

10/2017

15.6.2017

## **Executive Board decides to adopt measures against Leibniz director** **Scientific misconduct: False representation of data, insufficient documentation of data** **and breach of duty of supervision**

**The Leibniz Association is taking appropriate action in response to a case of scientific misconduct. At its meeting in Berlin on 13 June 2017, the research organisation's Executive Board decided to take action against the Director of the Leibniz Institute on Aging – Fritz Lipmann Institute (FLI) in Jena, Professor Dr Karl Lenhard Rudolph. This decision is based on the Leibniz Association's guidelines for ensuring good scientific practice and on dealing with allegations of scientific misconduct.**

This decision is a response by the Executive Board to the report of a Review Board set up in November 2016 to review allegations of scientific misconduct. The Review Board was set up due to external indications and information from Prof. Dr Rudolph concerning the allegations raised. In addition to ombudspersons from the Leibniz Association, the Review Board includes another six experts, including external experts.

According to their report, the Review Board reached the following conclusions:

1. Eight of the 11 scientific publications reviewed contain errors in data representation. These errors include improper duplication of parts of images, unmarked edits when electronically compiling parts of images, presentation of incorrect parts of images, improper selection when presenting results and inadequate loading controls for what are known as 'Western blots' on separate gels. Prof. Dr Rudolph is primarily responsible for six of these publications as corresponding author / senior author; he is jointly responsible as co-author for the presentation of criticised data in another publication.
2. In eight of the reviewed publications, it was not possible to submit data documentation corresponding to the requirements for good scientific practice with relevant trial protocols and primary data (lab books).
3. In four of the reviewed publications, experiments were not sufficiently checked for their reproducibility in accordance with the rules of good scientific practice.

While the Review Board does not see any specific indications that data was fabricated or that data manipulation was carried out directly or initiated by Prof. Dr Rudolph, it considers there to be proof of insufficient quality control and inadequate supervision of researchers within the relevant working group. As these factors facilitated numerous shortcomings in the reviewed publications significantly exceeding the scope of merely occasional, accidental errors, the Review Board considers Prof. Dr Rudolph's breach of the duty of supervision as working group leader and primary author to be grossly negligent. With regard to the cases mentioned in points

1 to 3 above, the allegation of scientific misconduct raised against Prof. Dr Rudolph is therefore deemed to be appropriate.

Based on the recommendations of the Review Board, the Executive Board has decided to adopt measures including a written reprimand directed at Prof. Dr Rudolph on the grounds of grossly negligent scientific misconduct, the withdrawal of his passive voting rights for Leibniz Association committees for three years and the exclusion of the FLI under Prof. Dr Rudolph's leadership from Leibniz Association competition proceedings for three years. The Executive Board also urges Prof. Dr Rudolph to publish errata to the criticised articles and retract one publication in accordance with the recommendations of the Review Board's report. For the complete list of measures, please refer to the statement below.

Reacting to the Executive Board's decision, Leibniz Association President Matthias Kleiner said: "These measures are appropriate and adequate for clearly and permanently criticising the scientific misconduct on the part of Prof. Dr Rudolph. The Leibniz Association will continue to stringently and emphatically ensure compliance with the standards of scientific integrity and consistently take into account the experiences it has gained from the proceedings that have now been concluded. This case demonstrates the importance of alert, competent and fact-driven whistleblowers in science."

**Additional information:**

Statement from the Leibniz Association on the report of the Review Board on its review of allegations of scientific misconduct

[www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/downloads/Forschung/Statement\\_FLI.pdf](http://www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/fileadmin/user_upload/downloads/Forschung/Statement_FLI.pdf)

Leibniz Association guidelines for ensuring good scientific practice and on dealing with allegations of scientific misconduct

[www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/downloads/Forschung/Leibniz\\_Association\\_GUIDELINES\\_Good\\_Scientific\\_Practice\\_2015.pdf](http://www.leibniz-gemeinschaft.de/fileadmin/user_upload/downloads/Forschung/Leibniz_Association_GUIDELINES_Good_Scientific_Practice_2015.pdf)

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**The Leibniz Association**

The Leibniz Association connects 91 independent research institutions that range in focus from the natural, engineering and environmental sciences via economics, spatial and social sciences to the humanities. Leibniz Institutes address issues of social, economic and ecological relevance. They conduct knowledge-driven and applied basic research, maintain scientific infrastructure and provide research-based services. The Leibniz Association identifies focus areas for knowledge transfer to policy-makers, academia, business and the public. Leibniz institutions collaborate intensively with universities – in the form of "Leibniz ScienceCampi" (thematic partnerships between university and non-university research institutes), for example – as well as with industry and other partners at home and abroad.

They are subject to an independent evaluation procedure that is unparalleled in its transparency. Due to the importance of the institutions for the country as a whole, they are funded jointly by the Federation and the Länder, employing some 18,700 individuals, including 9,500 researchers. The entire budget of all the institutes is approximately 1.8 billion Euros.

**[www.leibniz-association.eu](http://www.leibniz-association.eu)**