

Conditions of participation for the ‘Berlin Social Enterprises 2026’ competition

1. Aim of the competition

With this award, the Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises honours social enterprises that pursue social and/or ecological goals through their actions and thus contribute to a sustainable, fair and future-proof economy and urban society. The companies are characterised by particularly innovative, sustainable or participatory solutions that have a convincing impact.

2. Target group

In May 2026, three Berlin-based social enterprises will be honoured in each of the three award categories – People, Planet and Transformation – for addressing social and/or ecological challenges with their business model and/or use of funds.

The organisation should pursue public welfare objectives with its economic activities and thus be a driver of sustainable economic transformation.

3. Selection process & announcement of the winners

- Step 1 – Submit application: Organisations must register on the application platform to submit their application in one of the award categories (People, Planet or Transformation).
- Step 2 – Checking the eligibility criteria for completeness and accuracy.
- Step 3 – Jury review: An experienced jury will rank the applications based on the evaluation criteria (see section 5) using the dual control principle.
- Step 4 – Jury meeting: In a moderated jury meeting, the top 5 applications (nominees) in the three categories will be ranked and the 9 winning teams (places 1-3 per category) will be selected.
- Step 5 – Publication of nominees: The top 5 organisations in the 3 categories are expected to be informed in calendar week 19 and announced on the website <https://socialeconomy.berlin/wettbewerb-2026/> and via the social media channels of the Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises and Social Economy Berlin. The 15 nominated organisations will be invited to the award ceremony on 19 May 2026 at re:publica.

- Step 6 – Creation of short videos: Short videos will be created on behalf of third parties, possibly with the participation of the TOP 15, to present the TOP 15 at the award ceremony.
- Step 7 – Award ceremony: The award ceremony will take place on 19 May 2026 at re:publica. The organisations and their solutions will be presented at the award ceremony.

4. Eligibility

Formal eligibility criteria:

- The organisation/company must already be established, i.e. it must have a legal form and
- have at least one place of business in Berlin.

Additional eligibility criteria:

Social objective

- The organisation addresses a social and/or environmental problem. The causes and effects of the problem as well as relevant stakeholders can be specifically identified. In addition, it can be shown which UN Sustainable Development Goal(s) the problem is linked to.

Personnel

- At least 25% of the organisation's employees are salaried. Volunteer work therefore accounts for less than 75% of the workforce.

Finances

- The organisation can cover part of its expenses itself through market income.

Market income accounts for at least 25% (including income from public sector contracts (not grants)), i.e. up to 75% of income may be donations, grants or philanthropic funds without consideration.

Use of funds

- The organisation uses part of its surplus, if any, to achieve its social or environmental goal. This means that surpluses are reinvested in the organisation itself or donated to organisations that pursue similar goals.

- If parts of the surpluses are used for other purposes (in exceptional cases), no more than 50% of the surpluses may be distributed in the form of dividends or capital distributions. With the prior consent of the relevant stakeholders, part of the liquidation balance may be freely distributed.

5. Selection criteria

The selection criteria are defined as follows:

- **Problem-solution fit (20%):**
 - Description of the social and/or environmental problem that the social organisation addresses.
 - Who or what is affected by the problem? Description of the target area or target group.
 - Description of the solution approach for the problem just described.
 - What steps or approaches are being taken to ensure that the measures achieve their goal?
- **Business model/finances (20%):**
 - Description of the business model. What products or services are being sold? To whom are they sold (buyers)?

- Can the organisation finance itself sustainably from the business model? What percentage of costs are covered by revenue from the sale of products or services? What is the proportion of philanthropic funds (donations, etc.) and/or government grants to cover all expenses?

- To what extent is it specified how financial surpluses will be handled (in the future)? If financial surpluses are distributed, what was/is the proportion of distributions (as a percentage of the total surplus)?

- **Impact (20%):**

- What positive impact does the organisation have on the target area or target group? What impact does it have on society as a whole?

- Has an impact model been developed?

- If so -> description of the impact model. A graphic or similar can also be uploaded.

- How does the organisation intend to scale its impact? If scaling is not planned, why not?

- To what extent is it ensured that the social impact of the organisation takes precedence over pure profit interests in the long term?

- **Team (10%):**

- How many people are employed as employees subject to social insurance contributions? (if possible in FTE)

- How many volunteers/honorary members regularly work for the organisation?

- Brief description of the (core) team.

- **Governance (10%):**

- Is there a governance model?

- How is employee participation/inclusion promoted?

- In which decision-making processes can they participate? Is there an advisory board or steering committee?

6. Prize money

The winners of each prize category will receive prize money of **€5,000**, the runners-up in each prize category will receive prize money of **€3,000**, and the third-place winners in each prize category will receive prize money of **€2,000**.

The money is provided by the Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises.

7. De minimis rule

The prize money constitutes a benefit for organisations and is therefore paid out as a so-called de minimis aid.

The prerequisite for receiving the prize money is therefore the fulfilment of the aid law requirements according to the so-called 'de minimis rule'. The amount of the de minimis aid must not have exceeded a maximum of €300,000 in the past three years (rolling period).

Compliance with de minimis regulations

The prize winners will be informed about the de minimis regulations in advance of the award ceremony, and Uhura, as a service provider for the Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises, will collect the de minimis declaration completed and signed by the organisation. Uhura will check that the de minimis declarations are complete and that the de minimis regulation has been complied with. The rolling 3-year period begins with the award ceremony on 19 May 2026.

In addition, since 1 January 2026, all aid falling under the de minimis rule has been published in a transparency register of the European Commission. The entry is made by the institution granting the aid, in this case the Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises.

8. Participation fee

Participation in the competition is free of charge for participants.

9. Cancellation of the competition/award ceremony

The organisations applying are not entitled to participate in the competition and the award ceremony. The Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises

reserves the right to cancel the competition and the award ceremony at any time or to exclude individual organisations in accordance with the rejection criteria under 10.

10. Legal notice

The Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises reserves the right to reject applications that:

- do not meet the eligibility criteria;
- reflect illegal content (e.g. pornographic content that infringes the rights of third parties, content that glorifies violence or is otherwise inappropriate);
- contain content that violates the law or does not comply with our moral principles.

11. Data protection

By participating in the application process, the organisation agrees that personal data may be used for the purpose of conducting the selection process. The Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises may collect, store and use data for this purpose and forward it to third parties for the purpose of conducting the selection process.

The Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises assures that all documents will be treated with the utmost confidentiality in accordance with European law (GDPR). All submitted documents will be made available exclusively on the website of the competition jury organisations and the Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises and to third parties acting on their behalf for the sole purpose of conducting the selection process. All parties involved sign a confidentiality agreement in advance and are therefore bound to maintain strict confidentiality.

12. Contact information

Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprises

Martin-Luther-Str. 105

10825 Berlin, Germany

Web: <https://www.berlin.de/sen/wirtschaft/>

Email: gesine.wittrich@senweb.berlin.de

The internet platform is operated by Social Economy Berlin.

Email: info@socialeconomy.berlin