

Institute for Molecular Biology (IMB) in Mainz, Germany: Leibniz Prize winner Christof Niehrs appointed founding director

The cell and developmental biologist Prof. Dr. Christof Niehrs is the founding director of the new Institute for Molecular Biology (IMB) at the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz. And so one of the world's leading bio-scientists will be guide the institute, which is presently under construction and due to go into operation in Spring 2011. "We are delighted that such a distinguished scientist as Professor Niehrs will in charge of the research centre. He has all the qualities required to advance top research in the field of molecular medicine here in Mainz", as Otto Boehringer, chairman of the board of directors of the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation, explained. To mark the 125th anniversary of the Boehringer Ingelheim Company in 2010, the Foundation announced the decision to donate 100 Million Euros over a period of 10 years to finance the scientific running of a centre of excellence. The building in which the institute will be accommodated is financed by the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate.

His outstanding scientific achievements have bestowed numerous prizes and distinctions on Professor Niehrs. These include the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize from the DFG (German Research Foundation), which is the highest German research award. In his capacity as head of the department of Molecular Embryology at the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ) in Heidelberg, the 48-year old scientist was also recently awarded an "Advanced Grant" of 2.4 Million Euros from the European Research Council (ERC) for his research. As far as Niehrs is concerned, his call to Mainz is a further stepping stone in his scientific career. "I am looking forward to this new challenge. It is an honour to be involved in moulding and launching the research centre for life sciences in my capacity as founding director". Professor Niehrs will officially take up his new position on 1. July 2010.

Rhineland-Palatinate's Minister of Science Doris Ahnen is convinced: "this excellent appointment will secure the new institute's reputation as a centre of excellence for the life sciences well beyond the boundaries of Rhineland-Palatinate. The IMB will prove to be a real milestone in the scientific community of the federal state in general and in the development of interdisciplinary research at the University of Mainz in particular." "The appointment of Professor Niehrs verifies that the IMB fulfils the international standards required for top research in terms of size and facilities. I am convinced that it will entice further top-class scientists to Mainz", Georg Krausch, President of the University added. The new research centre will unite different biomedical disciplines such as developmental biology, epigenetics and DNA-repair under one roof. The university estimates that the IMB will provide at least 100 new jobs for the area.

The Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation is a non-profit-making foundation whose purpose is the long-term promotion of biological, chemical medical and pharmaceutical science. It was founded in 1977 by Hubertus Liebrecht (1931 – 1991), a former partner of the Boehringer Ingelheim Company. The commitment of the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation reflects the benefactors' strong ties to their own roots. The interests of the Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz have always been particularly close to their heart.

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