

Joachim Herz Award 2026

Guidelines

The "Joachim Herz Award" is awarded annually to outstanding up-and-coming scientists either in the natural sciences and engineering or in economics and business administration who have the potential to make an impact through excellent, socially and practically relevant research. The award aims to support them in deepening their interdisciplinary research and ideally promoting the transfer of their research results. In 2026 the award will be granted by the "Entrepreneurship" cluster.

1 Target group

The award is aimed at early-career scientists with a doctorate. To be eligible, they must show outstanding potential in their field of research and their research must demonstrate interdisciplinary approaches to solving societal challenges. The target group includes individuals working at a university or other research institutions (public or private non-profit) in Germany. Researchers from other European countries who are not yet working at a research institution in Germany at the time of application are also eligible to apply, if they have taken up a position at a German research institution by the time of the award ceremony.

International researchers that are active across institutions may still apply for the "Joachim Herz Award". It will then be necessary to determine which institution (based in Germany) can best manage the funding.

2 Call for applications

The award is granted annually, alternating between the clusters "Entrepreneurship" and "New Materials and Resources of the Future".

The Joachim Herz Foundation (Joachim Herz Stiftung, JHS) announces the call for applications for the "Joachim Herz Award" by sending emails to relevant institutions, via its social media channels, its website and by other means.

The application and selection process is carried out by the JHS.

3 Application

Applications for the award can be made by application.

All application documents must be submitted digitally. Access to the application platform and deadlines for submission are published in the respective call for applications.

Applications submitted after the deadline will not be considered for selection.

4 Selection of the awardee

The person with the most promising research proposal will be selected by an expert jury. The most important selection criteria are the recognizable potential for excellence of the applicant as well as an interdisciplinary and preferably application-oriented research approach of the project outline.

The jury will be selected by the JHS and will be composed of renowned scientists and experts who have demonstrated excellence and expertise in the respective subject area of the call.

The awardee(s) will be selected in a multi-stage process:

- Firstly, all applications are formally reviewed by the JHS. The jury then examines which applications appear fundamentally worthy of funding. These applications can either be reviewed by the jury members themselves or by external experts. External reviews may be requested in particular in case of partiality within the jury, if there is insufficient consensus or if the jury members wish to have an external assessment. On the basis of the evaluation, the jury will draw up a shortlist of applicants who will be invited to present their projects to the jury in a personal pitch.
- At the request of the jury or the foundation, additional experts may be invited to attend the applicants' pitches. After the presentation, the jury meets to select the individual to receive the award based on the application documents, the pitches, and – if available – the external reviews. The formal decision is ultimately made by the JHS Management Board, taking into account the recommendations of the jury and experts.

Applicants are not entitled to a justification of the selection decision.

5 Funding

The funding amounts to up to EUR 500,000 and is granted for the realization of the project presented by the awardee in the application.

A usage guideline specifies the permissible possible uses and requirements (e.g. eligible cost types) of the funding.

Within this framework, the awardees independently decide on the scientific use of the funding.

6 Allocation of Funding

The basis for awarding the funding is a grant agreement between the JHS and the institution (public or nonprofit) where the awardee holds a position, and the awardee. The funding will be allocated for a specific purpose to the institution where the awardee is employed.

The funding is granted on the basis of an award letter. By accepting the award, the awardee or the co-recipient institution acknowledges the guidelines and modalities of use.

7 Duration

The funding may be utilized within a period of three years. The term begins on the first day of the period for which funding is initially requested as part of the draw down plan, at the earliest on the calendar day following the date of the award ceremony, but not later than six months after it.

8 Award ceremony

The award will be presented to the awardees at an official ceremony.

9 Miscellaneous

The JHS reserves the right to revoke an award and claim a refund if the application is false or incomplete, if the conditions of approval are not met, or if there are other important reasons for revocation. There is no entitlement to funding from the JHS.

The JHS also reserves the right to change or amend these guidelines.

- In case of uncertainty, the German version of this document applies. -