



Heraklion, June 6, 2020

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **Professor Nektarios Tavernarakis elected Member of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology Governing Board**

Nektarios Tavernarakis, Chairman of the Board of Directors at the Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas (FORTH), and Professor at the Medical School of the University of Crete, was elected Member of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Governing Board. The EIT Governing Board consists of 9 European innovation leaders, top-notch scientists, researchers and entrepreneurs whose scientific accomplishments, extensive experience and international reputation, have distinguished them in the fields of technology and innovation. The members of the Board are appointed by the European Commission, following a highly competitive evaluation of the scientific and managerial achievements of candidates, from all European countries.

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology is a pioneering initiative of the European Commission that drives innovation across Europe, by integrating the business, education and research sectors, towards developing find solutions to pressing global challenges. The Institute fosters innovation, through a successful model that promotes the development of dynamic, long-term European partnerships – the EIT Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs) – where businesses, education and research combine forces to deliver solutions to pressing global challenges. There are currently 8 KICs that aim to tackle climate change, sustainable energy, digital technologies, healthy living and active ageing, raw materials, food for future, smart, green urban mobility and manufacturing.

With Europe's largest innovation network of more than 50 EIT Innovation Hubs, gathering over 1.500 partners, the EIT endows innovators the means they need to succeed. EIT currently comprises 8 Innovation Communities and offers a wide range of activities, to help aspiring innovators turn their best ideas into products, services, jobs and growth, including education programmes, start-up and acceleration support, as well as, innovation-driven research projects. The EIT Community has brought over 900 new products and services to the market, trained thousands of entrepreneurs and has supported over 2.000 ventures that have attracted EUR 1.5 billion in external investment.

Mariya Gabriel, EU Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, stated:

"I am delighted to welcome these top-notch European innovation leaders to the EIT Governing Board. I am fully committed to ensure that all European innovation ecosystem players work together to make the EU the best place to innovate in the world. The EIT, together with the European Innovation Council, serve to ensure that European innovators and start-ups become global leaders to solve EU societal challenges".

Nektarios Tavernarakis is the first, and the only Greek to have been elected member of EIT's Governing Board, following an outstanding scientific and managerial career, with substantial contributions and important initiatives towards promoting innovation. This significant distinction comes as recognition of

the scientific quality and the highly competitive research conducted at FORTH and the University of Crete.

### Short Biography

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 corresponding member of the *Academy of Athens*, and an elected member of the *Scientific Council of the European Research Council (ERC)*, the *European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) Governing Board*, the *European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO)*, the *German National Academy of Sciences (Leopoldina)*, the *European Academy of Sciences and Arts*, 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. He has published numerous scientific papers in top-tier, cross-discipline, international scientific journals, in addition to invited book chapters, and other publications, including editorials, commentaries, and science-popularizing articles. His research has been commended internationally, and is supported by highly competitive funding from the European Union, international organizations and the Greek Government. For his scientific accomplishments, he has received several notable scientific prizes, including two *ERC Advanced Investigator Grants*, and an innovation-supporting *ERC Proof of Concept Grant*. He is one of the first in Europe, and the first 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 *Research Excellence award of the Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas*, the *BioMedical Research Award of the Academy of Athens*, the *Galien Scientific Research Award*, the *Helmholtz International Fellow Award*, the *International Human Frontier in Science Program Organization (HFSP) long-term Postdoctoral Fellowship*, the *Honorary Education Business Award*, and the *Dr. Frederick Valergakis Post-Graduate Research Grant Program Academic Achievement Award of the Hellenic University Club of New York*.

For more information, please visit the website of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology:  
<https://eit.europa.eu/>