

# Max Planck-Startup Award of the Stifterverband 2026

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Innovations secure our future. As novel products, services, and processes, they provide the foundation for the economic success of numerous companies and bring a wide range of benefits to people in all aspects of life. Time and again, such innovations also originate at one of the institutes of the Max Planck Society.

**Every two years**, the Stifterverband and the Max Planck Society recognize special achievements from the Max Planck Society in the field of entrepreneurship with the Max Planck-Startup Award of the Stifterverband. The prize is awarded to successful startups of the Max Planck Society that have a particularly positive impact on society.

The prize is endowed with **€ 30,000**.

## Who can apply?

Applications are open to **already founded spin-offs** from the Max Planck Society that are no older than five years.

The spin-off can be **technology-based**, meaning the technology, software or know-how on which the startup is based originates from a Max Planck Institute. However, it is not mandatory for Max Planck staff to be actively involved in the day-to-day operations of the startup. The team can also consist entirely of external members.

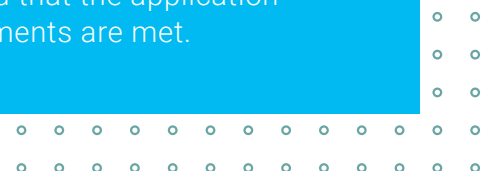
Alternatively, the startup may be **non-technology-based**, meaning that at least part of the founding team comes from a Max Planck Institute, but the underlying innovation/business idea does not necessarily have to originate from a Max Planck Institute.

**Awards are granted to (founding) teams**, such as the management, participating Max Planck scientists, etc. However, preference is given to teams rather than individuals.

Self-nominations are possible and encouraged.

Employees of both Max Planck Institutes and Max Planck Innovation can also draw the attention of potential applicants to the award and encourage them to apply.

**Multiple applications** are permitted, provided that the application requirements are met.





## Which application documents have to be submitted?

The following points must be included:

### Presentation of the company

**Detailed description of the startup's history:** at what point did the team start? Where does it stand now? How did the Max Planck Institute, the Max Planck Society or Max Planck Innovation support the spin-off project?

**Description/ proof of financing** (existence of external funding or funding through generation of turnover), for example in the form of raised funding, financing secured, or achieved turnover.

**Description of the positive impact the startup's products and/or services have on society, particularly in Germany, and the reasons behind this impact.** "Impact" is to be interpreted broadly and can include aspects such as job creation, therapeutic approaches, sustainability, value creation, or addressing major societal challenges such as climate change, energy, food, medical care, sustainable development goals, etc.)

**Description of whether and how the company continues to be integrated into the Max Planck Society; specific benefits it offers to the Max Planck Society,** such as job creation opportunities for Max Planck researchers, the development of research equipment, or engagement in collaborative research activities; **what it contributes to strengthening the startup culture within the Max Planck Society,** for example, as a role model during career or entrepreneurship events and its involvement in mentoring programmes.

**If applicable, comments on the patent with regard to protection and relevance.**

In general, the application documents should not exceed a total five DIN A4 pages.  
The documents should collectively present a coherent overall picture of the spin-off.

**Applications must be submitted in electronic form only.**

**The submission period is from September 1 to November 15, 2025.**

Please send the application via email to:

Max-Planck-Gesellschaft,  
Department of Communication  
Claudia Zerrer  
claudia.zerrer@gv.mpg.de

Only applications that **are complete, meet all the aforementioned requirements, and are received by the advertised deadline** will be considered.

The applications received will be submitted to a jury for review. After their decision, the Max Planck Society will announce the name of the winning team to the Stifterverband.

**The winning team will be notified in early February 2026.** The joint award ceremony of the Max Planck Society and the Stifterverband is scheduled to take place on June 16, 2026, during the 77th Annual Meeting of the Max Planck Society in Frankfurt (Main).

The announcement of the winning team will be made through a press release. As part of the award ceremony, a short film showcasing the winning team will be produced, which can be utilized for future promotional purposes.

**More general information on the prize:**

<https://www.mpg.de/max-planck-startup-award-of-the-stifterverband>

