



Athens, July 3, 2018

To:
FENS office
FENS Executive Committee
CARE committee

Subject: Letter of Support to Prof. Nikos Logothetis and Request for action

One of the most prominent hubs of excellence in neuroscience, directed by Prof. Nikos Logothetis at the Max Planck Institute for Biological Cybernetics (MPI-BC) in Tübingen, has been driven to close its primate research following a lack of appropriate support from the MPS's leadership, after harassment and unsubstantiated allegations by "animal rights" activists that commenced in 2014 (for the history of events, see Abbott 2018; Speaking of Research 2018; editorial 2015). The members of the Hellenic Society for Neuroscience (HSfN) express our solidarity and support to Prof. Nikos Logothetis and his colleagues, as well as our serious concern over the far-reaching consequences of the way this closure came to effect could have on the future of research in Europe.

Since such extremist actions by "animal rights" activists are not unprecedented (Editorial 2004), we at HSfN believe that, as a scientific community comprised of institutions, public and other major stake holders of neuroscience and medical research, we have failed to protect our colleagues at Tübingen and prevent this closure from materializing. The value of research in general, and more specifically the value of research in non-human primates highlighted by the significant contributions of the Logothetis lab, are well recognized (FENS and SfN, 2014; MPS 2015). In so far as the Logothetis lab followed meticulously all the protocols of animal handling dictated by the European directive and German law, and outlined in their approved protocols, we believe Logothetis and his colleagues should not be alone in their legal battles and struggles. After all, the activists exceed their democratic right to protest; they have not only committed unlawful actions against MPI-BC, but to all who stand to benefit from medical research with responsible use of animals – including the millions of patients with neurodegenerative diseases and not only -. After all, this can serve as an example of how outstanding research can be threatened by non-scientific attitudes/policies and thus animal research could be at stake overall.

FENS, HSfN and other national institutions can be even more active in many ways. From educating the public and objectively assessing its informed consent for responsible use of animals in research, to lobbying with our governments,



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and most importantly to activate legal actions or advice on how to hold research institutions accountable for protecting the researchers that help them thrive (Abbott 2018; Speaking of Research, 2018).

In 2015, Professor Logothetis decided to close his primate lab and continue his research in rodents (Vogel. 2015). The question is: “Why did the Max Planck Society (MPS) decided in February 2018 to revoke Prof. Logothetis ability to continue his research, given that neither MPS nor state authorities found serious violations in 2015”? This decision appears to be prepared for the (legal) outcome of a complaint to the police based on a video footage taken by activists in the lab in 2014. It is claimed (Max Planck Campus, 2018) that MPS acted ahead of any conviction or actually in absence of any new incriminating evidence.

We kindly ask FENS and CARE to consider taking a formal position on the MPS decision regarding Prof. Logothetis’ research license. The European scientific community should urge the MPS President to immediately restore Prof. Logotheti’s director rights for conducting experiments. Additionally, if possible to initiate the discussion on a European Commission level.

Isn't this a case of science succumbing to the pressure of a minority group of animal rights extremists? Certainly, when city prosecutors go after the scientists, and not after the people firing off anonymous death threats, then science and isonomy are threatened. We believe FENS and all of us have a crucial role to play here – regardless of for whom the bell tolls, this time.

Sincerely,

On behalf of HSfN
Christina Dalla, PhD
President of Hellenic Society for Neurosciences
Athens, Greece





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