

We mourn the loss of our former long-serving scientific director

Prof. Dr. Michael Steiner

who passed away on the 5th of November 2022 at the age of 79 in Berlin.

From 1998 to 2008, Prof. Michael Steiner was the scientific director of the Hahn-Meitner-Institut (HMI), one of the predecessor institutes of today's Helmholtz-Zentrum Berlin. During that time, he prepared the merger of the HMI with BESSY GmbH, both of which operated large-scale facilities. His aim was to unite neutron and photon research under one roof, in the spirit of fruitful scientific exchange.

Michael Steiner was a world-renowned expert in research with neutrons. His experiments on antiferromagnetically coupled spin chains made an important contribution to the theory of topological phase transitions, for which F. D. M. Haldane, J. M. Kosterlitz und D. J. Thouless received the 2016 Nobel Prize in Physics. Steiner was a professor at TU Berlin and the University of Mainz.

Michael Steiner started as a research assistant in 1974, in the Neutron Scattering workgroup headed by Prof. Dachs at the HMI, and was subsequently entrusted with many further duties. In 1994, he became Director of the Berlin Neutron Scattering Center (BENSC) at the Berlin research reactor BER II, which gained an outstanding reputation under Steiner's management. Experiments with high magnetic fields and low temperatures were in particularly strong demand worldwide, and many international groups found themselves drawn to Berlin. Neutron research at the HMI became known throughout the world for innovative experimental possibilities and an intellectually stimulating research environment, which Michael Steiner played a major role in shaping. In addition to neutron research, he put solar energy research on solid footing by making it the second pillar of the HMI, and established new structures to promote it further.

In 2010, Michael Steiner was awarded the Order of Merit 1st Class of the Federal Republic of Germany for his tireless commitment to strengthening the German and European scientific landscape.

Even after his retirement in 2009, Michael Steiner remained active to the benefit of science. He contributed his long-standing expertise as the spokesperson for the European Neutron Scattering Association (ENSA), which represents the interests of 4500 users of European neutron sources.

Michael Steiner was a highly respected expert not only within the scientific community, but especially here at our centre, which he directed with great vision and human sensitivity. With the passing of Prof. Michael Steiner, we have lost a true visionary who had brilliant ideas and to whom we owe a great deal.

We send our heartfelt condolences to his family and loved ones and wish them much strength for the time ahead.



Prof. Dr. Bernd Rech
Scientific Director



Thomas Frederking
Executive Director Finance and Administration



Jörg-Michael Heuser
Chair of the Works Council