



romanian space agency

Romania



# CANSAT

ROMANIAN COMPETITION  
GUIDELINES  
2026



# → INTRODUCTION

CanSat activities across its Member States (including Canada, Latvia, Slovenia and Malta), all leading to a European final event – the European CanSat Competition. The CanSat project, aimed at secondary school students, mainly addresses Technology, Physics, and programming curricular subjects. By offering the practical experience of working on a small-scale space project, CanSat makes use of these subjects in an interdisciplinary manner, and promotes collaboration and teamwork.

In Romania the organiser of the competition is the European Space Education Resource Office (ESERO) Romania in synergy with the Romanian Space Agency (ROSA). Additionally, we are delighted to collaborate with partners such as the National University of Science and Technology POLITEHNICA Bucharest, along with the Faculty of Aerospace Engineering and other strategic partners. Join us in this extraordinary adventure and discover the fascination of space exploration!

The Romanian CanSat competition is included in the collaboration protocol between the Ministry of Education (no. 12434/10.10.2026) and the Romanian Space Agency (no. 1206/14.10.2026) and is included in the official educational calendar Annex 5, No. 24410/05/28.01.2026 under chapter 3, position 04, page 12.

## **What is a CanSat?**

A CanSat is a simulation of a real satellite, integrated within the volume and shape of a soft drinks can. The challenge for the students is to fit all the major subsystems found in a satellite, such as power, sensors and a communication system, into this minimal volume. The CanSat is then launched by a rocket up to an altitude of approximately one kilometre, or dropped from a platform, drone or captive balloon. Then its mission begins. This involves carrying out a scientific experiment and/or a technology demonstration, achieving a safe landing, and analysing the data collected.

## Contents

Educational value of the CanSat project.....	4
→ Phase 1 - Imagine your CanSat .....	5
Primary and secondary CanSat missions .....	5
1. Primary mission.....	5
→ Phase 2 – Build your CanSat .....	7
Support throughout the development phase.....	7
Reporting.....	7
→ Phase 3 – Launch your CanSat.....	9
<i>National Launch Campaigns</i> .....	9
→ Phase 4 - European learning and celebration event: ‘Space Engineer for a Day .....	9
→ ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS.....	10
→ TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS.....	11
3. Meeting the requirements for the Romanian Launch Campaign .....	13
→ EVALUATION AND SCORING.....	14
1. The jury.....	14
2. Scoring.....	14
A. Technical achievement .....	14
B. Scientific value .....	14
C. Professional competencies .....	15
D. TeamWork .....	15
Marking scheme.....	16
Penalties.....	16
3. Prizes .....	16
→ CONTACT.....	17

# Educational value of the CanSat project

Through the CanSat project, the participating student teams experience all the phases of a real space project, from selecting the mission objectives, designing their CanSat, integrating the components, testing the system, preparing for launch, and analysing the scientific data obtained. Throughout this process the students:

- learn by doing,
- get acquainted with the inquiry-based methodology that is typical of real-life scientific and technical professions,
- acquire and/or reinforce fundamental Technology, Physics, and programming curricular concepts,
- understand the importance of coordination and teamwork,
- enhance their communication skills.

The phases of the European CanSat Competition reflect and take into account the set of national CanSat activities – mostly national competitions – which lead to the selection of one national team that will participate in the European celebration event. Only one team per participating country (ESA Member States<sup>1</sup>, Latvia, Slovenia, Canada and any guest competitor) is admitted to the European learning and celebration event: ‘Space Engineer for a Day’.

The phases of the Romanian CanSat Competition are set by the national organisation. Eight teams will be selected and will participate in the launch campaign. The intermediary selection will be based on the project status and documentation submitted for the Critical Design Report.

**The European CanSat Competition 2026 consists of four phases:**

- 1. Phase 1** – Imagine your CanSat
- 2. Phase 2** – Build your CanSat
- 3. Phase 3** – Launch your CanSat: *National Launch Campaigns* (See calendar below)
- 4. Phase 4** – European CanSat: **European learning and celebration event: ‘Space Engineer for a Day’**

Phases 1 -2-3 are considered National and are managed by ESERO Romania. Phase 4 onwards of the CanSat competition is managed by the ESA Education Office.

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<sup>1</sup> ESA Member States in 2025: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

In the framework of the current collaboration agreement between ESA and the Republic of Malta, teams from Malta can also participate in the European CanSat Competition as guest competitors. Teams from other countries may also participate in the European CanSat Competition as guest competitors if approved by ESA (see Annex 1).

# → Phase 1 - Imagine your CanSat

## Primary and secondary CanSat missions

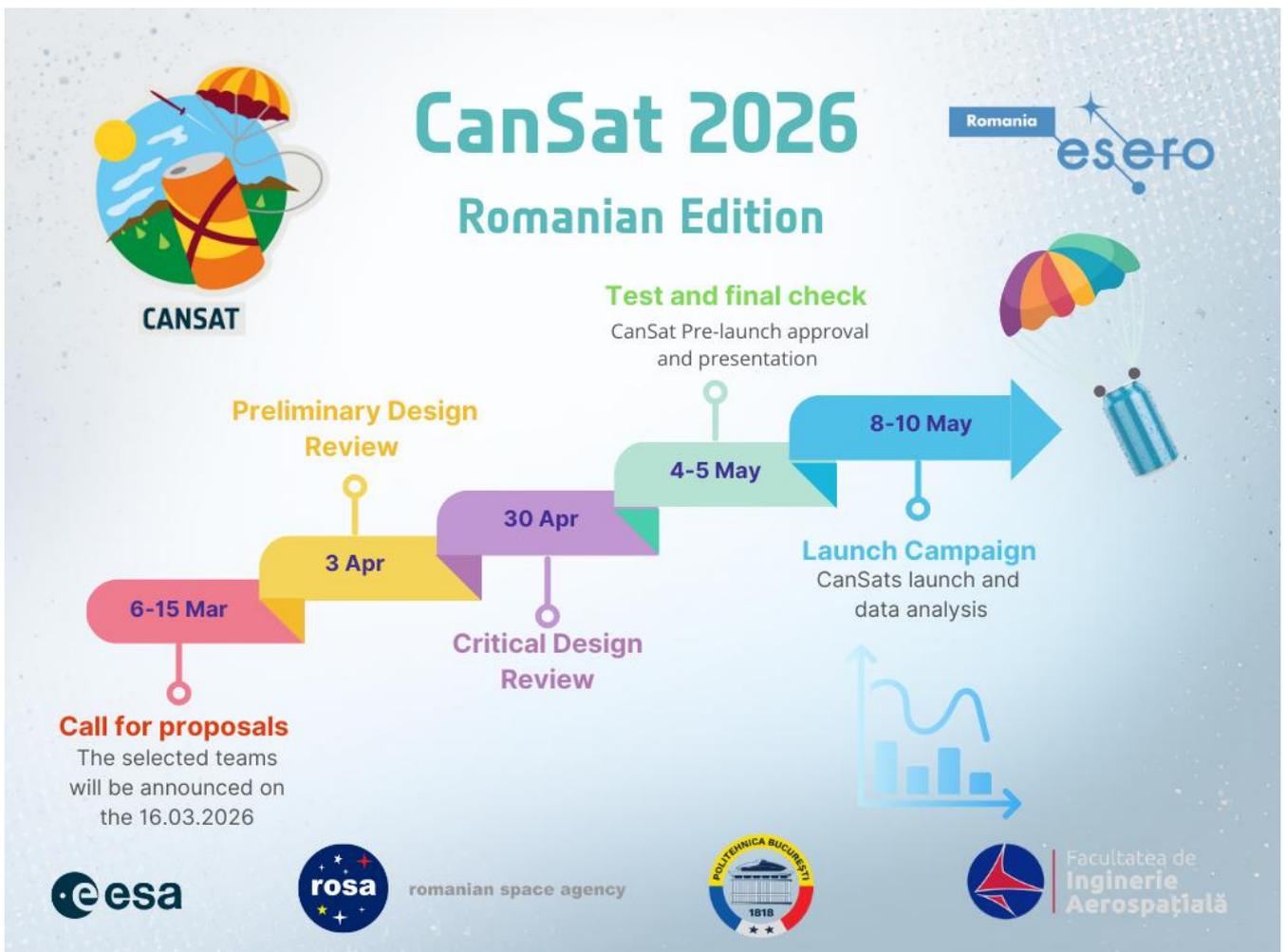
### 1. Primary mission

The team must build a CanSat and program it to accomplish the following compulsory primary mission, **to measure, after release and during descent, the following parameters: air temperature and air pressure.** For the Romanian CanSat Competition 2026 launch campaign, this data must be **stored and transmitted at least every second in an on-board removable memory card and the CanSat must send over IP or by other radio method also its last known location in order to be recuperated.**

During the post-flight analysis, it must be possible for the team to analyse the data obtained (for example, make a calculation of altitude) and display it in graphs (for example, altitude vs. time and temperature vs. altitude).

The secondary mission of the CanSat must be selected by the team. Teams can take ideas from real satellite missions or collect scientific data for a specific project, make a technology demonstration for a student-designed component, or any other mission that would fit inside the CanSat and show its capabilities.

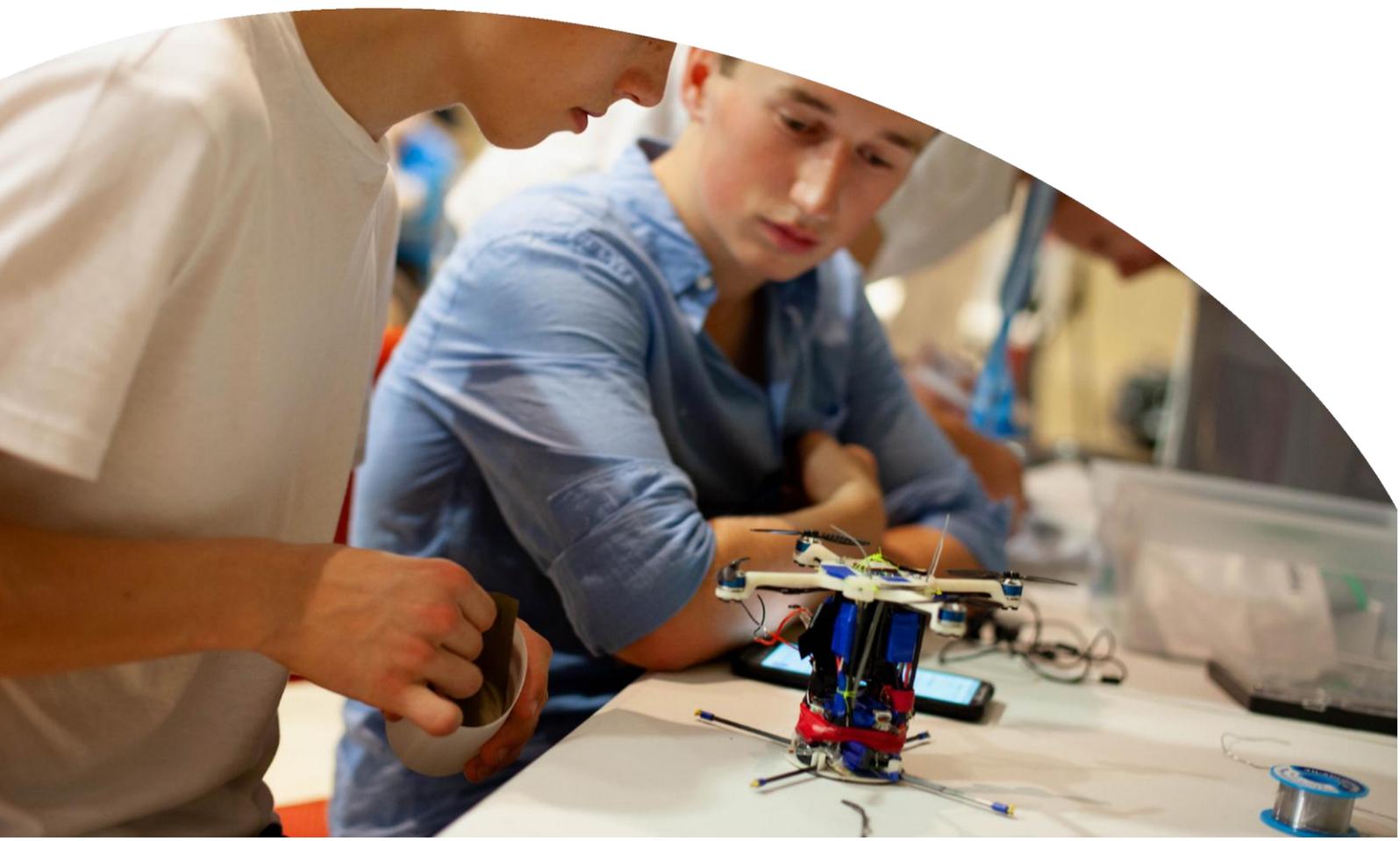
## CanSat Timeline



Teams should brainstorm their own mission objectives, ideas and constraints in order to try to define their mission. The student teams are free to design a mission of their choice, as long as they can demonstrate to have some scientific, technological or innovative value. Teams should also keep in mind the limitations and requirements of the CanSat mission, and consider the feasibility (both technical and administrative in terms of time and budget) of their chosen mission.

Teams are invited to take inspiration from **ESA's missions** for designing their own secondary missions, which could form the basis of a real space mission!

In this phase, the applicants will need to present their investigation plan by answering a series of questions in the registration form regarding their CanSat project. Teams will be judged according to the clarity and quality of their proposals. Student teams must submit their project by completing the form <https://forms.gle/h7RSVinat4nYAPdr5> by 15 March 2026, 24:00 .



## → Phase 2 – Build your CanSat

Under the supervision of their teacher/mentor, all the teams participating in CanSat will have to carry out technical work on their CanSats, applying the procedures used in the typical lifecycle of a real space project, which are:

- Selection of mission objectives;
- Definition of technical requirements necessary to achieve these objectives;
- Design of hardware and software;
- Reporting;
- Design of ground station/ground telecommunication system;
- Integration and testing of the CanSat before the European launch campaign starts.

### Support throughout the development phase

Teachers/mentors participating in National Competitions may be offered support from their National Organisers, such as<sup>2</sup>:

- CanSat Teacher's workshop for mentors
- CanSat Webinars with space experts
- Supporting learning materials (e.g., the [ESA CanSat resources](#) or national resources)
- Individual recommendations/help throughout the project
- Reviewed versions of submitted documents

### Reporting

If a team is participating through their own National Competition, they may need to submit different reports to their national organisers for them to track the team's progress. These reports are typically:

- Preliminary Design Review (PLR)
- Critical Design Review (CDR)
- Final Design Review (FDR-as built)

The Preliminary Design Review (PDR) /Critical Design Review (CDR), is a technical document that ensures the design can meet the stated performance requirements, taking into account all the system constraints.

Compiling the PDR/CDR allows student teams to detail and evaluate the design effort, determine readiness for hardware fabrication and for software coding, and establish the final configuration of the secondary mission.

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<sup>2</sup> This offer will vary depending on the National Organiser, please consult this with your contact point.

### The CanSat PDR/CDR must contain:

- A demonstration that all the requirements stated in the guidelines for the European CanSat Competition have been fulfilled;
- The design specifications needed to fulfil the secondary mission;
- Results of the completed requirements verification tests; • Overview of mission operations; • Detailed budget.

The CDR must be submitted to ESERO via email ([cristina.stancu@rosa.ro](mailto:cristina.stancu@rosa.ro)) no later than the dates specified in the calendar on page 3 of this document, with the name of the team and name of the document submitted clearly written in the subject line (e.g. "CDR - Team X").

The CanSat Flight Design Review (FDR) must be submitted to ESERO via email ([cristina.stancu@rosa.ro](mailto:cristina.stancu@rosa.ro)) no later than the starting date of the launch campaign, 08.05.2026, with the name of the team and name of the document submitted clearly written in the subject line (e.g. "FDR - Team X").

ESERO Romania will provide guidelines as well as templates for the required reports to each participating team.



## → Phase 3 – Launch your CanSat

### *National Launch Campaigns*

In order for a National CanSat Competition to be recognised by ESA (and, as a consequence, for the national winning team to be automatically accepted into the European CanSat Competition):

- Student teams must comply with the European competition student team eligibility criteria stated above.
- The national organisers have to guarantee a fair geographical distribution and participation of teams from across their country.
- **Only national winning teams are invited to the brand-new European learning and celebration event: ‘Space Engineer for a Day’ event at ESTEC (for national winners only): 17-19 June 2026**
- 2026. The winning national team must follow the exact rules for eligibility as stated on the CanSat mini-website. ESA will not make exceptions if any requirement is not met at **the European learning and celebration event**, regardless of whether any exceptions were made in the National Competitions.
- The Romanian CanSat Campaign will take place on an aerodrome and the CanSats will be launched by helicopter from an altitude of 1000m. Teams will be in contact with the jury members and will make themselves available to be contacted online at the appropriate times.

## → Phase 4 - European learning and celebration event: ‘Space Engineer for a Day

For further details regarding the organisation of the European learning and celebration event: **‘Space Engineer for a Day’**, please refer to the European CanSat mini-website available at <https://cansat.esa.int/>

Starting in school year 2023-2024, the national winning teams will be welcomed by ESA at its ESTEC site in the Netherlands for a brand-new European learning and celebration event: ‘Space Engineer for a Day’, to take place on 17-19 June 2026. With this event we will celebrate your achievements and your team will experience first-hand what is the day-to-day life of an engineer working in the space business.

You will be able to:

- Explore out-of-this world facilities and laboratories
- Meet space experts
- Present your work to a panel of experts in a poster session
- Enjoy social and space-themed activities
- Network with the other national winning teams in a truly international environment.

ESA is looking forward to welcoming you in June!!

# → ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS

In order for a student team to be accepted into the European competition, the following conditions have to be fulfilled:

1. Each student team must comprise a minimum of 4<sup>3</sup> up to a maximum of 6 students (aged 14 – 19 years old) resident in an ESA Member State<sup>4</sup>, Latvia, Slovenia or Canada, respecting one of the following conditions:
  - Team of students enrolled full-time in a highschool;
  - Team of students in home schooling condition (certified by the National Ministry of Education or delegated authority);
  - Team of members of a social club enrolled full-time in upper-secondary schools (highschools);
2. At least 50% of the students included in a team must be nationals of an ESA Member State, Slovenia, Latvia or Canada.
3. University/higher education students cannot participate in this competition.
4. Each team needs to be supervised by a teacher or mentor responsible for monitoring the team's technical progress, offering help and advice, and acting as the team's point of contact with the organisational team.
5. It is forbidden for a team to participate in the European CanSat Competition more than once, with the exception of the teacher/mentor and up to 50% of the students from any former team.

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<sup>3</sup> A minimum of 4 students per team is required in order to guarantee proper team interaction and collaboration.

<sup>4</sup> ESA Member States in 2020: Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

In the framework of the current collaboration agreement between ESA and the Republic of Malta, teams from Malta can also participate in the European CanSat Competition as guest competitors. Teams from other countries may also participate in the European CanSat Competition as guest competitors if approved by ESA (see Annex 1).

# → TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

The CanSat competition is designed to simulate all aspects of a real satellite mission including design, development, testing, launch, operations, and data analysis, by means of teamwork.

**The Romanian CanSat competition launch will be made by helicopter/airplane from an altitude of 1000m.** The organisation might consider alternate launch options in case of bad weather or other unforeseen circumstances.

## General requirements

The CanSat hardware and mission must be designed following these requirements and constraints:

1. All the components of the CanSat must fit inside a standard soft drinks can (115 mm height and 66 mm diameter), with the exception of the parachute. Radio antennas and GPS antennas can be mounted externally on the top or bottom of the can, depending on the design, but not on the sides.
2. **Note:** The payload area usually has 4.5 cm of space per CanSat available, along the can's axial dimension (i.e. height), which must accommodate all external elements including: parachute, parachute attachment hardware, and any antennas.
3. The mass of the CanSat must be between a minimum of 300 grams and a maximum of 350 grams. CanSats that are lighter must take additional ballast with them to reach the 300 grams minimum mass limit required.
4. Explosives, detonators, pyrotechnics, bio and inflammable or dangerous materials are strictly forbidden. All materials used must be safe for the personnel, the equipment, and the environment. In case of doubt by ESA, Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) may be requested from the teams.
5. The CanSat must be powered by a battery and/or solar panels. It must be possible for the systems to remain switched on for four continuous hours (**4 h**).
6. The battery must be easily accessible in case it has to be replaced/recharged.
7. The CanSat must have an easily accessible master power switch.
8. The data for the Primary Mission ( temperature and pressure) must be **stored and transmitted at least every second** in an on-board removable memory card.
9. The CanSat should have a recovery system, such as a parachute, capable of being reused after launch. It is recommended to use bright coloured fabric, which will facilitate recovery of the CanSat after landing.
10. Inclusion of a positioning system for retrieval (beeper, radio beacon, GPS, etc.) is recommended.

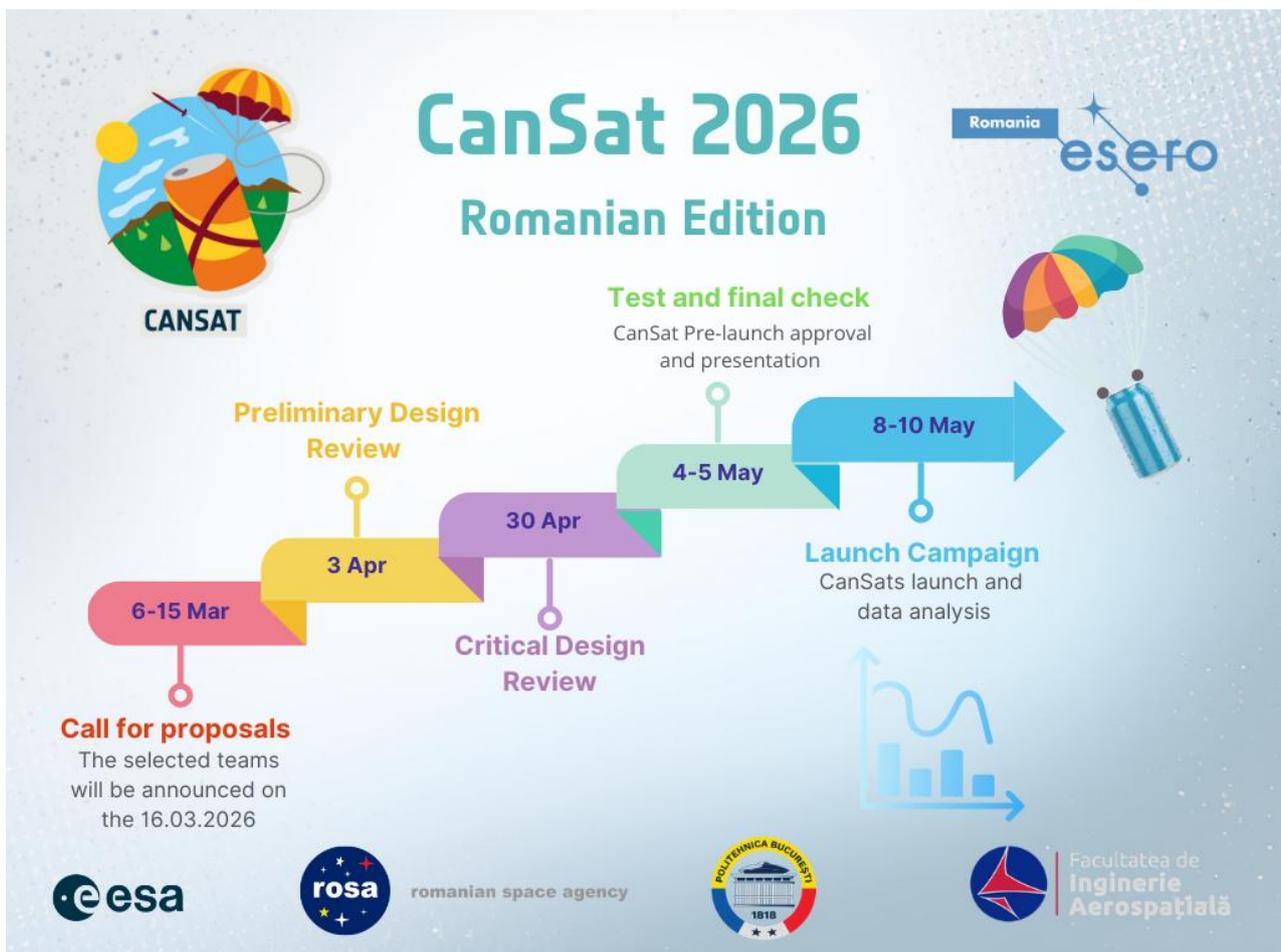


- 11.** The parachute connection must be able to withstand up to 500 N of force. The strength of the parachute must be tested to ensure that the system will operate nominally.
- 12.** For recovery reasons, a maximum flight time of 120 seconds is recommended. If attempting a directed landing, then a maximum of 170 seconds flight time is recommended.
- 13.** A descent rate between 8 and 11 m/s is recommended for recovery reasons. However, the CanSat's descent speed must not be lower than 5m/s or higher than 12m/s for safety reasons. Additionally, the airfield or weather conditions might determine additional mandatory restrictions on the velocity.
- 14.** The CanSat must be able to withstand an acceleration of up to 20 g.
- 15.** The total budget of the final CanSat model should not exceed 500€. Ground Stations (GS) and any related non-flying item will not be considered in the budget. More information regarding the penalties in case the teams exceed the stated budget can be found in the next section. In the case of sponsorship, all sponsored items should be specified in the budget with the actual corresponding costs on the market.
- 16.** The assigned frequency must be respected by all teams in the Launch Campaign. The range of allowed frequencies changes depending on the country where the event is hosted and will be communicated in due time. It is recommended that teams pay attention to the design of the CanSat in terms of hardware integration and interconnection, so the radio frequency can be easily modified if necessary. Remember for the Romanian CanSat Competition 2026 launch campaign, the data required for the primary mission must be stored at least every second in an on-board removable memory card and the CanSat must send its last known location in order to be recuperated.
- 17.** The CanSat must be flight-ready by the deadline specified by the organiser.

### 3. Meeting the requirements for the Romanian Launch Campaign

To verify that the CanSats are suitable for launch, a pre-technical inspection will be made via teleconference with the team for the Romanian CanSat launch campaign.

- **Requirements 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8 and 12, 15 will be evaluated** on site by a specially appointed CanSat technical team. Teams that don't pass any of the tests on the first attempt will only be permitted one second chance to amend the issues, to meet all the requirements. In case of failing at the second attempt, the team will be considered not to have achieved flight status and their CanSat won't be approved for launch. If the physical event takes place with online participation from the student teams, these tests will be carried out by ESA and therefore teams will only have 1 chance to pass.
- **Requirements 10 and 13** refer to tests that should be carried out prior to and the proof of these tests being successful should be stated in the FDR.
- A statement of confirmation that the rest of the requirements are met should be included in the Pre-Launch Report, paying special attention to the COVID-19 requirements and **requirement 14**, which must be stated in the document.
- We remind you of the phases of the Romanian CanSat competition



# → EVALUATION AND SCORING

## 1. The jury

The jury, appointed by ROSA and national partners, will be composed of CanSat experts, education experts, or engineers and scientists who will evaluate the teams' performances during 'Phases 1-2-3', during Phase 4 the jury will be appointed by ESA, taking into account the CanSat Pre-launch Report. The jury members will score the teams during the launch campaign and announce the results from their scoring in the Closing Ceremony.

The jury will typically have 3-6 members, and their fields of expertise can vary from science to engineering or education. The jury board is usually comprised of:

- Space science/engineering expert(s)
- IT/Electronics expert(s)
- Education expert(s)
- Radio communication expert(s)

## 2. Scoring

Performance in the following areas will be evaluated:

### A. Technical achievement

The jury will take into account how the teams obtained the results, how reliable and robust the CanSat was, and how the CanSat performed. Innovative aspects of the project will be judged (e.g. the tools selected and the hardware/software used).

The aspects evaluated will be:

- **Mission's technical complexity:** The CanSat's technical level, understanding of the technical concepts and the originality of the engineering aspects of the mission.
- **Performance of the Primary mission:** The CanSat's technical performance in terms of deployment and data collection for the Primary Mission.
- **Performance of the Secondary mission:** The CanSat's technical performance in terms of deployment and data collection for the Secondary Mission.

### B. Scientific value

The scientific value of the teams' missions and the teams' scientific skills will be evaluated. This includes the scientific relevance of the mission, the quality of the technical reporting (both written and oral) and the team's scientific understanding that will be assessed from the team's ability to analyse and interpret results appropriately.

The aspects evaluated will be:

- **Scientific relevance:** Assessment of whether measurements are done with a clear and well- founded scientific purpose, the extent to which the CanSat is used in an original way and if the data collection is appropriate for reaching the objective.
- **Scientific understanding:** Level of understanding of the scientific principles that underlie the project.
- **Technical reporting:** Ability to summarise with clarity and provide a readable and complete Pre-Launch report, the proper labelling of the graphs and use of the correct units and the ability to present scientifically sound data and interpretations during the launch campaign.

### C. Professional competencies

The Jury will assess the team's collaboration and coordination, adaptability and communication skills. The aspects evaluated will be:

- **Teamwork:** Collaborative effort of the team in order to complete the tasks in the most effective and efficient way.
- **Adaptability:** Attitude towards continual improvement and ability to adapt to new conditions, both from the national competition towards the European Competition (if applicable) and/or as far as ideas for improvement after the European Competition are concerned.
- **Communication:** Oral presentation skills, the ability to provide a captivating presentation involving confident speaking skills and a visually appealing presentation.
- **Outreach:** The team will be awarded points on how the project is communicated to the school and the local community, taking into account web pages, blogs, presentations, promotional material, media coverage etc.

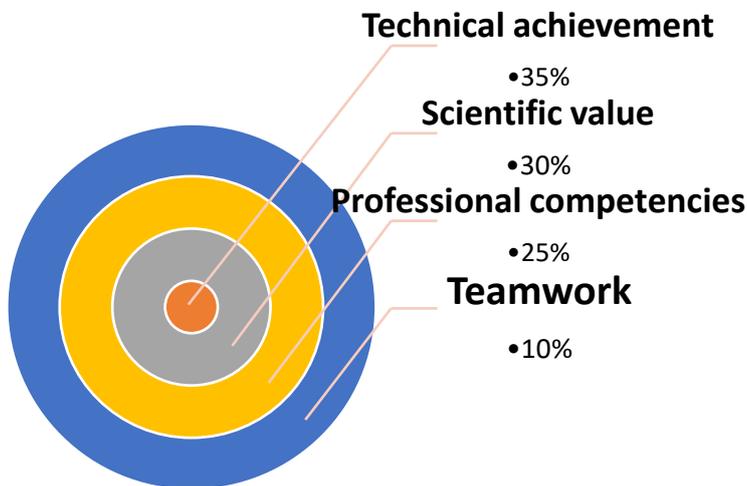
### D. TeamWork

As the jury, we will assess the **effectiveness of teamwork** within each CanSat team based on communication, collaboration, problem-solving, and overall project execution. A strong team demonstrates **clear role distribution**, ensuring that each member takes ownership of their responsibilities while maintaining **fluid coordination** between subsystems such as hardware, software, and telemetry. We will evaluate how well the team members **communicate**, both internally and with external mentors, and whether they actively **support each other** in overcoming technical challenges. The ability to **resolve conflicts professionally**, adapt to unexpected issues, and maintain a **positive team dynamic** will be key indicators of a well-functioning group.

# → ANNEX

## Marking scheme

The overall balance between the items to be evaluated is as follows:



## Penalties

Teams' final scores will be penalised with 1% per day of late submission of the CanSat Pre-Launch Report. Similarly, 1% of the final score will be subtracted per 10 euros extra spent over the maximum CanSat budget of 500 euros.

## 3. Prizes

The award scheme is designed to acknowledge teams' strengths in as fair a way as possible. At the Romanian and European CanSat Competition 2026, the prizes will be awarded according to the following categories:

- **Best CanSat Project:** This prize will be awarded to the team with the best overall score.
- **Highest Technical Achievement:** This prize will be awarded to the team with the best score in the 'Technical Achievement' field
- **Outstanding Science Mission:** This prize will be awarded to the team with the best score in the 'Scientific value' field.

**\*Honorary Prize/Special Mention (optional):** The jury may award an 'honorary prize' in The jury may award an honorary prize to recognize exceptional aspects of a team's participation, such as outstanding engineering ingenuity, perseverance in overcoming technical challenges, remarkable team spirit, or other memorable contributions during the competition. This distinction may also include light-hearted recognitions celebrating creativity, experimentation, and the learning process that characterizes the CanSat programme.

The competition does not include a full public ranking of all participating teams. At the end of the event, the jury will announce and award three main prizes: **Best CanSat**, **Best Scientific Mission**, and **Best Technical Achievement**. Only the teams receiving these prizes will be publicly announced, and the detailed ranking of all teams will not be disclosed. Due to the large number of evaluation criteria and the limited time available

during the competition, the jury cannot provide individual written feedback or detailed scoring to each team. However, general feedback and observations may be shared during the final presentation session.

The following rules will also apply:

- When a team goes 'above and beyond' in a particular area not covered by one of the official prizes.
- A team cannot receive more than one prize.
- The 'Best CanSat Project' prize will always be awarded to the team with the highest overall score.
- If a team is ranked the highest in several categories, priority will be given to the highest weighting prizes (Outstanding Science Mission (35%) or Highest Technical Achievement (35%)); in case a team is ranked the highest both in the Scientific value and Technical Achievement fields, the prize awarded will be for the category in which the team has the highest score margin, ahead of the 2nd ranked team in that field.

For example, if one team has the best scores in both Technical Achievement (scoring 8.5 out of 10) and Scientific (scoring 9.5). They will then be granted the Highest Technical Achievement prize because this category has a higher weighting, and the Best Science prize will be granted to the second best score in that field.

In a different scenario, where a team has both the best overall score (scoring 8.5) and the best score in Science (scoring 9.5), this team will be awarded the European CanSat 2026 prize instead, as this prize needs to be awarded to the best overall score, and the 2nd ranked team in the 'Science field would receive the respective prize.

## → CONTACT

**All questions and expressions of interest should be directed to:**

**Email:** [cristina.stancu@rosa.ro](mailto:cristina.stancu@rosa.ro);

