

Professor Matthias W. Hentze

Matthias Hentze is currently Director of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) in Heidelberg (Germany). Following medical studies in Germany and the UK, and his qualification as a medical doctor, he obtained his postdoctoral training at the NIH (USA) in the late 1980s, when he and his colleagues discovered “iron-responsive elements” as the first mammalian regulatory elements in mature mRNAs. As an EMBL faculty member since 1989 his scientific focus was first on elucidating mechanisms of posttranscriptional regulation by RNA-binding proteins. Since 2010 work by the Hentze group has uncovered an unexpected complexity and scope of RNA-binding proteins. Supported by an ERC Advanced Grant and other funds, their work identified riboregulation as a novel principle of biological control and elucidated unanticipated roles of RNA.

Prof. Hentze is a co-founder of the Molecular Medicine Partnership Unit (MMPU), a joint interdisciplinary and translational academic research unit of the Medical Faculty of Heidelberg University and the EMBL, which bridges between medicine and molecular biology. He is also the co-founder of Anadys Pharmaceuticals, one of the early (2000) RNA-based companies that went public in 2004 and was acquired by Roche in 2011. With his extensive experience in scientific management, Matthias serves or has served on numerous international scientific advisory and editorial boards. Matthias Hentze’s research contributions have been recognized in numerous ways including Germany’s most prestigious scientific award, the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize in 2000, the 2007 Lautenschläger Research Prize of Heidelberg University, and the 2015 Feodor Lynen Medal of the German Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. He is also the 2020 recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award of the RNA Society and the 2023 recipient of the Centenary Award of the Biochemical Society. He received an honorary doctorate by the Australian National University in Canberra, and is an elected member of the European Molecular Biology Organisation (EMBO), the German Academy of Sciences Leopoldina, the Academia Europaea, the Australian Academy of Science, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. Matthias is the recipient of the Otto Warburg Medal 2025 of the Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.