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Özlem Türeci and Uğur Şahin Inducted into the “Hall of Fame der deutschen Forschung”

- **Recognition for co-developers of the first Covid-19 vaccine approved worldwide**
- **Curious Mind Researcher Award for young scientists presented to Matthias May and Michael Saliba**

Darmstadt, Germany, March 6, 2021– Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, a leading science and technology company, today inducted Özlem Türeci and Uğur Şahin into the “Hall of Fame der deutschen Forschung” at an award ceremony in Wiesbaden, Germany, co-organized with manager magazin. Türeci and Şahin are the founders and members of the Management Board of BioNTech, Mainz, Germany, which developed the first mRNA-based Covid-19 vaccine approved worldwide. In addition, the two event organizers today awarded the Curious Mind Researcher Award (Curious Mind Forscherpreis). The prize of € 7,500 in the “Mobility & Energy” category was awarded to physicist Matthias May (37). Physicist Michael Saliba (38) also received € 7,500 for his work in the “Materials & Active Ingredients” category.

“Özlem Türeci and Uğur Şahin have done outstanding research for decades and are true pioneers in medicine. Their work has been indispensable in bringing the Covid-19 pandemic to a halt. This is a truly historic achievement, but certainly only the beginning of a unique success story for the entire field of mRNA technology. Based on this technology, the door to an effective treatment of cancer and to new vaccines for infectious diseases is now wide open, and we owe this in large part to this year’s honorees. My warmest congratulations for this well-deserved recognition,” said



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Belén Garijo, Chair of the Executive Board and CEO of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, at today's award ceremony in Wiesbaden.

Özlem Türeci and Uğur Şahin – together with the BioNTech and Pfizer research teams – have achieved something extraordinary in extraordinary times. They developed, tested and received approval of the first Covid-19 vaccine registered worldwide. The vaccine is based on a novel formulation of a codable, chemically synthesized messenger RNA (mRNA) molecule that only occurs in its natural form within living cells. This technology forms the basis of a new generation of targeted vaccines and therapies for patients across the globe. This immense achievement has rightfully earned researchers Özlem Türeci and Uğur Şahin a place in the Hall of Fame der deutschen Forschung.

Two young scientists receive Curious Mind Forscherpreis

[Matthias May](#), who was awarded the Curious Mind Forscherpreis in the "Mobility and Energy" category, leads an Emmy Noether Junior Research Group of the German Research Foundation (DFG) at the Institute for Theoretical Chemistry at Ulm University. There, he develops photoelectric fuel cells, which produce hydrogen directly from water using solar energy. He has set multiple efficiency world records in this category and holds three patents. May was a scholarship recipient of the German Academic Scholarship Foundation (Studienstiftung des deutschen Volkes) and obtained his doctorate in Physics from Humboldt University, Berlin. After studying in Stuttgart, Grenoble and Berlin, he worked as a post-doctoral researcher at Technical University Ilmenau and at the California Institute of Technology (CalTech), Pasadena, United States. He received a postdoctoral scholarship from the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina to conduct research in Cambridge, United Kingdom.

[Michael Saliba](#), winner of the Curious Mind Forscherpreis in the "Materials and Active Ingredients" category, is Institute Director and Chair of the Institute for Photovoltaics at the University of Stuttgart. There, he researches thin-film solar cells, which, in addition to the conventional silicon technology for electricity generation, have a thin [perovskite](#) crystal layer on the surface, which considerably increases the efficiency of solar cells. Saliba won a Heinz-Maier-Leibnitz prize of the DFG (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, German Research Foundation) in 2020.

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He obtained his doctorate in physics from the University of Oxford, United Kingdom, in 2014. He was then a Marie Curie Fellow and carried out research visits at Cornell University and Stanford University in the United States. He holds three patents on perovskite technologies, which promise low-cost, robust and efficient solar cells.

The research work of the four scientists was recognized at a ceremony in Wiesbaden, which was attended virtually by numerous guests simultaneously from the worlds of business, politics and science. In 2009, manager magazin introduced the Hall of Fame der deutschen Forschung to honor outstanding scientists for their superb contributions to the further development of research in Germany, simultaneously enhancing the future prospects of Germany as a business location. The so far 25 members include Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard, winner of the 1995 Nobel Prize in Medicine, Harald zur Hausen, winner of the 2008 Nobel Prize in Medicine, Stefan Hell, winner of the 2014 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, and Karlheinz Brandenburg, developer of the mp3 data compression method, as well as former liquid crystal researcher of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany, Ludwig Pohl.

Granted for the first time in 2018, the [Curious Mind Forscherpreis](#) honors the work of young scientists carrying out research in Germany. The prize recognizes curious minds up to the age of 40, whose work is characterized by originality and excellence, and whose innovative strength is already providing impetus for the further development and future viability of Germany as a business location.

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The company holds the global rights to the name and trademark "Merck" internationally. The only exceptions are the United States and Canada, where the business sectors of Merck KGaA, Darmstadt, Germany operate as EMD Serono in healthcare, MilliporeSigma in life science, and EMD Electronics. Since its founding in 1668, scientific exploration and responsible entrepreneurship have been key to the company's technological and scientific advances. To this day, the founding family remains the majority owner of the publicly listed company.