

**Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas  
Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology  
Medical School of the University of Crete**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**Heraklion, Greece, July 20, 2017**

**FORTH Chairman, Professor Nektarios Tavernarakis, receives the prestigious Helmholtz International Fellow Award**

The Helmholtz Association is Germany's largest scientific organization and conducts top-level research to identify and explore the major challenges facing society, science and the economy. It brings together 18 research centers, with more than 38,000 employees and an annual budget of over €4 billion. The Association has set the cooperation with the world's best scientists as a key objective. To this end, the organization has established the Helmholtz International Fellow Award, which targets outstanding senior scientists and research managers based outside Germany who have excelled in fields relevant to the Helmholtz Association, including science management at large international research institutions. The most important selection criteria are the researcher's academic performance, his/her international reputation and the compatibility of his/her research field or project with the activities of the proposed Helmholtz Centre. Helmholtz International Fellows receive an honorary award of 20,000 €, and the opportunity to pursue research flexibly at one or more Helmholtz Centers, where cooperation already exists or would be useful and profitable in the future. Nektarios Tavernarakis was selected to receive the award for his seminal research achievements, relevant to ageing, neurodegeneration, and learning and memory.

Nektarios Tavernarakis is the Chairman of the Board of Directors at the Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas (FORTH), Research Director at the Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (IMBB), and Professor of Molecular Systems Biology at the Medical School of the University of Crete, in Heraklion, Greece. He is the Director of the Graduate Program on Bioinformatics at the Medical School of the University of Crete, and is also heading the Neurogenetics and Ageing laboratory of IMBB. He is an elected member of the Scientific Council of the European Research Council (ERC), the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO), and Academia Europaea. He has also served as the Director of the Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology. He earned his Ph.D. degree at the University of Crete, and trained as a postdoctoral researcher at Rutgers University in New Jersey, USA. His research focuses on the molecular mechanisms of necrotic cell death and neurodegeneration, the interplay between cellular metabolism and ageing, the mechanisms of sensory transduction and integration by the nervous system, and the development of novel genetic tools for biomedical research. For his scientific accomplishments, he has received several notable scientific prizes, including an innovation-supporting ERC Proof of Concept Grant and two ERC Advanced Investigator Grants. He is one of the first in Europe, and until now the only one in Greece, to have been awarded this highly competitive and prestigious grant twice. He is also the recipient of the EMBO Young Investigator award, the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Friedrich Wilhelm Bessel research award, the Bodossaki Foundation Scientific Prize for Medicine and Biology, the Empeirikeion Foundation Academic Excellence Prize, the Galien Scientific Research Award, the Helmholtz International Fellow Award, the Research Excellence award of the Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas, the BioMedical Research Award of the Academy of Athens, and the International Human Frontier in Science Program Organization (HFSP) long-term Postdoctoral Fellowship.

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