

Girls Go STEM Student Challenge 2026 – Rules & Guidelines

1. Overview

1.1 The Student Challenge in a nutshell

The *Girls Go STEM Student Challenge* is an annual European competition designed to encourage girls to collaborate on innovative ideas in STEM. Participants work in teams to develop solutions and compete for the opportunity to:

- Win a trip to a European city
- Present their project on stage at the Girls Go STEM flagship event
- Engage with an international audience and experts

1.2 The Student Challenge 2026 Theme: Space Debris

There are currently over 1.2 million pieces of tracked debris orbiting Earth: old satellites, rocket parts, and fragments from past collisions. Millions more are too small to track, yet still dangerous.

In simple terms, *space debris* includes all non-functional, human-made objects in space, especially broken or no longer working satellites. When components fail, they can break apart into fast-moving fragments that threaten other missions.

The challenge is to rethink this problem: girls are asked to choose one space component and redesign it so that, if it fails, it produces as little harmful debris as possible. Examples include using materials that burn up more easily, designing parts to break into smaller, less dangerous pieces, or including mechanisms that safely release pressure before an explosion.

1.3 Submissions

- To **complete the challenge**, each team must create a design (drawing or simple 3D model), explain their material choices and show what would happen if the component failed.
- Each team must submit **a slide deck and a short video** (1 minute maximum) presenting their idea. Please ensure you have the consent of everyone appearing in the video (or make those who didn't give consent unrecognisable) and that any images and music used are royalty-free.
- A **signed consent form** is mandatory for each participant at the application stage. It must be signed by legal guardians if participants are under the age of 18 and it is required because submissions are shared with external evaluators, and, with their consent, finalist videos are published on the initiative's official channels.
- The **submission form** is available on the Girls Go STEM website, on the Student Challenge 2026 page.

1.4 Language Requirements

The official competition language is **English**. Applications submitted in other languages will **not be considered**.

1.5 Submission Deadline

The deadline for submissions is **27 July 2026 at 13:00 CET**.

2. Eligibility

2.1 Team Requirements

- Each team must consist of **2 to 4 girls**
- **Individual participation is not allowed**
- The competition is **open to girls only**

- All team members must be **alumnae of the Girls Go STEM programme**, meaning they have:
 - Completed at least 2 introductory courses, and
 - Completed at least 1 additional course, preferably the Space Debris course

2.2 Team Structure

- Team members may come from **different schools**
- International teams are allowed; however, teams must **apply under one country only**
- The competition is open to teams from the following countries:

Albania, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands, Turkey, UK, Ukraine, Kosovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

2.3 Teacher/Mentor as Accompanying Adult

- Each team can be supported by a teacher/mentor
 - If selected for the final event, each team must travel with **one accompanying teacher or mentor**
-

3. Competition Structure

3.1 Application & National Selection

- Teams apply via the **Girls Go STEM website**
- Applications are first evaluated at the **national level**
- **One team per country** is selected as the **National Winner**

⚠ Important:

If only one team applies from a country, it is **not automatically selected as national winner**. Applications must meet quality standards compared to other international entries.

3.2 European Selection & Event Participation

- A **maximum of 24 national winning teams** will be invited to the in-person flagship event.
- The final number of teams will depend on budget availability and overall quality of applications.
- The event will take place:
 - **In a European city (TBC)**
 - **In Autumn 2026 (Second half of November TBC)**

3.3 Final Stage (On-site Event)

- Among all national winners invited to the on-site event, the **Top 3 teams** will be selected to pitch their ideas **live on stage** in front of a jury of experts in the field.
-

4. Evaluation Process

4.1 National Evaluation

- Submissions are reviewed and scored by **volunteer evaluators in the field of space**, having declared **no conflict of interest**, and having signed a confidentiality agreement and accepted compliance with GDPR. They select the national winners.

4.2 European-Level Evaluation

- National winners are further evaluated and ranked by the **Girls Go STEM** initiative team, to select :

- The teams invited to the event
- The Top 3 finalists that will be pitching on stage at the event

4.3 Final Jury Evaluation

- During the on-site event, a jury of **3 aerospace experts** will evaluate the live pitches and select the **1st place winner**
-

5. Awards

5.1 Main Award

- The **1st place winning team** is selected during the event based on jury evaluation
- The prize will be announced soon and might include an international experience linked to the aerospace sector.

5.2 Audience Choice Award

- All **national winners** attending the event and having expressed consent for public voting are eligible to win the Audience Choice Award.
 - Free **online voting** will be opened **at least one month before the event**. The audience will have to vote for their 3 favourite teams based on the video pitches submitted.
 - The award goes to the team receiving the **highest number of public votes** and the winning team is announced live during the on-site event.
 - The prize will be announced soon and might include an international experience linked to the aerospace sector.
-

6. Financial & Logistical Support for Teams participating in the on-site event

6.1 Covered Costs

Girls Go STEM will cover expenses for up to **4 students and 1 accompanying adult (generally a teacher or mentor)** per team.

Covered expenses include:

- Flights
- Accommodation
- Airport transfers
- Meals during the event

6.2 Additional Costs

- If a second teacher wants to attend, the related costs must be covered by the school or the person themselves.
- Accompanying adults are responsible for organising and paying for:
 - Transport from home to the departure airport
 - Meals during travel

These costs will be reimbursed by **EIT RawMaterials** after the event, upon presentation of receipts.

7. Certificates

- **✗** No certificates will be provided for general applicants
- **✓** Certificates will be awarded to all **shortlisted national winners attending the event and their accompanying teachers/mentors**