

2026 Heineken Young Scientists Awards laureates announced



Amsterdam, 9 June 2026 – What goes wrong inside a cell in the context of infertility? In what way have religions influenced one another over the centuries? And how does our brain make decisions that determine our behaviour? These are a few of the questions that occupied the four laureates of the Heineken Young Scientists Awards 2026. This year's recipients are Miguel Leung, Yusuf Çelik, Ayushi Rastogi and Anne Urai.

Every two years, the Heineken Young Scientists Awards recognise and encourage highly promising researchers affiliated with Dutch universities or research institutes. Established in 2010 by Charlene de Carvalho-Heineken, the awards are presented by the Alfred Heineken Fondsen Foundation in the domains of Medical/Biomedical Sciences, Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences.

Laureate of the Young Scientists Award for Medical/Biomedical Sciences

Miguel Leung



Photo: Bram Belloni

In many forms of infertility, it is clear that something is going wrong with sperm or egg cells, but exactly what remains unclear. [Miguel Leung](#) is trying to unravel that mystery by closely studying the molecules in these cells. As a structural biologist at the Hubrecht Institute, he combines cryo-electron microscopy with AI to visualise protein structures at a resolution that was previously inaccessible. Leung and his team recently mapped the 3D structure and protein composition of molecular machines important for the function of sperm and egg cells.

Laureate of the Young Scientists Award for Humanities

Yusuf Çelik



Photo: Bram Belloni

Over the centuries, religions have adopted all sorts of ideas and customs from each other. [Yusuf Çelik](#), assistant professor of Digital Humanities and Islam at VU University Amsterdam, is researching the particulars of these cross-pollinations. Using AI, he peruses and analyses millions of pages of historical texts – work that would otherwise take researchers many years to complete. In doing so, he reveals connections between religions and culture that had previously remained hidden from view for preceding generations of scholars.

For more information, questions and interview requests, please contact:

De Wolven, pr & communicatie: Jitske van der Goot & Lotte Westbeek, Heinekenprizes@dewolven.com or +31(0)20 – 620 33 54

www.heinekenprizes.org and via social media [Instagram](#) | [LinkedIn](#)

2026 Heineken Young Scientists Awards laureates announced

Laureate of the Young Scientists Award for Natural Sciences

Ayushi Rastogi



Photo: Bram Belloni

Software is intricately intertwined with virtually every aspect of our lives, from paying by card at the supermarket to checking in to board a train. When software fails, it can disrupt the daily lives of millions of people. [Ayushi Rastogi](#), assistant professor of software engineering at the University of Groningen, is investigating how software can be developed to be reliable, inclusive, and future-proof – especially in light of the ever-increasing role claimed by AI. Through her work, which affects both academia and industry, Rastogi contributes to a digital sector that functions better and is also more accessible to a broader group of people.

Laureate of the Young Scientists Award for Social Sciences

Anne Urai



Photo: Bram Belloni

Every day, people make countless decisions based on what they see, hear, and expect. But why does one person react differently than another to the exact same information? [Anne Urai](#), assistant professor of cognitive neuroscience at Leiden University, is seeking the answer inside the human brain. In her laboratory, she takes real-world situations and translates them into controlled experiments. She demonstrates that decisions do not stand on their own, but are influenced by previous choices, social context and internal dynamics in the brain. In applying the resulting insights to current issues in society, she hopes to gain a better understanding of what motivates people to adopt sustainable behaviour..

Jury and awards ceremony

An independent jury of leading experts presides over the Heineken Young Scientists Awards. The jury for the 2026 edition is chaired by Hester den Ruijter (UMC Utrecht) and also includes Lenneke Alink (Leiden University), Arjan Houtepen (Delft University of Technology), Thijs Bol (University of Amsterdam), Jeroen de Ridder (VU University Amsterdam), Liesbeth Janssen (Eindhoven University of Technology), Karwan Fatah-Black (Leiden University), and Alexander Vlaar (Amsterdam UMC).

Each laureate receives an unrestricted cash prize of €15,000 and a specially commissioned artwork in acknowledgement of their outstanding scientific achievements. The awards ceremony will take place on Thursday, 1 October 2026, at the ARTIS Amsterdam Royal Zoo.

Prizes in the previous edition were awarded to Kevin ten Haaf (Medical/Biomedical Sciences), Lorena De Vita (Humanities), Casper van der Kooi (Natural Sciences), and Manon van Scheppingen (Social Sciences).

2026 Heineken Young Scientists Awards laureates announced

About the Heineken Prizes

The Heineken Young Scientists Awards are part of the Heineken Prizes, Netherlands' most prestigious international prizes in science and the arts. This honour has been conferred since 1964.

Every two years, a Heineken Young Scientists Award is presented to four researchers affiliated with a Dutch university or research institute. Their outstanding research and innovative insights offer an inspiring example for other young researchers. The laureates are selected by an independent jury, which is responsible for the nomination and selection process.

More information: HeinekenPrizes.org.