

Pressemitteilung**Max-Planck-Institut für Hirnforschung****Silke Wolf**

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<http://idw-online.de/de/news825646>Wettbewerbe / Auszeichnungen
Biologie
überregional**Moritz Helmstaedter Receives Prestigious Leibniz Prize 2024**

Prof. Dr. Moritz Helmstaedter, Director at the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research in Frankfurt, has been awarded the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize by the German Research Foundation (DFG). The Leibniz Prize is the most important research award in Germany and is endowed with 2.5 million euros. With this award, the DFG honors Helmstaedter's groundbreaking research in the field of neuroscience.

The Joint Committee of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation) today announced the winners of the prestigious Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize 2024. Three outstanding female and seven male scientists from different disciplines were selected. The selection was made by the Selection Committee after an intensive review of 150 proposals.

The ten awardees represent a broad spectrum of scientific disciplines. They include Moritz Helmstaedter, neuroscientist and director of the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research in Frankfurt, Germany. His ground-breaking research has led to a fundamentally new understanding of the three-dimensional organization and function of the mammalian brain. Helmstaedter has developed tools and technologies that allow systematic and high-resolution access to the brain's densely interconnected neuronal networks. He is one of the pioneers of connectomics, a discipline that uncovers the fundamental principles of brain organization by reconstructing thousands of neurons and their synaptic connections. His analyses of a dense local connectome of more than 200,000 synapses have challenged decades-old assumptions about how neuronal connectivity works and now allow the inferring of highly precise connections between individual synapses. To achieve this result, Helmstaedter had to overcome several methodological challenges, including the preparation of large tissue samples up to whole brains in order to precisely record the neuron population. In this way, he was also able to answer questions about the fundamental differences between the human brain and the brains of other mammalian species.

Helmstaedter has been director of the Max Planck Institute for Brain Research in Frankfurt since 2014. At the same time, he has held an associate professorship in neural networks at Radboud University Nijmegen in the Netherlands since 2016. Prior to his current position, he received offers from the Janelia Research Campus in Virginia (USA) and ETH Zurich, which he declined. A physicist by training, he began his academic career at the Max Planck Institute for Medical Research in Heidelberg, Germany. Helmstaedter received the Max Planck Society's Otto Hahn Medal in 2009 and held the Bernhard Katz Lecture in 2013 to promote relations between Israeli and German neuroscience.

The Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize, which has been awarded by the DFG since 1986, is one of the most important research awards in Germany and is endowed with 2.5 million euros. Over the next seven years, the scientists can use the funds for their research as they wish. The Leibniz Prize 2024 will be awarded at a ceremony in Berlin on March 13, 2024.

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