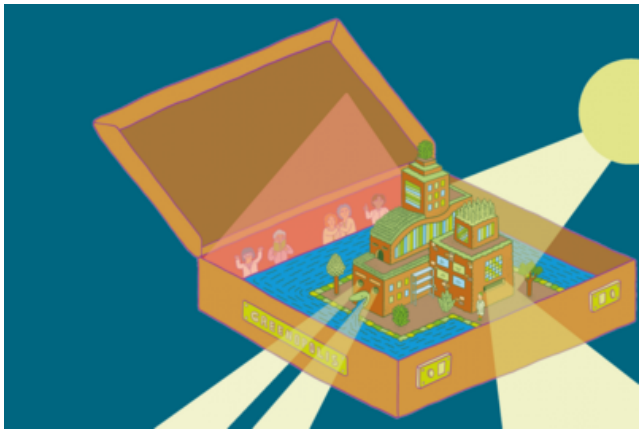
UniSysCat expires at the end of 2025, but not our research



Start Time: Thursday, May 22, 2025

End Time:

May 22, 2025, marked the decision day for both existing and newly proposed Clusters of Excellence. Today, the German Research Foundation (DFG) announced the funding decisions for this key funding line within the Excellence Strategy. Unfortunately, the Cluster of Excellence Unifying Systems in Catalysis was not selected for funding in this highly competitive round.

UniSysCat had applied for the fourth funding period as a Cluster of Excellence. The internationally recognized alliance for catalysis research has existed in Berlin for 18 years: From 2007 to 2018 under the name UniCat (Unifying Concepts in Catalysis), then from 2019 to 2025 as UniSysCat (Unifying Systems in Catalysis). During this time, the aim of UniSysCat has been to understand complex coupled catalytic reactions and thus advance catalysis research, particularly with regard to sustainability. Catalysis is one of the most important areas of research in chemistry.

With this ambitious approach, UniSysCat was ultimately not selected in the highly competitive Excellence Strategy funding round 2026–2032. While everyone involved deeply regrets the DFG's decision, there is still a strong sense of optimism for the future: catalysis research will continue to be a key area of scientific area in Berlin.

"Catalysis is central to a sustainable chemistry. Despite the decision, we are continuing our research to develop solutions for climate-neutral processes - Berlin will remain our innovation hub." As the spokespersons of UniSysCat, Prof. Dr. Maria Andrea Mroginski, Prof. Dr. Juri Rappsilber and Prof. Dr. Arne Thomas, say.

The individual institutions and researchers involved in UniSysCat will stay key players in the

Berlin and German research landscape. Moreover, UniSysCat's achievements in green chemistry - such as the foundation of the greenCHEM consortium and the Chemical Invention Factory - will ensure that both research and knowledge transfer in this field continue beyond 2025. Moreover, the close collaboration of the researchers in UniSysCat and their partners in Germany and abroad will continue after 2025, reflecting a strong commitment to ongoing cooperation. The will to make a difference, to transform chemistry sustainably is furthermore evidenced by the recent formation of the "Network Green Chemistry East".

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The Excellence Strategy is a funding program of the federal and state governments in Germany with the aim of strengthening the international competitiveness of German universities. The German federal and state governments provide 385 million euros annually for the first funding line of the Clusters of Excellence.

From May 19 to 21, 2025, the members of the international panel of experts appointed by the Joint Science Conference (Gemeinsame Wissenschaftskonferenz, GWK) of the federal and state governments met in Bonn to discuss the 98 applications for funding for new Clusters of Excellence on the basis of the international reviews conducted previously. The final selection decision was made on May 22 by the Excellence Commission, which is made up of members of the expert panel and the federal and state ministers responsible for science and research.