TRA 2026 VISIONS
YOUNG RESEARCHER AWARDS
GUIDELINES

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Table of Contents

List of Figures and Tables

1. TRA VISIONS 2026 Awards

1.1 Award Types

For TRA 2026, four types of Awards will be delivered:

- **Young Researcher Awards** – Recognising undergraduate students and early-stage researchers, for their outstanding research in transport studies.

- **Senior Researcher Awards** – Acknowledging established researchers for achievements and excellence in European research projects.

- **Special Honorary Award** – Recognising a senior respected researcher in the transport sector for a noteworthy and widely acknowledged contribution to research and innovation.

- **Host Award** – Delivered to the best paper author aligned with the conference theme "Re-Generation in Transport".

1.2 Award Categories

The TRA VISIONS 2026 Awards cover the following six transport categories, per transport mode: Road, Rail, Waterborne, Airborne, Cross-modal Passenger transport, Cross-modal Logistics.

Applicants are requested to select one of the six categories that best align with their contributions. In Table 1, award categories and an indicative list of keywords are presented.

Table 1. Award categories (per transport mode) of the TRA VISIONS 2026

TRA VISIONS 2026 Award categories (per transport mode) and keywords	
Road	Connected and Automated Vehicles; Road Infrastructure; Traffic Management, Road Safety; Shared Mobility; Active Modes; Electric Vehicles; Electrification of Road Transport; Grid Integration; Batteries; Sustainable Fuels; Circular Economy; Alternative Materials; Life Cycle Assessment; Software Defined Vehicles; Artificial Intelligence, Digitalisation
Rail	High-Speed Rail and Beyond; Rail Traffic Management, Operation; Rail Vehicles and Infrastructure; Smart Railways, Autonomous Trains; Externalities of Railways; Freight Rail and Terminals; Railways Resilience, Safety and Security; Urban, Suburban and Rural Rail Networks; Rail Passenger Experience; Railway Stations; Railways Economics and Policy
Waterborne	Use of sustainable alternative fuels in waterborne transport, Energy efficiency of waterborne transport; Electrification of waterborne transport; Digital waterborne transport (digital includes automation); Design and retrofitting of waterborne vessels; Freight transport; Passenger transport; Shipyards and equipment manufacturers; Ports and infrastructure; Safe and secure waterborne transport; Green shipping corridors; All ship types (from inland waterway transport to intercontinental)

Airborne	Air Traffic Management; Sustainable Aviation Fuels; Electric Aircraft; Hybrid Aircraft; Urban Air Mobility; Airport Innovations; Drone Systems; Decarbonization in Aviation; Air Passenger Experience
Cross-modal: Passenger transport	Public Transport; Multimodal Transport; Integrated Policy and Planning; New mobility services including Mobility-as-a-Service; Seamless Connectivity; Smart and Integrated Infrastructure; Transport Hubs; Behavioural change; Active mobility
Cross-modal: Logistics	Freight Transport decarbonization; emissions measuring and reporting, automation; Physical Internet; Interconnected Logistics; Resilient logistics networks; Ports and hubs; Intermodality/Synchromodality; Transport modes integration in logistics networks, digital technologies (AI, 5G, Digital Twins…) applications in freight transport and logistics; Data exchange and data sharing, Urban logistics, Last-mile Delivery, Integrated Passenger and Freight Systems

Applicants for the Young Researcher Awards must submit a paper to the TRA 2026 technical programme as part of their application.

Aligned with the TRA 2026 key theme, *Re-Generation in Transport*, the conference topics focus on horizontal — i.e., not mode-specific — transport challenges. Applicants must select the research topics and subtopics, as defined in the Call for Papers, that best describe their contribution (Table 2). Brief descriptions of research topics of the TRA Conference is available in Table 2. Detailed descriptions can be found in the Call for Papers.

In their statements, applicants for the Young and Senior Researcher Award(s) shall explain how their research relates to one (or more) of the research topics defined in the Call for Papers.

Table 2. Research Topics of the TRA 2026 Conference.

TRA 2026 research topics and subtopics	
User Centered Mobility	Transport Policy; Transport Safety; Inclusive Mobility; Active Travel Modes; Shared Mobility Solutions.
Green Mobility and Decarbonization	Zero Emission Vehicles; Electrification and Alternative Fuels; Greening Freight Transport; Circular Economy; Climate Neutral and Smart Cities
Planning and Operation	Resilient Transport Systems; Urban Infrastructure Management; Innovative Logistics Solutions; Decision Support Analysis; Transportation Economics
Transport Digitalization	Automated Mobility; Connected Transport Systems; Big Data Analysis; Mobility as a Service; Predictive Transport Solutions

2. TRA VISIONS 2026 Awards Benefits

Participating in the TRA VISIONS Awards offers a unique opportunity for researchers to gain recognition, visibility, and support while showcasing their contributions to transport research and innovation. Winners and finalists benefit from a prestigious platform that enhances their professional standing, fosters networking opportunities, and provides tangible rewards to further their research and careers.

Finalists benefit from comprehensive support, including waived conference fees, a trophy and a certificate acknowledging their achievement, ensuring formal recognition of their contributions.

For the Young Researcher Awards, monetary prizes are awarded per category, with €5000 for first place, €3000 for second place, and €2000 for third place.

The table below summarises the awards, benefits, and responsibilities for each category:

Table 3. Summary of Awards and Benefits

Awards and related benefits	Partner responsible	Young Researcher Awards	Senior Researcher Awards	Special Honorary Award	Host Award
Winners categories		3 winners per category ROAD, RAIL, WATERBORNE, AIR, CROSSMODAL Passenger Transport and CROSSMODAL Logistics	1 winner per category ROAD, RAIL, WATERBORNE, AIR, CROSSMODAL Passenger Transport and CROSSMODAL Logistics	1 winner Regardless of mode	
Prizes	Sponsors	Trophy and certificate Money prizes per category: 1st (5000€) 2nd (3000€) 3rd (2000€)	Trophy and certificate No monetary prize	Trophy and certificate No monetary prize	
Conference fee	CSA & TRA organisers	Waived for full conference	Waived for full conference	Waived for full conference	
Conference visibility	TRA organisers	Part of the programme Awarded at a high-profile event during the conference Acknowledged on website and social media			

3. TRA VISIONS 2026 Young Researcher Awards – Process and Evaluation Criteria

- **Target group**

The Young Researcher Awards are aimed at researchers who are currently pursuing a master's, or PhD degree, or within two years after completing their PhD (PhD defence date must be after 16 June 2023).

Eligible applicants must be affiliated with a College, University, or Research Institute in the European Union, EU Candidate Countries, Potential EU Candidate Countries, or the European Economic Area.

- **Evaluation Criteria**

Table 4. Young Researcher Awards – evaluation criteria

Criteria	Points	Threshold
Quality of the submitted research	20 pt	12 pt
Relevance of the research in replying to key/TRA transport challenges	20 pt	12 pt
Practical feasibility and potential implementation of the research	20 pt	12 pt
European relevance and/or Potential impact of the research at EU policy level	20 pt	12 pt
Research experience of the applicant (cv)	20 pt	12 pt

Applicants must also have submitted a paper as first author to the conference.

- **Submission material**

Table 5. Young Researcher Awards – required submission materials

Material	Description
Submission of the abstract	Submit the abstract (the same as for the main conference track).
Statement (1500 characters max for each question)	Provide responses to the following questions: • How well does your research address key transport challenges related to at least one the TRA2026 key topics? • Please describe the practical feasibility and potential implementation of your research at an industry level

	• Elaborate on how your research can contribute to influencing transport policy and decision-making within the European Union
CV	Include details of your prior research experience, projects, and awards.

- **Submission and Evaluation Process**

The submission process for the **Young Researcher Awards** will take place in two stages:

Expression of Interest – Applicants can indicate their interest in the competition through the TRA 2026 conference track.

Full Submission – Applicants shall submit a complete set of the required submission materials. The submission will be open until September 15, 2025. **Submission deadline has been extended until September 30, 2025**

The evaluation process for the **Young Researcher Awards** will take place in three stages:

Eligibility check – Entries will be reviewed for eligibility to create a longlist for each award category.

Expert evaluation – At least two independent transportation experts will assess the longlisted entries based on the provided evidence and selection criteria. The assessment will target four of the five established criterion: relevance of the research, practical feasibility/potential of implementation, European relevance/potential impact of the research at EU policy level, and research experience of the applicant. The quality of research criterion will be evaluated by TRA conference track reviewers, and their assessments incorporated. This stage will result in a shortlist of the top 10 applicants for each transport category. Before finalising the shortlist, organisers may request additional information from the shortlisted applicants.

Shortlisting workshop and final selection – A dedicated shortlisting workshop will be held for the final selection. The judging panel, composed of TRA VISIONS 2026 Consortium members, transportation experts, stakeholders involved in TRA 2026, and representatives from the European Commission, will use their expert knowledge and the published selection criteria to select one winner per each award category.

4. TRA VISIONS 2026 Young Researcher Awards – Rules

1. **Eligibility**

   - The awards are open to young researchers pursuing an MSc or PhD degree, or who have completed their PhD with the defence date after 16 June 2023, at a college, university, or research institute across the European Union, EU Candidate Countries, Potential EU Candidate Countries, and the European Economic Area (i.e., Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia (FYROM), Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom).
   - Each applicant may submit only one application for the award.
   - Applicants must have submitted an abstract to the conference track as the main author (Author 1).
   - Only applicants who meet the required experience criteria are eligible to submit an entry.
   - Previous applicants, including those shortlisted, may reapply to the competition.
   - Previous winners are eligible to apply again, but only in a different transport mode.

2. **Submission requirements**

   - Submissions must be made via the TRA 2026 Conference submission platform under the Young Researcher Award track.

   - Any entry must be written in clear, academic English.

   - Applicants must select one (and only one) of the outlined transport categories for their submission. While the submitted material may cover multiple transport modes, each entry will be considered under only one designated category. The competition organisers reserve the right to reassign an entry to a different transport mode if deemed misclassified.

   - Submissions must include the TRA 2026 conference abstract, a statement (answering to the criteria related questions), and a CV (covering the track record of prior research experience, projects, and awards).

   - Applicants will be asked to indicate the paper's same title for both the main conference and the Award submission.

   - Applicants shall indicate a supervising professor/senior researcher/senior scientist (if any), their organisation and contact details. The TRA VISIONS organisers may contact the supervising professor to verify the entrant's status.

   - Incomplete or non-compliant submissions will be rejected.

3. **Evaluation Process**

   - Eligibility check: Conducted by the TRA VISIONS organisers to verify compliance with requirements.

- Expert evaluation: Minimum two independent evaluators will assess each eligible submission, ranking the entries according to the evaluation criteria:
  - Quality of the submitted research – 20 points (threshold 12 points)
  - Relevance of the research in replying (at least one of) the four key TRA2026 topics – 20 points (threshold 12 points)
  - Practical feasibility and potential implementation of the research – 20 points (threshold 12 points)
  - Potential impact of the research at EU policy level – 20 points (threshold 12 points)
  - Research experience of the applicant (CV with prior research experience, projects, and awards) – 20 points (threshold 12 points)
- Shortlisting workshop: The top 10 shortlisted entries per category will be reviewed in a workshop by evaluators from the European Comission, the TRA supporting organisations, and external experts to determine the top 3 winners per category (Road, Rail, Waterborne, Airborne, Crossmodal Passenger Transport, and Crossmodal Logistics)

4. Deadlines & Notification

- Any first author of a paper submitted for the TRA 2026 conference can submit their application under the Young Researcher Awards track.
- The submission period is open from the notification of abstract acceptance until 15/09/2025. **Deadline extended until 30/09/2025.**
- Any entries beyond this time will not be accepted unless an extension is granted.
- The top three winners for each category will be informed of the selection at least 8 weeks before the TRA 2026 Conference.

5. Award Benefits

- Each winner (3 per transport category) will be invited to:
  - Be part of the conference programme.
  - Receive their award on the TRA 2026 stage.
- Each winner (3 per transport category) receive:
  - Monetary prizes for each category: 1st place (€5000), 2nd place (€3000), and 3rd place runner-up (€2000).
  - A trophy and a certificate recognising their achievement;
  - Acknowledgment on the TRA 2026 Conference website and social media.
  - A waiver for the TRA 2026 Conference attendance fee.
- Winners are responsible for organising their own accommodation, and travel to and from the TRA 2026 Conference in Budapest, Hungary.

6. Winner's duties

- The winners will be invited to attend the TRA 2026 Conference.

- Winners are expected to cooperate promptly with competition organisers for reasonable requests, including:
  - Providing additional materials.
  - Engaging in publicity efforts for the TRA 2026 Conference.
  - Participating in media activities related to their award.
- If a winner is unwilling to received the award, the organisers may award the prize to another shortlisted applicant.

7. Organisers' Discretion

- The judges' decision is final in all situations, including cases not explicitly covered in these rules.
- The organisers reserve the right to have discretion regarding the rules:
  - Change deadlines if deem necessary.
  - Not select a winner if no entries meet the required standard.
  - Cancel the Awards due to unforeseen circumstances beyond their control, including if financial support does not materialise. In such cases, no costs will be refunded.

8. Data Protection & Confidentiality

- All submitted materials will be treated as confidential and used solely for evaluation purposes.

9. Ethical & Legal Compliance

- Anyone with a conflict of interest in the process, including during the expert evaluation and shortlisting events stages, shall not take part in the process.
- All applicants must comply with these rules to be eligible for awards, certificates, and financial contributions.
- The organisers are not responsible for:
  - Ineligible or fraudulent submissions.
  - Late or lost submissions due to internet issues (applicants are advised to submit early).