

Obituary for George Thireos



It was with shock and great pain that the Scientific Council of IMBB learned of the sudden demise on January 20, 2011 of the former Director of the Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology and Vice-President of the Foundation for Research and Technology Hellas, Dr. George Thireos. With his death the Greek and international scientific community loses one of the most prominent researchers in the field of biological sciences.

George Thireos was born 59 years ago in Athens. He studied Biology at the University of Athens and Harvard University and, after brilliant postdoctoral training at the same University, he moved to Crete where he became a researcher of the Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology of FORTH. During this period he generated an outstanding body of research, which earned him a prominent position amongst the international leaders in his field. Along with his research activities, George served as the Director of the Institute of Molecular Biology & Biotechnology from 1994 to 2009.

George Thireos was a genuine researcher with a sharp way of thinking and an original approach to scientific questions. His research interests centered mainly on gene regulation at the transcriptional and translational levels. Using relatively simple model systems he made incisive contributions to our understanding of gene expression mechanisms relevant to all living organisms. Such mechanistic understanding is indispensable for advancing our efforts to combat human disease and developing a wide range of applications.

George Thireos' contribution went beyond his scientific work. During his tenure as Director, the IMBB made its mark as one of the top research centres in Greece and Europe. George lived to see the Institute evolve into a multidisciplinary research centre which, in collaboration with the other FORTH Institutes, studied a wide variety of cellular mechanisms. George had an unwavering dedication to academic excellence and scientific quality and was opposed to the submission of scientific thinking to the sometimes ephemeral funding trends.

Besides being a distinguished researcher, George Thireos was also a dedicated teacher. Throughout his tenure at the IMBB he actively participated in graduate student training and

mentored his colleagues towards this goal. Many students who later went on to develop brilliant careers as independent researchers were trained in George's group.

In his recent position at the Biomedical Research Foundation of the Academy of Athens he envisaged not only to continue his scientific endeavours, but to delve into a new and uncharted territory of scientific thinking, that of Systems Biology. Although his dreams were not realized due to his untimely demise, he has already established a solid foundation, which new generations of scientists will build upon in the future.

He was married to Popi Sinthichaki, researcher at the BRFAA, and was the father of 7 year old Alexandros.

Throughout his career, George Thireos was known for his integrity, the breadth of his knowledge, the dynamism of his research and his dedication to excellence and the rational and correct exploitation of knowledge.

His death represents a profound loss for the Greek and international scientific and academic community.

[Greek version](#)