Innovation against microplastics: URBANFILTER at the Formula 1 race in Zandvoort

Ingolstadt/Zandvoort, August 21, 2026 – Since September 2020, the Audi Environmental Foundation has supported the development of smart filters for street drains together with scientists from the Technical University of Berlin and other partners. At the Dutch Grand Prix of Formula 1 in Zandvoort, the Fédération Internationale de l'Automobile (FIA) will deploy the URBANFILTER concept for the first time in top-level motorsport.

Key points:

- The FIA, the world motorsport governing body, is deploying the smart filter at a racetrack for the first time
- The filter targets microscopic particles from tire wear and other pollutants
- The Audi Environmental Foundation is a pioneer of the URBANFILTER

This innovative concept addresses a major but often overlooked source of pollution in everyday life: contaminants such as tire wear, brake dust, microplastics, and other pollutants that accumulate on the road surface. The goal is to filter as many of these particles as possible out of the environment before they enter the water cycle through rain or wind.

This is where a specially developed filter installed in street drainage channels comes into play. The URBANFILTER concept, developed with support from filtration expert GKD and rainwater specialist ARIS, has proven its effectiveness through laboratory and real-world tests in major cities such as Berlin and Copenhagen, as well as on an ADAC wet-handling track and a winding thoroughfare. During recent testing at the Zandvoort racetrack, a retention rate of up to 99% was achieved, depending on the intensity of the rain and the characteristics of the particles.

Audi Environmental Foundation as a pioneer

"We are proud that the FIA is providing this important issue with a global stage and a testing ground under extreme conditions through its involvement in Formula 1," says Sven Veit, Managing Director of the Audi Environmental Foundation. "Motorsport is once again proving that it can serve as a technological role model." Implementing the URBANFILTER concept on a Formula 1 racetrack shows how an innovation developed for urban environments can be scaled up and applied elsewhere.

Founded in 2009 as a wholly owned, nonprofit subsidiary of AUDI AG, the Audi Environmental Foundation focuses on promoting so-called "Greenovation" projects, which use innovative technologies to contribute to the sustainable use of natural resources.

"Motorsport is once again proving that it can serve as a technological role model."
- Sven Veit, Managing Director of the Audi Environmental Foundation

Three-star environmental certification for the Neuburg site

Audi has been competing in Formula 1 with its own factory team since the beginning of this season. A key requirement for entering the premier class of motorsport was the FIA's mandate to use synthetic or biomass-derived fuels, along with a high proportion of electrical energy.

Following a comprehensive audit a few months ago, the FIA awarded a three-star environmental certification to Audi's Formula 1 power unit development site in Neuburg – the highest level under FIA guidelines. This certification builds on the existing ISO 14001 and ISO 50001 certifications and reflects the Neuburg site's implementation of specific measures, including the use of renewable energy sources for electricity and heat.

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About Audi

Audi drives transformation and shapes the mobility of tomorrow – with intelligent, electric products.

The premium automotive brand is available in more than 100 markets. Its global production network spans 21 sites in 12 countries. **Vorsprung durch Technik** unites more than 88,000 employees. With courage, passion, responsibility, and trust, they are reinterpreting more than 100 years of automaking tradition for the future. In 2026, Audi is entering Formula 1 with a factory team in a bold expression of its motorsports DNA.

The Audi Group also includes the supercar manufacturer Lamborghini, the luxury brand Bentley Motors, and the motorcycle maker Ducati.

Learn more about the Audi Group here.

Audi is entering Formula 1 for the first time in 2026 with its own factory team and a hybrid drive system ("power unit") developed in Germany. The F1 project from Audi is based at three locations: Audi Formula Racing GmbH, which was founded specifically for the project, is developing the power unit in Neuburg an der Donau. Audi Revolut F1 Team is based in Hinwil in Switzerland. This is where the development of the race car and the planning and execution of race operations are located. In addition, the UK Technology Centre in Bicester provides a foothold in the heart of "Motorsport Valley," offering direct access to top F1 talent and key strategic partners.

Formula 1 is regarded as the pinnacle of motorsport and, with its global reach, is one of the most important sports platforms in the world. Thanks to open competition, Formula 1 provides an environment for the development and testing of electrified powertrain technologies and for novel fuels derived from synthetic and renewable biological sources.

The Audi Environmental Foundation is an active supporter of research in new technologies and scientific methods for a livable future. Its declared aim is to help protect the environment and to create and promote opportunities for sustainable action. The foundation focuses in particular on the support and development of environmentally compatible technologies, on measures for environmental education, and on the protection of the natural resources for humans, animals, and plants. Established by AUDI AG in 2009 as a fully owned subsidiary, the foundation is a part of the company's social and environmental policy involvement.