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Hans-Werner Schmidt studied Chemistry at the University of Mainz (Germany) and ETH Zürich (Switzerland). He received his Diploma and Dr. rer. nat. degree in Chemistry with Prof. Helmut Ringsdorf at the University of Mainz. After a stay as visiting scientist at the Dupont Central Research in Wilmington, Delaware (USA) he moved to the University of Marburg to obtain his Habilitation in Macromolecular Chemistry. From 1989 to 1994 he was Assistant and Associate Professor of Materials with tenure at the Materials Department, College of Engineering at the University of California, Santa Barbara (USA). In 1993 he was visiting professor at the Institute Charles Sadron (CNRS) Louis Pasteur Universität Strasbourg, France. Since 1994 he is Full Professor for Macromolecular Chemistry at the University of Bayreuth.

Hans-Werner Schmidt is chairman of the DFG Collaborative Research Centre (SFB 481), director of the Bayreuth Institute of Macromolecular Research (BIMF) and one of the founding members of the Bayreuth Centre for Colloids and Interfaces (BZKG). Since 2004 he is chairman of the 'Elite Study Program Macromolecular Science' in the frame of the Elite Network Bavaria. In 2001 he was elected as board member of the Division of Macromolecular Chemistry of the German Chemical Society. At the University Bayreuth he is liaison person of the German Science Foundation, of the Fonds of the Chemical Industry, of the German National Academic Foundation and of the Elite Academy of Bavaria.