights or harm your commercial interests.

- **Data protection** — Any processing of personal data in the context of this prize will be done in accordance with Regulation [2018/1725](#). It will be processed solely for the purpose of evaluating your application (and subsequent management of your prize and, if needed, programme monitoring, evaluation and communication). Details are explained in the [Funding & Tenders Portal Privacy Statement](#).

By submitting the application, all applicants accept that the awarding authority will publish information on the finalists and winners.