

Pressemitteilung// Leibniz-Forschungsinstitut für Molekulare Pharmakologie (FMP)

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Volker Haucke receives the Ernst Schering Prize 2025

The Ernst Schering Prize 2025, endowed with 50,000 euros, is awarded to Prof. Dr. Volker Haucke, Director at the Leibniz-Forschungsinstitut für Molekulare Pharmakologie (FMP) and Professor of Molecular Pharmacology at Freie Universität Berlin. This prestigious science award honors his groundbreaking discoveries on the function of signaling lipids, which govern cellular responses to messengers, hormones, and nutrients, thereby shaping central processes of cell communication.

Dysfunctions in lipid signaling are associated with a wide range of diseases—from stroke to neurodegeneration and cancer. Prof. Haucke’s research thus provides critical biomedical insights of far-reaching clinical relevance. From numerous remarkable nominations, an international jury selected him for this distinction.

At the core of Haucke’s scientific work lies the role of membrane lipids, known as phosphoinositides. Acting as molecular switches, they regulate the transport of messengers and cellular components. His pioneering studies on vesicle transport and neuronal signaling have fundamentally advanced our understanding of cellular communication in the brain.

A systems biology perspective on diseases

Prof. Haucke emphasizes the importance of a systems biology perspective for biomedical progress: “Those who seek biomedical progress must not be content with simple causal chains.” Different diseases may be rooted in the same cellular mechanisms, even if triggered by distinct genes. “If we understand these common mechanisms, drugs that are already approved could prove effective for other diseases as well—faster, more targeted, and with lower risk.” In neuroscience in particular, this approach opens up new perspectives on complex disorders such as Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s, and rare genetic diseases.

Beyond theory, Prof. Haucke and his team are also making practical progress. They have developed novel compounds that specifically influence key processes such as cell division and

blood clotting. These discoveries open up promising therapeutic options, particularly in the fields of cancer and vascular medicine.

“Through his discoveries, Prof. Volker Haucke has not only revolutionized our understanding of cellular mechanisms, but also paved the way for innovative therapeutic approaches in medicine,” says Prof. Max Löhning, Chairman of the Foundation Council. “He is an outstanding example of how basic research can translate into societal impact.”

New perspectives on the brain

Prof. Dr. Detlev Ganten, Founding Director of the Virchow Foundation and nominator for the prize, highlights one aspect in particular: “Among Volker Haucke’s many important research findings, I am especially fascinated by his findings on the question: What makes the brain a thinking organ? Each of the 100 billion neuronal cells in the human brain has 7,000 points of contact (synapses) to other, far-distant neuronal cells. Volker Haucke has discovered that this extensive synaptic network in the brain is created by signaling lipids that make intelligent, networked thinking possible in the first place.”

The Ernst Schering Prize is awarded annually by the Schering Foundation and honors outstanding scientists worldwide whose groundbreaking research has generated new inspiring models or led to fundamental shifts in biomedical knowledge. Previous laureates include Nobel laureates Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard, David MacMillan, Carolyn Bertozzi, and Svante Pääbo.

Dr. Jörg Maxton-Küchenmeister, Managing Director of the Schering Foundation, emphasizes: “Through his pioneering work on lipid signaling, Prof. Volker Haucke has fundamentally transformed our understanding of key cell processes and opened up new pathways to treating major diseases such as cancer or neurodegenerative disorders. Moreover, his commitment to sustainable lab work deserves special recognition.”

With the Ernst Schering Prize 2025, Prof. Haucke receives a significant recognition of his outstanding scientific achievements and his contribution to advancing the frontiers of biomedical research. The award ceremony will take place on 24 November 2025 in Berlin.

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