

Press release

Jugend gründet: Four students from Meißen win the ALTANA Special Prize in Chemistry

- Team from Landesgymnasium Sankt Afra aims to make car washing more sustainable

Wesel, June 13, 2024 – “BRINAX” is the name of the business idea of Hubert Szeja, Alex Nedelchev, Konstantin Kluba, and David Wittman. The students from Meißen were awarded the ALTANA Special Prize in Chemistry at the finals of the nationwide Jugend gründet (Youth Startups) school competition. The students from Sächsisches Landesgymnasium Sankt Afra impressed the Special Prize jury with their outstanding business plan for a sustainable car wash detergent.

The team noted that while sustainability advancements are being made throughout the transport industry, car washing has remained untouched. With their development, Hubert Szeja, Alex Nedelchev, Konstantin Kluba, and David Wittman intend to change this.

“Greenwashing, but the right way!”

BRINAX is set to become the first 100% sustainable car wash for vehicle exteriors. To achieve this, the high school students rely on energy-efficient manufacturing processes, recycled bottles, and organic ingredients, including a self-developed preservative made from hop extract – true to their motto: “Greenwashing, but the right way!”

Dr. Kristina Keisers, Investment Manager at ALTANA AG, expressed her admiration for the idea's potential during the award ceremony at this year's national finals: “There is a growing demand for sustainable products. Chemical innovations are therefore increasingly based on bio-based materials. Hence natural raw materials are turned into everyday products. It is impressive to see how much innovative strength, passion, and entrepreneurial spirit the team of students is putting into the development and market launch of their future solution.”

ALTANA AG recognizes outstanding business ideas in the field of chemistry with the Special Chemistry Prize. The winners can look forward to a trip to one of ALTANA AG's largest research sites in Wallingford, near New York, where they will be given exclusive insights into the company and the opportunity to exchange ideas with researchers.

Final with the best ten teams of the competition year

At the final on June 11 and 12, the ten best competition teams of the Jugend gründet competition were invited to Stuttgart to present their business ideas to the national jury. This year, three teams from Baden-Württemberg, three from Hesse, and two each from Bavaria and Lower Saxony qualified.

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The competition was bigger than ever before: In the current school year, 5,038 students participated in Jugend gründet, and for the first time, over a thousand business plans were submitted in the nationwide student competition aimed at fostering entrepreneurial spirit.

The challenge for the young participants was to convince the experts of their business idea at a self-designed exhibition stand, including a pitch at the Future Ideas Fair.

A great sign for the future

"We saw the ten best of over a thousand competition entries in the national final. To compete here alone is an impressive achievement," said Dr. Stefan Luther, Ministerial Director at the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) in his welcoming address. "Above all, however, it is a great sign for the future, which you - dear finalists - want to shape with a wealth of ideas, a great deal of expertise and genuine passion. No matter who is on the winners' podium today: You are all a great asset to us! And I'm sure that taking part in this competition will be a great benefit and a wonderful experience for you too."

National victory for innovative sonar visual aid

First place, and therefore the "Jugend gründet" National Winner 2024 and the "Porsche Special Digital Future Prize", went to the "blind Sonar" team of Ferdinand Horn, Julian Schenker, and Dominik Schuler from Lichtenberg-Gymnasium in Sachsenheim. Their business idea is a self-developed sonar visual aid that enables visually impaired people to perceive their surroundings haptically.

Second place went to the "Conez GmbH" team with Brad Melvin Timo Fokou, Balint Bettner, Paul Würz, Lorenz Herp, and Viola Kraut from the Schloss Hansenberg boarding school in Geisenheim. Their business idea is an interactive soccer training vest designed to give players real-time feedback.

Leon Pelikan from the Goetheschule in Wetzlar secured third place. In the competition, he developed a democracy app for young people with which the pupil aims to promote direct exchange between young people and politicians.

National jury struggles for final ranking

The jury emphasized the extremely high standard of the 26 finalists, which made it difficult for the experts to decide which teams should take first place. The other ideas presented in Stuttgart included warming and pain-relieving period underwear (Cozy Flow, Achern, BW); a sustainable, foldable geo triangle (GreenGeoFold, Geisenheim, HE); an app for training presentation skills ("Eloquent", Munich, BY), an app for digital education for senior citizens ("GenConnect", Darmstadt, HE); a 3D printing platform for creative DIY (MakerRent, Hanover, NI); AI-supported microscopy analyses for disease diagnosis (SeesDisease, Leer, NI); and a sports talent scouting platform (SkillSpotter, Sasbach, BW).

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The jury at the national final

Every year, the Jugend gründet national jury consists of rotating experts from a wide range of disciplines. This year, the jury included Maria Dietz (GFT Technologies), Mathias Fromberger (pikepartners), Heiko Gintz (Westphalian University of Applied Sciences), Prof. Dr. Nils Högsdal (HdM Stuttgart), Dr. Kristina Keisers (ALTANA), Carolin Köhler (Porsche), Carsten Kraus (CK Holding), Ralf Lauterwasser (Steinbeis), Jascha Mähler (WILDPLASTIC), Anne Schmitz (McKinsey), Amelie Sperber (supernatural), Sara Velte (McKinsey), and Kerassa Wassermann (Porsche).

Shaping the future with innovative ideas

At the heart of Jugend gründet is the mission to develop problem-solving solutions and shape the future with innovative ideas. This school competition aims to inspire young people to start businesses and strengthen their entrepreneurial skills. “All ideas share an unconditional desire to make things better,” says project manager Franziska Metzbaur. “To this end, our teams invest a great deal of work and even more passion into their business ideas. They show great courage on stage and often display astonishing professionalism. This enthusiasm inspires me anew every year – that’s exactly what founders need!”

This is JUGEND GRÜNDET

In Jugend gründet, young people take on the role of founders for a school year. First, the young people develop their own innovative business ideas and write business plans during the first semester (September – January). In the second semester (February – May), they run a company virtually in a business simulation game. The best teams from the business plan phase present their ideas at pitch events in the spring. The competition culminates in June with the top ten teams of the school year competing in the final. At the Future Ideas Fair, the winner of the national competition is decided, and the main prize is a startup discovery trip to Silicon Valley, USA.

Sponsors and supporters

Jugend gründet is a nationwide student competition that has been sponsored by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research since 2003. Participation is recommended by the Conference of Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs of the federal states and can be recognized as a special learning achievement. Several renowned sponsors support the competition with its prizes and events. The main sponsor is Porsche AG.

For detailed information, visit: www.jugend-gruendet.de

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Picture From left to right: Dr. Kristina Keisers (ALTANA), Alex Nedelchev, David Wittman, Konstantin Kluba
Photo: JUGEND GRÜNDET (Reprint free of charge)

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About ALTANA:

ALTANA is a global leader in true specialty chemicals. The Group offers innovative, environmentally compatible solutions for coating manufacturers, paint and plastics processors, the printing and packaging industries, the cosmetics sector, and the electrical and electronics industry. The product range includes additives, specialty coatings and adhesives, effect pigments, sealants and compounds, impregnating resins, and varnishes, and testing and measuring instruments. ALTANA's four divisions, BYK, ECKART, ELANTAS, and ACTEGA, all occupy a leading position in their target markets with respect to quality, product solution expertise, innovation, and service.

Headquartered in Wesel, Germany, the ALTANA Group has 64 production facilities and 68 service and research laboratories worldwide. Throughout the Group, around 8,000 people work to ensure the worldwide success of ALTANA. In 2023, ALTANA achieved sales of more than € 2.7 billion. About 7 percent of the total sales is invested in research and development each year. Its high earning power and high growth rate make ALTANA one of the world's most innovative, fastest growing, and most profitable chemical companies.

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