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Press Release

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We are looking for: best research environment 2026!

Die Junge Akademie and the Volkswagen Foundation are once again jointly offering the prize for the best research environment in 2026 | Applications possible until 1 March 2026

Until 1 March 2026, members of a research environment based primarily within the German science system can apply online at diejungeakademie.de/en/projekte/best-research-environment-award for the “Best Research Environment 2026” award. In cooperation with the Volkswagen Foundation, *Die Junge Akademie* first announced this award in 2024. The award highlights the importance of a good research environment for scientific performance and recognises the contributions of each individual researcher. It also recognises the contribution of each research environment member to scientific progress. Five teams will be selected at random from a shortlist and each will receive €10,000. This funding can be put towards team-building activities, retreats, coaching or further training, for example. The random selection process highlights that the awarding of the prize money does not constitute a ranking. All the shortlisted teams are equally deserving winners.

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Presentation of the award is scheduled for 27 June 2026 in Berlin.

Best Research
Environment 2026

Applications until
1 March 2026



Die Junge Akademie



VolkswagenStiftung

“A supportive, structured and appreciative research environment is the foundation of scientific excellence. With the second round of the competition, we want to highlight once again how much hard work goes into creating these structures, and the difference they can make to people in the early stages of their careers,” says Hani Harb, a member of the Board of *Die Junge Akademie*, who is also an infectious immunologist at the University Hospital Carl Gustav Carus in Dresden.

“We are very pleased that the competition is entering another round. The strong response to the first call for entries showed a clear need to design and value research environments more consciously. With this award, we want to continue providing impetus for actively promoting high-quality conditions in science,” says Antje Tepperwien, Head of the Understanding Research and Funding Team at the Volkswagen Foundation.

Selection criteria and procedure

A selection committee will draw up a shortlist of 15 research environments from all applications. This committee will consist of members and alumni of *Die Junge Akademie*, a Volkswagen Foundation representative, individuals known in the scientific community, and a representative of a research environment that has previously received the award. When selecting the best research environments for the shortlist, the committee will evaluate factors such as transparent self-presentation, responsibilities, communication channels, networks and future plans. A random draw will determine the five winning teams from the shortlist.

Die Junge Akademie is the world’s first academy for scientists and researchers in the early and middle stages of their careers, and has become an important voice in Germany’s science system during its 25-year history. In cooperation with the Volkswagen Foundation, *Die Junge Akademie* is offering the award for the best research environment once again. The Volkswagen Foundation provided financial support to *Die Junge Akademie* until 2005, helping to establish the organisation.

Through its “Understanding Research” profile area, the Volkswagen Foundation creates spaces for reflection and supports structural changes in the science system. One thematic focus is the diversity of scientific culture(s).

All relevant information about the award, the selection criteria and access to the online application process can be found [here](#).

Die Junge Akademie
at the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities
and the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina

Die Junge Akademie was founded in 2000 as the world’s first academy for outstanding young academics. Its members – who come from all academic disciplines as well as creative fields – explore the potential and limits of interdisciplinary work in new projects, aim to encourage dialogue between academia and society, and provide new impetus in discussions about scientific policy. *Die Junge Akademie* is supported by the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW) and the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina. Its office is located in Berlin.