

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **Start of building operations for the Excellence Center for Life Sciences marked by ground-breaking ceremony**

#### **State government and Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation promote state-of-the-art research at Mainz University**

The state government of Rhineland-Palatinate, Johannes Gutenberg University (JGU), and the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation (B.I.F.) jointly celebrate the start of building operations for the new Excellence Center for Life Sciences at Mainz University. Minister of Science for Rhineland-Palatinate Doris Ahnen, Finance Minister Dr Carsten Kühl, University President Professor Dr Georg Krausch together with Otto Boehringer, Chairman of the Executive Board of the B.I.F., and Professor Dr Dr Andreas Barner, Chairman of the Scientific Advisory Board of the B.I.F., jointly performed the ground-breaking ceremony for the planned institution. In early February 2009 they had announced that they intended to establish an Excellence Center for Life Sciences at the JGU, to be sponsored by the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation to the amount of 100 million euros. The state of Rhineland-Palatinate is to contribute 45.5 million euros towards the construction of the state-of-the-art research building in order to ensure top-quality working and research conditions.

The Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation has undertaken to set aside 100 million euros over a period of 10 years to finance the scientific operations of the new Excellence Center. This represents one of the largest private donations ever provided for a scientific institution at a German university. "We are today creating a visible symbol of our solidarity with the region. Our commitment is designed to provide long-term support to Mainz as a center for science and to contribute towards ensuring excellent research conditions in view of the forthcoming 125th anniversary of the Boehringer Ingelheim company," says Professor Dr Dr Barner.

"Today's ground-breaking ceremony marks the creation of a landmark in our scientific environment. By initiating the construction of the new research building, the state of Rhineland-Palatinate is both expressing its gratitude for the exceptional commitment of the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation and making its own contribution towards

promoting the state as a university, science, and research location over the long term. The size of the center and its facilities will make it one of the leading international research hubs and will attract top scientists and researchers to Mainz. The JGU has the perfect prerequisites for establishing such a center of excellence," declares Science Minister Doris Ahnen.

Minister of Finance and Construction Carsten Kühl emphasizes that "exceptional dedication has been the result of the exceptional input here. The remarkable outcome: the excavators are already at work - only 10 months after the first negotiations." The very ambitious time schedule requires more than just determined commitment on the part of all participants. The building is to be ready for use by early 2011. "That is less than 2 years from concept to occupation. Given the fact that this is a highly specialized laboratory building, this constitutes an extraordinary performance with regard to construction," concludes Finance Minister Dr Carsten Kühl.

There are to be two construction phases: as announced in February, the first phase should be ready for occupation as soon as late 2010. The research building will provide a total of 6,297 square meters main floor space, with seminar and meeting rooms, a large auditorium, an extensive laboratory area, and general offices. The university expects approximately 100 new jobs to be created at the new Excellence Center.

At the planned Excellence Center for Life Sciences, various biomedical disciplines such as cell biology, genetics, biochemistry, and, quite possibly, materials sciences will be combined under one roof. Thanks to this potential for interdisciplinary cooperation, researchers will be in the position to compete at the very peak of international science. "The creation of an Excellence Center for Life Sciences will establish the science hub Mainz as an internationally relevant center for molecular medicine. The institute will provide a bridging function between the active agent-orientated material sciences and medicine, while at the same time extending and strengthening the know-how available "onsite" by creating scientific synergies between the disciplines. In view of the many already existing scientific links with research centers at the university as well as with the University Medical Center, the location in Mainz could hardly be better," comments Professor Dr Georg Krausch, President of the JGU Mainz.

Otto Boehringer, Chairman of the Executive Board of the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation, thanked Mainz University and the state of Rhineland-Palatinate for their excellent support: "The rapid and productive coordination of the construction and financial aspects of the planned Excellence Center for Life Sciences is a shining example of the success that can be achieved through a public-private partnership. I should like to thank all those concerned for the excellent collaboration and wish the Center every success for the future."

The Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation is strengthening cutting-edge research at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz by taking an unusual initiative: Over a period of 10 years, the foundation will provide a total of 100 million euros for the establishment and operation of an *Excellence Center for Life Sciences*. The state of Rhineland-Palatinate will thus receive one of the largest private donations invested in the research facility of a university to date. The state of Rhineland-Palatinate itself will be participating in the establishment of this center of excellence by sponsoring the construction of a new building, which will offer leading researchers excellent working conditions. The new institute to be established will meet international standards for cutting-edge research, explained Otto Boehringer, Chairman of the Board of the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation, and Doris Ahnen, Minister of Education, Science, Youth and Culture in Rhineland-Palatinate.

"We are pleased that the state of Rhineland-Palatinate and Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz regarded our idea of providing additional cutting-edge research at the University of Mainz in such a positive light and have immediately offered their support," explained Otto Boehringer. "In view of the intensified competition and the international rivalry to attract the 'best brains' in research, we should like to support both the state and the University of Mainz in strengthening their cutting-edge research and increasing their international visibility," Boehringer emphasized. "We, the Boehringer and the von Baumbach families, regard our recent involvement as active citizenship and as a service to society. We should like to make a long-term contribution. We want to strengthen and develop internationally visible cutting-edge research in Mainz and in the region as a whole, thus helping to provide solutions to scientific and medical problems and therewith improving the health of the population. This is also an example of how to turn social responsibility into a public-private partnership," said Boehringer.

The Minister-President of Rhineland-Palatinate, Kurt Beck, was very much pleased with the decision of the foundation: "I am extraordinarily proud and thankful that the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation is sponsoring a scientific institution in Rhineland-Palatinate to such an extraordinary degree. This is a great step forward for our state of Rhineland-Palatinate and an opportunity to extend its image as a viable science and research location of international standing." According to Beck, such a private commitment is a sign of far-sightedness and a well-developed sense of responsibility for the common good. Basic scientific medical research is contributing a great deal towards ensuring the future and is helping to increase people's quality of life in the long term. "The close collaboration and the cooperative negotiations between the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation, Minister Doris Ahnen, and Professor Georg Krausch, President of the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, have resulted in a major project with which the Foundation has demonstrated considerable confidence in us. We are more than grateful for this confidence, and we intend to live up to it," continued Minister-President Kurt Beck.

"An *Excellence Center for Life Sciences* at Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz will become a milestone in our scientific landscape. The University of Mainz already counts among those German universities with large research capacities: The University has a total of eleven DFG Collaborative Research Centers, five of which are in the field of life sciences. This role will be underpinned in the long term by the generous support of the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation, with which I am also highly gratified," said Doris Ahnen, Rhineland-Palatinate's Minister for Education, Science, Youth and Culture. "The life sciences have become the principal sciences of this century. It is therefore even more important that we should further extend this interdisciplinary area of research in Mainz at the highest level to be able to recruit the best scientists for this location and to further improve the position of top-level research at Johannes Gutenberg University in the national and international comparison," continued Minister Ahnen.

For Dr Dr Andreas Barner, Spokesman of the Management of Boehringer Ingelheim, this new initiative represents an opportunity for Mainz as a scientific hub: The planned center of excellence will enable Mainz to further strengthen its profile as a scientific location and offer newly recruited scientists a highly attractive scientific environment. The successors of the company's founder Albert Boehringer by this initiative make a

further contribution towards research and allow for excellent and internationally-orientated fundamental research to settle and grow in Mainz.

"With the foundation of the *Excellence Center for Life Sciences*, Mainz as scientific hub will establish itself as an internationally significant scientific center for molecular medicine. The institute will bridge the gap between the active substance-orientated materials sciences on the one hand and medicine on the other, supplementing and reinforcing the existing know-how by promoting scientific synergies between these disciplines," explained the President of the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz, Professor Georg Krausch. The center of excellence in Mainz will offers researchers and scientists particularly attractive job opportunities with a perspective extending over more than the ten years of the concept we have today.

### **Focuses, Financing, Organization, and University Links of the *Excellence Center for Life Sciences***

While the Boehringer Ingelheim Foundation will guarantee the overall operation of the center of excellence for a period of ten years by contributing a total of 100 million euros, the state of Rhineland-Palatinate will provide the approximately 30 million euros required for the construction of a state-of-the-art research building with the net internal area amounting to some 6000 square meters. The building will be constructed in two phases: The plans for the first phase assume that it will be ready for occupation by 1 January 2011. The center of excellence will most probably be set up by Johannes Gutenberg University in the form of a legally independent non-profit-making company with limited liability (gGmbH) that will be administrated by the University. Both the University and the Foundation initially mean to appoint two or three internationally renowned researchers who will shape the development of the center and attract "excellent young researchers from all over the world to Mainz" - in the words of Otto Boehringer. Up to three scientific departments are planned, each with a director and up to six independent groups of young researchers. The top researchers are to be appointed as professors or associate professors of the University of Mainz, but will be exempted from teaching duties to concentrate on their work at the institute. Internationally accredited founding directors will be recruited in accordance with the so-called "Harnack principle". This will be used to identify top international researchers who themselves will subsequently specify the concrete scientific focus and subject of

their work. They will be provided with excellent working conditions and they will be given a free hand in the selection of their members of staff. The establishment of the *Excellence Center for Life Sciences* will result in the creation of about 100 new jobs, both in research and non-academic capacities.

Otto Boehringer (Chairman of the Board), Kurt Beck (Minister-President of Rhineland-Palatinate), Dr Dr Andreas Barner (Spokesman of the Management at Boehringer Ingelheim), Doris Ahnen (Minister for Education, Science, Youth and Culture in Rhineland-Palatinate) and Professor Georg Krausch (University President) are convinced that "the location of the center in Mainz could not be better thanks to the numerous academic links to the University's main fields of research and its medical faculties, institutes, and clinics." This sets the course for success, both for science and for the population of the state as a whole. After all, the life sciences are all about the fundamental question of how we can live better in the future."

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