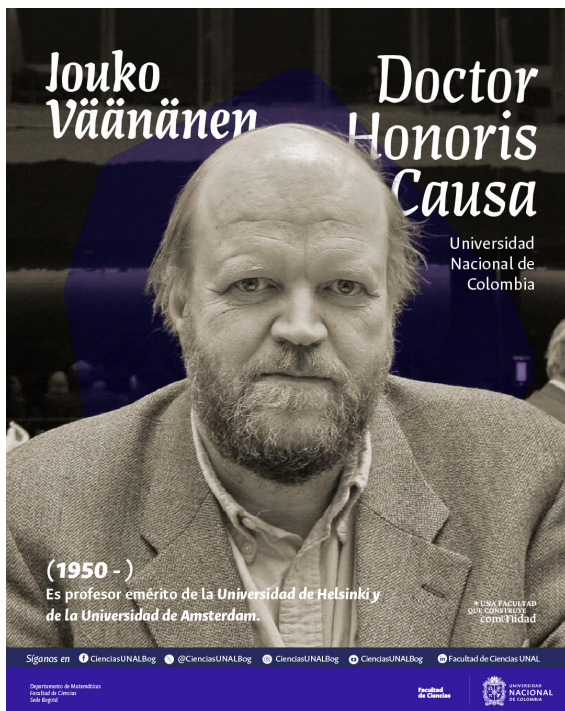


Jouko Väänänen awarded honorary doctorate by the National University of Colombia

25 September 2026



We are very happy to share some wonderful news: Jouko Väänänen has been awarded an Honorary Doctorate by the National University of Colombia (Universidad Nacional de Colombia), recognizing both his remarkable contributions to mathematical logic and his long-standing commitment to the mathematical community in Colombia, on 25 September 2026.

For many of us, Jouko hardly needs an introduction. He has been an important part of the University of Helsinki and the international logic community for decades as a researcher, teacher, academic leader and, perhaps most importantly, as a colleague who has always been extraordinarily generous with his ideas, time and enthusiasm.

Jouko studied mathematics at the University of Helsinki before beginning his doctoral studies in Warsaw with the legendary Polish logician Andrzej Mostowski. After Mostowski's death, he completed his doctorate at the University of Manchester under Peter Aczel. His career later brought him back to Helsinki, as well as to the University of Amsterdam and numerous universities around the world, including Cambridge, Paris, UCLA and the CUNY Graduate Center in New York. Along the way, he also took on major leadership roles at the University of Helsinki, including serving as Dean of the Faculty of Science and Vice-Rector, as well as important roles in European mathematical organizations.

Scientifically, Jouko has made fundamental contributions to mathematical logic, particularly in set theory, model theory, generalized quantifiers and abstract logic. He is perhaps especially well known for creating Dependence Logic, which opened a new way of thinking about dependence and independence in logic. The ideas have grown into a broad international research area, connecting mathematical logic with questions arising in fields ranging from data analysis to computer science and other areas in which information and dependencies between different sources matter. The work continues today through research on team semantics and dependence logic.

Jouko's commitment to creating and sustaining mathematical communities is also reflected in his remarkably long service to the European Set Theory Society. He was a member of its first Board of Trustees and, since 2012, has served continuously as its Treasurer, quietly doing much of the work that allows an international scientific community to flourish over the long term. Over nearly two decades he has helped support the Society's activities and its European Set Theory Conferences, and has been a familiar presence at occasions such as the awarding of the Hausdorff Medal. Most recently, he played a central role in bringing the European Set Theory Conference to Helsinki in 2026, serving on its scientific committee and helping lead its local organization. It is characteristic of Jouko that alongside his own research he has devoted so much time and energy to creating structures in which other mathematicians can meet, collaborate and develop their ideas.

But this honorary doctorate celebrates something more than an outstanding scientific career. It also recognizes a relationship that Jouko has built with Colombia over many years. Through repeated visits to Bogotá, Jouko has helped create and strengthen links between the University of Helsinki and the National University of Colombia. He has supported academic agreements, exchanges in both directions, and opportunities for graduate students and researchers. These connections have also contributed to the growth of a remarkably strong research community in mathematical logic at the National University of Colombia.

There is another side of Jouko's story that makes this recognition particularly fitting. His interest in building bridges across borders goes back much further than his collaboration with Colombia. As a young university student in Cold War Finland, Jouko was active in the peace movement. Later, he helped make Helsinki a meeting point for mathematicians from East and West at a time when researchers on opposite sides of the Iron Curtain could not easily communicate. The account prepared for the honorary doctorate recalls, for example, how Helsinki provided an important neutral academic space where researchers from the Soviet bloc could meet Western colleagues, present their work and exchange ideas. Jouko played an important role in making those encounters possible.

In many ways, there is a beautiful continuity here. From bringing mathematicians together across the divisions of Cold War Europe to building lasting connections between Helsinki and Bogotá, Jouko has spent a remarkable career not only developing new ideas, but also creating opportunities for people and ideas to meet.

Warmest congratulations, Jouko! This honorary doctorate is a wonderful and very well-deserved recognition of an extraordinary mathematical career and of the generosity, curiosity and international spirit that so many colleagues and students have had the pleasure of experiencing firsthand.

Laudatio written by Miguel Moreno