



Dear subscriber,

The University of Cologne is strengthening actively its prominent role as a driver of innovation and societal impact. With a total of five funded [DFG Clusters of Excellence](#), four among these with MNF participation, it showcases cutting-edge research in areas ranging from quantum computing to sustainable agriculture. Complementing this scientific success, the university has launched its own holistic [transfer strategy](#)—connecting research, application, and public engagement across disciplines. These achievements reflect our university as a dynamic environment for researchers, students, and founders eager to shape the future through knowledge transfer and innovation. As we head into an exciting summer of innovation in excellent science at the MNF, we're pleased to share recent updates and developments in the second quarter edition of the Transfer newsletter.

If you wish to recommend this newsletter to your colleagues and community then this [link](#) can be used.

## New Projects Funded!

**EXIST-Forschungstransfer:** The spin-off project *PoLightFilters* has secured €1.1 million in EXIST Research Transfer funding from the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK). Led by Dr. Andreas Mischok and supported by the team including Dr. Florian Le Roux, Elena von der Heyden, and Prof. Malte Gather—the project is developing a novel thin-film filter technology that uses quantum interactions in organic layers to significantly reduce optical noise. Offering major advantages in applications like LiDAR, fluorescence microscopy, and display technologies, this patented technology received support of Department 75 - Transfer for patent application. Industry connects were supported by Provendis and Transferscouts. Discussions with the team, Transferscouts & startup coaches of Gateway ESC and external network guided the EXIST application process.

**Go-Bio initial:** In the highly competitive 6th round of the BMBF's *Go-Bio Initial* funding programme, only 39 out of 187 proposals submitted nationwide were selected—based on originality, translational potential, and application relevance. Among them were two projects from the University of Cologne: *HoloCare* (Katharina Schwab, Institute of Light and Matter in Chemistry), which explores porous hydrogel-based wound dressings with integrated sensors, and *RevResist* (Dr. Hannah Doherty, CECAD), which aims to reverse antibiotic resistance in *P. aeruginosa*. Each project will receive €100,000 for a one-year exploratory phase beginning in October 2025. The successful submissions were guided by early-stage discussions with the Transferscout, PIs and researchers with timely assistance from Departments 75 & 73 on invention disclosures and application coordination.

## Contests, Events & Networking

**GSGS Research Conference 2025:** At this [annual event](#) of the graduate school of Geosciences, on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, the presented poster pitches were judged for the *Poster Prize for Best Innovation Potential*, supported by the Gateway Excellence Start-up center of the university. The prize recognizes research with strong potential for real-world applications. During the session, the faculty Faculty Transferscout engaged with graduates in short interviews exploring the innovation potential of their research, possible applications, and relevant stakeholders. Among six shortlisted posters, the three winning graduate students were Stefan Dittmann-Zöllner (*Sustainability in Geography Textbooks*), Ajeng Larasati (*Commodification in Tropical Ornamental Fish Trade*), and Michelle Zander (*Logistics and Employment in Retail*).

**CGSC Chemistry Day 2025:** The PhD Symposium has become a key fixture in the Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry's academic calendar. Held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June as part of the broader Chemistry Day—including the *Förderpreis* competition and the inaugural lecture of Prof. Oliver Dumele—the event featured 44 poster contributions, highlighting a growing research at the department. The annual *Poster Prize for Best Innovation Potential*—supported by the Gateway Excellence Start-up Center—was awarded to recognize research with strong potential for innovation. Out of around ten posters identified as having exceptional innovation potential, two graduate students were selected by a jury consisting of the Transferscout and Dr. Helmut Meyer (Technology Advisor, THM Nano): Tobias Behn for *Next-generation DNazymes* and Ranjini Sircar for *Substrate Signatures of Drosophila melanogaster Pretarsi and the Role of Pretarsal Setae*.

**Science4Life Business Plan:** Ernesto Llamas with their Plantman team recently took part in the Science4Life Businessplan-Wettbewerb, Germany's leading competition for life science and energy startups. Their plant-based therapeutic approach to Huntington's disease earned them recognition in both the Idea and Concept phases. The structured program helped them refine their business model and prepare for investor engagement in the end-June Business Plan phase. Supported by Transferscout of the Gateway ESC University of Cologne and a strong coaching network across CEPLAS, Plantman continues to gain traction within the innovation ecosystem.

**Second Biotech Breakfast:** On May 28, the second *Biotech Breakfast* at the InnoDom welcomed over 60 participants from academia, start-ups, industry, and investors across the NRW region. The informal morning meetup—co-hosted by Dr. Victor Bustos, Co-founder and CEO at Refoxy Pharma and Dr. Isabelle Schiffer, Investment Manger at b.value—offered young researchers in biotechnology a space to connect to the regional support network, explore potential career paths, and discuss science-based entrepreneurship supported by the Gateway ESC. With strong interest in areas like synthetic biology, pharma, and industrial biotech, the event continues to grow as a grassroots networking platform.

**DPG seminar *Erfolgreich Gründen*** on May 15th at InnoDom Cologne, early-career physicists explored opportunities for translating their research into startups. The event featured practical insights via lectures on spin-off creation, product development, team building, intellectual property, and funding strategies. Gateway services for the ecosystem as well as contributions on financing options for high-tech startups were highlighted alongside best practices of the experienced founders from Midel Photonics and Lidrotec. A keynote by Dr. Stephan Eifel (Pulsar Photonics) rounded out the day, offering candid reflections on the entrepreneurial journey. The event was part of a broader effort to equip researchers with the tools to shape their own innovation paths.

**High-Tech.NRW Demo Day:** The 6th Demo Day at HIGH-TECH.NRW showcased impressive deep-tech innovations from across North Rhine-Westphalia, with applications ranging from sustainable wood-based 3D printing to novel health technologies. Simplyfined from TU Dortmund won first place for their catalytic process converting plant oils into renewable chemical feedstocks. Second place went to Wellenpuls, a start-up from Sport University Cologne, whose wearable device uses neuro-muscular stimulation to strengthen deep core muscles and address chronic back pain. FORMeat from RWTH Aachen secured third place with a fiber-spinning technology that enables realistic textures in cultivated meat. The event also featured a panel discussion on the potential of deep-tech ventures to help Germany overcome the mid-tech trap.

**ChemCologne Cooperation Day 2025:** ChemCologne Cooperation Day 2025 at RWTH Aachen University brought together over 100 participants from academia, the chemical industry, and the startup ecosystem to foster innovation and shape the sector's transformation. A highlight of the event was the startup pitch session, where Power2Polymers, spin-off from RWTH won the audience vote with their bold vision for the future of chemistry. Industry representatives shared how chemical parks can support startups with scaling through infrastructure and tailored services. A closing panel with voices from deep-tech startups, public funding bodies, and transfer institutions explored key success factors for sustainable growth. The day highlighted the power of cross-sector collaboration in driving innovation forward.

## Awareness

**Informatics MSc welcome:** On April 7<sup>th</sup> at the welcome event for new MSc Informatics students in the summer semester 2025, Gateway and the Transferscout services and different opportunities for early engagement on research transfer, innovation and entrepreneurship were presented. Alongside academic orientation, students were introduced to network services available for those curious about turning ideas into innovations — during their studies.

**IP education online:** The University of Cologne offers a comprehensive [online resource](#) to support researchers in understanding and managing intellectual property (IP). Their dedicated platform provides a curated collection of short, informative videos and links to official institutions, covering topics such as patents, utility models, trademarks, industrial designs, and trade secrets. These resources are organized into thematic subgroups, allowing users to easily navigate and find information relevant to their interests. The platform also includes guidance on IP protection, technology transfer, and access to further training opportunities through the innovation2business.nrw network. For personalized advice, researchers can contact the university's Transfer Department 75 at [forschungstransfer@verw.uni-koeln.de](mailto:forschungstransfer@verw.uni-koeln.de).

## Upcoming Events , Workshops and Competitions:

**Jun 30, 2025 "Snapshot: Funding Opportunities for Technology Transfer": 15:00–16:00** Medizin.NRW's online info session offered researchers and SMEs an overview of key programs that support moving innovations from research to application. Featured schemes included DFG Knowledge Transfer, EXIST Transfer of Research, go:Bio initial, KMU-innovativ, KOINNO, ZIM, and EuroStars. The event aimed to help participants bridge the gap between academic work and market readiness. Register [here](#).

**July 2025 YES Workshop: Unlocking Research Potential: 9–10 July | 9:00 AM–5:00 PM | InnoDom Cologne, Gateway ESC, University of Cologne** Explore innovation and entrepreneurship as paths beyond academia in this two-day hands-on workshop for graduate

students and early-career researchers. Reflect on your strengths, discover your team's superpower, and apply tools like the Research Canvas to identify user needs and brainstorm real-world use cases. Collaborate across disciplines, develop a compelling pitch, and receive expert feedback—all in a supportive, inspiring space for experimentation and growth. Open to [registration](#) for researchers from all disciplines.

**July 2025 Cologne Startup Summer night: 10 July| 6:00–11:00 PM| Stadtgarten, Venloer Straße 40, 50672 Cologne** Powered by KölnBusiness, Web de Cologne e.V., and the Gateway Universities Cologne, the Cologne Startup Summer Night is the ultimate networking event for the regional startup scene! Secure your tickets [here](#)

**Oct 2025 Bridging Research and Innovation: 28 October |10:00 AM – 11:30 AM|online** Are you an ERC Principal Investigator exploring the societal or commercial potential of your research? This workshop offers a comprehensive introduction to the **ERC Proof of Concept Grant**—your first step toward market or societal application. Organised by the Division 7 Research Management and Gateway ESC of the University of Cologne in collaboration with the **National Contact Point ERC**, the event features insights from experienced applicants, application guidance, and tailored consultation opportunities. [Register here.](#)

**Nov 2025 DWIH Innovators Connect – Tandem 2025: 10–20 November | Bengaluru & Hyderabad, India** Are you a PhD student or recent graduate in the natural sciences ready to innovate globally? Team up with an Indian counterpart to co-develop tech solutions in an intensive two-week program hosted by top incubators. Work on real-world challenges, gain international exposure, and connect with mentors, startups, and investors from India and Germany. All costs for selected German participants are fully covered by DWIH New Delhi. [Application deadline: 13 July 2025 – More info here](#)

### **Get to know entrepreneurship as an alternative!**

Thank you for your continued support.

Best regards,

*The Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences Transfer Team*

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