



Heraklion 04/07/2023

## OBITUARY

### IMBB is mourning the loss of Tassos Economou



**It is with great sadness and deep grief we report that the former IMBB Researcher and Professor University of Crete Tassos Economou passed away on July 3, 2023, at the age of 59.**

Tassos Economou was born and raised in Alexandroupolis. He was married to the biologist researcher Dr. Lily Karamanou and father of three children.

He graduated from the Department of Biology of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki and received his PhD (1990) in Molecular Microbiology from the John Innes Institute and the University of East Anglia, UK. From 1990 to 1997 he was a postdoctoral researcher at the John Innes Institute, the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA, USA) and Dartmouth College School of Medicine (USA). From 1996 to 2016 he was a faculty member of the Department of Biology of the University of Crete and a researcher of the Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology. In 2016 he decided to continue his academic career at the KU Leuven University in Belgium.

Tassos Economou had a decisive contribution to the development of IMBB in the fields of biochemistry and microbial biotechnology. He was CEO of MINOTECH biotechnology and was one of the founders of IMBB's Proteomics Laboratory. He has made a catalytic contribution internationally to growth.

He made seminal contributions by catalyzing the international attempts to decode the molecular basis of protein trafficking. Being an exemplar of a modern cross-disciplinary scientist, he managed to understand the determinants that allow a cell to distinguish between cytoplasmic proteins and proteins that need to function at subcellular locations, outside the cell they are produced and even to “penetrate” host cells. For this, he mainly used two model molecular motors, the ubiquitously present and life-essential Sec translocase and the Type-III secretion system essential to pathogenic bacteria. His work challenged the signal hypothesis (Blobel, Nobel prize), proving that such address tags have additional molecular functions, beyond targeting, acting as allosteric regulators of protein transport and protein folding. His work has been published in the most pre-eminent scientific journals.



HELLENIC REPUBLIC  
MINISTRY OF DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENTS  
GENERAL SECRETARIAT FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION



**FORTH**

FOUNDATION FOR RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY - HELLAS  
**INSTITUTE OF MOLECULAR BIOLOGY AND BIOTECHNOLOGY**

He was dedicated to quality basic research and an outstanding university teacher. He helped and inspired many people to progress, with his sharp judgment, his vision and his love for science.

His passing away is a great loss for IMBB and the Greek scientific community. IMBB pays tribute to his memory and offers condolences to his family and friends.