Press Release

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Research Building for Brain-Machine Interfaces

36.77 million euros for University of Freiburg's new "Freiburg Institute for Machine-Brain Interfacing Technology"

The Science Council has given the University of Freiburg's proposal for a new research building for the "Freiburg Institute for Machine-Brain Interfacing Technology" (IMBIT) an outstanding evaluation and has recommended the project for funding. The State of Baden-Württemberg and the University of Freiburg have agreed to provide 36.77 million euros for the new research building together with the federal government as part of the program "Research Buildings at Universities." The Joint Science Conference (GWK) will make a final decision on the funding proposal on 19 June 2015. "Freiburg is the ideal location for this center," says Rector Prof. Dr. **Hans-Jochen Schiewer**. "The university hosts research groups that conduct excellent research in all of the most important disciplines for the IMBIT: microsystems engineering, robotics, neurobiology, and medicine. In addition, we have successful partnerships for neurotechnology research, in particular our Cluster of Excellence BrainLinks-BrainTools. The IMBIT will enable the university to make groundbreaking contributions to international neurotechnology research and consolidate its role as one of the world's leaders in this area."

The University of Freiburg's proposal was coordinated by Prof. Dr. **Wolfram Burgard**, director of the Cluster of Excellence BrainLinks-BrainTools, together with an interdisciplinary research team. "Our goal is to develop practicable applications for people with amputated limbs, paralysis, or Parkinson's disease on the basis of fundamental research and to help those

suffering from these conditions to regain some of their mobility and self-confidence," says Burgard.

The scientists aim to use the IMBIT as a platform for future advancements in neurotechnology with the potential to improve the everyday lives of patients with forms of brain disease or paralysis that are as yet insufficiently treatable. The researchers will develop technical systems that create long-lasting and secure interfaces with the brain via neural implants. Robotic assistance systems will enable patients to use these implants to solve complex tasks, for instance to command a mobile robot to bring them a bottle of water. Germany does not yet have a neurotechnology center with the large-scale devices and technical infrastructure necessary for conducting such research.

In order to achieve these goals, the IMBIT needs a research building with highly specialized infrastructure. It will be built on the campus of the Faculty of Engineering and have 3,000 square meters of floor space and room for 17 research groups with a total of approximately 115 employees. The construction costs are estimated at around 30.8 millions euros, plus 3.6 million euros for basic equipment and 3.1 million euros for large-scale devices.

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