

## Earth Observation Excellence Award

### Terms and Conditions

Content of Terms and Conditions as of 10 September 2025

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Welcome to the Earth Observation Excellence Award (EO Excellence Award). This award recognises outstanding achievements of early career<sup>1</sup> researchers who have contributed to the innovative use of Earth observation data and/or methods. The purpose of this initiative is to encourage, support, and promote scientific excellence in accordance with the objectives and strategy of the ESA and the contribution of EO to addressing climate change and accompanying environmental challenges. The focus of this award is on innovative and unique uses of EO data for science and applications. Innovative technology or engineering for Earth observation is not considered part of this award.

Subject to the submission of dossiers that meet the required standards, as outlined below, ESA plans to allocate two awards (see Section VI (8) for further details):

- **Individual Award:** A grant of up to €35,000
- **Team Award:** A grant of up to €65,000

Please read carefully the following general Terms and Conditions.

By participating in the Award, the Nominators and Nominees (as defined below) – agree to be bound by these Terms and Conditions and other conditions, including privacy notices, released on the Award Website as well as by any decision taken by ESA in the context of this Award Programme. The terms used with capitals herein are defined in the final section of these Terms and Conditions.

#### I. ORGANISATION OF THE AWARD – ROLES

(1) This Award Programme is launched by the European Space Agency, through its Directorate of Earth Observation Programmes and organised by AZO Anwendungszentrum GmbH Oberpfaffenhofen (mentioned hereafter as “Organiser”).

(2) ESA will contribute to the organisation of the Award Programme by:

- a. Entrusting the European Space Science Committee (ESSC) to organise the Award Selection Committee among its members,
- b. proposing an observer to the Award Selection Committee,

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<sup>1</sup> Early career researchers/scientists are defined under Section II (1) c.

- c. promoting the Award Programme through their webpages (e.g. ESA EO Portal) and social media channels,
- d. sponsoring the Award.

## II. ELIGIBILITY - EXCLUSIONS

### (1) Eligible Participants

For the Individual Award, any eligible individual can be nominated (“**Nominee**”) by another person (“**Nominator**”) or through self-nomination. Similarly, for the Team Award, a Nominator may propose a team, or a Team Lead may propose their team through self-nomination.

Both awards are subject to the eligibility and exclusion conditions and, generally, in compliance with these Terms and Conditions. A Nominee may be nominated for either the Individual or as part of the Team Award but it is not allowed to be nominated for both in the same round of the competition.

ESA welcomes and encourage participation from female, other gender, and members of underrepresented groups, fostering an inclusive and diverse environment for all nominations.

Except as otherwise mentioned in Section II (2) below, the Award Programme is open only to researchers to be nominated who fulfil, cumulatively, the following **Eligibility Conditions** at the time of their nomination:

- a. Nominated researcher(s) shall be in the early phases of their careers, with early career researchers being defined as those who are within 10 years of earning their PhD (or highest degree) and no more than 20 years since obtaining their first degree, excluding any periods of maternity leave.
- b. Their research has demonstrated a contribution to the innovative use of Earth Observations in the field of science and applications (innovative technology or engineering for Earth observation is not considered part of this award).
- c. The research shall primarily focus on the use of data from European satellites.
- d. Nominee(s) shall demonstrate their expertise through peer-reviewed publications.
- e. In the case of a team:
  - i. More than 50% of the team members must meet the early career criteria (explained in Section II (1) a., while the Team lead should respect entirely the condition above.
  - ii. A Team Lead must be assigned for the purpose of representing the Team during the nomination process. The maximum number of team members is five.

- iii. All team members must have worked on the same achievement, taken into account in the Nomination and must fulfil the eligibility conditions and not fall under any exclusion set forth in these Terms and Conditions.
- iv. The team should reflect diversity in its composition. This includes but is not limited to diversity in backgrounds, skills, experiences, gender and perspectives. In particular, there is no need for a Team to be necessarily from the same lab but to have worked together on the same achievement for several years.
- f. Nominee(s) must be resident(s) of one of the ESA Member States<sup>2</sup>, Canada, Latvia, Lithuania or Slovakia. For Team nominations, more than 50% of the team members must be residents of one of the ESA Member States, Canada, Latvia, Lithuania, or Slovakia.
- g. Nominee(s) must have agreed as an individual or a Team lead on behalf of a Team to be nominated for this Award by providing the Nominee Authorisation, under modalities set forth in Section IV herein.

## (2) Exclusion Cases

The following are not eligible to be a Nominator:

- a. Immediate family members of the Nominee(s).
- b. ESA staff members or contractors; they are not eligible to nominate Nominee(s) for the Award during their terms of service and for one year after the term is finished.
- c. Any member of the Award Selection Committee.
- d. Any member of the contracting company who is running the Award database and website.

The following are not eligible to be nominated for the Award:

- a. Immediate family members of the Nominator.
- b. ESA staff members or contractors; they are not eligible to be nominated for the Award during their terms of service and for one year after the term is finished (meaning that the nomination for these individuals cannot be accepted during their term, but can be accepted one year or more after the term ended).
- c. Any member of the Award Selection Committee.
- d. Any member of the contracting company who is running the Award database and website.

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<sup>2</sup> As of January 2025, the ESA Member States are Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

- e. Any individual who is subject to rules, restrictions or guidelines regarding competitions, gifts, prizes, awards, contests etc.
- f. Any individual who received an EO Excellence Award in the past.
- g. Any individual who is part of a nominated Team on the same scientific topic or achievement.
- h. Any individual or team which is in any of the following cases:
  - i. They have acted in a manner inconsistent with ESA's values, reputation, status and interests including cases of scientific misconduct.
  - ii. They have been the subject of a judgement which has the force of res judicata for fraud, corruption, involvement in a criminal organisation, money laundering or any other illegal activity.
  - iii. They have violated, or are suspected of violating, or contributed to the violation of the Intellectual Property Rights of a Third Party.
  - iv. They have sought to negate or restrict, through specific labelling or otherwise, the use of Proprietary Information, data and/or documents supporting the Nomination, as authorised by these Terms and Conditions.
  - v. They have performed, or are suspected of having performed, illegal or unlawful practices (such as corruption).
  - vi. They are subject to a decision preventing them from doing business with ESA.

### III. KEY DATES

<b>Start date:</b>	The Award Programme will start on <b>10 September 2025</b> [12:00 UTC].  It shall be announced on the ESA EO Portal and launched on the Award website available at <a href="https://eoxcellence.com">eoxcellence.com</a> .
<b>Nomination period:</b>	Nominations will be accepted from the Start Date until 12:00 UTC on <b>10 December 2025</b> .
<b>Evaluation period:</b>	Evaluation of the Nominations shall start in December 2025 and shall end mid-March 2026.
<b>Announcement of Winners:</b>	The Awardee (individual or team) shall be announced on the ESA EO Portal and on the Award Website. Moreover, the Awardee will be invited during a ceremony that will take place every 3 years at the ESA Living Planet Symposium.
<b>Change in timing:</b>	ESA may change any pre-set dates or schedules as necessary or opportune for ESA. The Organiser shall update the relevant information on the Award Website.

#### IV. HOW TO PARTICIPATE

##### (1) Nomination – Acceptance

Any individual may nominate themselves, an individual or team which fulfils the Eligibility Conditions (**Section II (1)**) and does not fall in the Exclusion Cases (**Section II (2)**), by submitting a nomination to the Database (collectively “**Nomination**”), **provided that** the Nominator has obtained the Nominee(s)’s acceptance to be nominated under these General Terms and Conditions (“**Acceptance**”).

##### (2) Modalities – Content

The Nomination shall be submitted via the Award Website. The Nomination must contain the information required from the Nominator and must be completed latest on 10 December 2025 [12:00 UTC] with the information required from the Nominee, as mentioned below.

The following information must be provided by the Nominator for each nomination:

- a. The first name and surname of each Nominee, along with their email address.
- b. In case of a nomination by a third person, a PDF Nomination letter (one page) must clearly detail why the Nominee(s) deserve(s) this recognition by reflecting the Selection Criteria (paragraph VI. (1)). Specifically, the Nomination letter should focus on the Nominee’s scientific contributions to the field, their importance, their impact on the discipline, and their implications for the future. The new views and insights stimulated by the Nominee’s work are particularly relevant. The Nomination letter must be signed by the Nominator (one person).
- c. In case a Nominator nominates themselves, a letter of support (one page) must be provided by a peer scientist in the field detailing why the Nominee(s) deserve(s) this recognition. The letter of support must be signed by the person who wrote it (one person).

The following information in PDF format must be provided by the Nominee for each nomination:

- a. A Curriculum Vitae (CV) (max. two pages) provided by each Nominee. In the case of a Team, each team member must provide a CV. The CV should include the name, address, employment history, qualification degrees (and when obtained), research experience, and honours.
- b. A selected Bibliography (max. two pages) provided by each Nominee. In the case of a Team, each team member must provide a bibliography. The list should include selected publications that best support the nomination and briefly state the Nominee’s total number and types of publications and citations. Related images,

graphics, animations, or videos supporting, explaining, or detailing the scientific career visually may also be uploaded by the Nominee, provided they have sufficient title or rights to do so.

- c. A description of the Achievement (maximum two pages) considered for the nomination. In the case of a Team, the Team Lead must provide this achievement description. It should focus on the specific activities for which the achievement is being made and demonstrate how it addresses the Selection Criteria outlined in paragraph VI (1), including the achievement's objectives, description, and its potential future impact. This should not be a list of different activities performed by the nominee but rather describe a single project or research theme for which the Nominee made a leading or substantial contribution.
- d. In the case of a Team nomination, a one-page description of the Team organisation must be uploaded that clearly outlines the individual responsibilities of each team member, the areas of collaboration, and any joint outputs such as publications, workshops, or other relevant activities.
- e. Optionally, nominees may upload a pitch video (maximum 2–3 minutes) and/or a short PowerPoint presentation (maximum 5 slides) to further illustrate and explain the nominated achievement.

### (3) Declarations – Representations - Warranties

By submitting a Nomination, the Nominator declares that:

- a. to the knowledge of the Nominator, the Nominee(s) fulfils the Eligibility Conditions (**Section II (1)**) and does not fall in the Exclusion Cases (**Section II (2)**).
- b. to the knowledge of the Nominator, the achievement subject to a Nomination is an original work of the Nominee(s) based primarily on European Earth Observation data.
- c. the Nominator fulfils the conditions set forth herein, in particular the conditions referred to in **Section IV (1)** above.

The Nominator may be required to formally declare these at submission, by accepting/clicking in each respective field.

By accepting to be nominated for the Award, the Nominee(s) is deemed having knowledge of these Terms and Conditions, having accepted them on irrevocable basis and having accepted the use of all information, data, materials etc. provided by the Nomination or under the performance of this Award Programme for the needs of the programme and related communication purposes by (or for) ESA and the Organiser.

By participating in this Award Programme, the Nominee guarantees that the Nomination does not contain any content which copy, reproduce, plagiarise or otherwise compromises, violates

or infringes any copyright or other intellectual property right of any natural or legal person or which may violate any trade secret or confidentiality obligations.

#### (4) Reject - Disqualification

ESA may reject any Nomination or disqualify any Nominee in case ESA has any reason to believe that any of these Terms and Conditions are not complied with.

In particular – and without limitation - should ESA have a reason to believe that an infringement of a copyright or other intellectual property right or a violation of a trade secret or of a confidentiality obligation may have taken place by any means (including by means of an unauthorized or unlawful distribution, exhibition, or by any unauthorised use of any third party work), then ESA may reject any Nomination or disqualify any Nominee from the Award process.

### V. LANGUAGE

The language of the Award Programme as well as any related communication shall be English unless a prior written permission was given by ESA to submit communication in another language.

### VI. EVALUATION

#### (1) Selection criteria

The evaluation criteria, for the selection of the winning individual/team, shall focus on the use of primarily European Earth Observation datasets in the field of science and applications. Excellence, innovation, and international collaboration together with, outreach to other communities shall be in the foreground of these criteria. A successful Nomination will provide proof of scientific excellence in the form of **a documented scientific publication record or comparable achievements in the field of EO data processing**, applications or communication and satisfying at least one of the following three criteria:

- Show new approaches, advancements or innovation in the field of EO or related (sub)disciplines.
- Demonstrate a focus on demand driven solutions development relevant to science, industry or society.
- Contribute to opening up new application areas for Earth Observation showing the potential and information content of Earth observation satellite data.

## (2) Weighting Factors (Individual)

- **Excellence in Science - 34%**  
e.g., high impact publications, EO research that advances our understanding of Earth systems, international collaboration, and recognition.
- **Excellence in Innovation - 33%**  
e.g., novel ideas, concepts, or methodologies.
- **Impact and Future Potential in Earth Observation - 33%**  
e.g., assessment of the achievement's potential to advance EO through new applications, scientific discoveries, or ongoing research likely to enhance EO methods or capabilities.

## (3) Weighting Factors (Team)

- **Excellence in Science - 25%**  
e.g., high impact publications, EO research that advances our understanding of Earth systems, international collaboration, and recognition.
- **Excellence in Innovation - 25%**  
e.g., novel ideas, concepts, or methodologies.
- **Impact and Future Potential in Earth Observation - 25%**  
e.g., assessment of the achievement's potential to advance EO through new applications, scientific discoveries, or ongoing research likely to enhance EO methods or capabilities.
- **Teamwork and Cooperation - 25%**  
e.g., assessment of the team's ability to work together effectively, including interdisciplinary co-operation, clear role allocation, communication and the integration of different areas of expertise to achieve common goals.

## (4) Award Selection Committee

The Award Selection Committee is constituted by the members of the Earth Science Panel (ESP) of the European Space Science Committee (ESSC) associated to the European Science Foundation (ESF).

The Award Selection Committee will evaluate the nominations and select the successful Awardee for both the individual and team awards.

The Director of ESA Earth Observation Programmes – or a person to whom the Director has delegated such authority – shall be the appointed observer on the Award Selection Committee.



The secretariat of the Award Selection Committee shall be run by the ESSC.

All members of the Award Selection Committee will be bound by:

- a. Confidentiality on the evaluation and the outcome of selection until it is approved.
- b. Impartiality and no conflict of interest; in case of a potential conflict of interests with a Nominee, the member of the Award Selection Committee shall refrain from the evaluation procedure.

In particular, the members of the Award Selection Committee will be required to declare if they had any personal and/or professional relationship with any Nominee, including:

- a. Known family relationship as spouse, child, sibling, or parent.
- b. Current business or professional relationship.
- c. Past or present association as thesis advisor or thesis student.
- d. Having had substantial collaboration during their professional career.
- e. Current employment at the same institution.
- f. Previous employment at the same institution within the last 12 months.

#### (5) Evaluation process

The Members of the Award Selection Committee:

- a. Shall provide their evaluation in the Database.
- b. Will use the competition database in the evaluation and selection process.

If more than half of the members of the Award Selection Committee declare a conflict of interest for a nomination, external evaluators will be invited for the evaluation.

Using the selection criteria, the Award Selection Committee will work by consensus ensuring that the spirit of the awards is properly followed, particularly for the recognition of outstanding achievements of early career researchers who have contributed to the innovative use of Earth observation data and/or methods.

The evaluation report prepared by the Award Selection Committee to the Director of ESA Earth Observation Programmes – or a person to whom the Director has delegated such authority - shall be considered binding to Nominator and Nominee(s) and final.

(6) Selection of the Awardee

The Director of ESA Earth Observation Programmes – or a person to whom the Director has delegated such authority – shall nominate the Awardee amongst the top scoring Nominees or nominated Teams.

(7) Notice

The Award winning Nominee shall be notified upon completion of the evaluation and the selection process by the Director of ESA Earth Observation Programmes – or a person to whom the Director has delegated such authority.

(8) Conditional Award

The granting of the Award is conditional upon the acceptance and compliance, by the Nominator and Nominees, of these Terms and Conditions.

ESA reserves the right to withdraw the Award and select another Awardee in case ESA has any reason to believe that any of these Terms and Conditions are not complied with, in particular in case the Nominee has not granted (or the Nominator has not submitted to ESA) the Acceptance referred to in **Section IV (1)** of these Terms and Conditions.

In addition, ESA reserves the right to ask the Nominator or the Nominee to execute any document necessary to confirm the rights granted by these Conditions.

(9) Award description

The Awardee (individual or team) of the EO Excellence Award Programme may receive funds to advance the research for which the award was granted.

- a. Following the announcement of the awardees, the Awardee shall submit a proposal (max 2 pages) outlining the intended allocation of the funds (exact deadline for the proposal submission to be confirmed).
- b. Individual awardee may receive a maximum of €35,000, while team awardee may receive up to €65,000, based on the nature of the proposal.
- c. Fund utilisation includes, but is not limited to:

- Travel and networking grants, encompassing research visits<sup>1</sup> and workshops<sup>3</sup> organised by the award recipient(s).

Other permissible uses of the fund encompass:

- Purchase of necessary Earth Observation data<sup>3</sup> to support the ongoing research activity.
- On-field<sup>4</sup> data collection and validation to support the ongoing research activity.
- Student sponsorship to support the advancement of the winning research.

## VII. RIGHTS GRANTED BY PARTICIPANTS

By participating in this Award Programme, the Nominee and the Nominator acknowledge and agree that ESA, the Organiser and any person acting under their responsibility as well as the Award Selection Committee are authorised to use (including to publish, distribute, share, edit, modify, store, display etc.) any material related to the award for communication and promotional purposes (e.g. by displaying it on ESA EO Portal and the Award Website). These may include:

- a. The Nomination and the supporting documentation, including visuals like images, graphics and video material.
- b. The identification data of the Nominees, as submitted by the Nominator and/or by the Nominee in the Award process,
- c. statements or declarations made by the Nominator and/or by the Nominee in connection with the Award Programme or process,
- d. any recordings of the voices, images or other attributes of the Nominator and/or by the Nominee collected or performed in connection with the Award Programme or process.

This authorisation is granted without a formal declaration being needed in this respect, on a free of charge, perpetual, worldwide and transferable basis, for ESA's needs, in particular for:

- a. The verification of the eligibility conditions and of the selection.
- b. For Organisers' Communication purposes, in particular to highlight the Award Programme and to promote similar initiatives in the future.

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<sup>1</sup> Research visit shall be conducted either at any of ESA's establishments or at an institute chosen by the awardees, provided that the chosen location is situated within ESA's Member States.

<sup>2</sup> Workshops or networking events shall be conducted either at any of ESA's establishments or at an institute chosen by the awardees, provided that the chosen location is situated within ESA's Member States.

<sup>3</sup> The selected data to be agreed with ESA.

<sup>4</sup> The selected campaign work to be agreed with ESA.

## **VIII. INFORMATION – PERSONAL DATA**

Personal Data is processed according to the ESA Personal Data Protection Framework. ESA collects and/or processes personal data to the extent such collection and processing is necessary or useful in the context of this Award and related communication activities.

ESA is subject to a Personal Data Protection framework composed of the following elements:

- a. The Principles of Personal Data Protection, as adopted by ESA Council Resolution (ESA/C/CCLXVIII/Res.2 (Final)) adopted on 13 June 2017
- b. The Rules of Procedure for the Data Protection Supervisory Authority, as adopted by ESA Council Resolution (ESA/C/CCLXVIII/Res.2 (Final)) adopted on 13 June 2017  
The Policy on Personal Data Protection adopted by Director General of ESA on 5 February 2018 and effective on 1 March 2018

Participants are required to comply with ESA Framework on Personal Data Protection available at the following URL:

[esa.int/About Us/Law at ESA/Highlights of ESA rules and regulations](https://esa.int/About_Us/Law_at_ESA/Highlights_of_ESA_rules_and_regulations)

## **IX. MISCELLANEOUS**

### **(1) Modification – termination of the Award Program**

ESA has the right to modify, suspend, cancel or terminate the Award Programme, at any time and without any obligation, liability or responsibility, for any reason, in particular, if the Award Programme is not capable of being run as planned or if its requirements are not fulfilled.

### **(2) Compliance with Laws and Regulations**

All Participants must observe all local, regional, national, and international laws, orders, directives, ordinances, treaties, rules and regulations which may apply to them in connection with all aspects of their participation to the Award Program. Participants are solely responsible for acquiring the appropriate licenses, waivers, or permits from the applicable regulatory bodies or other applicable third parties. Organisers shall in no way be responsible for providing the Participants any advice or counsel, legal or otherwise, with regard thereto.

### **(3) Applicable Law and Settlement of Disputes**

Except for personal data matters or incidents for which ESA Framework on Personal Data Protection shall apply, and for which ESA Supervisory Authority shall have jurisdiction:

- a. Without prejudice to the applicability of ESA Convention on privileges of ESA, the agreement resulting from acceptance of these Terms and Conditions shall be governed by and shall be interpreted in accordance with the Law of France.
- b. All disputes between ESA, the Organiser, Nominees and/or Nominators in connection with or arising out of the existence, validity, construction, performance and termination of this Award Programme (or any terms thereof) which the parties cannot resolve amicably within a reasonable period of time, shall be finally settled under the Rules of Arbitration of the International Chamber of Commerce by 3 arbitrators appointed in accordance with the said rules. The cost of arbitration, including the fees and expenses of the arbitrators, shall be shared equally by the involved parties unless the award otherwise provides. Each involved party shall bear its own representation fees and costs associated with the arbitration. The arbitration proceedings shall be conducted in the English language in Paris (France) and the arbitration award shall be final and binding upon the parties, their successors and assigns which shall comply in good faith with such decision.

#### (4) Limitation of ESA liability

By participating in the Award Programme, Nominees and Nominators agree:

- a. That ESA will be liable only for losses resulting from procedural breaches of the Award Programme, only in the event of wilful intent (including fraudulent intent) and gross negligence on the part of ESA, provided that the claim is formulated within three (3) months of the date when the first loss occurred. Any claims beyond the above shall be excluded.
- b. To release ESA and the Organiser from any and all liability, illness, injury, death, loss, litigation, claim, or damage that may occur, directly or indirectly, in connection with this Award Program.

#### (5) Modification of the Conditions

These Conditions may be changed by ESA at any time and shall be applicable upon notification of change at least on the Award Website. The amendments shall be numbered sequentially for the sake of traceability.

## **X. LIST OF ABBRIVIATIONS AND/OR DEFINITIONS**

“Agency” or “ESA”	European Space Agency, governed by ESA Convention opened for signature in Paris on 30 May 1975 and available on <a href="http://www.esa.int">www.esa.int</a> , having its Headquarters located at 8-10 Rue Mario Nikis CS 45741 F, 75738 Paris Cedex 15, France, <a href="http://esa.int/About_Us/Corporate_news/ESA_Headquarters">esa.int/About_Us/Corporate_news/ESA_Headquarters</a>
“Organiser”	AZO Anwendungszentrum GmbH Oberpfaffenhofen, Claude-Dornier-Straße 1, Gebäude 401, 82234 Weßling, Germany, <a href="http://azo-space.com">azo-space.com</a>
“ESSC”	European Space Science Committee, <a href="http://essc.esf.org">essc.esf.org</a>
“Nominator”	Any person which contributes to the EO Excellence Award by submitting a Nomination under these Terms and Conditions.
“Nominee”	Any Eligible person or team nominated by a Nominator to the EO Excellence Award under these Terms and Conditions.
“Database”	A database made available by a third-party licensor, under its own terms and conditions and its own privacy notice available on the Database, used as a tool for collecting nominations from the Nominators.
“Participants”	Means Nominator(s) and Nominee(s).
“Proprietary Information”	Any information or data of financial, personal, commercial or technical nature marked as proprietary, whether it is in written, electronic, photographic, oral and/or any other form relating to and/or disclosed by or on behalf of the disclosing party to the receiving party, pursuant to these Terms and Conditions.
“EO Excellence Award”	Earth Observation Excellence Award to which these Terms and Conditions apply.
“Award Website”	Means either the website accessible at the following URL ( <a href="http://eoxcellence.com">eoxcellence.com</a> ) and/or the Database.
“Awardee”	The Nominee(s) selected as a winner of the EO Excellence Award, in accordance with these Terms and Conditions.