

PRESS RELEASE

Cologne, 5 December 2025

FOGTEC awards Ernst Achilles Prize, once again recognising outstanding young researchers in the field of fire protection

Cologne. The Ernst Achilles Prize for excellent international young research in the field of fire protection was awarded for the third time. The award ceremony took place on 5 December 2025 at the host, sponsor and organiser FOGTEC in Cologne. The finalists presented their research work and exchanged views on current developments in fire protection research in a lively expert discussion. A total of €7,500 in prize money was awarded.

The Ernst Achilles Prize recognises innovative bachelor's, master's and doctoral theses as well as dissertations that make a valuable contribution to the further development of fire protection. This year, the prize attracted a particularly large number of applicants.

The evaluation focused on criteria such as innovation, scientific quality and practical applicability. After a multi-stage selection process and intensive discussions, three theses were awarded prizes for their particular excellence.

This year's winners:

1st place:

Maximilian Weisbecker with his thesis "Sparks and fire spread: Experimental investigations into the ignition mechanism in forest and vegetation samples" at the University of Magdeburg.

2nd place:

Andreas Schultz with his thesis "Designing a digital knowledge management system for civil hazard prevention using the example of the fire brigade" at the University of Paderborn.

3rd place:

Frederik Buhk with his thesis "Influence of Local Vegetation on Fire Spread Mechanisms in Surface Fires" at Lund University.

The winners were selected by an independent, high-calibre jury of experts. This year, the jury consisted of:

- Prof. Roland Goertz, Head of the Chair of Chemical Safety and Defensive Fire Protection, University of Wuppertal
- Dr Andreas Rogge, Head of Structural Safety, Federal Institute for Materials Research and Testing (BAM)
- Corinna Trettin, Fire Protection Expert, TÜV Süd Rail GmbH
- Rajko Rothe, Managing Director, Engineers for Applied Fire Protection Research, IFAB GmbH
- Witali Engelhardt, Operations Vice President New Business Europe, FM Approvals
- Dirk Sprakel, Chairman of the Management Board, FOGTEC Brandschutz GmbH

The award is named after Ernst Achilles (1929–1999), an internationally recognised pioneer of modern fire protection. With his visionary approaches and technical innovations, he set standards that continue to shape the industry today. The award is intended as a continuation

and tribute to this spirit of innovation.

With the Ernst Achilles Award, FOGTEC is sending a clear signal of its support for young talent.

"The award-winning works make an important contribution to the further development of fire protection, and that is exactly what we want to promote with this award. As a company that invests heavily in research itself, it is particularly important to us to support young talent and offer them a platform for their ideas." Dirk Sprakel, Managing Director of FOGTEC

About FOGTEC

FOGTEC Brandschutz GmbH is the world's leading company for the development, production and marketing of stationary and mobile systems for fire detection and suppression using high-pressure water mist. The systems are used in buildings, trains, tunnels, data centres and BESS.

The owner-managed company FOGTEC was founded in 1997. The company is headquartered in Cologne, with additional locations in Budapest, Milan, Mumbai and Shanghai. Further information: www.fogtec.com

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Winner of the Ernst-Achilles-Award 2025 (left to right): Andreas Schultz, Maximilian Weisbecker, Frederick Buhk