

Honoring Günter M. Ziegler – Happy 60th Birthday!

MATH+ takes this opportunity to congratulate Günter M. Ziegler on his 60th birthday! His remarkable commitment to Berlin mathematics makes him one of our most esteemed members. On the occasion of his 60th birthday, his colleagues and friends organized the workshop “[GMZ 60: Geometry, Topology, Community](#)” on 18-19 May.



[Günter M. Ziegler](#) is one of the most prominent representatives of mathematics in Germany and a highly valued member of the math community in Berlin. He was one of the founding fathers behind MATH+, the [Berlin Mathematical School](#), two DFG Research Training Groups, and various other activities and initiatives. We thank him for his significant commitment!

Born in Munich on 19 May 1963, Ziegler studied mathematics and physics at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität. In 1987, he earned his doctorate in mathematics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) in Cambridge (USA) and moved to Universität Augsburg shortly afterwards. [Martin](#)



[Grötschel](#), who was a professor in Augsburg at the time and later became professor for *Information Technology* at TU Berlin, president of the Zuse Institute, and chair of the DFG research center MATHEON, recalls him as follows: "When Günter Ziegler moved from MIT to my then chair in Augsburg as a postdoc in 1987, he was already a 'rising star' in the field of discrete mathematics, an independent researcher who was carving his own way into combinatorics, discrete geometry, topology, and

optimization." On the occasion of Ziegler's birthday, he summarized Günter M. Ziegler's career steps. Please find all four tributes by friends and colleagues below as PDF files.

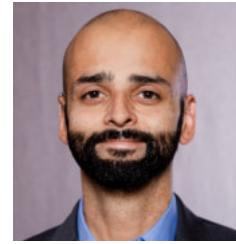
After a research stay at the Mittag-Leffler Institute in Stockholm, **Ziegler came to Berlin in 1992**, where he first worked at the Konrad Zuse Zentrum (today's Zuse Institute Berlin) and then became a professor at the Technische Universität in 1995. He was a member of the DFG Research Center



MATHEON - Mathematics for Key Technologies since its start in 2002. It was there in the mid-90s when [Michael Joswig](#), Einstein professor of *Discrete Mathematics/Geometry* at TU Berlin and Max Planck Fellow at MPI MiS Leipzig, came to Berlin as a postdoc, to work with and learn from Günter M. Ziegler, who inspired him to start developing the software system polymake, which became a crucial step in Joswig's academic career. In his appreciation, he elaborates on two remarkable scientific

achievements of Günter M. Ziegler.

The students always appreciated Günter M. Ziegler's approachability and accessibility. His door was open at any time, usually very early, but this also had advantages, as his former doctoral student at TU Berlin [Raman Sanyal](#), today professor for *Discrete Geometry* at Goethe-Universität Frankfurt, found out. He describes his first experiences as Ziegler's PhD student in a tribute to his birthday: "Open for Business at 7:20 am."



In March 2011, Ziegler moved to Freie Universität to a beautiful traditional villa in the Arminallee, which became the hotspot of his own mathematical community. [Christian Haase](#), a former Master's and PhD student of Ziegler and today a professor of *Discrete Algebraic Geometry & Math for Teaching Post* at FU Berlin, was fascinated by his unusual attitude that he recalls in a very personal anecdote

of 1996: "He is an engaging teacher and communicator with a contagious enthusiasm, and he remains approachable with a sense for what is fun in life."



As a **mathematician, Günter M. Ziegler** deals with aspects of discrete geometry, especially the theory of polyhedra, with algebraic and topological methods in combinatorics, and with problems of optimization. He received the most prestigious research award in Germany, the [Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize](#) by the German Research Foundation (DFG), in 2001. In 2010, he received an Advanced Grant from the [European Research Council](#), and in November 2017, he was the recipient of the Berlin Science Prize, awarded by the Governing Mayor of Berlin. As he described himself as a mathematician in an interview with the Tagesspiegel in 2011: "I am a mathematician who is passionate about his subject in all its breadth: the abstract worlds of thought, the big problems, the surprising applications, the undiscovered possibilities, and the fascinating images."

In 2018, he received the [Leroy P. Steele Prize](#) for Mathematical Exposition jointly with Martin Aigner for their book "Proofs from THE BOOK", which was inspired by Paul Erdős.

Ziegler held and still holds **many high-profile positions and memberships**: He is a member of the board of the [Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities](#), a member of the [German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina](#), and of [acatech](#) – Germany's National Academy of Engineering Sciences, and he is also a fellow of the [American Mathematical Society](#). From 2006 to 2008, he was president of the [German Mathematical Society \(DMV\)](#) and is still serving as a member of the DMV's executive board. From 2014 to 2018, he was a member of the Senate of the [German Research Foundation \(DFG\)](#). Ziegler currently directs the DMV's Media Bureau of Mathematics, the DMV's Office for Networking Schools and Universities, as well as the [MIP.labor](#), an ideas workshop for science journalism on mathematics, computer science, and physics.

Apart from the academic world, he is known to the broader public as one of the faces of the Year of Mathematics in 2008 and as the author of the book "Darf ich Zahlen? Geschichten aus der Mathematik" (English translation: "Do I Count? Stories from Mathematics"). His outstanding

commitment to **entertainingly communicate his research** in discrete mathematics to the general public and his successful efforts to create a fresh new image of mathematics in the public eye was recognized in 2008 when he received the "[Communicator Prize](#)" by the German Research Foundation (DFG).

In July 2018, Günter M. Ziegler opened another chapter in his career when he was elected [President of Freie Universität Berlin](#). He continues as president of Freie Universität for a second term after his re-election in 2022.

Dear Günter, MATH+ and the BMS wish you a happy birthday!

Tributes of his friends and colleagues:

- Martin Grötschel on Günter M. Ziegler's [career steps](#)
- Michael Joswig on Günter M. Ziegler's [two remarkable scientific achievements](#)
- Raman Sanyal on [his first experiences as Günter M. Ziegler's PhD student](#)
- Christian Haase [recalls him in a very personal anecdote of 1996](#)