



Welcome to our Summer Newsletter.

In June members of the executive team had the pleasure of meeting many officers of national societies, in our series of regional catch-up meetings. It was exciting to hear of accomplishments but perhaps the main message to come out, is that our societies have hugely enjoyed being able to meet in person at their annual meetings. The shadow of the pandemic is indeed receding.



Several important points were raised in our discussions, and I, along with the ExCo, will be following up on these. The most urgent was to provide a consensus statement on the continuing need for animal experimentation, and to oppose the call for an outright ban on animal testing, which will be debated by the EU parliament, at a plenary session in July. We are asking all national societies to sign the statement. It is vitally important that our voice, as European physiologists, is heard, and FEPS is the organization to lead on this.

Research integrity is another important and topical issue. There was agreement about this by all national society officers on the call. There was however no society that had a policy on this. I am pleased to say that Professor Christian Aalkjaer is leading a FEPS initiative to provide a statement, that will be used to engender debate and engagement with national societies. We will present this at the General Council meeting in Tallinn and discuss how to implement and disseminate the ideas.

You will be able to read about two other activities FEPS would like to support. The first is a European Day of Physiology, to be held during the Nobel prize week in December. Nina Vardjan, President of the Slovenian Society, describes how they celebrate this, and we invite other societies to start their programme. Secondly, members of the Romanian Physiological Society have been running a physiology quiz for three years – see an account and pictures in the newsletter. FEPS is interesting in working with the Romanian colleagues to see if we can make this a pan-European event. It is an excellent (and fun) way to get our discipline into the minds of students.

We are also pleased to feature our new Treasurer and member of the Executive Committee, Nina Ullrich, currently in Heidelberg, but soon to be setting up her lab in Bern, Switzerland – good luck with the move Nina!

I wish everyone a joyful and productive Summer and hope to see many of you at the SPS-FEPS -Baltic societies meeting in Tallinn, Estonia.

## Executive Board of FEPS

**Susan Wray / Liverpool, UK**  
President

**Fabio Benfenati / Genova, Italy**  
President-Elect

**Margarethe Geiger / Vienna, Austria**  
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**Nina Ullrich / Heidelberg, Germany**  
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**Robert Zorec / Ljubljana, Slovenia**  
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**Christian Aalkjær / Aarhus, Denmark**  
Member

## News & Events

We welcome all news & events from FEPS member societies to be published in the Newsletter and on the website ([www.feps.org](http://www.feps.org)). Please send all information to the FEPS secretariat at [info@feps.org](mailto:info@feps.org)

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**Update**

## PHYSIOLOGY IN FOCUS 2023

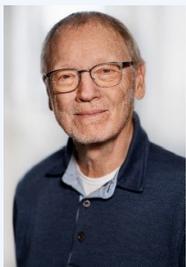
Tallinn, ESTONIA  
September 14-16



**August 1, 2023:**  
**August 31, 2023:**

**Deadline for late-breaking posters**  
**Deadline for registration**

### Plenary Speakers



**Jens Juul Holst**, University of Copenhagen, Denmark  
*Future therapy of obesity and type 2 diabetes based on the physiological actions of a gut hormone*

**Ole Holger Petersen**, Cardiff University, Wales, UK



*Watching living cells in action in the pancreas*

### Important links:



### Keynote Speakers



**Agneta Nordberg**, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden  
*Dynamic reactive astrogliosis in Alzheimer disease continuum*



**Lora Heisler**, Rowett Institute, University of Aberdeen, UK  
*New insights in the brain control of obesity and type 2 diabetes*



**Maija Dambrova**, Riga Stradins University, Latvia  
*Acylcarnitines: Fatty Acid Energy Metabolites in Health and Disease*



**Mart Saarma**, University of Helsinki, Finland  
*Novel regulators of cellular stress and neuronal survival*

## Breaking News

### FEPS Meeting in Granada, September 4<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>, 2024

We are happy to announce that the Spanish Physiological Society –together with FEPS– will organize the 2024 FEPS meeting in Granada. Details will follow soon on our website.



## Fellowships and Awards

### Physiology in Focus 2023, Tallinn, September 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>

#### FEPS Travel Awards for early career physiologists

As for previous FEPS meetings FEPS will provide 10 travel grants (250 Euro each) for early career physiologists to support their active participation in the Physiology in Focus 2023 meeting in Tallinn, Estonia.

Preference will be given to master and PhD students and those in their first postdoctoral position.

Applicants should have a poster or oral presentation at the meeting and provide the following documents by August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2023, to the Secretary General of FEPS (Margarethe Geiger) by e-mail ( info@feeps.org ).

Required documents include:

CV

Accepted abstract to be presented at the meeting

Proof of Registration

Support letter from the supervisor or department head indicating the need for travel support

Details can be found at the [FEPS website](#).



## Fellowships and Awards

### FEPS Traveling Fellowships 2023

- ◆ Last year FEPS has introduced the FEPS Travelling Fellowship (FTF). This program will be announced and given every year. Up to 2 awards (1,500 euros each) can be used flexibly in travelling to and staying in another European country to further an applicant's career in physiology. The country should be an in good-standing member of FEPS.
- ◆ This fellowship could be to support and develop research or exceptionally teaching. These awards are targeted at those who are postdoctoral workers, or in their first tenured position.
- ◆ Given the need to focus our limited funds and being aware of regional differences in the capacity of FEPS national society members, we will prioritize applications from those in regions where local funds are particularly restricted.
- ◆ These awards are not open to undergraduate or postgraduate students or senior scientists. These awards are not intended to cover meeting attendance – FEPS has a separate funding scheme for attendance at its meetings, including Europhysiology.
- ◆ Applicants will need to demonstrate how they will benefit from the FTF. They must have a host, clearly developed plans, aims and a timetable for their visit. The availability of any other supporting funds or benefits in kind (e.g. free accommodation), should be mentioned in the application.
- ◆ Successful candidates should also provide a short report on their FTF, suitable for the FEPS webpage and newsletter after their visit.
- ◆ For details and [application forms](#) see the [FEPS website](#).
- ◆ Next deadline for applications: **August 31st, 2023**

### Financial Support for Early Career Researchers

- ⇒ The FEPS executive committee is pleased to announce that FEPS will support conference participation of early career researchers. The grants will be awarded to PhD-students or postdoctoral fellows who are members of a National Physiological Society for active participation (accepted presentation) at a physiological society meeting outside their own country, but within Europe and other than Europhysiology or FEPS meetings.
- ⇒ This support is limited to 10 grants per year, one grant per national society, and € 200.- per person.
- ⇒ For details and deadlines please contact the [FEPS website](#).

## MEET A NEW MEMBER OF THE FEPS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

### Dr. Nina D. Ullrich

Dear Members of the Federation of European Physiological Societies



In the name of FEPS, I have been part of the organizing committee of the European Young Physiologists' Symposia (EYPS) since 2016, and I had the great pleasure of organizing early career meetings for young physiologists under the umbrella of different physiological society meetings in a number of European cities (Paris, Vienna, London, Copenhagen).



In September 2022, I was offered the role of the treasurer of FEPS, taking over from my former colleague and friend Bill Louch, and I take it as a proof of trust and a great honour to be part now of the executive committee of the European Physiological Society.

Since my early years at Vienna University, I have been captivated by physiology. I graduated in neurophysiology and zoology, initially working on spiders' touch receptors under the guidance of Prof. Friedrich Barth. At the same time, I came in contact with the lab of Prof. Wolf-Michael Weber in Giessen, now in Münster, Germany, who was working on cystic fibrosis and the CFTR in a tissue model involving leeches and nasal mucous epithelia from human biopsies. I was so fascinated by these studies and membrane physiology in particular, and knew that I wanted to pursue a career in biomedical sciences. So, I decided that for my PhD, I wanted to learn more about the biophysics of ion channels. And with some luck and good connections, I moved to Leuven, Belgium, to the Department of Cellular and Molecular Physiology and the team of Prof. Bernd Nilius, who guided me through the jungle of electrophysiology into the world of TRP channels, in particular the Ca<sup>2+</sup>-activated TRPM4 and TRPM5 channels. Back then, we did not know anything about the physiological role of TRPM4 in the body, but there was already an idea that this channel might be involved in the cardiovascular system and the heart. Intrigued by early discussions about cardiac ion channels, I moved on to Dr. Ken MacLeod's team at Imperial College London for my first postdoc, and this was my entrance into the field of cardiac cell physiology. Soon I had discovered my new passion for the cardiac L-type Ca<sup>2+</sup> channel and the ryanodine receptor, which was further intensified during my second postdoc in Prof. Ernst Niggli's lab at the Institute of Physiology at Bern University. I developed a strong expertise in cardiac excitation-contraction coupling, and together with a great team of collaborators, we have revealed new pathophysiological maladaptations in dystrophic cardiomyocytes resulting in severe alteration of the cellular homeostasis and Ca<sup>2+</sup> handling as a major contribution for the development of cardiomyopathy.

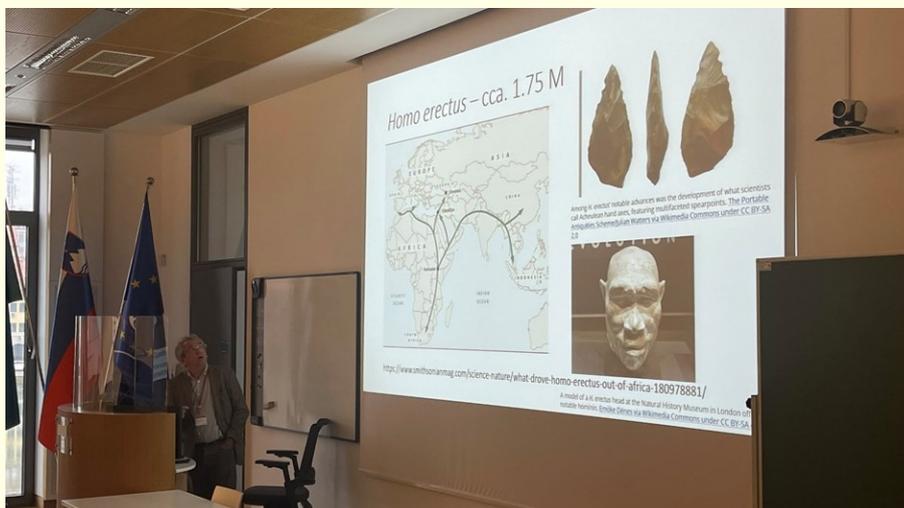
I further developed a strong interest in the back then rather new technology of producing novel cardiomyocytes from stem cells. I was fascinated by the idea of creating new cardiac tissue for myocardial regeneration after injury, but soon realized that the newly differentiated cardiomyocytes did not hold promise in matching the features of adult cardiomyocytes. Triggered by the challenging idea of promoting maturation of these cells *in vitro*, I have decided to dedicate my scientific work to the investigation of different maturation strategies in order to make iPSC-derived cardiomyocytes fit for biomedical applications and cardiac repair. With great support of many talented students and postdocs, I have worked on this topic for almost 10 years in the Cardiovascular Physiology unit of Prof. Markus Hecker at the Institute of Physiology and Pathophysiology, University of Heidelberg. Here, I have also been intensively engaged in teaching physiology for medical and pharmacology students. With a great new opportunity arising in Bern, I will soon move back to the Institute of Physiology at the University of Bern, Switzerland, and start a new lab to pursue my investigations on iPSC-cardiomyocytes in the vibrant scientific environment of the Institute, where the first cardiac action potential had been recorded.

## Slovenian Physiological Society and the “Day of Physiology” (Contributed by Nina Vardjan)

The Slovenian Physiological Society (SPS) was formally established in 1973. There is a long tradition in physiological research in the region, dating back to the 16th century studies of body mass homeostasis by Svetina (Sanctorius Sanctorius) at Koper (Capodistria), leading to the introduction of the term “perspiration insensibility”. Prior to the formal founding of SPS, Slovenian physiologists were active in the Physiological Society of Yugoslavia (est. in Slovenia in 1955), while Physiology as an academic discipline had been taught at the University of Ljubljana since 1919. Since its inception, the mission of SPS has been to promote Physiology through seminars, workshops, international meetings (SPS hosted the FEPS 2009 meeting in Ljubljana). SPS has close to 100 members, both students and academics, from the three main universities in Slovenia: The University of Ljubljana (Faculty of Medicine, Biotechnical Faculty, and Veterinary Faculty), the University of Maribor (Faculty of Medicine) and the University of Primorska.

The main objectives of SPS include: i) the promotion of research, professional and popular scientific activities in the field of Physiology; ii) the recruitment of young scientists and promoting cooperation between experts, researchers in the field of Physiology and other scientific disciplines in order to foster interdisciplinary cooperation; iii) the teaching and the development of new teaching and research methods in the field of Physiology; iii) the public outreach. In 2017, SPS decided to organize annual "Day of Physiology" meetings on 10th of December, the day when the awardees of the annual Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine receive their diplomas. The “Day of Physiology” is a one-day event with invited speakers from Slovenia and neighbouring countries. The main lectures cover the topics related to the annual awarded Nobel Prizes. In addition to the lectures on the Nobel Prize, other topics in the field of Physiology are also addressed. Half of the participants are primary and secondary school biology professors and the other half are physiology researchers who are mainly members of the SPS at an early stage of research. The first meeting in 2017 was attended by around 60 participants, while the meeting in 2022, held at the Faculty of Medicine, University of Maribor, was already attended by over 100 participants. The meeting continues to grow. During the COVID pandemics the "Day of Physiology" meetings were virtual, focusing on the physiology of viruses and the immune system. They were open to the lay public and attracted even more participants.

In the future the "Day of Physiology" could become an annual event organised also in cooperation with other FEPS member societies to jointly promote Physiology in Europe and beyond.



The Day of Physiology 2022 (Faculty of Medicine, University of Maribor, Slovenia)  
Andrej Šorgo: “Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine 2022: A brief history of the human genome”

## News from the Romanian Society: 3rd INTER-MEDICAL SCHOOL PHYSIOLOGY QUIZ May 26-27th, 2023, Cluj-Napoca, Romania



The Physiology Department of "Iuliu Hațieganu" University of Medicine and Pharmacy Cluj-Napoca, with the support of University, of The Romanian Society of Physiological Sciences and of the Students' Organization, hosted the 3rd Inter-Medical School Physiology Quiz, a competition whose origins are attributed to Prof. Dr. Cheng Hwee Ming from the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The contest took place in "Iuliu Hațieganu" Auditorium and it brought together student teams from the Medical Universities of Romania, Serbia and Moldavia. Romania is the first European country that organized this competition.



The Romanian quiz used an adapted version of the original competition. An independent jury evaluated the given answers for the objectivity of the scores. After each question, Professor Cheng explained the correct answer.



The winners received the trophy, flowers and rewards from the sponsors. The competition brought together students who shared their common passion for physiology with curiosity, courage and determination in a vibrant and exiting environment, building together long-lasting friendships.