



Ministry of Economic Affairs
and Employment of Finland

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SAFER2028 website

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NATIONAL NUCLEAR SAFETY AND WASTE MANAGEMENT RESEARCH PROGRAMME SAFER2028 IN 2023; CALL FOR PROPOSALS IN AUTUMN OF 2022

Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland (MEAE) will launch the National Nuclear Safety and Waste Management Research Programme (SAFER2028) in 2023. The key goal of SAFER2028 is to ensure the preservation and further development of nuclear safety expertise in Finland. The Framework Plan of the research programme, published in June 2022, describes the content of the research programme including the thematic areas, the objectives and the research needs of the projects to be funded, and is included as an appendix to this letter.

With this letter, VN/21022/2022, the Ministry announces the call for proposals, in which project proposals can be made for the SAFER2028 programme for the year 2023. This letter, the Framework Plan and the instructions and templates related to the call can also be found on the SAFER2028 website (safer2028.fi).

Funding in SAFER2028

The SAFER2028 programme is mainly financed by collecting the fees according to Nuclear Energy Act from key organisations holding licenses and operating in the nuclear energy and waste management sector. Complementary funding can also be applied for from other organisations that independently decide on their funding. In this call for proposals, funding is applied for from the State Nuclear Waste Management Fund (VYR), which will fund the SAFER2028 programme approximately with ten million euros in 2023.

The call for proposals in 2023 has two parts, in accordance with the Nuclear Energy Act. The first part is an open call for research and infrastructure projects with one-to-three-year duration. Shorter, one or two year long, innovative, and high-risk research projects are also

encouraged. Funding balance between the research areas will reflect former national research areas.

Research and infrastructure projects can also apply for Excellence project status. Excellence projects receive a funding decision for two or three years. The projects applying for Excellence status submit research and financing plans for the entire duration of the project and, if approved, a short notification on continuation in subsequent years provided that the research has progressed according to the original plan.

The first part of the call also includes the Doctoral Education Network (DENSE), which grants funding to a few postgraduate students in the field of nuclear safety or nuclear waste management. DENSE funding can be granted for one to four years. DENSE activities also include annual seminars, to which all doctoral students participating in the SAFER2028 programme are welcome.

The second part of the call is the facility cost of the laboratory part of the Nuclear Safety Building directed only to the VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland Ltd, as described in Nuclear Energy Act Amendment (676/2015), YEL § 53 a (see general justifications and section-specific justifications). This funding is 2 700 000 euros at maximum in 2023. If this funding is not used in full, it can also be used for financing of the proposals in the first part of the call.

Evaluation criteria and project selection process

The evaluation criteria for selecting research projects in the SAFER2028 programme are the following:

- project's ability to develop expertise
- significance to nuclear safety
- usability for end users
- scientific level of the proposal
- novelty of the methods and new approaches
- use of experimental facilities
- national and international collaboration and networking
- compatibility with the framework plan of the SAFER2028 programme

Infrastructure projects are evaluated specifically in terms of developing research capabilities.

The Steering Groups of the SAFER2028 programme evaluate the project proposals against the criteria mentioned above. Based on the evaluation results and its own judgement, the SAFER2028 programme Management Group will make a financing recommendation of projects for 2023 to be funded in SAFER2028 to MEAE and the financiers, according to the legislation.

The amount of VYR funding in the Management Group's recommendation is at maximum the amount of available VYR funding announced by MEAE. During the Management Group's process, the financiers can agree among themselves on the direction or merging of projects and on changing the funding or scope of the project compared to the original application, if it is seen as serving the goals of

the SAFER2028. These kind of changes will be agreed with the authors of the project proposals, and if this is not possible, their funding will be reconsidered.

Based on the applications, MEAE makes a proposal to VYR on a project portfolio that meets the requirements stipulated in the Nuclear Energy Act, i.e., supporting the objective of maintaining national expertise in the nuclear safety field. The previously mentioned SAFER2028 Framework Plan and its appendices are considered the basis for the preparation of project proposals.

Other evaluation criteria for the projects selected for MEAE's proposal are the significance of the projects in terms of research needs, suitability for the above-mentioned project complex, technical and scientific merits, economic affordability in relation to the goals of the project in question, the conditions of the selected organisations to achieve the planned results, and previous references.

The VYR funding share of projects is, as a rule, 70% of the total costs of the project at maximum. However, for specific reasons, the project may be granted a larger funding share. Participation fees in international projects and groups can receive 100% VYR funding if the Management Group so recommends.

All project applications must include a project plan, which describes the tasks of the project and their objectives. The separate tasks must aim at a united objective.

It is recommended that the authors of the project proposals are in contact with the end users and research programme governance already in the planning phase, so that the suitability of the project proposals for the SAFER2028 programme and the usability of the results can be ensured. The director of the programme and the MEAE contact person will assist in establishing connections if necessary.

Applications in autumn of 2022 for the year 2023

Project proposals for the safety of nuclear power plants or nuclear waste management and suitable for the Framework Plan of SAFER2028 **must be submitted to the e-mail address of the Ministry of Employment and the Economy at tarjokset.tem@gov.fi, no later than Friday 7th of October 2022 at 2:00 p.m.** (time of e-mail submittance). Project presentations with their attachments must be submitted as a single PDF file named ACRONYM_SAFER2028_2023.pdf (ACRONYM is the short name of the project with a maximum of 7 characters). When sending the project proposal, the limitations of the e-mail system regarding large file sizes must be taken into account. **The e-mail and its documents must refer to the case number VN/21022/2022.**

Additionally, **the documents must be submitted** according to the application instructions by the above-mentioned time **also to the programme administration at the e-mail address safier2028@vtt.fi.**

The Framework Plan of the research programme as well as instructions for the Call for Proposals for 2023 such as templates for the project plan and financing proposal can be downloaded from the SAFER2028 web-

site, the address of which can be found at the end of the letter. The website also has additional information about the project evaluation procedure and schedule.

The Management Group of the SAFER2028 submits its recommendation for projects to be included in the programme to MEAE by December 31, 2022. After that, the Radiation and Nuclear Safety Authority STUK will give its opinion on the MEAE's proposal, and the aim is to make decisions on VYR financing of the project portfolio by the end of March 2023.

Contact persons for MEAE and the SAFER2028 programme administration

The Ministry of Employment and the Economy contact person for SAFER2028 is Chief Engineer Jorma Aurela, email jorma.aurela@gov.fi, tel. 050 592 2109.

The SAFER2028 programme director is Suvi Karvonen, suvi.karvonen@vtt.fi, tel. 040 3562536.

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APPENDICES	To MEAE archives
DISTRIBUTION	SAFER2028 website: https://safer2028.fi/
FOR INFORMATION	State Nuclear Waste Management Fund VYR Advisory Commission on Nuclear Safety

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