

Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft · 53170 Bonn, Germany

To eligible nominators for the
Heinz Maier-Leibnitz Prize
of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft

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Heinz Maier-Leibnitz Prize of the DFG - 2026 Call for Nominations

Dear Sir or Madam,

The Heinz Maier-Leibnitz Prize is an accolade for early career researchers and provides further incentive for excellent achievements in their research work since 1977.

In 2026, ten prizes can be awarded with a prize sum of **Euro 200,000** each. The prize money can be spent for research purposes only up to three years.

I would like to invite you to nominate outstanding researchers to the DFG as candidates for the Heinz Maier-Leibnitz Prize and submit your nomination

until 14 May 2025.

Please allow me to emphasise that nominations for female researchers are particularly welcome.

Finally, I would be grateful if you could inform the DFG of any developments that could possibly influence the selection outcome, even after your submission. Please note that tenured full professors, or equivalent, cannot be considered, therefore inform us on accepted calls of the candidates.

Yours sincerely,



Katja Becker

2026 Heinz Maier-Leibnitz Prize

1. *Purpose of the programme*

The Heinz Maier-Leibnitz Prize, named after the physicist and former president of the DFG, is an accolade for early career researchers and provides further incentive for excellent achievements in their research work. The prize has been awarded since 1977. Besides honouring excellent research achievements, the prize is intended to assist in furthering scientific careers.

2. *Selection Criteria*

The funding is intended for researchers in a development and probationary phase for remaining in academia/for a permanent professorship. Researchers with a tenured full professorship in March 2026, or those with a commensurate salary and benefits package, will not be considered.

The award is not only to be understood as being in recognition of the dissertation; nominees should also have established a distinctive academic profile after obtaining their doctorate, and the results of their research have attracted attention within the subject-specific community, suggesting that excellent performance can be expected of them in the future. Generally speaking, this requires the presentation of documented research results, in particular in the form of publications above and beyond the dissertation.

3. *Prize Endowment and Use*

Up to ten prizes can be awarded per year, each endowed with €200.000.

The prize money can be used for up to three years for the purpose of further academic research. The funds may not be used to cover the winner's personal expenses. The Special Funding Guidelines for Academic Awards apply (only available in German – [DFG-Vordruck 2.33](#)).

4. *Eligibility Requirements*

The award can go to early career researchers working at a research institution in Germany or at a German research institution abroad by 1 January 2026 the latest regardless of where the research was conducted.

The award is open to all fields of research.

As a rule, nominations may only be submitted within six years after obtaining the doctorate. Times lost, that are shown in the application (e.g. due to illness, care) can be considered.¹

Those who have gained a post-doctoral teaching qualification may also be nominated for the Heinz Maier-Leibnitz Prize; the same applies to junior professors, those receiving funding under the DFG's Emmy Noether Programme, heads of Junior Research Groups and comparable researchers in early career phases. Researchers holding a position with a tenure track can be nominated as long as their tenure is not secured at the time of the final decision (March 2026).

Please note the recommendations "[Dealing with Risks in International Research Cooperation](#)" when looking for suitable candidates.

5. *Eligibility to submit nominations*

Nominees may be put forward by:

- The elected members of DFG Review Boards,
- all Universities and other doctorate-granting higher education institutions in Germany,
- further members of the DFG, the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities, the Helmholtz Association of National Research Centres, the European Molecular Biology Laboratory,
- all previous prizewinners of the Heinz Maier-Leibnitz Prize;
- all previous members of the Selection Committee.

Please note that individuals can submit one nomination proposal, while institutions can submit up to three nomination proposals, and the four non-university research institutions Max Planck Society, Leibniz Association, Fraunhofer Society, Helmholtz Association may submit up to five nomination proposals.

6. *Required documents and submission*

Please submit the following documents with your nomination via the DFG's electronic proposal and review system elan (elan.dfg.de):

- a statement of appreciation justifying the nomination, approx. one to two pages in length
- an academic curriculum vitae (Please do not include photos of the candidates);
- a current list of publications;

¹ The submission deadline for female researchers providing childcare within the eligibility period will be extended by two years per child, while the deadline for their male counterparts will be extended by one year per child, no documentation is necessary. Male researchers who provide childcare beyond the one-year period can also be eligible for a max. two-year extension per child provided appropriate documentation is given. The eligibility period may be extended for a maximum of six years in total. Children of nominees who are under the age of 12 when the period begins and who permanently live in the same household as the nominee are included.

- a list of up to five important publications with full text links.²

Please do not enclose any other letters of recommendation or further documents.

To extend the review opportunities we kindly ask you to submit the documents in English and German, if possible. Publications remain in their original language.

Please note that you need to register in elan for submission. If you have questions in this regard, contact the elan Helpdesk (0228/885-2900, elan-helpdesk@dfg.de).

7. *Selection procedure and deadlines in 2026*

Nominations must be submitted until 14 May 2025. Prizewinners are selected by the DFG's Joint Committee in March 2026 on the basis of recommendations made by the Selection Committee for the Heinz Maier-Leibnitz Prize. The ceremony will take place in June 2026.

² If the full text of a publication is not available via link please upload the file via elan. Please try to keep file sizes to a minimum; you cannot attach files larger than 10 MB. If you must submit larger files, you may submit them subsequently via a data exchange platform. Please contact katharina.magerkurth@dfg.de to receive a link. In this case, please upload a note referring to the additional documents.