

## Proposal

### The Kafatos Lecture series

Engaging the public worldwide with ground breaking life science research



#### Professor Fotis Kafatos - 1940-2017

Founder and first President of the European Research Council (ERC) – 2007-2010

Director General of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) – 1993-2005

Founder and first Director of the Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (IMBB-FORTH), Heraklion – 1983-1993

Founder of the Biology Department and Professor of Biology at the University of Crete – 1982-2006.

#### Summary

Following the death of Professor Fotis Kafatos, the former Director General of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL) on 18 November 2017, the EMBL community felt passionately that his legacy should be commemorated. They agreed that it was important to highlight his outstanding contributions to life sciences as a highly influential scientist and mentor, founder and president of the European Research Council (ERC), a Director General of EMBL, and a champion of bringing life sciences to the broader community.

It was decided that a prestigious annual life science lecture aimed at the general public worldwide would be a fitting tribute. The lecture would be held in-person at a prestigious venue in the city or country of the selected speaker and would be streamed live and made available online to the general public worldwide thereafter.

#### About Fotis Kafatos

Born and raised in Crete, Professor Kafatos is arguably the most outstanding Greek figure in modern biology. He made fundamental contributions to Greek science as Founder and first Director of the Institute of Molecular Biology and Biotechnology (IMBB). “With the support of Giannis Lianis, the first Minister of Research and Technology in Greece, and other members of the government, this brainchild of Professor Kafatos soon became part of a cluster of five very lively institutes making up the new Research Centre of Crete (FORTH). The island of Crete, a scientific desert until that time, developed into the Eastern Mediterranean region’s most important technology and research centre. It is a common belief that if it hadn’t been for the rocket-style take off of the IMBB, the current remarkable state of development would have never been achieved.”<sup>1</sup>

Professor Kafatos was chosen in 1993 as the Director General of Europe’s leading life science institute – the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL)<sup>2</sup>. This appointment recognised his major achievements in molecular and evolutionary developmental biology. After twelve years at EMBL, Professor Kafatos became the Founder and first President of the European Research Council – a body which has transformed European research.

“Professor Kafatos was instrumental in the successful setting up of the ERC and its first years of operations. During the decade preceding the launch, he was a driving force in the movement of scientists demanding the foundation of such a council. With great commitment and stamina he fought with heart and soul for having this new organisation established. He was adamant that the council be run by scientists and scholars in order to see to the needs of the research community. This governance has been a decisive factor of the success of the ERC.”<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.imbb.forth.gr/news/130919\\_kafatos-fotis.pdf](https://www.imbb.forth.gr/news/130919_kafatos-fotis.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [www.embl.org](http://www.embl.org)

<sup>3</sup> <https://erc.europa.eu/news/in-memoriam.F.Kafatos>

Professor Kafatos was a fervent supporter of outreach and engaging with society, establishing EMBL's Science and Society Programme, Communications Department and Alumni Association. He cared deeply about the careers of younger scientists, convincing the ERC's Scientific Council that more than half of all funding should go to the younger generation, a rule that was subsequently increased to two-thirds of the budget.<sup>4</sup>

### About the Kafatos Lecture

We would like to commemorate Professor Kafatos with a prestigious annual lecture that brings groundbreaking life science research to the public across the globe, making it accessible and highlighting its day-to-day impact. Academics worldwide will be invited to nominate outstanding scientists who are past or current ERC grantees in the field of life sciences (guaranteeing excellence in science), and to provide links to videos which demonstrate their nominated scientist's credentials as an excellent and engaging public speaker. The lecture could be held as a stand-alone event or in combination with another public outreach event or conference. It would be held in-person at a prestigious venue and would be streamed live and made available online to the general public worldwide thereafter.

A formidable panel of well-known experts will be formed to select the best nominations for any given year.

### Our Proposal

We would be hugely grateful for a commitment to the Kafatos Fund that would help establish the lecture series with a launch in 2022 in Heraklion, Crete, Fotis Kafatos' birthplace.

All donors will be recognised in the material on the event.

For the Kafatos Lecture series, we are seeking a multi-year commitment that covers the annual cost of €10,000 as follows:

- Honorarium for the speaker (€2,500)
- Travel and accommodation, where relevant, for the speaker and a presenter
- Publicity, marketing material, campaigns
- Filming, necessary animations, live streaming and dedicated online channel
- Simultaneous translations
- Coaching to present to the general public, if relevant
- Venue hire and catering

The lectures will be administered by the EMBL Alumni Association, in line with existing initiatives which honour EMBL's first two Directors General.<sup>5</sup> The call for nominations will be distributed worldwide through the impressive networks of EMBL, its alumni and lecture partners.

Every effort will be made to make the lectures well-known and a highlight event in any city or country.

Thank you in advance for your kind consideration of this proposal. We would of course be delighted to answer any queries you might have.

### Contact



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<sup>4</sup> <https://science.sciencemag.org/content/358/6369/1387>

<sup>5</sup> EMBL's first two Directors General, Sir John Kendrew and Lennart Philipson, are commemorated by the EMBL Alumni Association with the Kendrew and Philipson Awards: [www.embl.org/alumni/awards](http://www.embl.org/alumni/awards)