

February 2021

Researcher, Teacher, Science Manager

Obituary for Prof. Dr. Manfred Baerns (1934–2021)

We were deeply saddened to learn of the death of Manfred Baerns. At the Leibniz Institute for Catalysis we mourn the loss of a colleague and friend, honorary member of our institute. As a researcher, he left a deep mark on the international catalysis landscape. As an academic teacher, he shaped generations of technical chemists. As a science manager, he rendered outstanding services to the integration of East German chemical research after German reunification.

Manfred Baerns studied in Hanover from 1954 to 1959, obtained his doctorate in 1961 and habilitated in 1974. In the same year, he took over the Chair of Technical Chemistry at the Ruhr University in Bochum, which he led to great international renown. In 1995 he was appointed scientific director of the newly founded Institute for Applied Chemistry Berlin-Adlershof, ACA.

He was soon faced with the task of saving the ACA over the disastrous budget situation of the Berlin Senate Administration. Manfred Baerns succeeded in this with his appreciative manner and clever focus on core competencies, which helped the ACA to become attractive and ultimately enabled a merger with the Rostock Institute for Organic Catalysis Research to form the new Leibniz Institute, LIKAT.

Since 1999, Manfred Baerns was Emeritus Professor at the Ruhr-Universität. From 2006 to 2014, he worked as a guest scientist at the Fritz Haber Institute of the Max Planck Society in the Department of Inorganic Chemistry.

Manfred Baerns' life's work includes some 300 publications, cited many thousands of times, more than 20 patents, and standard works of distinction. Numerous doctoral students received the tools for their careers from him, and he was a critical mentor to his post-doctoral students. Manfred Baerns fulfilled important functions, for example as Dean of the Faculty of Chemistry and member of the Senate at the Ruhr University in Bochum, as a DFG reviewer and on the boards of important foundations. He was a board member of DECHEMA, a member of the GDCh, the German Bunsen Society for Physical Chemistry, the American Chemical Society.

He had an unerring instinct for new developments in research and was highly regarded for his critical decision-making aids, including the DECHEMA position paper "Future of Catalysis Research", which was written under his leadership. He received numerous honors for his work, such as the DECHEMA plaque in titanium and the Award of 4th World Congress on Oxidation Catalysis.

Our sympathy goes to his family. We remember him with honor.