

# Press Release

Freiburg  
April 30, 2009  
No. 08/09  
Page 1

## **Adolf Goetzberger is European Inventor of the year 2009**

### **European Patent Office honours founder of Fraunhofer ISE for lifetime achievement**

Professor Dr. Adolf Goetzberger, founder of the Fraunhofer Institute for Solar Energy Systems ISE in Freiburg, Germany was awarded the title "European Inventor of the Year" in the category of Lifetime Achievement on April 28, 2009. In Prague Castle in the presence of the Head of the Czech Parliament Miloslav Vlček and more than 400 guests, EPO President Alison Brimelow and Heinz Zourek, Director General in DG Enterprise and Industry, honoured inventors in four different categories.

Adolf Goetzberger was honoured for his work on the commercial use of solar energy, helping to make solar cells a viable alternative to fossil fuels. "It was an interesting lifetime," Mr Goetzberger said. "I am surprised myself to see how far we have come. I am glad I have lived long enough to see my work come to fruition."

To quote Günter Verheugen, the Commission Vice-President in charge of Enterprise and Industry: "The prizewinners are a testament to the richness of the human imagination and the significance of technological innovation. Their inventions have saved lives all over the world and protected the environment; yet their innovatory spirit has also helped to create jobs in Europe and strengthen its competitiveness." In the words of EPO President Alison Brimelow: "The award celebrates the creativity of all inventors who, in applying their technical, scientific and intellectual skills, make a major contribution to technical progress, growth and employment in Europe. Such skills are particularly important in economically difficult times."

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**Page 2**

The four prize winners were chosen by an independent international jury, which this year included Jonathan Liebenau of the London School of Economics; Jürgen Dormann, former CEO of ABB; Emma Marcegaglia, entrepreneur and head of Confindustria, the Confederation of Italian Industry; and Ernst-Ludwig Winnacker, Secretary General of the European Research Council.

The European Inventor of the Year stands out among the many prizes for innovation on account of its geographical scope and unique selection procedure. In its nominations the jury considered candidates from an open competition and was also able to call upon the expertise of examiners at the national patent offices and the EPO. It chose from among commercially successful inventions patented by the EPO before 1 January 2004. The awards are purely symbolic and do not include a cash prize or other material reward.

The awards are a joint initiative of the European Commission and the European Patent Office, launched in 2006. They honour inventors and inventions that have made a significant and lasting contribution to technological progress in Europe and so to strengthening the European economy. They are presented once a year in four categories. In addition to Adolf Goetzberger, this year's winners in the other 3 categories were Jürg Zimmermann (Switzerland) and Brian Druker (USA) in the category Industry for the invention of an effective drug to combat chronic myelogenous leukaemia, providing unprecedented rates of recovery; Joseph Le Mer (France) in the category SMEs/Research for inventing a heat exchanger of such a brilliantly simple design that it makes heating systems both inexpensive and energy-efficient; Zhou Yiqing (China) in the category Non-European Countries for his anti-malaria drug based on an herbal agent, which has been instrumental in saving hundreds of thousands of lives.

## **Adolf Goetzberger**

Adolf Goetzberger, who celebrated his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday last year at a gala with Fraunhofer ISE staff and his longtime

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**No. 08/09**  
**Page 3**

companions, worked in the field of semiconductors during the first 25 years of his professional life. He was employed at the top addresses in U.S. research: at the Shockley Laboratory in California with the Nobel Prize winner and co-inventor of the transistor William Shockley and at Bell Laboratories in Murray Hill, New Jersey. In 1968 the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft brought Goetzberger back to Germany. Up to the founding of Fraunhofer ISE, he served as the director of the Fraunhofer Institute for Applied Solid State Physics IAF in Freiburg. In 1971, the University of Freiburg appointed him as honorary professor in the Department of Physics. Throughout his active professional life, he supervised many diploma and doctoral students. At the end of the 1970's, Goetzberger began making his vision a reality by planning a solar research institute within the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft. In 1981, Fraunhofer ISE was founded with a staff of 18. The degree of perseverance and pioneer spirit necessary at that time for the development of this project is difficult to imagine in today's world. Later, Goetzberger succeeded in acquiring the financing for the Energy Self-Sufficient House – an inhabited laboratory using technologies that are still considered groundbreaking today. It is Goetzberger's efforts that are also responsible for bringing the residence of the world headquarters of the International Solar Energy Society ISES to locate in Freiburg. When Prof. Goetzberger reached retirement age in 1993 and stepped down from his position as Institute Director, Fraunhofer ISE had already grown to take its place as the second largest solar energy research institute in the world, following after the National Renewable Energy Laboratory in the USA. Under the leadership of his successors Prof. Joachim Luther (1993-2006) and Prof. Eicke R. Weber (since 2006), the Institute has continued to increase in size. Today with a staff of 830, it is the second largest institute within the Fraunhofer-Gesellschaft.

In 1983, Adolf Goetzberger was the first German to receive the J.J. Ebers Award from the IEEE Electron Devices Society for his superior technological

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**Freiburg**  
**April 30, 2009**  
**No. 08/09**  
**Page 4**

achievements in the field of electronic components. Many are the distinguished solar awards received by Adolf Goetzberger: Medal of Merit from the Land Baden-Württemberg (1989), Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany (1992), Achievement through Action Award (ISES, 1993), honorary doctoral title from the University Uppsala (1995), Farrington Daniels Award (ISES, 1995), Karl Boer Medal (1997), Bequerel Prize (1997), William R. Cherry Award (IEEE, 1997), Einstein Award 2006 of the Solar World AG (2006), European Solar Prize (EUROSOLAR, 2006).

Adolf Goetzberger remains actively involved in the field of solar energy. He serves as a consultant for Fraunhofer ISE, goes to work daily and continues to write publications and patent applications.

Further information on the EPO Inventor of the Year award, including film/photos can be found at:

<http://www.epo.org/about-us/press.html>

**Text of the PR and photo** can be downloaded from our web page : [www.ise.fraunhofer.de](http://www.ise.fraunhofer.de)



Source: European Patent Office

Adolf Goetzberger, winner of the European Inventor of the Year Award in the category Lifetime Achievement, and Alison Brimelow, President of the European Patent Office EPA at the award ceremony in Prague on April 28, 2009.

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