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During a ceremony at the Grand Hôtel in Stockholm on 27 September, the Swedish King His Majesty Carl XVI Gustaf awarded the Marcus Wallenberg Prize 2010 to Professor Hans Joachim Blass, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT), Germany, for his path breaking work regarding innovative and reliable structural timber connections which have high load transfer capacity and can be efficiently applied at construction sites and within industrial processes

Wood as a construction material offers several important environmental benefits. It is renewable, it stores carbon that has been sequestered from carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, it provides excellent opportunities for reuse and, when recycled, it serves as a carbon neutral source of energy.

The competitiveness of timber as a building material depends on the properties of the wood components themselves but to a large extent also on connections between components. In engineered wood structures, the capability of connections to transfer loads is commonly a limiting factor. This has been a constraint to the use of wood in general and, in particular, for larger constructions like bridges, big stores, sports arenas, agricultural buildings, industrial buildings and spectacular official buildings.

Professor Blass has by extensive research provided fundamental engineering knowledge on timber connections and converted this knowledge to a usable format for practicing engineers.

“The developments made by Professor Blass have been of great importance for the increased use of larger wood-based construction elements like gluelam, which in Europe has increased in use by more than four times since the mid 1990s. They have also contributed to the increase in the timber frame market share of new housing.” said Marcus Wallenberg, Chairman of the Marcus Wallenberg Foundation at the award ceremony

Professor Hans Joachim Blass

Professor Blass was born in 1955. He took his PhD in 1987 at the faculty of Civil and Geodesic Engineering at Karlsruhe University. After employment at Karlsruhe University, Germany, Forintech Canada Corp., Canada and TNO Building research, Delft, The Netherlands, he was appointed Professor for timber structures at Delft University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands. Since 1995 he has been Professor of Timber Engineering at Karlsruhe Institute of Technology (KIT) which was founded in October 2009 through the merge between Karlsruhe Research Centre and the Karlsruhe University, and he is Director of its Material Testing Institute for Steel, Timber and Masonry

(Versuchsanstalt für Stahl, Holz und Steine). Besides his academic career, Professor Blass is actively involved in the standardisation work on timber structures and in knowledge transfer of challenging timber structures both within and outside Europe. Professor Blass is partner in Blass & Eberhart Consulting Engineers, Karlsruhe, Germany.

The Marcus Wallenberg Prize

The Marcus Wallenberg Prize was instituted to encourage scientific achievements within the forestry and forestry-related sectors. This year it was awarded for the 27th time. The prize winner receives 2 million Swedish Crowns.

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For general information about the prize, see www.mwp.org

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