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Markku Leskelä received both M.Sc. (1974) and PhD (1980) degrees from Helsinki University of Technology (now Aalto University). During 1979-1986 he worked at University of Oulu as associate professor, in 1986-1990 at University of Turku as professor and in 1990-2018 at University of Helsinki as professor of inorganic chemistry. He made visits abroad in 1983 (University of Utrecht), 1987-1988 (University of Florida) and in 1999 (University of Paris VI). During 2004-2009 he worked as Academy professor.

His research interests cover development of chemistry for Atomic Layer Deposition of thin films, metal compound mediated activation of small molecules and luminescent materials. He has worked as vice-director (2002-2007) and director (2012-2017) in two centers of excellence funded by Academy of Finland. He has published about 730 original and 60 review papers which have been cited more than 30 000 times (h-index 80; Web of Science). He holds 40+ patents. He was nominated in 2004 as ISI Highly Cited Author in materials science. He has received several honors and awards, for example Magnus Ehrnrooth Foundation award in Chemistry (2002), A.I Virtanen award (2011), American Vacuum Society ALD innovation award (2012), Honorary award of Finnish Academy of Sciences and Letters (2014), Honorary doctor (University of Tartu 2016). He is a member of four academies of sciences. He has and has had several positions of trust in universities (for example board of trustees at University of Helsinki 2010-2017), scientific societies, academies and foundations. He is at the moment the president of the Finnish Academy of Technical Sciences (2019-2022).