

## Leibniz Prize 2013 for Frankfurt professor Ivan Dikic

**6th December 2012. In recognition of his groundbreaking work in decrypting the Ubiquitin code, Ivan Dikic is to receive the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize 2013, Germany's most prestigious scientific award. The award is funded and presented by the German Research Foundation (DFG). It is the research prize with the highest endowment worldwide and comes with a grant of 2.5 M €.**

Ubiquitin is a small protein which is abundant in all cells. It first became famous as 'kiss of death' due to its ability to target other proteins for degradation. Today a much more complex role for Ubiquitin has been established, and Ivan Dikic was one of the pioneers in the field unraveling the mechanisms by which this amazing regulator achieves high specificity despite its ubiquitous presence.

Ubiquitin exerts its action by being attached to other proteins in multiple different ways, leading to an almost unlimited number of possible structures. Ivan Dikic was among the first to conceptualize and prove that these Ubiquitin modifications work like codes that are recognized by highly specific domains in other proteins, thereby bringing interaction partners in a cell together like a matching key and lock. His contribution to decrypting the code by which Ubiquitin mediates its signals fundamentally changed the view on the power of this small regulator, not only in healthy cells, but also in human diseases. Small changes in this fine-tuned system can make a big difference, and this is the reason why Ubiquitin is also involved in a wide range of pathophysiological processes, e.g. neurodegenerative disorders, immunological diseases and cancer.

As announced by the DFG today, his groundbreaking work will now be honored with the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize 2013.

"I am deeply honored and touched by this news today. It is a special feeling and great joy for me to receive this most prestigious research award in Germany. My gratitude goes to all students, postdoctoral fellows and colleagues in Frankfurt with whom I shared the passion and excitement of doing science", says Dikic. Prof. Werner Müller-Esterl, president of the Goethe University, congratulated his colleague: "Ivan Dikic is the ideal prototype of a research-active medic, who invests enormous enthusiasm and almost infinite energy into science and education. I value him for his originality and conceptual thinking, paired with leadership skills and assertiveness."

Ivan Dikic graduated as a medical doctor at the University of Zagreb in Croatia. He obtained his PhD and postdoctoral training in the renowned Schlessinger lab at New York University before he took up a group leader position at the Ludwig Institute for Cancer Research in Uppsala/Sweden. In 2002, Dikic joined the Goethe University Frankfurt.

Today, Dikic is leading the Institute for Biochemistry 2 (IBC2) and the recently founded Buchmann Institute for Molecular Life Sciences (BMLS) at the Goethe University in Frankfurt. Besides being a passionate scientist, he is also committed to education of younger scientists and to communicating science to the general public, not only in Germany, but also in his native country Croatia. He has been elected member of European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) and the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina.

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