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Scientific misconduct: Written reprimand and two-year ban on requests for funding

Administrative committee of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German research association) takes action against ageing researcher Karl Lenhard Rudolph from Jena.

The DFG has once again taken steps to remedy a case of scientific misconduct: The administrative committee of Germany's largest research funding organisation and centralised self-governing scientific organisation has now decided in Bonn to adopt measures against the ageing researcher and Leibniz Prize winner Prof. Karl Lenhard Rudolph, in accordance with the DFG procedure for dealing with scientific misconduct.

Rudolph, who is engaged by the Leibniz Association's Leibniz Institute for Age Research - Fritz Lipman Institute (FLI) in Jena, was sanctioned by the administrative committee with a written reprimand and a two-year exclusion from the right to request funding. The administrative committee followed a recommendation of the DFG committee concerning the investigation into allegations of scientific misconduct.

In 2016, the DFG initiated an investigation into Rudolph's conduct following an allegation of data manipulation in a publication of which Rudolph was the final author. At the same time, the Leibniz Association also initiated an investigation, during which the DFG procedure was temporarily suspended. In June 2017, this procedure came to the conclusion that Rudolph had been guilty of scientific misconduct and several measures were adopted against him by the executive committee of the Leibniz Association.

Following the decision of the administrative committee, the DFG has also ceased proceedings to investigate Rudolph's activities. After considering several written statements from Rudolph, the final report of the investigation by the Leibniz Association and a personal hearing with Rudolph, the DFG committee enquiry into the allegations of scientific misconduct reached the conclusion that misrepresentations had occurred in a total of three publications with DFG funding. Rudolph was the final author and corresponding author of these publications, and in the opinion of the committee, could and should have identified these misrepresentations, as he himself also acknowledged during the course of the investigation.

In accordance with the DFG procedure for dealing with scientific misconduct, the investigative committee thus suggested to the administrative committee that Rudolph was issued a written reprimand and a two-year exclusion from the right to request funding, as the administrative committee has now done. "These measures take the shortcomings of Mr. Rudolph into account in an appropriate manner," said the

chairman of the investigative committee, DFG General Secretary Prof. Dorothee Dzwonnek, following the announcement of the decision of the administrative committee.

Dzwonnek emphasised that the publications in question were not based on falsified data, while also drawing attention to the fact there was no connection between these three publications and the Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize awarded to Rudolph for his groundbreaking research by the DFG in 2009, since all the publications in question appeared after this point in time.