Guidelines for evaluators

2026 SAF€RA joint call

"Innovative solutions and technologies to improve safety of workers and emergency responders"

February 4th, 2026

Table of Contents

1 Introduction

SAF€RA is a partnership between research funding organizations working in the field of industrial safety in Europe. SAF€RA publishes joint calls for proposals on various topics related to industrial safety and organizes dissemination activities to ensure that research results lead to improvements in safety management. The scope of SAF€RA includes coordination of research on the prevention of major accidents, with off-site consequences and risks to the environment and society, and in particular the economic benefits of industrial safety solutions, safe innovative processes, preparedness and response as well as protection of the environment, new methods to enhance the creation of a safety culture and prudent attitudes, risk reduction strategies, reference technologies for life extension of aged and repaired structures, as well as products and systems required to improve industrial safety.

In 2026, the SAF€RA joint call concerns *Innovative solutions and technologies to improve safety of workers and emergency responders*. The *Guidelines for proposers* document contains more detailed information on the call topic.

For more information:

- SAF€RA's website > https://www.safera.eu/

2 Call objectives

The objective of this joint call for proposals for research and development projects is to promote European transnational research in this field taking a proactive, multidisciplinary and innovative approach to developing solutions for sustainable growth and enhanced competitiveness of European industry.

In order to foster transnational collaboration, projects funded within this joint call must involve the collaboration of at least two research teams in two different eligible countries. Researchers requesting support for their project may submit either:

- A transnational consortium pre-proposal, comprising at least two partner organizations from two eligible countries;
- A single-nation pre-proposal, comprising one or more organizations from a single eligible country. In this case, the organization(s) accept the principle of a collaboration with one or more other organizations from one or more other eligible countries. After evaluation of the pre-proposals, the Call Steering Committee will suggest grouping two or more single-nation pre-proposals into a transnational consortium, based on their thematic and methodological complementarity.

In the second stage of the call, full proposals are to be submitted by a transnational consortium, which must comprise at least two consortium partners from two eligible countries.

Furthermore, additional consortium partners, not eligible for SAF€RA funding, may participate in the projects on the basis of self-financing. Such partners should state the source of funding for their contribution to the proposal and the conditions under which their funding will be available.

General remarks

- The research teams within a consortium should include investigators of complementary scientific disciplines and research areas necessary to address the proposed research aims.
- Given the applied nature of the topics, the participation of stakeholders within the project (either as subjects of investigation, or partners contributing to the work) is encouraged.
- Proposals should contain novel, ambitious aims and ideas, combined with well-structured work plans.
- Projects that contribute to standardization efforts are encouraged.

3 Call management

Two boards, the Call Steering Committee and the Evaluation Panel, will manage the evaluation process of the call with the support of the Call Secretariat. The process includes the eligibility and relevance check of the pre-proposals, the evaluation of the full proposals, the final selection and award of research funding, monitoring project progress during the funding period, and final evaluation of the joint call.

The Evaluation Panel is a panel of internationally recognized scientific experts within the disciplines identified as being relevant for the call topic, responsible for the evaluation of submitted full proposals. Evaluation Panel members will not submit or participate in proposals within the call, and shall accept a confidentiality agreement and confirm that they do not have any conflicts of interest.

The Call Steering Committee is composed of a representative from each SAF€RA funding organization participating in the joint call. All decisions concerning the call procedures will be made by the Call Steering Committee. It will supervise the progress of the joint call and the evaluation of proposals. The Call Steering Committee will make the final funding recommendation to the national/regional funding organizations regarding the proposals to be funded, based on the final ranking list provided by the Evaluation Panel. It will also propose the grouping of individual pre-proposals in the first stage into consortia and coordinate subsequent negotiations. It accompanies the entire lifespan of the call, evaluates the performance of the projects and resolves potential disagreements which may arise during the lifetime of the projects.

4 Evaluation process

The call will use a two-stage application process. During the first stage, applicants will present a pre-proposal describing the broad outline of their project. The pre-proposals will be examined by the Call Steering Committee for eligibility and relevance, and a subset of the projects will be requested to proceed to the second stage of the call.

In the second stage, a centralized evaluation will be performed by the Evaluation Panel and the Call Steering Committee. Based on the result of the evaluation, projects will be recommended (or not) for funding. Note that the national/regional organizations will make the final funding decision.

The evaluation criteria (further detailed in Annex 1) are:

- Compatibility with the call topics
- Scientific or technological excellence
- Expected outcomes (scientific & operational)
- Project implementation

Further comments on the evaluation process:

- Each project full proposal will be reviewed by a minimum of three evaluators (one Evaluation Panel member and two external reviewers).
- A review report consists of written remarks and a numerical score per review criterion.
- Technical support to evaluators is provided by the Call Secretariat. Evaluators communicate only with the Call Secretariat.
- The names of the evaluators will not be disclosed publicly, either during or after the review process. An exception may be made in countries where disclosure of the reviewers' name is legally obliged upon request of the applicant.
- Evaluators can come from any country.
- Evaluators refrain from reviewing a proposal in case of a conflict of interest that was not detected by the Call Secretariat beforehand. Criteria for conflict of interest are listed in Annex 2.

5 Basic principles of evaluation

- Evaluators will only receive full proposals whose eligibility and relevance have been checked by the Call Steering Committee.
- The evaluation of a proposal shall be based solely upon the information contained in the full proposal.
- Evaluators shall evaluate proposals belonging to their broader domain of expertise.
- All proposals are assessed only on the basis of given evaluation criteria (see Annex 1).
- In case of conflict of interest (see Annex 2), the proposal will be returned to the Call Secretariat for referral.
- Proposals and review reports are written in English.

Each full proposal will be allocated to at least two external reviewers and one Evaluation Panel member who fit the profile of the application. Based on the proposals' ranking established by the Evaluation Panel and on available funding, the Call Steering Committee will suggest the projects to be funded to the national/regional funding organizations.

Only proposals judged to be of high quality will be funded. If the number of proposals considered to be of high quality, as judged by the Evaluation Panel, corresponds to a total requested funding level which is smaller than the available budget, only part of the funds will be used.

Projects not recommended for funding by the Call Steering Committee will not be funded in the context of this SAF€RA call (but may be funded directly by one or more of the funding organizations, outside of the scope of SAF€RA).

For each project, the Call Steering Committee will communicate the final decision along with the comments of the anonymous reviewers to the project coordinator.

Annex 1: Evaluation criteria

Compatibility with the call topics

Scientific or technological excellence:

- Soundness of the concept
- Quality of the objectives
- Quality and effectiveness of the scientific methodology
- Contribution to the development of the respective research field

Value of the expected outcomes (scientific & operational):

- To what extent do you expect that the project will improve scientific knowledge, or lead to improvements in operational practice which lead to safety improvements, or contribute to standardization, and increase the competitiveness of European industry in general?
- Are the dissemination activities planned suitable for their purpose?
- What are the prospects for establishing effective and sustainable partnership within the consortium, including transfer of knowledge and experience?

Project implementation:

- To what extent are the project objectives feasible?
- Are the methodology, work plan and time-frame likely to lead to the expected outcomes?
- Appropriate allocation and justification of the resources to be committed (budget, staff, equipment).
- Does the research team have the necessary competencies/experience to address the issues raised (previous scientific track record, publications in scientific journals, etc.)? If the problem would benefit from a multidisciplinary approach, are the relevant disciplines represented?
- Does the collaboration between research teams add value to the project? Is the work breakdown well balanced?

Meaning of numerical rankings

Ranking		
0	Fails	
1	Poor	The proposal shows serious weaknesses in relation to the criterion
2	Fair	The proposal generally addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses that need corrections
3	Good	The proposal addresses the criterion in question well but certain improvements are necessary
4	Very good	The proposal addresses the criterion very well but small improvements are possible
5	Excellent	The proposal successfully addresses all aspects of the criterion

Annex 2: Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest in evaluating a proposal exists if one or more of the following criteria apply to the evaluator (Evaluation Panel member or external reviewer) and at least one of the researchers involved with the proposal:

1. Relatives, personal ties or conflicts;
2. Close scientific collaboration, *e.g.* implementation of joint projects or joint publications within the past three years;
3. Direct scientific competition with personal projects or plans;
4. Close proximity, *e.g.* member of the same scientific institution or impending change of the reviewer to the institution of the applicant or *vice versa*. An exception is made for large scientific institutions (more than 50 research staff) where the two people are not involved in regular collaborations.
5. Teacher/student relationship, unless a following independent scientific activity of more than 10 years exists;
6. Dependent relationship in employment during the past three years;
7. Participation in current or recently concluded professorial appointment proceedings;
8. Current or prior activity in advisory bodies of the applicant's institution, *e.g.* scientific advisory boards;
9. Personal economic interests in the funding de