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## Prof. Dr. Johanna Stachel awarded Lautenschläger Research Prize

**Prof. Dr. Johanna Stachel, Director of the Institute of Physics of the University of Heidelberg, is the first recipient of the new Lautenschläger Research Prize of the University of Heidelberg — The prestigious prize is to be awarded every two years and with a value of 500,000 marks is one of the best-endowed research awards in Germany**

Prof. Dr. Johanna Stachel is one of the outstanding figures in German high-energy physics research, the aim of which is to throw light on the structure and characteristics of charged particles at high energies. This state, in which the constituents of nuclei, protons and neutrons, lose their identity and change into a new form, so-called quark-gluon plasma, prevailed during the first micro-seconds of the universe and may also be involved in super-novas and the birth of neutron stars. It can also be generated in so-called "fireballs" produced by big particle accelerators.

### Outstanding talent

In her field of research Johanna Stachel is widely considered to be the outstanding talent of the younger generation. Born in Munich in 1954, she graduated at the University of Mainz, where she later did her doctorate. On a grant from the Humboldt Foundation she then moved to Stony Brook University (USA), one of the leading universities for physics with three Physics Nobel Prize laureates on its active staff. In the space of 10 years Johanna Stachel ascended from the rank of external post-doc student to Full Professor of Physics at the age of 39, an unusually rapid rise even in America. In 1996 she accepted the offer of a C4 professorship at the University of Heidelberg.

She laid the foundations of her academic success story with the modification of an experiment run at the Brookhaven National Laboratory (BNL) in the close vicinity of Stony Brook, thus gleaning new and unexpected data and insights of major significance for the ongoing heavy ion programme at CERN in Geneva. She is now the scientific spokesperson of a major — and highly successful — international cooperation program there. For the new LHC accelerator, planned for 2005, she, her Heidelberg team and scientists at Darmstadt's Society for Heavy Ion Research (GSI) are working on a novel detector decisively improving the diagnosis of matter in fireballs.

In appreciation of the leading role she has played in her field, she was invited to join CERN's high-ranking Scientific Policy Committee. For years she has been an invited speaker at countless international conferences and is a valued member of scientific panels all over the world. Johanna Stachel is a member of

numerous scientific committees and of the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences. She has been awarded various research prizes and received the German Bundesverdienstkreuz medal in 1999 for her services to science.

### Valuable research prize

The Lautenschläger Research Prize of the University of Heidelberg is called after its donor, Manfred Lautenschläger, chairman of the supervisory board of the MLP Holding AG and honorary senator of the University of Heidelberg since 1998. The prize is being awarded this year for the first time and will in future be awarded every two years to scientists and academics from the University itself or to researchers especially closely associated with it. Manfred Lautenschläger and the University of Heidelberg regard the prize as a token of appreciation for top-level research in Germany. The prize money is for research only and is designed to further international scientific and scholarly cooperation, notably forms of cooperation with a commitment to the involvement of young scientists. As such, the Prize is fully in line with Heidelberg's traditionally outward-looking academic policies. This year's recipient, Prof. Dr. Johanna Stachel, satisfies all these criteria to the full.

Endowed with 500,000 marks, the Lautenschläger Prize is among the biggest research awards in Germany. Scientists and scholars from all disciplines are eligible for the Prize as long as they are still actively involved in teaching and research and can point to an outstanding and distinctive record of academic achievement. The illustrious Awarding Committee is made up of leading Heidelberg scientists and scholars, the donor Manfred Lautenschläger and external members such as Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Frühwald (President of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation) and Prof. Dr. Manfred Erhardt (Secretary General of the Donors' Association for the Promotion of the Sciences and Humanities in Germany). Prof. Dr. Stachel will be receiving the award at a celebration in the Great Hall of the Old University on 8 December 2001.

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