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Erko Stackebrandt, former Director of DSMZ GmbH (German Collection of Microorganisms and Cell Cultures), has been involved in the systematics, molecular phylogeny and ecology of archaea and bacteria for more than 40 years, working on the phenotype and genotype of pure cultures and on molecular microbial diversity assessment. He was engaged in the description and taxonomic revision of more than 700 bacteria taxa of various ranks. He has published more than 650 scientific papers in refereed journals and written over 100 book chapters. He is currently the Coordinator of the ESFRI (European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures) project MIRRI (Microbial Resource Research Infrastructure), which aims to streamline the activities and strategies of major European culture collections.