



## GEO Mountains Ideathon Call 2026

### Background

The Global Network on Observations and Information in Mountain Environments ([GEO Mountains](#)) is a Work Programme Initiative of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), co-led by the Mountain Research Initiative ([MRI](#)) and the Institute of Atmospheric Sciences and Climate of the National Research Council of Italy ([CNR-ISAC](#)). GEO Mountains connects research and mountain observation networks to enhance the discoverability, accessibility, and usability of data and information pertaining to environmental and socio-economic systems in mountain regions worldwide.

Through support from the MRI and the Swiss Agency for Development & Cooperation (SDC)'s Adaptation at Altitude Programme, and in collaboration with GEO, we are launching a first Ideathon participation call for Early-Career Professionals, including Masters and PhD students and postgraduate professionals, working in the field of Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) in mountain environments

The Ideathon aims to:

- Empower youth to work on real-world disaster risk challenges in mountain environments
- Promote and build capacity in the use of Earth observation, in situ data, and open data principles
- Foster interdisciplinary collaboration between science, practice, and policy, and enhance professional contacts and networks.
- Generate replicable solution concepts that are transferable and applicable to mountain regions,

### What to expect

The Ideathon programme is organised in two parts. The first part starts on Thursday 2 July and ends on Sunday 5 July, and will involve a series of technical inputs, coaching sessions, workshops, and group work. The second part runs from Monday 6 to Wednesday 8 July, and includes participation at the Regional Mountain Conference, with dedicated sessions to showcase results and outcomes of the training.

During the first part of the event, participants will work in teams on one of several pre-defined challenge themes, such as:

- Avalanche risks under changing climate conditions
- Slope instability linked to permafrost thaw
- Glacier retreat and cascading hazards (e.g., debris flows, outburst floods)
- Multi-hazard risks to critical mountain infrastructure
- Integrated mountain hazard data platform
- Real-time, community-based hazard monitoring & early warning system
- Community and climate resilience observatory
- Effective science-to-policy information and communication

Each challenge will be linked to concrete stakeholders (e.g., municipalities, civil protection, infrastructure operators), will be supported by scientific and practitioner mentors, and will be designed to be replicable across mountain regions globally.

Useful resources are available via the GEO Mountains [General](#) and [In Situ Data Inventories](#). Additional resources include the [GEO Knowledge Hub](#), and resources offered by other [GEO Work Programme Activities](#).

Travel support and full board for the duration of the event, as well as conference registration, are covered by the organisers. However, the number of participants is limited, and applications will be evaluated and selected based on merit and fulfilment of all eligibility criteria.

## Eligibility and application process

Further details on eligibility are provided in the **Annex: General Eligibility Conditions**.

Applications must be submitted via [this online form](#). Please ensure all requested information is provided, as incomplete submissions will not be evaluated. **Deadline for applications: 2 March 2026, 23:59 CET**.

## Key dates and milestones:

Call for applications opens:	<b>6 February 2026</b>
Deadline for applications <a href="#">via this form</a> :	<b>2 March 2026, 23:59 CET</b>
Confirmation of successful applications:	<b>by 1 April 2026</b>
Mountain Youth Ideathon dates:	<b>2 – 9 July 2026</b>
Regional Mountain Conference dates	<b>5 – 8 July</b>

For questions, please contact the GEO Mountains Secretariat at: [geomountains@mountainresearchinitiative.org](mailto:geomountains@mountainresearchinitiative.org).

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## Annex: Mountain Youth Ideathon Eligibility and Conditions

1. **Age and career stage:** Applicants must be 35 years of age or younger at the time of application. Eligible participants include early-career researchers (generally within 5 years post-MSc or PhD), Master's or PhD students currently enrolled in relevant programmes, and young professionals working in fields related to disaster risk reduction, Earth observation, climate adaptation and governance, mountain research, or related disciplines.
2. **Geographic and thematic priority:** While applications are open for eligible participants worldwide, priority will be given to applicants from or working in the following mountain regions: Alps, Andes, Central Asia, East Africa, South Caucasus, and Hindu Kush Himalaya. Up to 3 participants will be selected from each priority region to ensure balanced geographic representation.
3. **Disciplinary background and expertise:** We seek participants with experience and with diverse professional profiles including technical specialists (GIS, remote sensing, Earth observation, data science), natural and social scientists, science communication specialists, policy analysts and practitioners, professionals from government agencies, NGOs, and entrepreneurs working on mountain or DRR-related innovations.
4. **Application process:** Only complete applications submitted via the [online registration form](#), and received by the deadline (2 March 2026, 23:59 CET) will be considered. Applications submitted via email or other channels will not be accepted, and incomplete applications will not be evaluated.
5. **Commitment to full participation:** Applicants must confirm their ability to attend the entire programme from 2-9 July 2026 in Obergurgl, Austria. This includes the Ideathon activities (field visits, technical training, team challenges, mentoring sessions), the Regional Mountain Conference (RMC) sessions, and all scheduled workshops, networking events, and final presentations. Selected participants must be reachable before the on-site programme and available for pre-event information sessions and communication ahead of the Ideathon.
6. **Funding:** GEO Mountains will provide full financial support for selected participants, covering round-trip economy class international travel to Obergurgl (Austria), accommodation for the duration of the programme (approximately 7-8 nights), all meals during the Ideathon and conference, Regional Mountain Conference registration fees, local transportation, field visit costs, programme materials, and travel and health insurance (if required). Visa fee costs may also be covered; however, please note that visa applications are the full responsibility of the participant to organize and secure.
7. **Active engagement and collaboration:** Participants are expected to actively contribute to the team-based challenge projects throughout the programme, engage constructively with mentors, experts, and fellow participants, participate in field visits, problem-owner presentations, and hands-on technical training, attend science communication and policy-engagement capacity-building sessions, prepare and deliver a brief self-introduction presentation, and present team project outcomes at the dedicated workshop during the conference.
8. **Expected outputs:** Participants are expected to co-develop open-access, replicable prototype solutions that address real-world disaster risk challenges in mountain regions, contribute to team presentations and documentation of project outcomes, as well as agree to acknowledge GEO Mountains, GEO, and the Ideathon in any future outputs, publications, or presentations that build on work developed during the programme, and provide feedback on the Ideathon experience through a post-programme evaluation survey.
9. **Network membership and ongoing engagement:** Selected participants consent to joining the GEO Mountains network and mailing list, and the [Mountain Research Initiative Expert Database](#).
10. **Diversity and inclusion:** GEO Mountains is committed to fostering an inclusive and diverse community. We strongly encourage applications from women and underrepresented groups in science and technology, individuals from developing countries and mountain regions, practitioners and professionals from non-academic sectors, and Indigenous peoples and local community representatives working on mountain issues. In addition to technical experience and scientific merit, the evaluation and selection process will also prioritize diversity in terms of geography, gender, disciplinary background, and professional sector to ensure rich and balanced perspectives.
11. **Selection process and criteria:** Following an eligibility screening check by the GEO Mountains Secretariat, applications will be forwarded to, reviewed and evaluated by a select committee comprising of the GEO Mountains Secretariat, GEO Secretariat, MRI's Governing Body members, and other external experts. Selection will be based on the relevance of the applicant's background, expertise, and interests to the proposed challenge themes, potential contribution to interdisciplinary team collaboration and innovative solution development, demonstrated interest in disaster risk reduction, Earth observation, or mountain research, commitment to bridging the science-policy gap and strengthening communication skills, geographic and disciplinary diversity to ensure balanced representation, and completeness and quality of the application



materials.

**12. Visa and travel arrangements:** Selected participants will be responsible for initiating visa procedures promptly upon notification of selection (if required) and coordinating with the organisers on travel arrangements. Participants must also provide necessary documentation for travel booking and reimbursement. The organisers will provide support and guidance throughout the travel arrangement process.

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*MRI: 05.02.2026*