

FENS-SfN JOINT STATEMENT ON THE TREATMENT OF PROFESSOR NIKOS LOGOTHETIS AND HIS COLLEAGUES AT THE MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE FOR BIOLOGICAL CYBERNETICS

The Federation of European Neuroscience Societies (FENS) and the Society for Neuroscience (SfN) are extremely dismayed by the treatment of Professor Nikos Logothetis and his colleagues at the Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics (MPIK) in Tübingen.

The value of research for wide-reaching scientific and medical advances, including the experiments carried out at the MPIK, cannot be overstated. Animal research is of course an emotive topic, however, scientists should be able to depend upon support from their institutes when faced with unfounded attacks from animal rights organisations and public smearing, as in the case of Professor Logothetis.

We are aware that Professor Logothetis has been accused of wrongdoing in his animal research and that some issues may remain under investigation. Nevertheless, Professor Logothetis has been exonerated of the majority of the accusations that he initially faced. Even if minor issues remain to be investigated, it is wrong that he is assumed to be guilty by the Max Planck Society even before he has had a chance to defend himself and that he remains tarnished by the earlier allegations that have proven false.

The treatment of Professor Logothetis and his colleagues by the Max Planck Society sets an alarming precedent whereby institutions neglect to support affiliated scientists facing similar unproven accusations and disregard the presumption of innocence. Moreover, the recent cancellation of the Scientific Advisory Board's visit to the Institute - a key element of the institute's usual transparent scientific review process - denies Professor Logothetis and his colleagues the possibility to explain and defend their research. The withholding of such a review from scientists who have not faced allegations seems particularly unfair.

The scientific community looks to bodies such as the Max Planck Society for leadership and clarity. In addition to letters addressed directly to the Max Planck Society, SfN and FENS hereby reiterate their call on the Max Planck Society to rectify their unfair treatment of Professor Logothetis. Moreover, the society should reinstate the aforementioned scientific review procedure, which is fundamental for the research performed at the Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics. Furthermore, we call upon all research institutions to develop mechanisms that will guarantee support for their affiliated scientists when targeted in a similar way by animal activists.

The Federation of European Neuroscience Societies and the Society for Neuroscience represent more than 60,000 scientists globally. FENS and SfN aim to advance neuroscience research and education, support their members and the wider neuroscience community, and facilitate scientific exchange. FENS and SfN strongly advocate the responsible use of animals in biomedical research and work, through their respective committees on animals in research, to promote public awareness and understanding of the importance of the use of animals in neuroscience.

References

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