MAX-PLANCK-INSTITUTE
OF QUANTUM OPTICS

Garching, 30 November 2012

Press Release

Wilhelm Exner Medal for Professor Theodor W. Hänsch

**Press &
Public Relations**
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Professor Theodor W. Hänsch, Director at the Max-Planck-Institute of Quantum Optics in Garching near Munich, has received the Wilhelm Exner Medal of the Austrian "Gewerbeverein" in Vienna on November 19, 2012. The award was presented to him by the Austrian Federal Minister for Science and Research, Prof. Karlheinz Töchterle, during a celebration at the Palais Eschenbach in Vienna. Prof. Hänsch was honoured together with the nano-scientist Prof. Friedrich Prinz, Stanford University (Stanford, USA), and the bio-technologist Prof. Robert Langer, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (Boston, USA).

The Austrian "Gewerbeverein" was founded in 1839 as an independent representative of trade, craft, industry, and liberal professions. Since 1921 this medal – which is named after the well known Austrian supporter of economic development and technology, Wilhelm Exner (1840 bis 1931) – is given annually to scientists and researchers "who have promoted economy in an outstanding way, directly or indirectly, through their excellent scientific contributions." In the past 91 years the medal was awarded to 234 excellent scientists and researchers, among those 21 Nobel prize-winners. Some of the former recipients of the Wilhelm Exner medal have been, for example, famous researchers like Fritz Haber, Ernest Rutherford, Otto Hahn, Anton Zeilinger or Manfred Eigen, but also legendary engineers like Ferdinand Porsche, Wernher von Braun, Conrad Zuse, or Ferdinand Piech.

From the left: Prof. Uwe B. Sleytr, Manager of the Wilhelm-Exner-Medaillen-Stiftung, Prof. Theodor W. Hänsch, Prof. Karlheinz Töchterle, Austrian Federal Minister for Science and Research, Kommerzialrätin Margarete Kriz-Zwittkovits, president of the "Österreichischer Gewerbeverein". © Foto Schuster

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Ad personam:

Professor Hänsch was born in Heidelberg in 1941. He studied physics at the University of Heidelberg, earning his doctorate in 1969. He went on to post-

doctoral study in the United States, and was a professor of physics at Stanford University from 1975 to 1986. Since 1986 Professor Hänsch has been Director at the MPQ and Professor of Experimental Physics at the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität in Munich. Since 2006, he holds a chair at the LMU endowed by the Carl Friedrich von Siemens Foundation.

His main research fields are the high-precision laser spectroscopy of hydrogen and similar elements and the investigation of ultracold quantum gases. His work in laser physics and quantum optics has especially influenced the field of cold atoms by the method of laser cooling and enabled precision measurements of atomic parameters. The Nobel Prize in Physics 2005 was awarded to him for the development of the frequency comb technique which greatly improved the precision of atomic clocks and set the basis for new experiments in metrology.

Professor Hänsch has received many scientific prizes and awards. Among others he was awarded the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft in 1988. In 2006 the *Große Bundesverdienstkreuz mit Stern* (Great Cross of Merit with Star) of the Federal Republic of Germany was conferred upon him. In June 2008 he became member of the 'Order Pour le mérite' which was established by the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV in 1842. *Olivia Meyer-Streng*

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More information on the award:
http://www.wilhelmexner.org