

2023
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2026

DIREKTION AWARDS - GUIDE FOR APPLICANTS

2nd open call to reward the:

“Best near-to-deployment innovative solutions regarding Disaster and Resilience society gaps for emergency responders”



Start: January 6th, 2026 at 12:00 CET
Deadline: March 6th, 2026 at 12:00 CET



Project Contact



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DIREKTION Project

The number and severity of disasters are increasing in Europe, due to climate change, ageing of industrial facilities and infrastructures, geo-political instability, poor knowledge management for critical activities and the vulnerability of the population exposed (density, age, migration...). To face these challenges, firefighters, rescuers, emergency medical responders and civil protection staff, have to implement effective and affordable solutions to support their operations. The DIREKTION project has established and implemented mechanisms and procedures to enhance knowledge sharing by directing the development of innovative technologies answering the needs of practitioners and policymakers. The steering role of international organisations (CTIF, FEU) and end-users in the project guarantees useful and practical results.

The project has started with the deployment of tools assessing the relevance and interoperability of innovative technologies developed by EU Horizon projects. A structured analysis of needs and gaps and the screening of potential solutions has then been undertaken. The procedures have used the outcomes of projects like FIRE-IN, DRIVER+ / CMINE, MEDEA, the pilot for the Network of European Hubs for Civil Protection and Crisis Management and has followed the taxonomy of the EU security market study to ensure a structured use of results. Based on the capability-driven evaluations and a detailed analysis of the opportunities and constraints for the uptake of innovative solutions, DIREKTION has established priorities for future research programming and capacity building. Moreover, the project continues to further establish networking and dissemination opportunities of interest for the DRS community in close collaboration with existing communities of users. They involve industry, SMEs & start-ups, research organisations and practitioners, at EU and national levels. DIREKTION strengthens current practice and future research and innovation planning in disaster resilience.

BRIEF OVERVIEW

The overall objective of DIREKTION is to sustainably establish a **network in the community of Disaster Resilience (DRS)** that will **enhance the exchange and consolidation of knowledge, and will promote innovation, technology uptake** as well as multi-stakeholder cooperation targeting European needs and objectives. The project is co-funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe program under grant agreement No. 101121249.

As a continuation of the first edition launched in 2025 on the best innovative solution, the 2nd DIREKTION Awards aim to **highlight and reward the most promising innovative solutions** addressing the priority capability gaps identified by first responders within the Disaster Resilience domain. This second call focuses on mature, demonstrable solutions with strong potential for operational adoption, improved interoperability and increased impact across Europe. This contest is also expected to promote R&D innovation.

Key details are summarized below:

- This call is open to **start-ups, SMEs, large companies, Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs), universities, Non-profit organisations (NGOs, Foundation), Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs)** from the **European Union and Horizon Europe Associated Countries**.
- This edition targets solutions at **TRL 5–7**.
- The submission period is **from 6th January 2026 at 12:00 CET to 6th March at 12:00 CET**.
- **10 winners** will be selected and awarded **€10,000 each** to support the communication and promotion of their solutions.
- The **official winners' announcement** will take place in **June 2026** during **INTERSCHUTZ** (Hannover, Germany) or during the **CERIS Disaster Resilience Days** (Brussels, Belgium). All awarded solutions will have the opportunity to pitch during these large events.



Figure 1: Timeline

To ensure a clear understanding of the call and the submission process, all applicants should carefully read the documentation:

- This Guide for applicant is the main document;
- The Frequently Asked Questions includes specific questions;
- Use the DIREKTION website to preload the Application form and then submit online.

CONTEXT

The number and severity of disasters are increasing in Europe, due to climate change, ageing of industrial facilities and infrastructures, geo-political instability, poor knowledge management for critical activities and the vulnerability of the population exposed (density, age, migration...). To face these challenges, firefighters, rescuers, emergency medical responders and civil protection staff, have to implement effective and affordable solutions to support their operations.

DIREKTION is dedicated to enhancing disaster resilience by bringing together first responders, researchers, and industry experts. Our mission is to provide Europe with faster, more efficient access to innovative solutions and technologies in disaster response and recovery. The overall objective of DIREKTION is to sustainably establish and implement mechanisms and procedures to enhance knowledge sharing by directing the development of innovative technologies answering the needs of practitioners and policymakers. The project is co-funded by the European Union's Horizon Europe program under grant agreement No. 101121249.

DIREKTION project is coordinated by INDEV and involve 16 partners in total (including 6 DRS practitioner organisations) from 13 countries.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CONTEST

The goal of this contest is to identify innovative projects that effectively reflect the most urgent and high-impact capability needs observed across fire services, civil protection, emergency medical responders and other operational actors. Its purpose is to support innovation uptake and further adoption, thereby accelerating impact and increasing European visibility.

This contest will reward **10 winners with the 2nd DIREKTION Awards, each receiving 10.000€ each**. All the awarded projects will have the opportunity to **showcase/present their solutions at the INTERSCHUTZ event¹ in June 2026 as well as at the CERIS Disaster Resilience Days²**. They will have a dedicated pitch session and the broadcasting of their video during these events.

Areas of applications of the projects include but are not limited to: situational awareness & decision support, communications & interoperability, wildfire, EV battery fire, robotics & remote operations, responder health and safety, CBRNe decontamination / HAZMAT, Training & Exercises.

Projects should demonstrate how their proposed solution or methodology contributes to one or more of these themes and improves preparedness, response and recovery within the Disaster Resilience domain.

The solutions will address current capability gaps identified by the DIREKTION consortium, in coherence with International Forum to Advance First Responder Innovation's list (IFAFRI)³. The main capabilities gaps identified are described below:

¹ Interschutz will take place in Hannover (Germany) from 01st to 06th June 2026. Detailed information, including the exact dates for pitching the solutions will be provided as soon as possible. Please check the website for information on this event: <https://www.interschutz.de/en/>

² The next CERIS Disaster Resilience Days will take place in Brussels (Belgium) from 30th June to 2nd July. The latest CERIS DRS event was held in Athens in October 2025 and included the first DIREKTION Awards 2025. More details are available here: [Building a Resilient Europe: Highlights from the CERIS Disaster Resilience Days 2025](#).
[CERIS Website](#)

³ IFAFRI is mainly focused on gaps in emergency response by first responders. The capability gaps identified are: real-time tracking of responders (1); real-time detection, monitoring and analysis of threats and hazards (2) rapid identification (3); integration of information (4); interoperable communications (5); remote acquisition of information (6); remote

DIREKTIION Topics	DIREKTIION - Capability Gaps	IFRARI – Capability Gaps
Command, Control, & Coordination	The ability to establish coordination between several agencies	CG 4 - Integration of information CG 7 - Remote operations CG 9 - Actionable intelligence
	The ability to incorporate information between multiple actors	
	The ability to enable quick adaptation to a changing scenario	
Communications & Information Sharing	The ability to provide a common situational understanding	CG 4 - Integration of information CG 5 - Interoperable communications CG 9 - Actionable intelligence
	The ability to standardize the fluxes of information and decision-making	
	The ability to improve public awareness	
Intelligence & Investigation	The ability to display big picture view with checked data	CG2 - Real-time detection, monitoring and analysis of threats and hazards CG 3 - Rapid identification CG 6 - Remote acquisition of information CG 9 - Actionable intelligence
	The ability to provide indoor visualization in low visibility fire environments	
Logistics & Resource Management	The ability to establish standards or legal framework for multiagency or cross-border activities	CG 5 - Interoperable communications
	The ability to provide connectivity for communication (indoor/outdoor, remote)	
Responders Health & Safety	The ability to sustain safe operations	CG 2 – Real-time detection, monitoring and analysis of threats and hazards CG 8 – Responder health CG 10 – Protective equipment

Technology & Innovation	The ability to receive real-time information from and for on-scene responders	CG 1 – Real-time tracking of responders CG 2 – Real-time detection, monitoring and analysis of threats and hazards CG 6 - Remote acquisition of information CG 7 – Remote operations CG 9 – Actionable intelligence
	The ability to geotrack responders (closed area or not), provide risk mapping and life detection	
Training & Exercise	The ability to train and exercise the responders in situation awareness and decision-making to ensure anticipation, agility when facing uncertainty or complexity	CG 9 – Actionable intelligence

A non-exhaustive list of possible needs priorities for responders includes:

- Robots and UAVs (drones) for air, land and sea operations;
- Smart textiles for firefighters: wearables, garments, breathing apparatus, Personal Protective Equipment 5.0 (PPE 5.0);
- Exoskeletons and useful tools to enhance operational capability in operation;
- Enhancing responders training and situational awareness: Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality (VR), Augmented Reality (AR) and Mixed Reality (MR) technologies;
- Exposure of responders: solutions to prevent from harmful chemical substances such as fire smoke, PFAS (Perfluoroalkyl and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances) and improve decontamination processes;
- Batteries of Electrical vehicles: fires and extinguishing means (open spaces, parking, homes/residential).

Applicants must propose innovative projects with **Technology Readiness Level⁴ (TRL) from 5 to 7**. It means middle-TRL projects that are validated and demonstrated in relevant environment and that address the needs of responders.

Transnational approaches or approaches that break with what already exists (technological or usage innovations), as well as cross-functional solutions (responding to several gaps and needs) will be evaluated with interest.

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The contest is open to any legal entities - start-ups, Small and Mediums Enterprises (SMEs), large companies, Research and Technology Organisations (RTOs), universities, Non-profit organisations (NGOs, Foundation),

⁴ Please refer to the [General Annexes](#) for Horizon Europe Work Programme 2023-2025 for a full description of TRLs.

Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) - that are established in EU Member States and its Overseas Countries and Territories or Horizon Europe Associated Countries members of the European Union⁵. They are invited to present their project (solutions or methodology) which are presented as priorities to the capability gaps expressed by emergency responder organisations.

Applicants can **apply individually or as part of a consortium**.

Applications will be excluded and marked as ineligible if:

- The applicant is 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)⁶.
- Have any conflict of interest: Applicants shall not have any actual or/and potential conflict of interest with the selection process and during the whole project. All situations of potential conflict of interest will be assessed case by case. Consortium partners, affiliated entities, employees, board members cannot take part in the contest.
- Are under liquidation or in difficulty according to the Commission Regulation No 651/2014, art. 2.18.

Applicants who were already awarded in the 1st DIREKTION Awards are not eligible to apply.

SUBMISSION PERIOD & PROCESS

The contest will be open **from 6th January 2026 at 12:00 CET to 6th March at 12:00 CET**.

The participants must produce and submit a short video presenting their solutions and its interest emphasizing the innovation, added value and impact of the developed solution.

To be considered for the DIREKTION Awards, applications must:

- Be submitted before the deadline: **6th March at 12:00 CET**.
- Be submitted electronically via the DIREKTION website: www.direktion-network.org
- Include all required documents:
 - online Application form,
 - Video and picture(s).
- Be written in **English** and be fully complete.

⁵ Horizon Europe Associated Countries as of 20.08.2025: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Faroe Islands, Georgia, Iceland, Israel, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Serbia, Turkey, Tunisia, Ukraine, United Kingdom. Please refer to the [list](#)

⁶ The EU Official Journal contains the official list and, in case of conflict, its content prevails over that of the EU Sanctions Map are not eligible to participate.

THE VIDEO GUIDE

The video's **maximum authorized length is 3 (three) minutes**.

The video must be **visually and content wise appealing**: the use of images, music, infographics, and other material is encouraged.

The video should be done with the objective of being **further disseminated** by the DIREKTION consortium on the different communication channels (DIREKTION website and social medias, website from other European projects ongoing). For that reason, the video should not contain any confidential information. The video will be broadcasted during the INTERSCHUTZ event in June 2026.

The video **must comply with copyright and licensing** and therefore directly reference the source or the rights to its adoption in the last frame of the video.

The video **must comply with GDPR rules**, notably about the appearance and consent of people in video materials online (see <https://gdpr.eu/gdpr-consent-requirements/>).

Costs related to the video making or promotional costs (roll-up, flyer, etc.) as well the logistics costs related to the contest must be borne by the applicants.

Any application that does not meet the above criteria will be **inadmissible** and will not proceed to evaluation.

Only one application per project is allowed. If more than one proposal for the same project submitted by the same applicant is identified, only the last proposal which has been submitted will be evaluated

EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

The evaluation committee is composed of six experts from practitioners' organisations. Every application will be assessed by minimum two evaluators.

The experts will evaluate the project to ensure that it delivers useful and achievable outcomes that strengthen knowledge sharing, increase R&D innovation relevant to DRS practitioners. Experts are bound by a confidentiality agreement.

Each application will be evaluated according to the following table of criteria:

N°	CRITERIA	SCORE
1	EXCELLENCE: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ambition of the proposed solution in addressing effectively the capability gaps and identified needs - innovation: demonstrate the strength of the innovative approaches 	0 - 5
2	IMPACT: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Operational capacity: explain what the solution is resolving - Commercial Strategy and Scalability: what is the development strategy? when the solution commercially will be available? Please provide some indicators on the market potential (in how many countries, sites, users, market share/fit) - Competition: details about the degree of competition for your particular solution, the expected outcomes and impacts - Involvement of end-users during the development of the solution: in what form were they involved in the development? 	0 - 5
3	IMPLEMENTATION: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team: management and leadership qualities, cross functional team with a strong background and skills base and considering its gender balance 	0 - 5

Each criterion will receive a score from 0 to 5, 0 being the lowest and 5 the highest as follows:

0 FAILS	1 POOR	2 FAIR	3 GOOD	4 VERY GOOD	5 EXCELLENT
The proposal fails to address the criterion or it cannot be assessed due to missing or incomplete information	The criterion is inadequately addressed or there are serious inherent weaknesses.	The proposal broadly addresses the criterion, but there are significant weaknesses	The proposal addresses the criterion well but there are a certain number of shortcomings	There is a small number of shortcomings but overall, the proposal addresses the criterion very well	The proposal successfully addresses all relevant aspects of the criterion with no or minor shortcomings

Half scores are not given. The minimum score for a criterion is 3 (out of 5) and the minimum total threshold is 10 points. The final score will be the average score of each criterion. It means that if a proposal receives less than 3 in one criterion or less than 10 in the overall score, it is automatically rejected.

The applications scored above the threshold, and for which there is a significant divergence in the scores provided by the two experts, will be identified. In the event of a tie, the following criteria will be applied in order of priority:

- the highest score in the excellence section
- the operational capacity

Consensus meetings will be organized to ensure scores are agreed upon by the evaluators.

At the end of the evaluation process, the winners will be informed by email **on 20th April 2026**.

PRIZES AMOUNT & PAYMENT ARRANGEMENTS

In total, **10 prizes** will be awarded for this 2nd Open Call - Best innovative near-to-deployment innovative solutions projects regarding Disaster and Resilience society gaps for emergency responders and each winner will receive 10.000€. In case the winner is in a consortium, the payment will be made to the lead applicant.

The payment is subject to the **presence of at least one representative of the awarded solutions at INTERSCHUTZ in June 2026 and at the CERIS event from 30 June to 2 July 2026** (mandatory requirement).

Each awarded solution will receive 10.000€, upon the official announcement of the winners in June 2026.

The cash prize amount is intended to be used to cover:

- **communication and promotion** of the awarded solutions;
- **visibility** through pitch session **during the INTERSCHUTZ** event in June 2026;
- **attendance to European events** related to disaster resilience (CERIS Disaster Resilience Days)

Please, be aware that an important part of the amount is reserved to attend INTERSCHUTZ event.

INFORMATION ON CONTENT, PRIVACY AND DATA MANAGEMENT

Original Content, Ownership: By participating in this award, all participants should guarantee that they are the exclusive owners of the copyright and all other proprietary rights and all materials and content submitted by the participant to enter the Contest. The Participants guarantee that they have the right to grant to any third party (e.g. DIREKTION consortium) the right to use, reproduce, distribute and display any content **for dissemination purposes**.

By entering this Contest and sending your video, the participant understands and agrees that the DIREKTION project and/or anyone acting on behalf of DIREKTION has the right, where permitted by law, to use the content and information for any promotional purposes without limitation and without any further compensation, notice, review, or consent.

Privacy Policy: Information submitted with an entry is subject to the Privacy Policy stated on the project website, in line with the GDPR rules. To read the Privacy Notice, click here: <https://www.direktion-network.org/privacynotice>

Data management (collection, storage, processing and circulation) – GDPR: The projects activities strictly complies with the EU laws and regulations, in particular EU Directive 95/46/EC (GDPR). The data collection linked to the awards will be kept confidential, except the cases agreed through informed consents, which will be fully in line with the requirements of the data protection law. The data required of awards' applicants was carefully evaluated and validated in advance to avoid excessive data collection.