

CALL FOR APPLICATION

MÜLHEIM WATER AWARD 2026

In this call for application you will find all relevant information you need to apply.

These information are part of the application procedure and automatically accepted by all applicants when handing in an application.

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1. Background and objectives

The Mülheim Water Award honours practice-oriented research and development projects as well as the implementation of innovative concepts for water analysis and a secure drinking water supply. People or institutions from Europe can apply with already implemented innovative procedures, products, concepts and new findings with a strong focus on practical use and application within water management. The Mülheim Water Award is not about basic research.

The Mülheim Water Award was first granted in 2006. During the previous nine competitions, almost 190 applications from 25 different European countries were received. The applications covered the entire range of water management. Since 2017 the GERSTEL GmbH & Co. KG also supports the Mülheim Water Award next to RWW Rheinisch-Westfälische Wasserwerksgesellschaft mbH. Both are located in Mülheim an der Ruhr.

Find more information under www.muelheim-water-award.com.

2. Call topic

The subject of submission for 2026 is:

Innovations for a sustainable water management and safe and secure drinking water supply

We are looking for innovative, practice-relevant concepts as well as application-ready solutions to meet future challenges in water systems and water analysis.

Future challenges for a sustainable water management and a responsible water use and –application require the rethinking of design and/or the improvement of business and technical processes as well as in the analysis and assessment of water quality.

The following focus topics are particularly addressed:

- Non-target screening (NTS) and high resolution mass spectrometry (HRMS)
- Effect-based Analytics
- PFAS – Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances
- PMT – persistent, mobile and toxic substances
- Green Analytical Chemistry
- Automation
- Digitalization, big data and artificial intelligence (AI)
- The adaption to changing structures because of demographic/structural/climate change.
- Use, efficiency and protection of resources
- Water reuse
- Predictive maintenance
- operating cost optimisation

You can also apply with projects that are dealing with waste water but are connected to the drinking water production, having a verifiable positive effect on it.

3. Evaluation criteria

All applications dealing with the subject of submission are being shown to the jury for assessment. The following criteria are used for the evaluation.

Criterion	Main questions / Description
Innovation level and relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is it an innovation? - What is innovative about it? - What were the innovation goals?
Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is it universally applicable? - What about the supply- and service reliability? - How good is the content-related and the regional transferability of the results?
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How is the quality, resp. the implementation of the study? - How robust are the results?
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Does the project contribute to the protection and a lower use of resources? - Is there clear evidence for this?
Economic efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Has economic efficiency been considered? - Is the development economically viable or will the economic efficiency improve?

4. Requirements for participation

Natural or legal persons, groups of persons and institutions from Europe may apply with projects about innovative procedures, solutions, products and concepts. Also of interest are new findings with a strong focus on practical use and applicability within water management. You can only apply yourself, you cannot be nominated or suggested by anyone else and you cannot suggest anyone. If you apply as a group, there has to be named one so called 'leading applicant'. Members of the jury are not allowed to participate.

You can apply from Europe (geographically defined, not politically) and Israel. For the Mülheim Water Award, Turkey counts as part of Europe, as well as the Caucasian countries Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia. Not counted as Europe is Kazakhstan.

Due to the political situation, applications from the Russian Federation and Belarus are excluded until further notice.

The expansion to Israel is based on the long common history of Europe and Israel, which is characterized by growing interdependence and cooperation. Israel has also been involved in the EU's research and technological development framework programs since 1996.

The geographical limitation to Europe is related to the location of the headquarters of the applicant. If you apply as a group, at least one member of the group has to have

their headquarters in Europe. The implementation of the project you apply with does not have to be in Europe.

If the project you want to apply with ended more than two years ago (measured from the time of the application) you cannot apply with it any longer. You are allowed to apply with a project that isn't finished yet, but only if it is in an advanced state, concluded from a scientific point of view, and the results can be measured according to the evaluation criteria.

5. Application- and selection procedure

The application process is structured into two steps. First, the applicants need to apply with a short description of their project (**pre-qualification phase**). You only can apply online for the first step by using the application form you find on the website www.muelheim-water-award.com. The form will be available in time for the start of the competition. All other kinds of applications will be rejected.

Based on the project description the jury selects a shortlist of the most promising projects. The selected applicants (projects) are being informed by the coordination office and asked to hand in more detailed application documents for their project within a month (**nomination phase**).

The coordination office and the jury reserve the right to invite the applicants to introduce their projects or carry out an inspection on-site (review of project implementation).

You can apply in German or English language. Each applicant is only allowed to apply with one project.

The evaluation of the applications is organized by the coordination office but the decision about the winning project(s) is done by the jury, usually within four months after the nomination phase has ended.

6. Deadlines

You can only apply within the time frame. The pre-qualification phase starts at **01. December 2025** and ends **28. February 2026, 12.00 a.m., MET**. The application process has to be completed and the online form submitted before then. Later applications aren't going to be accepted. The second phase (nomination phase) starts when you are requested by the coordination office to hand in further application documents. The coordination office will inform you about the precise deadlines for the second phase.

7. Award ceremony

The award ceremony of the Mülheim Water Award 2026 takes place during the conference dinner of the 7. Mülheimer Wasseranalytisches Seminar (MWAS 2026) at the 16. September 2026 in Mülheim an der Ruhr, Germany.

8. Prize money and use of it

The price to win in 2026 are 10.000€, donated in equal parts by RWW Rheinisch-Westfälische Wasserwerksgesellschaft mbH and GERSTEL GmbH & Co. KG, both companies located in Mülheim in Germany. The prize money can be split between two winners. The decision if and to which parts the price money is split is subject to the jury. In the case that a group applied, the money goes to the leading applicant. The price money can be used for any purpose and the recipients of the price money agree to be mentioned by name publicly.

9. Jury

The members of the jury are up to five internationally recognized and accepted experts from science and practice that are dealing with drinking water supply and water analysis. You will find the members of the jury on our website www.muelheim-water-award.com.

10. Confidentiality

The submitted documents are made available for the coordination office, the members of the jury as well as the sponsors of the Mülheim Water Award. The other rights of the applicants remain unaffected. The information the jury and the coordination office receive during an application are treated strictly confidential. All data is treated strictly confidential too, data protection is respected. We do not accept liability for the loss of any data.

11. Miscellaneous

During the ongoing application procedure no further details are given by the coordination office or the jury. The coordination office and the jury are not obliged to give any explanations or reasons on their choice of projects for the second project phase. Together with the application you give us your consent to publish your names during the media coverage of the Mülheim Water Award.

Awarding the Mülheim Water Award happens on a voluntary basis. There is no legal obligation for the sponsors and the coordination office to award the price.

The judges' decision is final.

12. Severability clause

Should individual or several provisions of these conditions be or become invalid in whole or in part, the validity of the remaining provisions and of the contract shall not be affected. In place of the ineffective regulations, a retroactively similar-in-content regulation that comes closest to the intent of the desired regulation comes into effect.

13. Contact

The implementation and organization of the Mülheim Water Award is carried out by the coordination office at IWW Institut für Wasserforschung gemeinnützige GmbH in Mülheim an der Ruhr, Deutschland on behalf of the sponsors.

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