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Elena Conti elected as Foreign Member of the Royal Society

The Royal Society has elected director Elena Conti from the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry as new Foreign Member.

The Royal Society has elected Elena Conti, director at the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry, as new Foreign Member. Founded in 1660, the United Kingdom's National Academy of Science is a prestigious community committed to the highest quality of science. By electing Elena Conti as new member, the Society recognizes her outstanding work in the fields of RNA and structural biology. The admission ceremony is planned to take place in summer 2021, contingent of the pandemic situation.

About the new elected Foreign Member

In cells with a nucleus, ribonucleic acid, RNA, connects genetic information on DNA level in the nucleus with protein production in the cytoplasm. How is RNA transported from the nucleus into cell cytoplasm and how is RNA degraded? Which molecules and processes are necessary? Elena Conti, head of department of "Cellular Structural Biology" at the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry, has been working on these research questions for many years. Together with her team, Conti studies the atomic structures of the protein complexes involved. For example, Conti's team has successfully deciphered the atomic structures of the RNA exosome complexes, large multiprotein assemblies that degrade RNA. New insights into RNA degradation mechanisms also help in understanding which proteins are produced and in what amounts. RNA degradation can either be part of a constitutive turnover or it can be incited by quality control pathways to decompose defective RNA molecules. In both cases, macromolecular complexes play a major role. In recent work, Conti's group has focussed on how the exosome physically relates to ribosomes, the protein factories.

Elena Conti studied chemistry at the University of Pavia and biophysics at Imperial College in London, where she received her PhD in 1996. She then went to Rockefeller University New York, USA, as a postdoctoral fellow. She then moved to Germany to establish her research group first at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) in Heidelberg and since 2007 at the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry in Munich, where she is a Director and also Honorary Professor at the LMU Munich. Conti is an elected member of EMBO and of the German Academy of Sciences. She has received several awards, including the Jeantet Prize for Medicine, the Leibniz Prize (shared with Elisa Izaurralde) and the Feltrinelli Prize.



About the Royal Society

The National Academy of Science of the United Kingdom has its origins in the 1660s. The aim of the Society is to recognize, promote, and support excellence in science. Moreover, it is committed to using scientific developments for the benefit of humanity. The scientific community now comprises approximately 1700 outstanding scientists, engineers and technologists, including around 75 Nobel Laureates. The Royal Society is a self-governing Fellowship. Fellows and Foreign Members are elected for life through a peer review process based on excellence in science. Each year up to 52 Fellows and up to 10 Foreign Members are elected from a group of around 800 candidates who are proposed by the existing Fellowship.

<https://royalsociety.org/>



Caption:

Elena Conti

Photo: Axel Griesch ©MPI of Biochemistry

About the Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry

The Max Planck Institute of Biochemistry (MPIB) belongs to the Max Planck Society, an independent, non-profit research organization dedicated to top-level basic research. As one of the largest Institutes of the Max Planck Society, about 800 employees from 45 nations work here in the field of life sciences. In currently about 35 departments and research groups, the scientists contribute to the newest findings in the areas of biochemistry, cell biology, structural biology, biophysics and molecular science. The MPIB in Munich-Martinsried is part of the local life-science-campus in close proximity to the Max Planck Institute of Neurobiology, a Helmholtz Center, the Gene-Center, several bio-medical faculties of the Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München and the Innovation and Founding Center Biotechnology (IZB).

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