

Engage on Earth, Unite in Space

Exploring Next Level Cross-Sector Innovations

Extended deadline
until **31 March 2026!**

TERMS OF PARTICIPATION INNOSPACE MASTERS 2026 “Engage on Earth, Unite in Space. Exploring Next Level Cross-Sector Innovations” OF THE GERMAN SPACE AGENCY AT DLR

Content of Terms as of 25 March 2026

1. OVERVIEW OF INNOSPACE MASTERS 2026

The INNOspace Masters **2026** competition is hosted by German Aerospace Center (**DLR/host**) within the scope of the INNOspace initiative for strengthening innovation and establishing new markets. It is organised on its own responsibility by Institut für qualifizierende Innovationsforschung und -beratung (**IQIB/organiser**). Further competition **partners** are: The German ESA Business Incubation Centres (ESA BIC Bavaria, ESA BIC Hessen, ESA BIC Baden Württemberg, ESA BIC Northern Germany, and ESA BIC North Rhine-Westphalia), ESA Business Applications, Airbus, and OHB SE, and Mercedes-Benz.

2. THEME AND CHALLENGES OF THE INNOSPACE MASTERS 2026

INNOspace Masters is an international innovation competition to promote ideas for the transfer of technology and expertise from other industries to the space sector (spin-ins/New Space) or from space to non-space sectors (spin-offs). It awards the best ideas and solutions to overcome current challenges and improve our lives through cross-industry innovation.

The overall theme for the 2026 round of the competition is:

„Engage on Earth, Unite in Space. Exploring Next Level Cross-Sector Innovations“

Participants are invited to submit their ideas to one of the following six challenges:

[DLR Challenge 2026: “Groundbreaking Cross-Sector Innovations”](#)

[ESA BIC Challenge 2026: “Join the New Space Economy”](#)

[ESA BA Challenge 2026: “Space for a Resilient Society”](#)

[Airbus Challenge 2026: “Boosting Earth-Space Industry Partnerships”](#)

[OHB Challenge 2026: “Sovereign End-to-End Systems”](#)

[Mercedes-Benz car2space Challenge 2026: “Space up your Drive”](#)

Further information, including challenge descriptions, evaluation criteria, and rewards, can be found on the [INNOspace Masters website](#).

3. PARTICIPATION CRITERIA

Participation in the INNOspace Masters 2026 is open to enterprises, universities, non-university research institutions, start-up-teams, consortia, and individuals of legal adult age. General Exclusions: Employees of the host (including all [DLR institutes and facilities](#) as well as the German Space Agency at DLR), partners, affiliated organisations, and their relatives are **not permitted to participate in the individual challenge hosted by their organisation**. However, they may participate and submit proposals to challenges hosted by the other partners.

Challenge specific Participation Criteria:

[DLR Challenge 2026](#)

Open to universities, non-university research and scientific institutions and comparable institutions. Also eligible are companies that carry out economic activities, regardless of their legal form, **with a registered office or branch in the Federal Republic of Germany** (link to [Commission Regulation \(EU\) No 651/2014](#)). Companies without a German branch are excluded. Participants must comply with the formal funding procedures that are subject to the [general funding regulations of the German federal state](#). The **submission of a proposal does not constitute any legal entitlement to a grant**.

[ESA BIC Challenge 2026](#)

Participants must have a **residence and work permit in Germany**. In case of successful participation and potential incubation, participants agree to comply with the formal requirements of the respective ESA BIC:

[ESA BIC Bavaria](#), [ESA BIC Hessen](#), [ESA BIC Baden-Württemberg](#), [ESA BIC Northern Germany](#), [ESA BIC North Rhine-Westphalia](#).

[ESA BA Challenge 2026](#)

Participation in the ESA BA Challenge is **restricted to companies with a site located in Germany**. Participants in the ESA BA Challenge thus confirm that their **organisation/company is registered in Germany/under German Law**. Funding from the ESA Business Applications programme is not intended for the support of technological development – a high technology readiness level (TRL 9) is a pre-requisite for participation. The technology may be adapted to the requirements for application in a new market, but must have reached TRL 9 for application in an existing market.

Participation of research organisations, universities or research teams may be admissible if the submission focuses on the commercialization of existing intellectual property, prior research results or similar.

[Airbus, OHB](#), and [Mercedes-Benz car2space](#) Challenge 2026

No additional formal exclusion criteria.

4. SUBMISSION PROCESS

The submission period runs from **15 January, 13:00 CET until 31 March 2026, 13:00 CEST**.

All submissions must be made via the [secure online submission platform of INNOspace Masters 2026](#). Registration is required to create a user account, which may then be used to submit innovative business ideas to any of the six challenges offered.

When creating an account, participants provide contact details, which the organiser will use to support them during the submission process and inform them of all matters related to the INNOspace Masters 2026 as well as any other matters which the organiser may deem relevant for a participant of the competition.

After logging in, participants must select a challenge for their idea/solution. [All challenges of 2026 including the respective objectives and rewards](#) are to be found on the INNOspace Masters website. New challenges may be added during the competition runtime. Any additional challenge will be announced on the [INNOspace Masters website](#), which always reflects the latest status of information.

Participants submit their idea/solution by filling out all mandatory data and fields. To submit an idea, the participant must actively click the “Submit entry” button in the Award Force online submission platform no later than **13:00 CEST on 31 March 2026**. Only those ideas/solutions that contain all mandatory information will be considered for the INNOspace Masters 2026.

Please note:

- Each submission must be an original idea submitted to only one challenge.
- Participants can submit multiple ideas but not the same or slightly altered idea to different challenges.
- Submissions are only valid if all mandatory fields are completed before the deadline.

5. EVALUATION PROCESS

Each submission will receive its own ID. The submissions will be evaluated by an expert panel of the respective challenge and according to the [evaluation criteria for each challenge](#). All experts assigned with the evaluation of the submitted ideas must commit to a non-disclosure agreement (NDA) before the proposals are put forward for evaluation. All employees of the host and the partners of the INNOspace Masters competition 2026 as well as from the group of associated companies in accordance with section 15 of the Companies Act (Aktiengesetz) can also be included in the group of experts. In this case, the host or partners ensure the further confidential handling of the data.

The specific evaluation process for each challenge can be accessed on the INNOspace Masters website:

[DLR Challenge 2026](#)

[ESA BIC Challenge 2026](#)

[ESA BA Challenge 2026](#)

[Airbus Challenge 2026](#)

[OHB Challenge 2026](#)

[Mercedes-Benz car2space Challenge 2026](#)

6. CONFIDENTIALITY

The organiser of the INNOspace Masters 2026 will take necessary measures to ensure the confidentiality of all submissions. The submitted ideas/solutions will be safeguarded with the highest level of care against unauthorised access by third parties. The personnel and experts involved in managing the competition are committed to treating all matters confidentially. Furthermore, all personal data of participants will be handled with discretion and will only be shared with the designated group of individuals specified by the organiser. During the awards ceremony, the awarded ideas/solutions will be made public along with the challenge winners.

7. INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY AND LIABILITY

All rights that the participants hold pertaining to their idea/solution will remain with the participants. Whether participants realise their ideas/solutions on their own responsibility or together with the host/a partner of the INNOspace Masters 2026 is left to participant's discretion. Please note: Participants will not acquire any rights to their idea/solution by participating in the INNOspace Masters 2026. The formal protection of the participant's idea/solution is subject to the participant only. Through the participation in the INNOspace Masters 2026 and/or the publication of the idea/solution during the award ceremony, any protection of the idea (if not previously protected by a patent) may be rendered void or otherwise lost. The idea may become common property. It is therefore strongly recommended to sufficiently protect the ideas/solutions upfront in form of an NDA or by applying a patent, utility model, or another form of protection right.

In case the participants have developed their idea/solution in or in connection with their employment, they should notify their employer prior to the participation in the INNOspace Masters competition.

Despite all efforts to keep the participant's idea/solution confidential prior to its publication, participants have to understand and acknowledge that neither the organiser nor the host/partners assume any liability for any damage resulting from the idea/solution becoming public.

In participating, participants affirm that they or the co-applying consortium members are the sole owner of all rights pertaining to the idea/solution submitted and that their participation will not violate the rights of any third party. Should any third-party rights nonetheless come to light, participants further affirm that the organiser will not be made liable for any amount of resulting damages/claims.

8. USE OF PERSONAL DATA, PHOTOS AND VIDEOS

By participating in this competition, each participant agrees that the organiser and the host may use the personal data, photos and videos taken in the course of the competition (including photos and videos taken at the Winner's

Pitch in Bonn and the **INNOspace Masters 2026 award ceremony** in Berlin), and the description as well as the uploaded illustration image file of the idea for public relations purposes.

This consent is voluntary and can be refused without giving reasons and without having any disadvantages as a result. Participants may revoke this consent at any time in text form (e.g. letter, e-mail) with effect for the future.

9. MISCELLANEOUS

The award decisions will not be subject to dispute in a court of law. Decisions of the experts of the competition are final and binding for all participants in all aspects of the competition. Participants have no right to a statement of the experts' decisions.

The organiser assumes no responsibility for providing the host/partners' rewards. This includes cash rewards and in-kind rewards. The provision of the rewards lies exclusively with the host/partners.

Each winner as well as those placed second or third are responsible for all federal, state, local, provisional and other taxes.

The organiser reserves the right to modify these terms, including any of the deadlines set forth herein, at any time.

Participation in this competition shall be governed by German law. Place of jurisdiction shall be Cologne, Germany.

10. CONTACT & PRIVACY POLICY

For information on the competition please visit the [INNOspace Masters website](#). For any information about the privacy policy at DLR, please refer to [Information about Data Protection](#). If you have any further questions, please inquire at INNOspace-Masters@iqib.de.