

Participation Terms Digital Future Challenge

English version

Status 23 July 2026

The following participation terms set out the rules and prerequisites for participation in the Digital Future Challenge, which is run by Initiative D21 e.V. and Deloitte-Stiftung (Foundation).

1. Definitions

“SUBMISSION” means the digital submission of an IDEA or SOLUTION by the deadline of the idea phase or by the deadline of the elaboration phase of the challenge.

“ORGANIZERS” means Deloitte-Stiftung (Foundation) within the Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft e.V. and Initiative D21 e.V.

“INVENTIVE RIGHTS” means patent or utility model rights.

“FINALISTS” are the persons who qualify as members of one of the five top teams for the elaboration phase of the Digital Future Challenge.

“WINNERS” are the persons who, as members of one of the three teams selected on the basis of the quality of their SOLUTIONS by the ORGANIZERS and the jury at the close of the CHALLENGE, are awarded prize money.

“IDEA” refers to a submission in the idea phase (for the semifinal).

“SOLUTION” refers to the elaboration and the pitch in the elaboration phase (for the final and publication).

“PROTECTABLE CONTENT” means any content that may be eligible for protection under specific intellectual property laws (in particular copyright, trademark, design, patent and utility model laws).

“USE CASE PROVIDERS” means all organizations that provide a use case within the framework of the Digital Future Challenge.

2. Eligibility to participate

2.1. Participation in the Digital Future Challenge is free of charge.

2.2. All participants must read, accept and comply with these participation terms and the obligations set out herein.

2.3. This challenge is a student challenge. Participation and awarding of prizes are therefore limited to natural persons aged between 18 and 35 who are currently enrolled at a German university.

2.4. Each participant may take part in the current Digital Future Challenge only once, may be a member of only one team, and may submit an IDEA or SOLUTION together with their team members depending on the phase.

2.5. Participants must form teams of two to four members and submit their IDEA/SOLUTION jointly.

2.6. Any participant who violates the provisions of these participation terms may be excluded from the Digital Future Challenge at any time. The ORGANIZERS also reserve the right to exclude the affected teams in their entirety from the Digital Future Challenge.

3. Registration / digital submission management

3.1. To participate in the Digital Future Challenge, each prospective participant must register online at <https://digital-future-challenge.mein-wettbewerb.de/> and submit all required data electronically.

4. Duration, dates and submissions

4.1. The Digital Future Challenge usually runs from October to March and is divided as follows:

4.2. Idea phase runs from 1 October 2026 until 1 December 2026 at 23:59 (deadline); the completed Submission Template (PDF document) must be submitted by the registered team via the digital portal.

4.3. Semifinal takes place on 14 January 2027; the pitch presentation (PPTX document) must be submitted via the digital portal three working days beforehand by 23:59.

4.4. Elaboration phase runs from 15 January to 17 February 2027 inclusive, with the final on 22 February 2027 including announcement of the WINNERS and publication of the IDEAS/SOLUTIONS; the pitch presentation (PPTX document) and the completed publication template (DOCX document) must be submitted via the digital portal three working days beforehand by 23:59.

5. Procedure – idea phase

5.1. Participants/teams must submit their IDEA by the deadline (see clause 4.2) as described in section 8. IDEAS will only be considered if all team members have approved the SUBMISSION by the end of the IDEA PHASE.

The SUBMISSION of the IDEA must be made exclusively using our Submission Template via the digital portal at <https://digital-future-challenge.mein-wettbewerb.de/>.

5.2. The idea phase ensures that all submissions are complete, timely and meet the content requirements of the competition. The following formal criteria must be met:

Formal check (formal criteria):

- Only the official Submission Template was used
- The submission is made within the specified deadline
- The length requirement (max. 8 slides) is complied with
- The file is submitted in the specified format (PDF) (PPTX optional as a supplement)
- The submitted PDF is correctly formatted and technically fully readable
- The Submission Template is completely filled out

- The submitted IDEA clearly matches the respective use case in terms of content

After the formal check, a brief content review will also be carried out by the ORGANIZERS. The initial content evaluation is based on the following criteria:

Brief content review (content criteria):

- Consistent and comprehensible presentation of the IDEA, in particular the short description and the unique selling point (USP)
- Overall impression of the Submission Template

On this basis a ranking is created and 50 submissions are forwarded to the jury for further evaluation. There is no entitlement to being forwarded to the jury.

5.3. The jury qualifies a total of ten teams for the semifinal. The evaluation of the IDEAS is carried out in accordance with clause 9 of these participation terms.

5.4. Ten teams in total advance to the semifinal. These are composed as follows: the teams with the highest ranking per use case are invited. If there are fewer than ten use cases in the competition, additional teams will be invited based on the highest jury scores.

6. Procedure – semifinal

6.1. The ten qualified teams will be given the opportunity to participate in workshops during a one-day semifinal event and to present their IDEA to a jury in the form of a pitch.

6.2. Based on the presentation of the IDEAS, a jury will qualify a total of five teams for the subsequent elaboration phase and for the final. The evaluation of the IDEAS is at the discretion of the jury. If participants or teams plan to support their presentation with multimedia content, these materials must be uploaded to the digital portal three working days before the semifinal and must comply with the format requirements defined there: <https://digital-future-challenge.mein-wettbewerb.de/>.

7. Procedure – elaboration phase & final

7.1. Only the five teams that qualify through the idea phase and the semifinal have the opportunity to participate in the elaboration phase and the final.

7.2. In this phase, the five teams will elaborate their IDEA into a more complex concept based on jury feedback. Teams must upload their SOLUTION and the completed publication template to the digital portal by the specified deadline (see 4.4) and comply with the format requirements defined there: <https://digital-future-challenge.mein-wettbewerb.de/>.

SOLUTIONS will only be considered if all team members have approved the SUBMISSION by the end of the elaboration phase.

7.3. The elaborated SOLUTIONS of the five teams will be presented at the final to the ORGANIZERS and a jury in the form of a pitch. If participants or teams plan to support their presentation with multimedia content, these materials must be uploaded via the digital portal three working days before the final and must comply with the format requirements defined there: <https://digital-future-challenge.mein-wettbewerb.de/>.

7.4. On the basis of the pitch presentations, the jury will select the three best teams, rank them according to the quality of their SOLUTION and award prizes in accordance with clause 10.

8. Characteristics of IDEAS / SOLUTIONS

8.1. All SUBMISSIONS in the form of IDEAS and SOLUTIONS must meet the requirements of the Digital Future Challenge, in particular those set out in the provided Submission Template.

8.2. To participate in the Digital Future Challenge, each team must have submitted its independently developed IDEA in final form and all required data on time via the digital portal. SOLUTIONS must be uploaded in final form including all required data by the deadline. All IDEAS and SOLUTIONS must be submitted in common digital formats, including in particular:
PDF / PPTX / DOCX
MOV / MP4

8.3. All IDEAS and SOLUTIONS must be submitted in German or English.
In case of technical problems or technical queries regarding the digital portal, support can be contacted exclusively at support@zauberberg-medien.de.

9. Selection procedure and evaluation criteria

9.1. The Digital Future Challenge is organized as a selection process so that only participants or teams that have passed the idea phase and the semifinal can participate in the elaboration phase and the final.

9.2. Selection of the IDEAS, which qualify for the semifinal, is generally based on the following criteria:

- Social relevance of the idea
- Future viability & innovativeness of the idea
- Feasibility of the idea
- Multiperspective approach in idea development
- Inclusion of society in idea development
- Overall impression & impact of the idea

9.3. Under no circumstances will selection be made by lottery, chance or luck.

9.4. The selection decision regarding the ten best ideas and teams in the idea phase, the five best ideas and teams in the elaboration phase, the final ranking of the best solutions and teams at the end of the elaboration phase, and the awarding of prizes will be made by a jury appointed by the ORGANIZERS.

9.5. All participants who pass the idea phase will be informed of their selection by email. Information about selection in the idea phase will be provided during December. The ORGANIZERS reserve the right to change the dates. The current dates will be published on the website at the link referred to in clause 4.

9.6. All participants and teams must respond to the notification described in clause 9.5. If teams do not respond within the deadline set out in that notification, the ORGANIZERS reserve the right to exclude the respective participant or team and to designate substitutes.

9.7. The final result and thus the decision on the awarding of prizes will be announced during the final.

10. Prizes

10.1. The announced prizes will be awarded to the best participants or teams under the following conditions:

- a sufficient quality of the submitted SOLUTION has been confirmed by the ORGANIZERS and the participants accept and unreservedly comply with these participation terms.

10.2. Only participants selected by the jury at the end of the elaboration phase and the final as one of the three best teams will be awarded prizes and will thus be WINNERS.

10.3. Please note that the ORGANIZERS can transfer any awarded prizes to the winning participants only after the affected participants have first provided all necessary data (in particular details such as name, address, email address, bank details and university affiliation) to the ORGANIZERS.

10.4. The WINNERS of the Digital Future Challenge will be awarded prizes with a total value of EUR 15,000. Please note that teams and their SOLUTIONS are evaluated and ranked on the basis of their quality.

11. Rights in submitted IDEAS / SOLUTIONS

11.1. All participants warrant that they are the holders of any rights in their IDEAS and SOLUTIONS, or are authorized to transfer and/or grant the rights specified in clause 11.3 with respect to their IDEAS and SOLUTIONS to the ORGANIZERS. Participants also warrant that there are no other PROTECTABLE CONTENT and/or INVENTIVE RIGHTS in the IDEAS and SOLUTIONS that would prevent the transfer and/or grant of rights pursuant to clause 11.3 to the ORGANIZERS. Furthermore, participants warrant that their IDEAS and SOLUTIONS do not infringe any other legal rights protected by law. Participants warrant for all IDEAS and SOLUTIONS that rights of publicity and other personal rights have been respected and that any required consents from third parties have been obtained.

11.2. All participants and teams that are not FINALISTS of the Digital Future Challenge retain all rights in their PROTECTABLE CONTENT and/or INVENTIVE RIGHTS. No transfer or grant of rights to the ORGANIZERS will take place in this case.

11.3. For the FINALISTS of the Digital Future Challenge the following applies: participants remain at all times able to exercise their rights under the conditions set out in these participation terms. In the event that a SUBMISSION of an IDEA or SOLUTION contains PROTECTABLE CONTENT that is transferable, the participant agrees to the gratuitous, non-exclusive, irrevocable, unlimited in time and territory transfer of the protectable rights in such content to the ORGANIZERS. The ORGANIZERS, however, grant the participants a comprehensive non-exclusive right to use the transferred PROTECTABLE CONTENT. With respect to PROTECTABLE CONTENT that cannot be transferred, participants grant the ORGANIZERS an irrevocable, gratuitous, unlimited in time and territory non-exclusive and transferable right of use (in particular reproduction, distribution,

storage and playback). The ORGANIZERS do not acquire any commercial exploitation rights in the submitted IDEAS and SOLUTIONS, but they are entitled to communicate about the IDEAS and SOLUTIONS to the public.

FINALISTS also undertake that for a period of three (3) months after the CHALLENGE they will not enter into any further negotiations about the commercial use of the submitted ideas and solutions with third parties (granting an exclusive pre-negotiation right to the USE CASE PROVIDERS).

11.4. As this is a team challenge, the submitted IDEA and SOLUTION are to be regarded as a joint work. The IDEAS and SOLUTIONS of teams can therefore only be considered further in the course of the Challenge if, at the end of both the idea phase and the elaboration phase, all team members have consented to the submission. This consent is given actively as part of the submission of the IDEA with respect to the most recently submitted IDEA and SOLUTION.

11.5. By participating, the submitting person or team agrees that the content submitted within the framework of the Digital Future Challenge (SUBMISSION) — including the IDEA, the Submission Template and later presentations — may be viewed and used by the ORGANIZERS, USE CASE PROVIDERS, partners, sponsors and supporters insofar as this is necessary for evaluation, examination of potential collaboration, or for a better substantive understanding (e.g., by production or camera teams). Disclosure will be made only to authorized parties. Intellectual property rights in the idea and submitted documents remain at all times fully with the team.

12. Indemnification

12.1. Participants agree to indemnify the ORGANIZERS and the Stifterverband für die Deutsche Wissenschaft e.V. on first demand from all third-party claims asserted against the Stifterverband because the participants have culpably violated any of the obligations contained in these participation terms.

12.2. Participants agree to bear the reasonable costs of legal defense incurred by the ORGANIZERS and the Stifterverband für the Deutsche Wissenschaft e.V. against the third-party claims described in clause 12.1.

13. Publicity

13.1. All participants grant the ORGANIZERS the right to use the data they have provided on the platform for publicity purposes if they belong to a team that qualifies for the semifinal.

14. General provisions

14.1. Participation in the Digital Future Challenge requires acceptance and full compliance with these participation terms. The ORGANIZERS reserve the right to exclude participants and teams who do not comply with these terms from the Digital Future Challenge with immediate effect and without compensation.

14.2. The ORGANIZERS reserve the right to modify the participation terms at any time without the consent of the participants. Participants will be informed of any modifications in an appropriate manner.

14.3. The ORGANIZERS reserve the right to shorten, stop or cancel the Digital Future Challenge at any time without prior notice. Participants have no entitlement to continuation or resumption of the Digital Future Challenge.

14.4. Legal recourse, in particular against the decisions of the jury and against the results of the formal check and first evaluation round carried out by the ORGANIZERS, is excluded.

15. Confidential information

15.1. Participants undertake – including beyond the duration of the Digital Future Challenge – not to disclose to third parties identifiable confidential operational and business information of the ORGANIZERS, Deloitte GmbH Wirtschaftsprüfungsgesellschaft, Deloitte Digital GmbH, Deloitte Consulting GmbH and their affiliated companies and of third parties that become known to them in the context of the Digital Future Challenge.

15.2. The obligation in clause 15.1 does not apply insofar as the information

- was already known to the participants at the time it was communicated,
- was already public, i.e. published or generally accessible at the time of communication, or becomes public thereafter without breach of this agreement by the participants,
- was developed independently by the receiving participant without use of the ORGANIZERS' information, or
- must be disclosed to third parties due to legal, regulatory or judicial order. In such case the participants shall inform the ORGANIZERS without delay.

16. Final provisions

16.1. The German contract text shall prevail. The English-language contract text is provided for reading convenience only and is not intended to have legal effect. In the event of discrepancies between the German and the English text, the German text shall prevail.

16.2. These participation terms are governed exclusively by German law. The application of the UN Convention on Contracts for the International Sale of Goods (CISG) is excluded.

16.3. Should provisions of these participation terms be or become wholly or partially invalid or unenforceable, or should these participation terms contain one or more gaps, the validity of the remaining provisions shall remain unaffected. In place of the invalid, unenforceable or missing provisions, a provision shall be deemed agreed that the parties would have agreed in order to achieve the economic purpose pursued by them with this contract, had they considered the respective point.

16.4. For questions or feedback, the ORGANIZERS can be contacted at the following email address: kontakt@digital-future-challenge.de.