

Press release

ALTANA Special Prize in Chemistry Awarded to Student Duo from Heilbronn – Honored at the JUGEND GRÜNDET National Finals 2025

- Two students from the Freie Josef-Schwarz-Schule in Heilbronn have been awarded the prestigious ALTANA Special Prize in Chemistry during JUGEND GRÜNDET finals.
- The team impressed the jury with their innovative business idea for edible algae-based cups, designed to reduce plastic waste at sporting events.
- The official award ceremony took place yesterday during the national finals in Stuttgart.

Wesel, June 27, 2025 – More energy for athletes, less plastic waste in the environment – that is the goal of Maximilian Schmidt and Nico Wittmann, students at the Freie Josef-Schwarz-Schule in Heilbronn. With their business idea “AlgaSprint,” the two young innovators participated in the nationwide student competition JUGEND GRÜNDET – and succeeded.

Yesterday, Maximilian and Nico were honored with the ALTANA Special Prize in Chemistry at the competition finals in Stuttgart. Their clever concept: edible algae-based cups as a sustainable alternative to plastic ones. “Our cups are edible, rich in nutrients, and perfect for sporting events,” the duo explained. They already offer a variety of flavors.

“We were not only impressed by the originality of the idea, but also by the quality of the business plan. With a clear positioning at sporting events, the team identified a promising niche for application,” said Dr. Kristina Keisers, Investment Manager at ALTANA AG, during the award ceremony.

With this coveted Special Chemistry Prize, ALTANA AG recognizes outstanding entrepreneurial ideas in the field of chemistry. As winners, Maximilian and Nico can look forward to an absolutely unique experience: the students will embark on a trip to one of the largest research sites of the ALTANA Group in Wallingford, near New York. On site, they will be given exclusive insights into the company, engage with other passionate researchers, and of course, the trip would not be complete without some sightseeing in Big Apple.

National Victory for smart color mixing machine for artists

At the national finals on June 25 and 26, hosted by main sponsor Porsche AG, the top ten teams of the competition year presented their business ideas. Finalists hailed from Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg, Hesse, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Rhineland-Palatinate, and Saxony. Qualification was tougher than ever: in the 2024/2025 competition year, a total of 5,930 students participated in JUGEND GRÜNDET.

The national victory and main prize – a guided trip to Silicon Valley, USA – went to Team Eucarida from Simmern.

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The future is what we make of it

Finding solutions to pressing problems and shaping the future through innovative ideas – this is the guiding principle of JUGEND GRÜNDET. The competition aims to inspire young people to embrace entrepreneurship and to strengthen their future skills.

“According to a recent study, more than 80 percent of people no longer believe in a better future,” said project director Franziska Metzbour. “I am not one of them. Our students prove that every one of us can make a difference – even when the road is tough. Their courage gives me courage and makes me personally feel confident about the future.”

About JUGEND GRÜNDET

At JUGEND GRÜNDET, students take on the role of entrepreneurs for a full school year. In the first semester (September – January), they develop an innovative business idea and write a comprehensive business plan. In the second semester (February – May), they manage a virtual company in a business simulation. The best teams from the business plan phase present their ideas at pitch events in spring. The national finals are held in June, where the top ten teams compete at the Future Ideas Fair to win the national title and the main prize: an educational discovery trip to the start-up ecosystem of Silicon Valley, USA.



Photo

Laudator Dr. Kristina Keisers (center) with the two lucky award winners Nico Wittmann (left) and Maximilian Schmidt

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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 66 production facilities and 69 service and research laboratories worldwide. Throughout the Group, around 8,400 people work to ensure the worldwide success of ALTANA. In 2024, ALTANA achieved sales of more than € 3 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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