EERA Joint Programme on Smart Cities

PhD candidate Award

The transformation of cities and urban areas toward sustainability, resilience, and efficiency is a central challenge of our time. We need to reframe and rethink the governance, planning and management of cities and public spaces attuned to their citizens' and local businesses' interests and make them more liveable, safe, inclusive and resilient.

The European Energy Research Alliance Joint Programme on Smart Cities (EERA JP SC) brings together leading research organisations to align national and European Research and Innovation R&I efforts in the field of smart cities. By providing cutting-edge innovations and expert-based know-how, EERA JP SC informs the definition and implementation of strategies and policies at local, national, international and EU-levels.

In recognition of the critical contribution of doctoral research to this mission, the **EERA JP SC launches a PhD Candidate Award to honour outstanding PhD research pathways that advance the field of smart cities.**

The aim is to highlight high-quality doctoral work in progress, promote scientific excellence, and encourage knowledge exchange within the EERA JP SC community.

Through this initiative, the EERA JP SC seeks to support and inspire a new generation of researchers dedicated to shaping the cities of the future.

Eligible PhD research pathways should align with at least one of the **thematic areas** of the JP SC's Sub-Programmes, which include:

- **Clean Energy Transition & Urban Decarbonisation in Cities**
- **Smart & Digital Transition in Cities**
- **Urban Resilience & Integrated Sustainability in Cities**
- **Capacity Building, Knowledge Sharing and Dissemination related to Cities**
- **Collaboration with EU/extra EU funding Programmes related to Smart Cities**
- **Market & Industry Engagement related to Smart Cities**

For further details on thematic areas, visit the EERA Joint Programme Smart Cities website and follow us on LinkedIn.

Award details

Type and number of awards:

- To support the exploitation of research impact and value, the following monetary prices will be awarded:
  - **Gold award:** €1,000
  - **Silver award:** €800
  - **Bronze award:** €500
- The monetary prices are intended to enhance the impact of the recipients' research and/or support its further development.
- In addition to the monetary awards, selected candidates may also be offered the opportunity to present their research at a future relevant EERA JP-SC or member event.

Eligibility criteria call 2026:

To be eligible, applicants must meet all the following criteria:

- **Doctoral status:** Applicants must have successfully completed at least the 1st year of their PhD research and **must not have defended** their PhD thesis **before 30 September 2026**.
- **Affiliation with EERA.**: Applicants must either:
  - Be currently enrolled in a PhD programme at a member organisation of the European Energy Research Alliance (EERA) or EERA Joint Programme Smart Cities, or
  - have conducted significant collaborative research related to their PhD in partnership with an EERA member organisation.

    Refer to Annex I for the full list of EERA member organisations.
  - **Research topic**: The applicant's PhD research must align with at least one of the following JP SC thematic areas:
    - lean Energy Transition & Urban Decarbonisation in Cities
    - Smart & Digital Transition in Cities
    - Urban Resilience & Integrated Sustainability in Cities
    - Capacity Building, Knowledge Sharing and Dissemination related to Cities
    - Collaboration with EU/extra EU funding Programmes related to Smart Cities
    - Market & Industry Engagement related to Smart Cities

      For further details on thematic areas, visit the EERA Joint Programme Smart Cities website.
- The EERA JP SC PhD Candidate Award values original research and requires all PhD candidates to ensure that their submissions reflect their own intellectual work. In your application documents, you may use AI for tasks such as text editing, code refining or literature review. In this case, you should always verify the accuracy of the results and also disclose its use explicitly. However, you must not use AI to develop your research motivation, hypotheses or interpret your results. Doing so will result in disqualification.

Application requirements:

An application will be considered complete and eligible for evaluation only if it includes **all of the following:**

- **Curriculum Vitae**: max 2 pages (A4), including a list of publications resulting from the PhD work.
- **Extended abstract**: 2 pages of text (max 8,000 characters including spaces). Up to three figures may be included (figures do not count towards the character or page limit). The extended abstract must clearly highlight:
  - Context and motivation
  - Objectives
  - Methodology
  - Novelty and key results
  - Potential impact on the European industry and energy sector
  - A brief statement on how the prize funds will be used.

  Text exceeding the character limit will not be considered for evaluation.
  - **Letter of support by your supervisor**
    - **AI declaration (how AI is used)**
  - **Short video presentation** (max 3 minutes) introducing the candidate, research topic, key results and impact. A structure for the video is provided in Annex II.

The application could also include a copy of the best paper related to the PhD work (optional).

Submission and confidentiality:

- Applications must be submitted via email to smartcities@eera-set.eu by **21 August 2026** (23:59 Brussels time) at the latest and including all documentation listed in the "application requirements". Applicants should upload the video presentation on YouTube, set the visibility to "Unlisted", and include the link to the video in text of the e-mail.
- All submitted materials will be treated in strict confidence and will not be shared outside the evaluation committee.
- Insights of the research work of selected awardees will be published on the JP Smart Cities website and shared via LinkedIn for dissemination and JP SC promotional purposes.

Evaluation criteria:

All eligible applications will be assessed by the Evaluation Committee based on the following criteria:

1. Scientific quality and originality (up to 5 points)
2. Methodological soundness and academic rigor (up to 5 points)
3. Relevance to the JP Smart Cities' thematic areas (up to 5 points)
4. Level of innovation and potential for practical application (up to 5 points)
5. Quality of the video presentation (up to 5 points)
6. Quality of the online presentation (up to 5 points)

To be considered for an award, applications must score at least 3 points in each criterion.

Timeline:

- **21 August 2026** - Application submission deadline
- **October 2026** – Notification of results to applicants
- **Online Presentations** – Early November
- **Winner announcement** – November

Award process:

- **Preliminary phase – formal compliance check:** Applications will first undergo a preliminary review to verify formal compliance with the requirements outlined in the "Application requirements." If all documentation is in order, the application will proceed to the next phase. Otherwise, the applicant will be notified of the exclusion.
- **Technical evaluation phase:** Eligible applications will be assessed by a panel of technical experts appointed by the Management Board (MB) of the Joint Programme. Potential conflicts of interest will be duly assessed.
- **Notification of results:** Applicants will be informed, by an e-mail message sent to the address that the applicant used to submit the application, of the outcome of the evaluation process
- **Acceptance of the award:** The applicant has **10 days** from the notification of results to accept the award by replying via email. After this period, if the candidate has not accepted or have not sent any confirmation, the JP will proceed with adjusting the ranking accordingly.

Evaluation Committee:

The experts who evaluate the applications will be appointed by the Management Board of the JP SC. All experts will be required to declare any potential conflicts of interest before participating in the evaluation process.

Questions:

For any questions or additional information, please contact the JP Smart Grids at smartcities@eera-set.eu.

ANNEX I – Full and Associate Member organisations of the EERA Joint Programme Smart Cities

- **AAU** – Aalborg University
- **AIT** – Austrian Institute of Technology GmbH
- **AUAS** – Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences
- **BERA** - Belgium Energy Research Alliance
- **CIEMAT** - Centre for Energy, Environment and Technology Research
- **CNR** - Italian National Research Council
- **CTU** - Czech Technical University in Prague
- **ENEA** - Italian National Agency for New Technology, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development
- **Fraunhofer** - Fraunhofer Gesellschaft
- **IIMP PAN** - THE SZEWALSKI INSTITUTE OF FLUID-FLOW MACHINERY POLISH ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
- **IREC** - Catalonia Institute for Energy Research
- **IZTECH** - Izmir Institute of Technology (IZTECH)
- **KTH** - Royal Institute of Technology, Sweden
- **LNEG** - National Laboratory for Energy and Geology
- **METU**
- **NTNU** - Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- **POLIMI** - Politecnico di Milano
- **Sapienza University of Rome**
- **SINTEF AS**
- **TNO** - Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research
- **TUD** – Delft University of Technology
- **UdG** - University of Girona
- **UiS** - University of Stavanger
- **UKERC** - UK Energy Research Centre (IMPERIAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY AND MEDICINE)
- **UNIBO** - University of Bologna
- **UNIMIB** - University of Milano-Bicocca
- **UNIPI** - University of Pisa
- **UNIROMATRE** - Roma Tre University
- **UnivPM** - Università Politecnica delle Marche
- **WUT** - Warsaw University of Technology

Full and Associate Member organisations of the EERA Joint Programme Smart Cities

Austria:

- Austrian Institute of Technology GmbH
- Energy Institute at the Johannes Kepler University Linz
- Graz University of Technology
- International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis
- TU Wien

Belgium:

- Belgium Energy Research Alliance (BERA)
- VITO
- Engie Laborelec
- KU Leuven
- IMEC
- OCAS NV

Bulgaria:

- Agricultural University Plovdiv
- Bulgarian Academy of Sciences
- Energy Agency of Plovdiv
- Sofia University 'St. Kliment Ohridski', Faculty of Economics and Business Administration

Canada:

- University of Quebec at Trois-Rivieres

Croatia:

- Energy Institute Hrvoje Pozar

Cyprus:

- The Cyprus Institute
- University of Cyprus

Czech Republic:

- Brno University of Technology
- Czech Energy Research Alliance (CERA)
- Czech Technical University in Prague
- Institute of Thermomechanics of the CAS
- Nuclear Physics Institute of the Czech Academy of Sciences
- Research Center Řež
- Tomas Bata University in Zlín
- VSB-Technical University Ostrava

Denmark:

- Aalborg University
- Aarhus University
- Copenhagen Business School
- DHI
- Technical University of Denmark (DTU)

Estonia:

- Tallinn University of Technology

Finland:

- Aalto University
- School of Energy Systems
- University of Helsinki
- University of Oulu
- University of Vaasa
- VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland Ltd.

France:

- Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission (CEA)
- Bureau de Recherches Géologiques et Minières
- Ecole Centrale de Nantes
- Electricity of France
- France Energies Marines

- IFP Energies Nouvelles
- MINES ParisTech
- National Center for Scientific Research
- University of Lorraine
- University of Strasbourg

Germany:

- Center for Solar Energy and Hydrogen Research
- DBFZ Deutsches Biomasseforschungszentrum gemeinnützige GmbH
- Energy Research Centre Lower Saxony
- European Distributed Energy Resources Loboratories e.V. (DERlab e.V.)
- Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing
- Forschungszentrum Juelich
- Fraunhofer
- German Aerospace Center
- Helmholtz Association of German Research Centres
- Helmholtz Centre Potsdam - GFZ German Research Centre for Geosciences
- Helmholtz-Zentrum Berlin für Materialien und Energie
- IZPF Fraunhofer
- Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT)
- OFFIS Institute for Information Technology
- Ruhr-Universität Bochum
- RWTH Aachen ISEA
- Technische Universität Darmstadt
- Technical University of Ilmenau
- University of Bayreuth
- University of Oldenburg
- University of Stuttgart
- Westphalian University of Applied Sciences
- WIP Renewable Energies

Greece:

- CERTH
- CRES - Center for Renewable Energy Sources and Saving
- University of Western Macedonia

Hungary:

- MTA Centre for Energy Research

Ireland:

- University College Dublin
- University College Cork

Island:

- Icelandic Geosurvey

Italy:

- Centro Sviluppo Materiali S.p.A. (CSM)
- Italian National Research Council (CNR)
- Italian National Agency for New Technology, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development (ENEA)

- ETA Florence
- Newcleo
- OGS (National Institute of Oceanography and Applied Geophysics)
- Politechnic of Milan
- Politechnic of Turin
- Renewable Energy Consortium for Research and Demonstration (RE-CORD)
- Ricerca sul Sistema Energetico (RSE)
- Sapienza University of Rome
- Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna
- Seamthesis
- University of Bari Aldo Moro
- University of Bologna
- University of Catania
- University of Florence
- University of Genova
- University of Milano-Bicocca
- University of Modena and Reggio Emilia
- University of Naples Frederico II
- University of Palermo
- University of Padova
- University of Perugia
- University of Pisa
- University of Turin
- University of Rome Tor Vergata
- Università Politecnica delle Marche
- Università Roma Tre
- X-NANO

Latvia:

- Institute of Physical Energetics (IPE)

Lithuania:

- Kaunas University of Technology, Prof. K. Baršauskas Ultrasound Research Institute
- Lithuanian Energy Institute

North Macedonia:

- Ss. Cyril and Methodius University in Skopje

Norway:

- Institute for Energy Technology
- Norwegian Institute for Nature Research
- NORCE Research AS
- Norwegian University of Science and Technology
- SINTEF AS
- SINTEF Energy Research
- SINTEF Ocean
- University of Bergen
- University of South-Eastern Norway
- University of Stavanger

Poland:

- Institute of Power Engineering - National Research Institute (IEN)
- The Szewalski Institute of Fluid-Flow Machinery Polish Academy Of Sciences
- Oil and Gas Institute - National Research Institute
- National Centre for Nuclear Research
- Warsaw University of Technology

Portugal:

- CENSE / NOVA.id.FCT
- Collaborative Laboratory for the Biorefineries
- INESC TEC - Institute for Systems and Computer Engineering, Technology and Science
- International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory
- National Laboratory for Energy and Geology
- University of Évora
- WavEC Offshore Renewables

Romania:

- National Institute for R&D in Electrical Engineering ICE-CA Bucharest
- National Institute of Materials Physics
- RATEN
- Politehnica University of Timișoara

Spain:

- CENER - National Renewable Energy Centre
- CIEMAT - Centre for Energy, Environment and Technology Research
- CIIAE - Iberian Centre for Research in Energy Storage
- CIRCE - Research Centre for Energy Resources and Consumption
- IKERLAN
- Imdea Energy Institute
- IMDEA Materials
- IREC - Catalonia Institute for Energy Research
- ITE - Instituto Tecnológico de la Energía
- LEITAT
- Spanish National Hydrogen Centre
- Spanish National Research Council
- Technological Centre of Components
- Oceanic Platform of the Canary Islands
- TECNALIA
- Technical University Madrid
- Tekniker
- Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya
- University of Alicante
- University of Oviedo
- University of the Basque Country
- University of Seville
- University of Girona
- VICOMTECH

Slovakia:

- Slovak University of Technology in Bratislava

Slovenia:

- National Institute of Chemistry
- University of Ljubljana

Sweden:

- Chalmers University of Technology
- Lulea University of Technology
- Research Institute of Sweden
- Royal Institute of Technology
- Uppsala University

Switzerland:

- EPFL
- Paul Scherrer Institute
- Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich
- Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology
- TRANSMUTEX
- University of Applied Sciences and Arts Lucerne
- University of Applied Sciences and Arts of Western Switzerland Valais/Wallis
- University of Geneva

The Netherlands:

- Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences
- DIFFER - Dutch Institute for Fundamental Energy Research
- Netherlands Energy Research Alliance (NERA)
- Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO)
- Delft University of Technology
- University of Groningen
- Utrecht University
- Wageningen Research part of Wageningen UR
- NRG PALLAS B.V.
- Maritime Research Institute Netherlands
- Technical University of Eindhoven

Turkey:

- EGE UNIVERSITY
- Izmir University of Economics
- Kadir Has University
- ODTÜ-GÜNAM Üniversiteler Mah
- The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK)
- Izmir Institute of Technology (IZTECH)
- Istanbul Teknik University
- Hacettepe University
- Middle East Technical University
- Marmara Research Center

United Kingdom:

- British Geological Survey
- National Nuclear Laboratory
- Offshore Renewable Energy Catapult

- UK Energy Research Centre
- Cardiff University
- Imperial College London
- Plymouth Marine Laboratory
- Science and Technology Facilities Council
- University College London
- University of Birmingham
- University of East Anglia
- University of Edinburgh
- University of Exeter
- University of Leeds
- University of Sussex
- University of Strathclyde
- University of Warwick
- University of Derby
- National Composites Centre
- CERTH
- Center for Renewable Energy Sources and Saving

ANNEX II - Structure for the 3-Minute application video

1. **Introduction**
   - State your name and university or institution.
   - Briefly describe the main topic or goal of your PhD research.
   - Explain its relevance to the EERA Joint Programme Smart Cities thematic areas.

2. **Research overview**
   - Present your primary research questions or objectives.
   - Outline the methodology or approach used in your work.
   - Summarise key results or progress achieved to date.

3. **Relevance and potential impact**
   - Explain how your research contributes to Smart Cities and/or supports Europe's energy and climate goals.
   - Emphasise the potential impact and significance of your findings in real-world applications.