

Leibniz Competition:

Strategic Goals, Research Assessment and
Monitoring

Last edited: December 2025

Preliminaries:

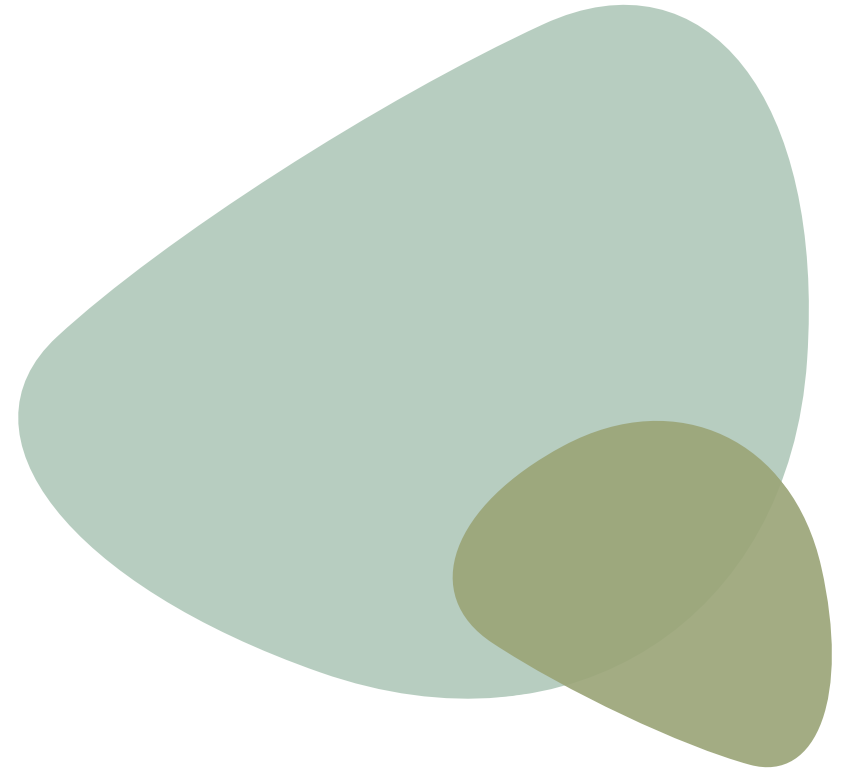
This set of slides is aimed at all researchers and science officers in Leibniz institutions. It is intended to provide an initial overview of the internal competition procedures in the Leibniz Association, in terms of their objectives and funding opportunities, but also with a view to creating the greatest possible transparency of the selection procedures themselves and including a cross-year overview.

Some of the slides contain [links](#), some of the slides contain notes with additional information.

*A PowerPoint version of the slides is available upon request
(please contact saw@leibniz-gemeinschaft.de)*

Overview

1. The Leibniz Association
2. Leibniz Competition
 - 2.1 Objectives/ Evaluation Criteria
 - 2.2 Eligibility and funding
 - 2.3 Review process/ Assessment
 - 2.4 Transparency and fairness
3. Additional information and contact



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The Leibniz Association

The Leibniz Association at a glance

- Founded in 1995
- An association of 96 independent institutes, including 17 infrastructure facilities and 8 research museums
- Financial volume € 2 billion (2021) by Joint Science Conference
- Around 21,000 employees, including 12,000 scientists
- Evaluation every 7 years
- Strong regional roots in every German federal state



96 institutes
17 infrastructure facilities
8 research museums

The Leibniz Association covers a broad range of scientific fields

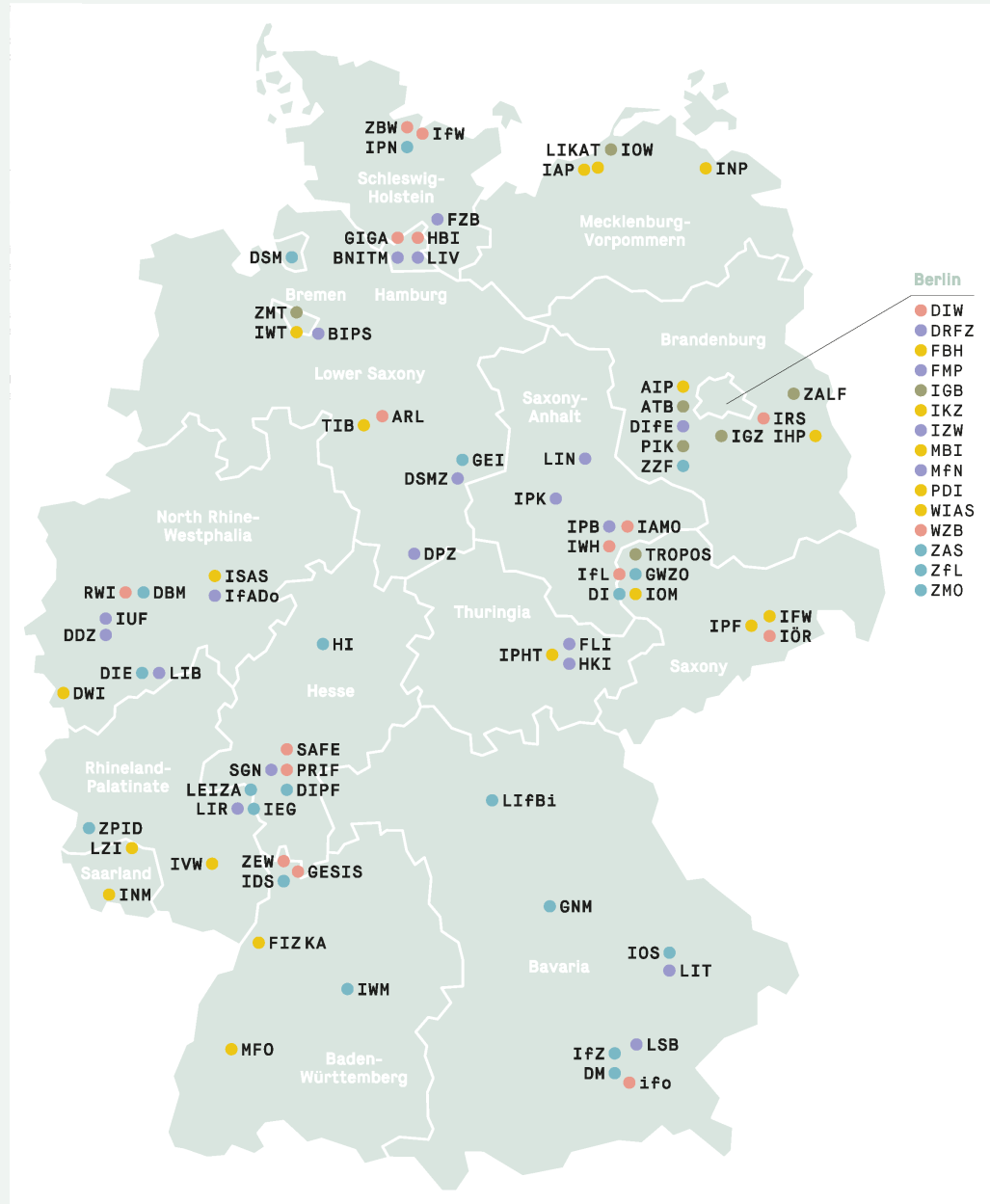
Section A: Humanities and Educational Research (23 institutions)

Section B: Economics, Social Sciences, Spatial Research (18 institutions)

Section C: Life Sciences (24 institutions)

Section D: Mathematics, Natural Sciences and Engineering (23 institutions)

Section E: Environmental Research (8 institutions)



The Leibniz Mission: Collaborative research

Scientific excellence and social relevance

- Knowledge-based and applied research
- Interdisciplinary and collaborative research
- Close collaboration with universities
- Wide range of research infrastructure facilities, eight research museums

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Leibniz Competition

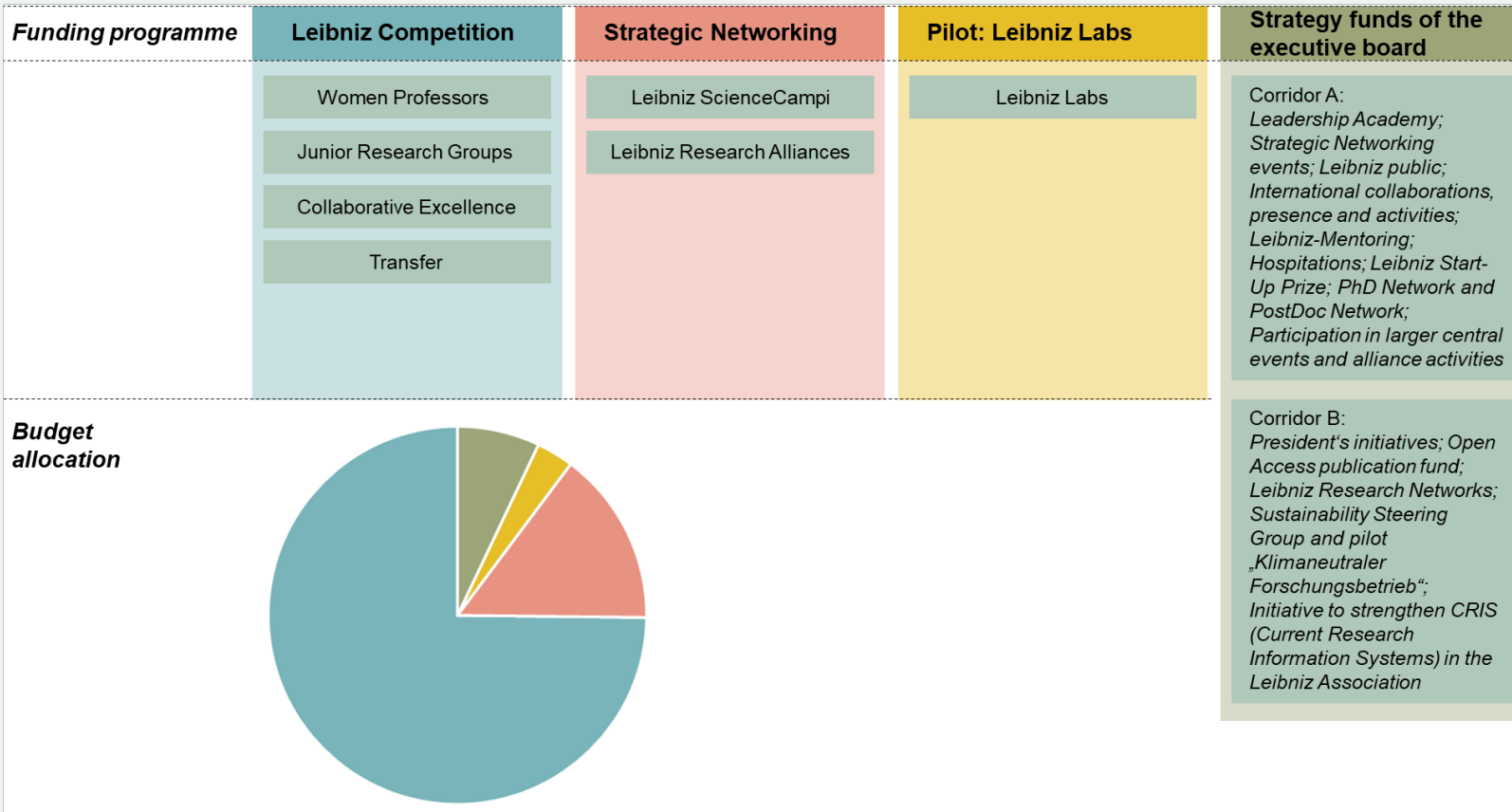
Why a Competition within the Leibniz Association?

- To achieve **the Leibniz Association's strategic objectives**
- To stimulate the Leibniz Association's continued **profile development**
- As an incentive of **internal competition and collaboration**
- Initiated in 2005 within the context of the Pact for Research and Innovation



Research funding within the Leibniz Association

Budget allocation depicts the total budget allocated to a specific funding programme in the competition rounds 2018-2026 (Leibniz Competition, Strategic Networking, Leibniz Labs) and in the calendar years 2017-2025 (Strategy funds), respectively





Junior Research Groups

- Promoting young talents
- Attracting the best minds
- Internationalization



Women Professors

- Attracting the best minds
- More women in scientific leadership positions
- Internationalization



Collaborative Excellence

- Promotion of collaboration within Leibniz and between Leibniz institutes and their networks
- Optional: high risk – high gain



Transfer

- Strengthening the transfer into politics, society and the economy

Strategic priorities of the four Open Topic funding programmes

The main strategic goals of the Leibniz Competition are: Attracting and retaining the best minds, promoting dynamic development, deepening networking, strengthening transfer to business and society



Objectives

Gain outstanding scientists from Germany and abroad

Promote early career researchers

Offer early independence

Leibniz Junior Research Groups

Evaluation criteria

The candidate's

- Academic performance (based on the quality, number and impact of publications and funding obtained from third parties, as well as activities in the areas of peer review, teaching and mentoring)
- Career status and further career perspectives
- Scientific independence and integration into the institute's research landscape
- International research experience

The project's

- Academic and methodological quality
- Originality and level of innovation
- Maturity and relevance



Leibniz Programme for Women Professors

Objectives

Promote outstandingly talented women and their innovation potential

Increase percentage of women in leadership positions

Strengthen strategic collaboration with universities

Evaluation criteria

- The candidate's academic profile and career prospects
- Academic excellence of the candidate's research project and its importance to the Leibniz institute and the scientific environment
- Strategic and structural impact
- Status of the joint appointment



Leibniz Collaborative Excellence

Objectives

Highly innovative research

Strategic collaboration within the Leibniz Association and the greater scientific community

Optional: high risk – high gain

Consolidating already established Leibniz topics as well as development of new fields of research

Evaluation criteria

- Academic excellence and innovativeness
- For high risk – high gain: expected scientific breakthrough or fundamentally new perspective
- Quality of the network
- Synergies of the collaboration and added value through networking
- The topic's relevance
- Strategic and structural impact



Objectives

Qualitative and quantitative development of transfer of knowledge and technology

Leibniz Transfer

Evaluation criteria

- Innovativeness and relevance
- Prospects of success and feasibility
- Target groups and efficacy
- Sustainability
- Assessment of the project leaders
- Added value for the Leibniz Association



Structural aspects relevant for all programmes

- **Concept for research data management**
- **Dissemination of results:** Open Access Publications are expected; Two per cent of the project funds must be budgeted and used for open access publication costs
- **Outreach activities**, where applicable
- **Equality standards and diversity**
- **Career development**
- **Good scientific practice**



Eligibility and funding

- In total **25 million € p.a.** available
- **Every Leibniz Institute** can submit applications
- **1 or 2 applications per institute** as lead applicant (up to 1 million € total per application)*
- An application for the **Leibniz Programme for Women Professors** can be **added twice per year**

** A non-lead Leibniz Institute can contribute a share of its own application budget (this is called budget partnership). The lower limit for this is 200,000 EUR. A budget partnership relieves the application budget of the lead institute and enables it to submit further applications. You can find more information about budget partnerships in our [FAQs](#).*



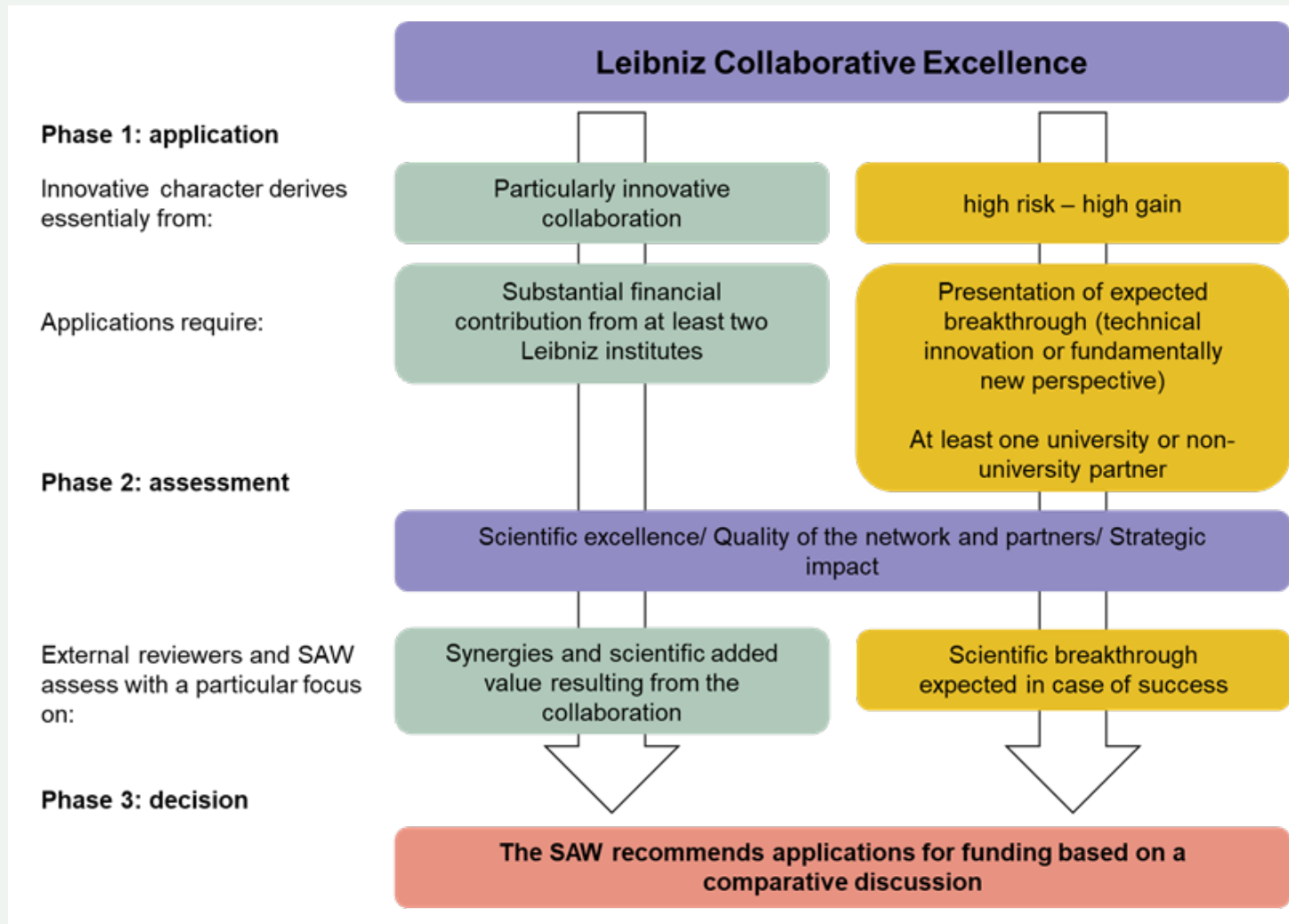
How to apply

- Application rounds start with the submission of an **expression of interest** (30 September for the first round of the Leibniz Programme for Women Professors, 30 March for all other programmes including the second round of the Leibniz Programme for Women Professors).
- **Full applications** are submitted by 30 October (first round of the Leibniz Programme for Women Professors) and 30 April (all other programmes including the second round of the Leibniz Programme for Women Professors)
- Applications are submitted via an electronic application system. Access is given to scientific institute directors who can then invite other persons to create their own accounts and edit or submit expressions of interest and full applications.
- The detailed project proposal follows a defined structure and must not exceed a total length of 12 pages (excluding title page and bibliography). Proposal templates are available in our [Wiki](#). Resubmissions are allowed an additional half page to comment on changes made in the application.

Categories in the programme Leibniz Collaborative Excellence

Applications in the programme Leibniz Collaborative Excellence fall into one of two categories:

- **high risk – high gain** – (the expected breakthrough or fundamentally new perspective have to be presented in the application)
- Projects where the **innovative character derives mainly from the collaboration** (at least two Leibniz institutes must substantially benefit from the application)



Research Assessment in the Leibniz Association

- Defined programmes, structured proposals, specific evaluation criteria
- **Peer review:** each proposal gets a written assessment by two external experts and two rapporteurs from the **Senate Competition Committee (SAW)**
- Discussion in **panel** and **plenary sessions** of the **SAW**
- **Committee Care and Culture:** Nominations, briefings, feedback rounds, conversation culture and confidence/trust
- The Leibniz Association joined the Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment (CoARA) in 2022 and thus committed itself to recognise the diverse contributions that research makes and to emphasise qualitative assessments.

Submission of applications



Review process

Two external expert opinions are obtained for each application and examined for any conflict of interest. About 70 per cent of the external reviewers work abroad.

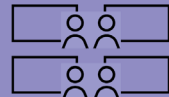
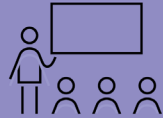


Written reporting by SAW

The scientific members of the SAW write comparative reports of the applications and their reviews. It is determined which applicants to the programme Leibniz-Junior Research Groups will be invited for interviews.

Interviews

Personal presentation of selected candidates in the programme Leibniz-Junior Research Groups to a selection panel of the SAW.



Subject-specific SAW panels

Discussion of all proposals in a scientific field (humanities and educational sciences, social sciences, life sciences, natural sciences and engineering) and determination of preliminary evaluations.



SAW selection meeting

Discussion of the applications and determination of funding recommendations. These are presented to the Senate of the Leibniz Association, which makes the final decision.

The four levels of quality assurance during the review process

SAW: Senate Competition Committee



Important procedural features

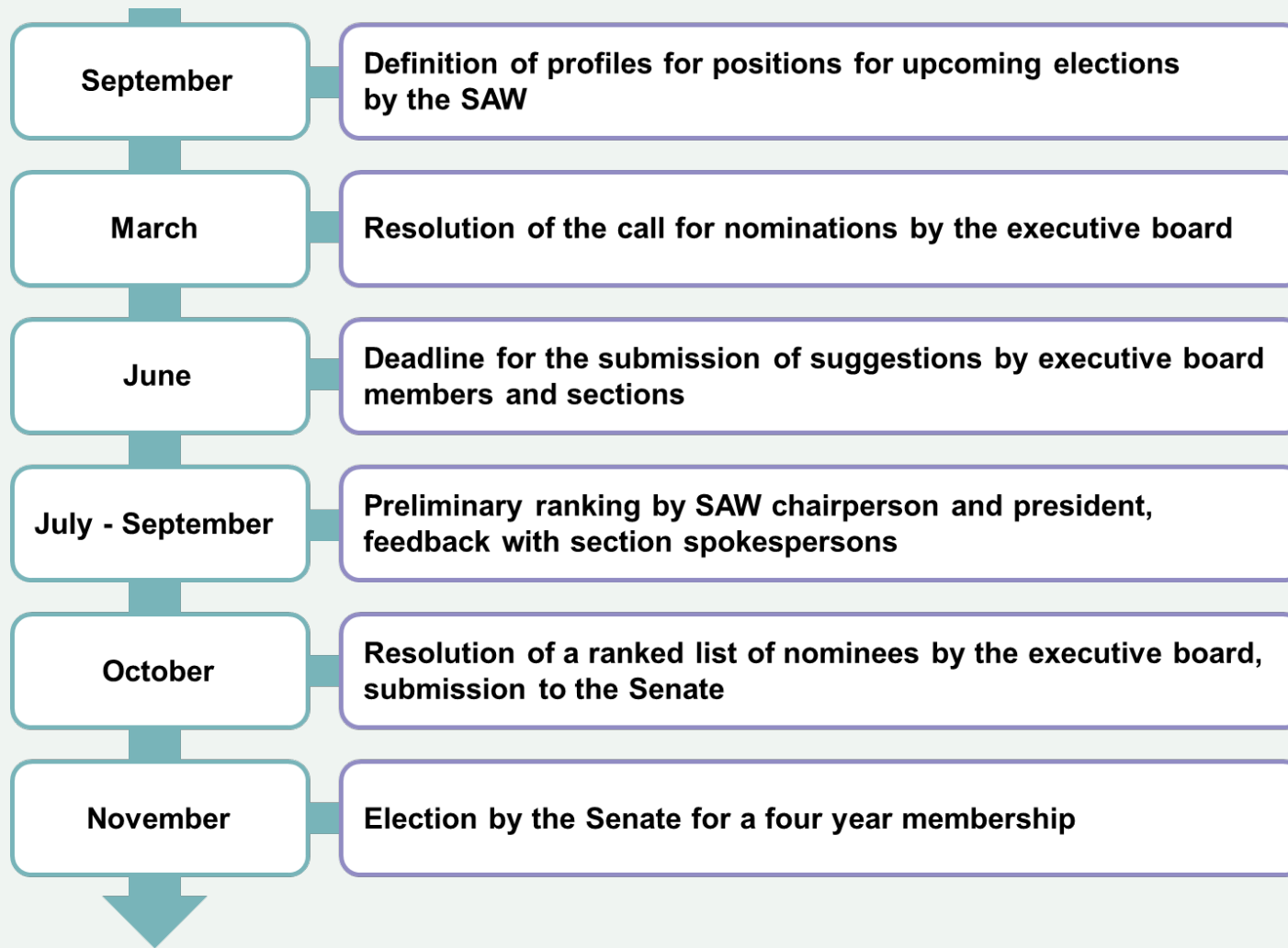
- **Personal presentation of selected applicants for Leibniz Junior Research Groups:** A one-day selection meeting to assess the prospects of success and leadership potential
- **Additional deadline in the Leibniz Programme for Women Professors:** Since 2020, applications can be submitted twice per year
- **Focus on qualitative assessment:** Narrative CVs; Highlight the 5-10 most important publications, comment on the relevance of these publications for the project
- **Pilot in Leibniz Transfer:** In order to bundle transfer activities from several institutes, the maximum funding amount per application in the programme Leibniz Transfer will be increased to 3 million € for the Leibniz Competition 2027. The requested amount must be covered by the institutes' application budgets; the application budget of 1 million € per institute remains unchanged.



Who assesses? Members of the Senate Competition Committee (SAW)

- The head of the SAW is **Sebastian Lentz**, Vice President of the Leibniz Association, deputy is **Barbara Sturm**, Vice President of the Leibniz Association
- The members of the SAW are:
 - 23 External Researchers,
 - 2 Members of the Leibniz Senate (and 2 deputies for them)
 - 5 Section spokespersons,
 - Representatives of the DFG, the GWK office, the German Council of Science and Humanities, and the federal and state governments (without voting rights)
- The 23 external researchers and the two members of the Leibniz Senate make funding recommendations.

Election of External Researchers to the SAW



Humanities and Educational Research

Modern and Contemporary History
History and Culture of Eastern Europe
Psychology
Linguistics and Digital Humanities
Educational Sciences and Educational Research

Social Sciences

Social Sciences
Human Geography and Regional Sciences
Economics/ Microeconomics
Economics/ Macroeconomics

Life Sciences

Infectiology/ Immunology
Epidemiology, Prevention and Public Health
Zoology, Evolutionary Biology and Neuroscience
Microbiology/ Biochemistry/ Drugs
Molecular Cell Biology

Natural and Engineering Sciences

New Materials/ Chemistry
Physics, experimental
Physics, theoretical
Materials Science and Engineering
Electronic and Photonic Materials and Applications

Environmental Sciences

Geo-, Environmental and Agricultural Sciences
Environment and global Ecological Systems
Biodiversity Research

Applied Informatics and Data Science

Denomination of SAW positions for External Researchers

A list of SAW members is also available [online](#).

Denomination of SAW positions for External Researchers

as of 1st April 2026

A list of SAW members is also available [online](#).

Humanities and Educational Research

Ute Daniel
Klaus Gestwa
Michaela Riediger
Elmar Souvignier
Anke Holler

Social Sciences

Monika Eigmüller
Johannes Glückler
Stefan Trautmann
Valeriya Dinger

Life Sciences

Christian Bogdan
Sabine Rohrmann
Ilona Grunwald Kadow
Thomas Böttcher
Sandra Iden

Natural and Engineering Sciences

Patrick Théato
Manfred Bayer
Ingrid Mertig
Eckhard Quandt
Regina Dittmann

Environmental Sciences

Georg Guggenberger
Andreas Oschlies
Josef Settele

Barbara Hammer



Fundamentals of the process



- Programme documents including evaluation criteria
- [GO-SAW](#) (rules of procedure)
- Annually updated selection procedure paper

Feedback to applicants and institutions



- Brief description of the selection procedure
- Anonymized Reviews
- SAW statements to the respective application

Communication



- Annual [report](#) available online
- Overview of funded projects on the website
- Feedback round with section spokespersons and external scientists in the SAW

Monitoring



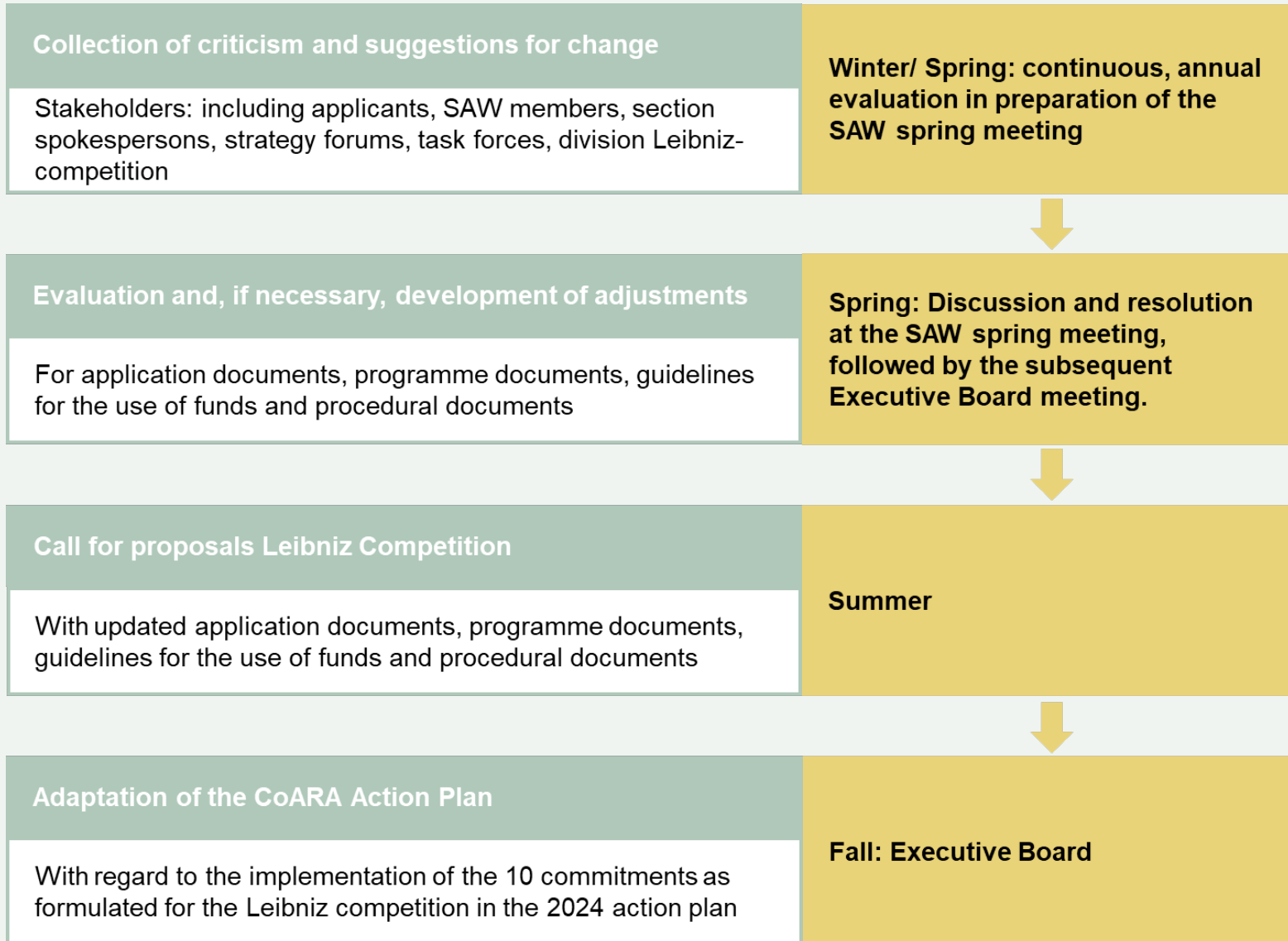
- Distribution of budget among funding programs
- Chances of success according to e.g. scientific field; Gender; Institute size

Transparency and fairness of the procedure

Programme documents are available [online](#)

Process to reflect assessment

Scheme of annual reflection and adaptation of research assessment



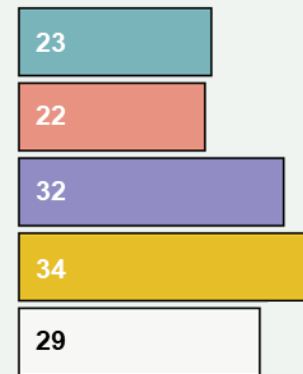


Funding rates according to scientific fields

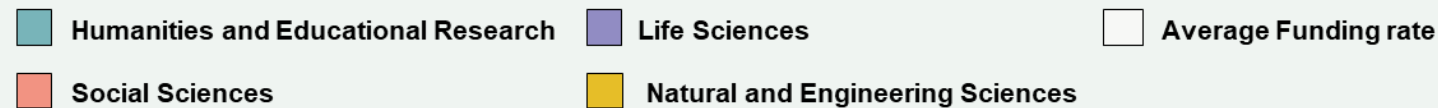
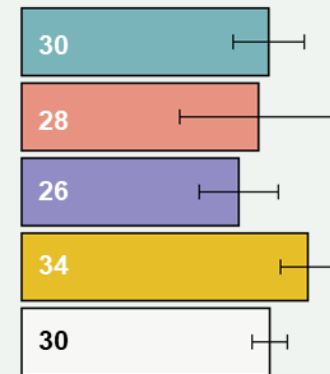
Funding rates vary from year to year depending on the quality of proposals.

Funding rates are depicted as percentage of the overall requested budget per scientific field. Values are means, error bars are standard deviations

Competition 2026



Competitions 2021-2025

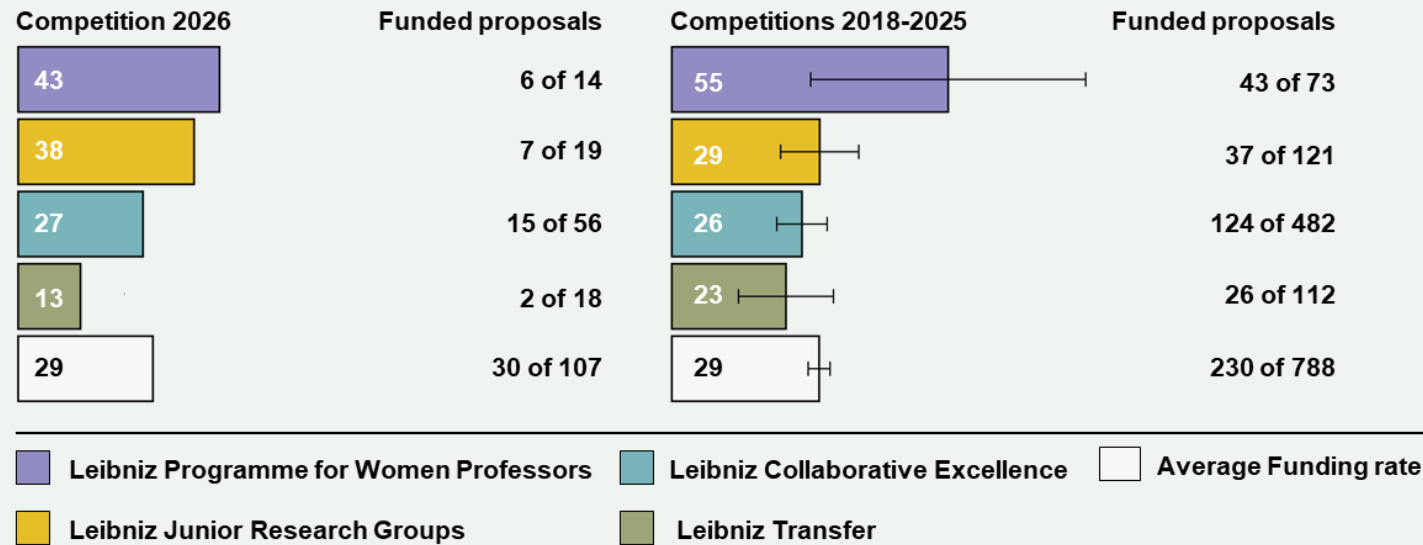




Funding rates according to programmes

Funding rates vary from year to year depending on the quality of proposals. There is an open competition between programmes.

Funding rates are depicted as percentage of the overall requested budget per scientific field. Values are means, error bars are standard deviations

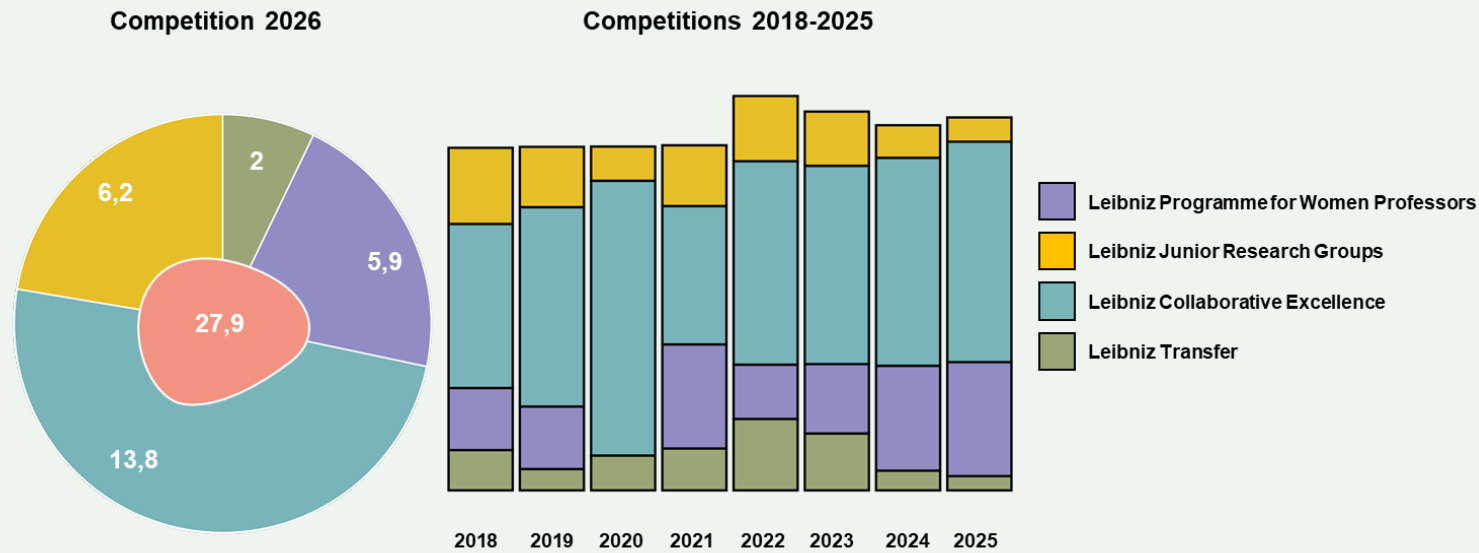




Budget allocation between programmes

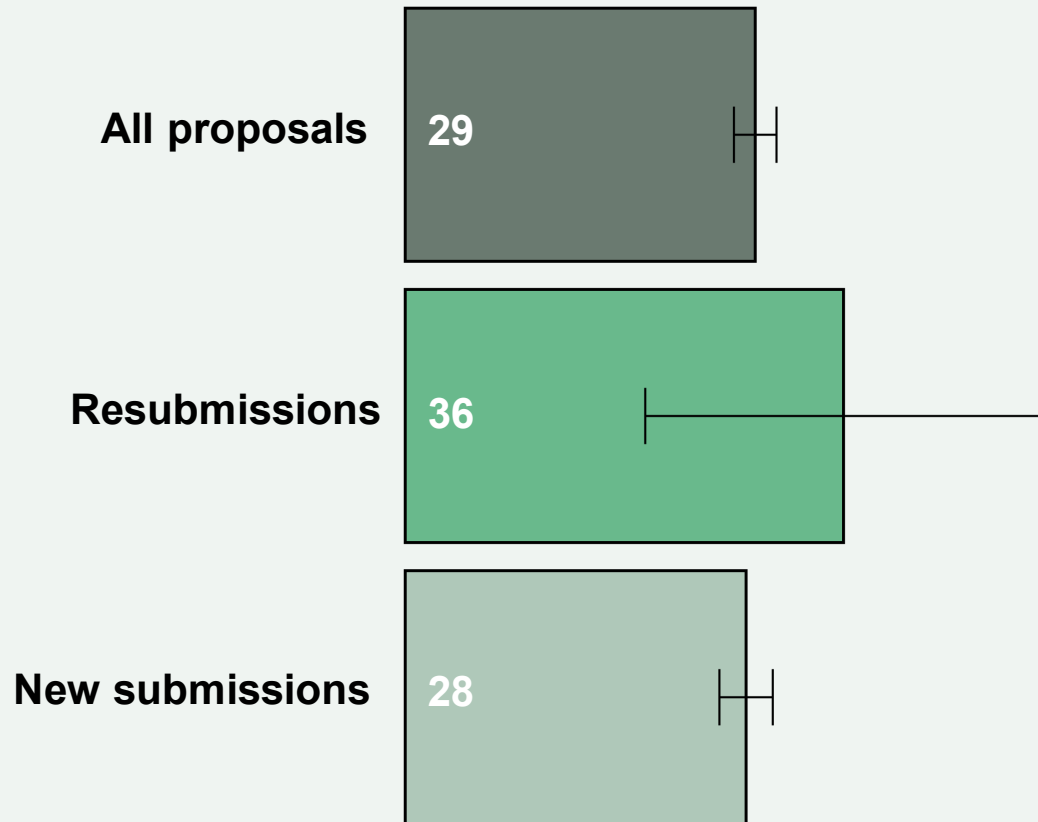
Most of the budget is allocated to the programme Leibniz Collaborative Excellence, reflecting the high number of proposals.

Budgets are depicted as million €





Success rate



Success rate of resubmissions

The average success rate of resubmissions in the Leibniz Competition is 36 %, the overall success rate is 29%

Bars depict mean values (Competitions 2021-2026), error bars are +/- sd

Around 13 % of all applications are resubmissions (average of Leibniz Competitions 2021-2026)

Success rates of interdisciplinary proposals

The SAW is particularly well-suited for assessing **interdisciplinary applications** due to its structure: As all scientific fields of the Leibniz Association are represented in the SAW, the proposals can be assessed from two perspectives that are subject-related.

- The success rate of these applications (27%) is comparable to the overall success rate (29%)
- Interdisciplinary applications are submitted in all programmes and from all sections
- More than two thirds of all proposals in the Leibniz Competition 2026 were classified as interdisciplinary

Data from Leibniz Competitions 2020-2026

Definition

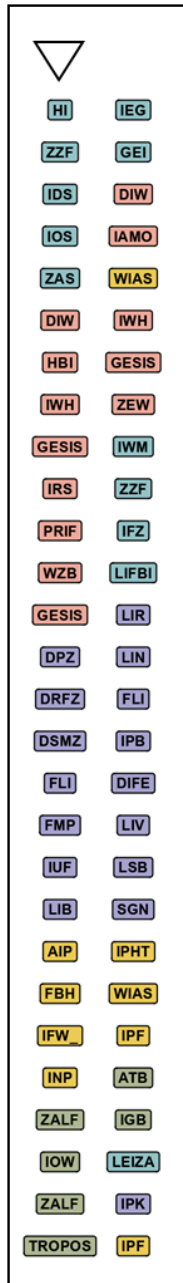
A project in the Leibniz Competition is classified as interdisciplinary if:

- a. at least two Scientific Fields are selected by the applicants

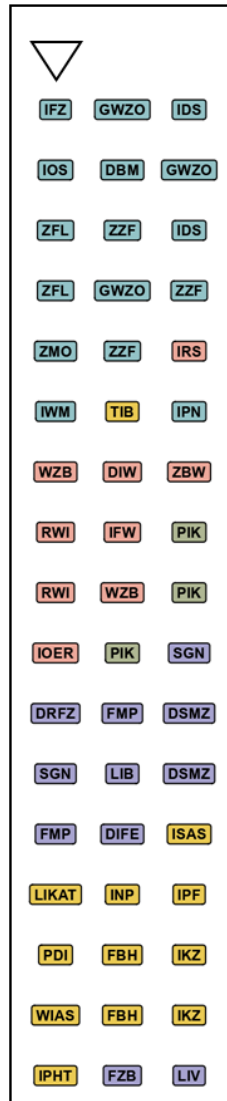
OR

- b. two SAW members with different expertise can be assigned in a subject-related manner

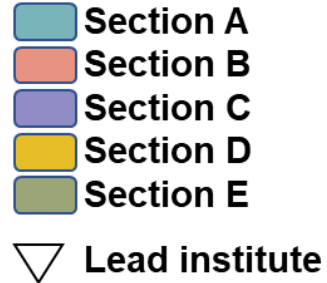
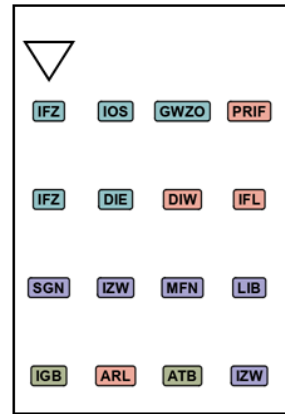
2 partners



3 partners



4 partners



Collaborations between Leibniz institutes

Collaborations in 49 active projects within Leibniz Collaborative Excellence

Most of the projects involving collaboration of Leibniz institutes are organized in tandems (28) or groups of three (17).

- There are collaborations within one section or across different sections.

Active projects as per 31 December 2025

Projects are sorted by section of the lead institute and subsequently by intra- oder intersectional collaboration



Participation and success of women researchers

* Percentage of women in scientific leadership positions in the Leibniz Association: aggregated data from all management levels, data was obtained for the “Bericht zum Stand der Umsetzung des Pakts für Forschung und Innovation 2024”.

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025
Percentage of Women								
as applicants in the Leibniz Competition	35%	26%	40%	45%	56%	46%	56%	51%
without Women Professors	31%	24%	33%	41%	50%	40%	47%	44%
as project leaders in the Leibniz Competition	39%	26%	50%	34%	48%	41%	56%	60%
without Women Professors	27%	26%	30%	24%	38%	19%	37%	50%
in scientific leadership positions*	31%	32%	32%	32%	33%	35%	35%	%



Participation of Leibniz institutes

* Note that the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW) and the Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP) are counted as two institutes in the Leibniz Competition.

**Participation rate incl. non-lead institutes also defines an institute as participating if it is an institutional collaboration partner in at least one application.

Leibniz Competition round	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Eligible Leibniz institutes*	92	94	96	97	97	98	98	97	97
Participation rate as lead institutes	92%	90%	80%	82%	87%	83%	78%	85%	88%
Participation rate incl. non-lead institutes**	97%	94%	85%	90%	89%	84%	90%	93%	94%

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Additional information and contact



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sollberger(at)leibniz-gemeinschaft.de | Leibniz Transfer | Leibniz ScienceCampi | Leibniz Research Alliances

Additional information and contact

[Website](#) | Programmes | Programme Documents | Guidelines for the use of Leibniz Competition funds

[Wiki](#) | Templates | FAQs | Application Procedures | Administration of projects

[Funded projects](#)