

Undermining Trust: The Impact of Scientific Fraud on EU Financing and Research Integrity



Robert Mistrik, Chairman, Slovak Research and Development Agency
European Science Advice Forum, West University of Timișoara, Romania
11.–12. September, 2023

Politicians who plagiarize

Prime minister

Pravda › Správy Domáce Matovič confessed to plagiarism ›

Matovič confessed to plagiarism

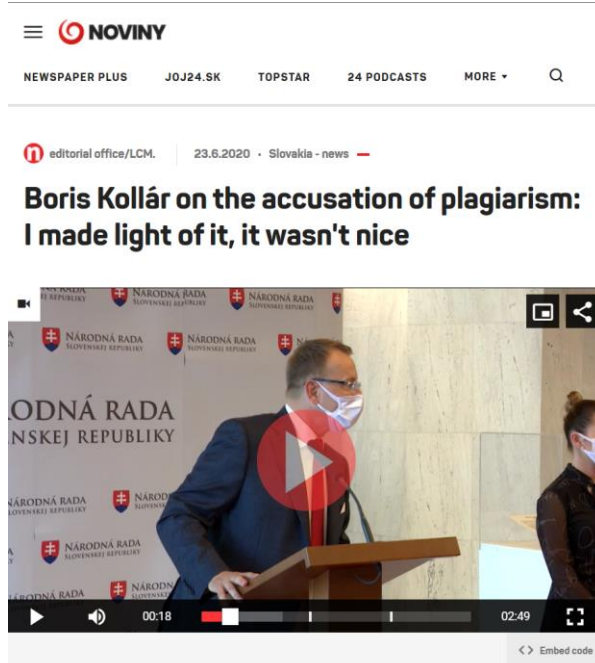
Prime Minister Igor Matovič (OĽaNO) was supposed to steal two publications from a trio of Slovak economists while writing his diploma thesis, which he defended in 1998. He received his master's degree at the Comenius University (UK) in Bratislava.

Pravda, TASR • 16.07.2020 14:23, updated: 19:09



Source: Pravda, 16.7.2020

Chairman of the parliament



BRATISLAVA / Chairman of the National Council of the Slovak Republic Boris Kollár

Source: Noviny JOJ, 20.6.2020

Chairman of the parliament

Slovakia | 21/11/2018 17:40 | act. 29/07/2019 12:30

Danko admitted that the work is a compilation of other works (podcast)



Andrej Danko

Source: TASR



Peter Hanák



Activate your newsletter



Save the article

Andrej Danko showed the notes for the rigorous exam. According to the opposition, this is not proof of anything. How was today's debate in the National Council during the attempt to recall Danko? Play our podcast.



The Speaker of the Parliament, Andrej Danko, defended

Source: Aktuality.sk, 21.11.2018

Minister of education

July 13, 2020 at 4:43 p.m. | 6

Minister of Education Gröhling also submitted the plagiarism

He joined politicians such as Andrej Danko or Boris Kollár.



Minister of Education Branislav Gröhling. (Source: TASR)

Font: A | And

SHARE DISCUSSION (361)

/ Receive the SME Morning Briefing with a summary of the day's essential news. [Activate your subscription with one click.](#) /

BRATISLAVA. Minister of Education Branislav Gröhling from SaS belongs to the politicians who wrote off in their final thesis at

Source: SME.sk, 13.7.2020



CNN.com

<https://www.cnn.com/politics/politicians-plagiarism>

From speeches to PhD's: Politicians who plagiarize

19. 7. 2016 — 10 cases of political plagerism. ... Here are 10 instances when political figures plagiarized.

POLITICS

A Brief History Of Politicians Lifting Words From Other Sources

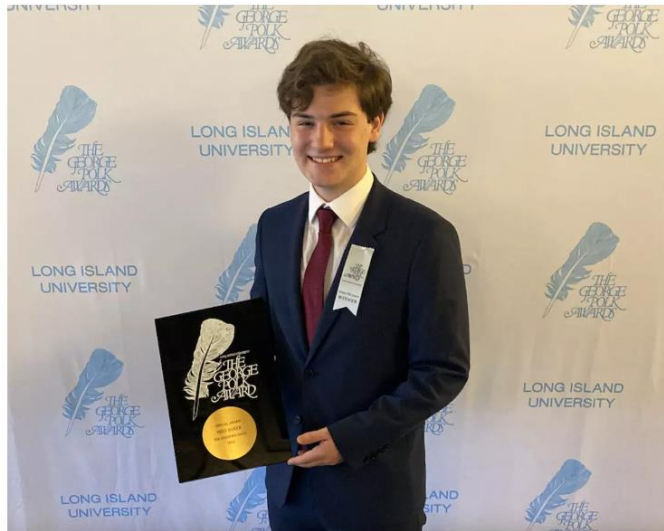
July 19, 2016 · 12:06 PM ET

Research misconduct: Stanford freshman brought down the president of the university

Los Angeles Times

SCIENCE & MEDICINE

Q&A: How this Stanford freshman brought down the president of the university



Theo Baker, a student journalist at Stanford, was honored with a prestigious George Polk Award for investigating claims that the university's president published research papers that contained manipulated data. (Courtesy of Theo Baker)

BY CORINNE PURTILL | STAFF WRITER

JULY 21, 2023 4 AM PT



Rumors of altered images in some of the research papers published by Stanford University President Marc Tessier-Lavigne had circulated since 2015. But the allegations involving the neuroscientist got little attention beyond the niche scientific forum where they first appeared — until Stanford freshman [Theo Baker](#) decided to take a closer look.

Source: Los Angeles Times, 21.7.2023

The Stanford Daily

News • University

Stanford launches probe into President Tessier-Lavigne's research following 'Daily' investigation on allegations of scientific misconduct



(Photo: L.A. CICERO/Stanford News Service)

By **Theo Baker**

Nov. 30, 2022, 1:05 a.m.



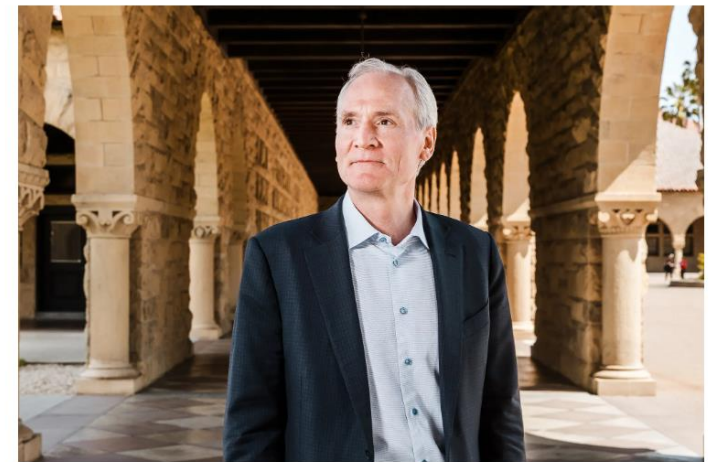
Stanford has opened its own investigation into President Marc Tessier-Lavigne's research after a piece unveiling seven years of scientific misconduct allegations was published by The Daily on Tuesday morning. The Daily outlined four papers with Tessier-Lavigne credited as an author which, according to research misconduct expert Elisabeth Bik, contain "serious issues." The issues were corroborated by two other researchers.

Source: The Stanford Daily, 30.11.2022

The New York Times

The Research Scandal at Stanford Is More Common Than You Think

July 30, 2023



Stanford president Marc Tessier-Lavigne. Carolyn Fong for The New York Times

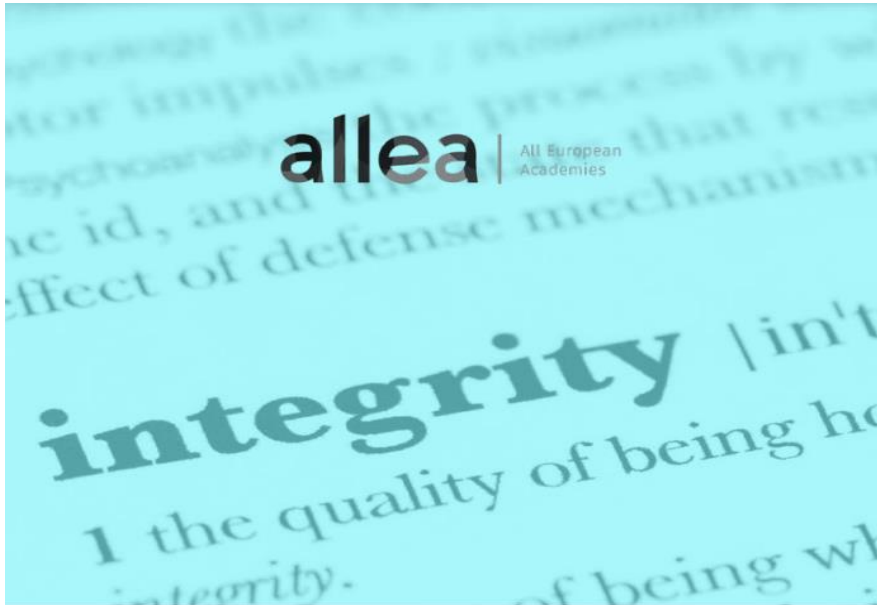


By **Theo Baker**

Mr. Baker is a rising sophomore at Stanford University. At its daily student newspaper, he won a George Polk Award for investigating allegations of manipulated experimental data in scientific papers published by the university's president.

Source: The New York Times, 30.7.2023

The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity



The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity

REVISED EDITION 2023

The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity serves the European research community as a framework for self-regulation across all scientific and scholarly disciplines and for all research settings.

The ***European Commission*** recognises the European Code of Conduct as the reference document for research integrity for all EU-funded research projects and the European Code of Conduct increasingly serves as a model for organisations and researchers across Europe and beyond.

Research misconduct is traditionally defined as fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results.

In their most serious forms, unacceptable practices are sanctionable, but at the very least every effort must be made to prevent, discourage, and stop them through training, supervision, and mentoring and through the development of a positive and supportive research environment.

Research misconduct vs. European Commission

November 10, 2022 11:29 am

Nature

Education

Seven withdrawn studies from Nitra are also part of the international scientific case. According to the dean, the editor of the magazine failed



OTAKAR HORÁK



Turn on articles by email



PLOS ONE

advanced search

OPEN ACCESS PEER-REVIEWED

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Morpho-physiological and biochemical attributes of Chili (*Capsicum annum* L.) genotypes grown under varying salinity levels

Madiha Butt, Abdul Sattar, Tahira Abbas, Rashid Hussain, Muhammad Ijaz, Ahmad Sher, Umbreen Shahzad, Sami Ullah, Marian Brestic, Marek Zivcak, Kristina Gasparovic, Bandar S. Aljuaid, Ahmed M. El-Shehawi, Ali Tan Kee Zuan

Published: November 4, 2021 • <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0257893>

Article	Authors	Metrics	Comments	Media Coverage

0 Save	4 Citation
1,356 View	0 Share

Download PDF
Print
Share

Check for updates

Related PLOS Articles

has RETRACTION
Retraction: Morpho-physiological and biochemical attributes of Chili (*Capsicum annum* L.) genotypes grown under varying salinity levels
[View Page](#) [PDF](#)

Retraction

The PLOS ONE Editors retract this article [1] because it was identified as one of a series of submissions for which we have concerns about authorship, competing interests, and peer review. We regret that the issues were not addressed prior to the article's publication.

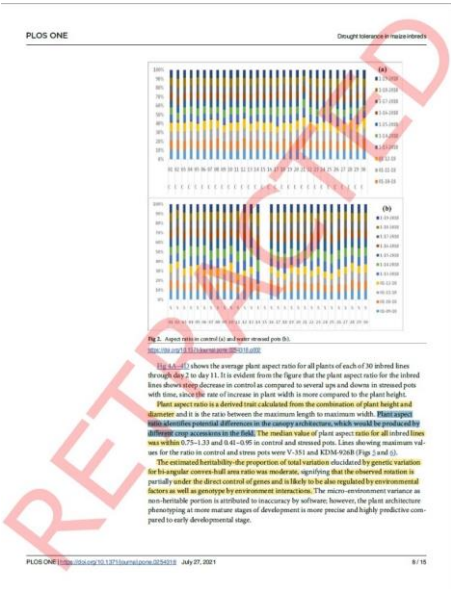
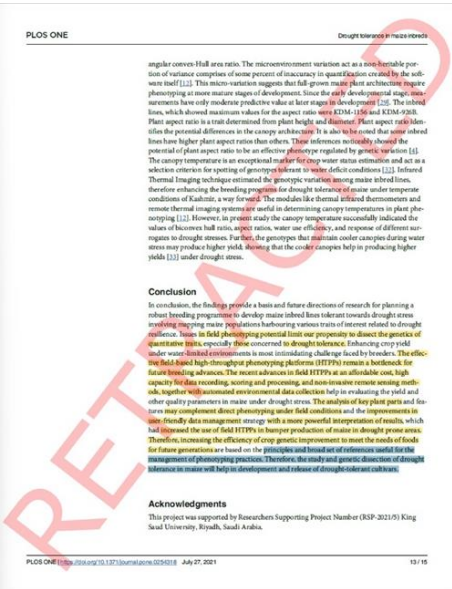
MButt, ASattar, TA, RH, MI, ASher, US, MBrestic, MZ, BSA, AMES, and ATKZ did not agree with the retraction. SU and KG either did not respond directly or could not be reached.

17 Aug 2022: The PLOS ONE Editors (2022) Retraction: Morpho-physiological and biochemical attributes of Chili (*Capsicum annum* L.) genotypes grown under varying salinity levels. PLOS ONE 17(8): e0272532.
<https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0272532> | [View retraction](#)

One of the retracted articles in Plos One. The contacted scientists deny the failure and say that they had no influence on the editorial process. Reprofoto –

Source: Dennik N, 10.11.2022

- Plagiarism
- Conflict of interests
- Irrelevant citations
- Citations farms
- Fake peer review



DAR, Zahoor A., et al. Identification for surrogate drought tolerance in maize inbred lines utilizing high-throughput phenomics approach. Plos one, 2021, 16.7: e0254318.

Research misconduct vs. European Commission

- Member of the Council of the Slovak Government for Science, Technology and Innovation

The Council of the Government of the Slovak Republic for Science, Technology and Innovation is the main coordinating and advisory body of the Government of the Slovak Republic in the field of research and innovation policies.

- Member of the Presidium of the Slovak Research and Development Agency

The Agency is the only national grant agency established in order to support research and development in Slovakia by granting financial means from the State Budget.

- Head of the Department of Plant Physiology, Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra

May 19, 2023 3:04 p.m.

Education

He published a scientific work every four days. Suspicion of plagiarism by Marián Brestič will be investigated by the ethics commission



OTAKAR HORÁK



Turn on articles by email

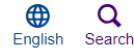


Marián Brestič works at the Faculty of Agrobiotechnology and Food Resources of SPU in Nitra, is a member of the APVV Presidency and a member of the Slovak Government Council for Science, Technology and Innovation. Photo - ESET Science Award archive/Linda Kisková Bohušová

One of the most cited Slovak scientists, Marián Brestič, faces accusations of plagiarism, incorrect citation, undeclared conflict of interests and other misdemeanors. The majority of the presidency of the scientific grant agency (APVV) asks the government to remove him from his post in it. "We suspect serious violations of scientific ethics and integrity," says Robert Mistrik, chairman of the APVV Presidium. Marián Brestič talks about the purposeful effort to discredit him and the witch hunt.

Source: Dennik N, 19.5.2023

Research misconduct vs. European Commission



Home > Business, Economy, Euro > Economic recovery >

Recovery and Resilience Facility >

Slovakia's recovery and resilience plan

Slovakia's recovery and resilience plan

Following an unprecedented crisis due to the pandemic, Slovakia's recovery and resilience plan responds to the urgent need of fostering a strong recovery and making Slovakia ready for the future. The reforms and investments in the plan will help Slovakia become more sustainable, resilient and better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of the green and digital transitions. To this end, the plan consists of 196 "mutually agreed deliverables", namely qualitative milestones and quantitative targets that track the progress in implementing the plan's reforms and investments. The plan will be supported by **€6.3 billion in grants**. 43% of the plan will support **climate objectives** and 21% of the plan will support **the digital transition**.

The expected transformative impact of Slovak's plan is the result of a combination of wide-ranging and complementary reforms and investments, which address the specific challenges of Slovakia. The reforms address in particular the bottlenecks to a lasting and sustainable growth.



3

Science, research, innovation. This priority area encompasses measures to boost Slovak research, science and innovation, and attract and retain highly qualified people from Slovakia and abroad in the country. Important reforms included in the cluster concern the research and innovation governance system. The overall cost of the measures represents some 11 % of the plan's financial allocation.

Table 1 – RRF allocation for Slovakia by area and component (€ million)

Areas	Components	Allocation (grants)	Share of total allocation
3. Science, research, innovation		739	11 %
	C9. More efficient management and strengthening of research, development and innovation funding	633	10 %

Research misconduct vs. European Commission

Selection process for Council members Nominations for Council members were submitted by public, private and non-profit sector entities operating in the innovation ecosystem based on a **public call from the Government Office of the Slovak Republic**. A total of 75 candidates from the academic, business and non-profit sectors were nominated as part of the call. In order to ensure the independence and quality of the evaluation, the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic established a six-member independent evaluation commission, composed of experts in the field of research, development, innovation and risk capital relevant to the assessment of the submitted nominations, with regard to:

1. the excellence of the candidate;
2. the candidate's international experience;
3. structures of the SR economy;
4. areas of smart specialization (smart industry, mobility, digital transformation, public health, healthy food, environment).

Based on the points awarded to individual candidates and the joint discussion, the expert evaluation committee created a list of recommended candidates for membership in the Council for the Prime Minister of the Slovak Republic.

Members of the independent evaluation commission



Prof Mark Ferguson
Position: Chairman of the Board of the European Innovation Council
Area of activity: Biotechnologies, drug discovery, developmental cell biology, research and innovation policy

Mark is the Chairman of the Board of the European Innovation Council (EIC). He was Chief Scientific Adviser to the Irish government, CEO of Science Foundation Ireland and co-founded the biotechnology company Renovo. He was previously Professor and Dean of Biological Sciences at the University of Manchester. Mark is the recipient of numerous international research prizes and awards including the 2002 European Science Prize, author of 329 scientific papers, holder of 61 patents, author/editor of 8 books and supervised 77 PhDs. students. He has served on several international committees for research and innovation, including the chairmanship of the EIC pilot advisory committee.



Vladimír Šucha
Position: Head of the Representation of the European Commission in Slovakia
Field of activity: Natural sciences, research and innovation policy, science for politics, education

Vladimír Šucha is the head of the Representation of the European Commission in the Slovak Republic from 2022. Before that, he was the main political advisor of UNESCO, outside the European Commission. Since 2012, he has been in the leading positions of the Joint Research Center - scientific and knowledge service of the European Commission. Before that, he worked for 6 years as the director for culture and media at the Directorate General for Education and Culture of the European Commission. Before joining the European Commission, he held various positions in the field of European and international affairs. From 2005 to 2006, he was director of the Agency for Research and Development Support, the national body responsible for funding research. He worked at the Representation of the Slovak Republic to the EU in Brussels as an advisor for research, education and culture (2000-2004). At the same time, he has a long-term academic and research career, he is a full professor in Slovakia and a visiting professor/scientist at various academic institutions in many countries. He has published more than 100 scientific papers in peer-reviewed journals.

Source: Office of the Government of the Slovak Republic.

Field screening of diverse wheat germplasm for determining their adaptability to semi-arid climatic conditions (BLS) Agriculture, (BLS) Plant Biology/Botany; <i>PLoS One</i> → <i>PLoS</i>	+Concerns/Issues About Authorship +Conflict of Interest +Fake Peer Review	Shahzadi Mahpara Muhammad Shafiqat Bashir Rehmat Ullah Muhammad Bilal Salma Kausar Muhammad Imran Latif Muhammad Arif Imran Akhtar Ali Tan KEE Zuan Ehab A A Salama Abdulrahman Al-Hashimi Alamoud Afifeham
https://retractionwatch.com/2022/08/03/exclusive-plos-one-to-retract-more-than-100-papers-for-manipulated-peer-review/ Kinetin mitigates Cd-induced damage to growth, photosynthesis and PS II photochemistry of Trigonella seedlings by up-regulating ascorbate-glutathione cycle (BLS) Biology - General, (BLS) Biology - Molecular, (BLS) Plant Biology/Botany; <i>PLoS One</i> → <i>PLoS</i>	+Concerns/Issues About Authorship +Conflict of Interest +Fake Peer Review	Gausiya Bashir Shikha Singh Shree Nishan Prasad Muhammad Javed Ansari Salma Usmani Saleh Alfarraj Sulaiman Ali Alharbi Marian Brestic
https://retractionwatch.com/2022/08/03/exclusive-plos-one-to-retract-more-than-100-papers-for-manipulated-peer-review/ Morpho-physiological and biochemical attributes of Chili (Capsicum annum L.) genotypes grown under varying salinity levels (BLS) Agriculture, (BLS) Biology - General, (BLS) Plant Biology/Botany; <i>PLoS One</i> → <i>PLoS</i>	+Concerns/Issues About Authorship +Conflict of Interest +Fake Peer Review	Madiha Butt Abdul Santar Tahara Abbas Rashid Hussain Muhammad Ijaz Ahmad Sher Umreen Shahzad Sam Ullah Marian Brestic Marek Zencak Kristina Gasparyan Bandar S Alotaibi Ahmed M El-Shohany Ali Tan KEE Zuan
Potential of Landsat 8 OLI for mapping and monitoring of soil salinity in an arid region: A case study in Dushak, Turkmenistan (BLS) Agriculture, (BLS) Biology - General, (BLS) Plant Biology/Botany; <i>PLoS One</i> → <i>PLoS</i>	+Concerns/Issues About Authorship +Conflict of Interest +Fake Peer Review	Elif Gonal Xunkang Yang Orhan Mete Kiliç Musta Budak Samir Al Obaid Mohammad Javed Ansari Marian Brestic
https://retractionwatch.com/2022/08/03/exclusive-plos-one-to-retract-more-than-100-papers-for-manipulated-peer-review/ Identification for surrogate drought tolerance in maize inbred lines utilizing high-throughput phenomics approach (BLS) Agriculture, (BLS) Plant Biology/Botany; <i>PLoS One</i> → <i>PLoS</i>	+Concerns/Issues About Authorship +Conflict of Interest +Fake Peer Review	Zahoor A Dar Shouket A Dar Jameel A Khan Aizat A Lone Sama Laseyan B A Lone R H Kanth Asif Iqbal Jagdish Rane Shahir H Wani Saleh Alfarraj Sulaiman Ali Alharbi Marian Brestic Mohammad Javed Ansari
Dryland Agricultural Research Station, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology-Kashmir, Rangreth Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India Department of Entomology, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology of Kashmir, Srinagar-Kargil, Ladakh, India Department of Biotechnology, University of Agricultural Sciences, Bangalore, India Dryland Agricultural Research Station, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology-Kashmir, Rangreth Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India ICAR-National Bureau for Plant Genetic Resources, New Delhi, India Department of Agronomy, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology-Kashmir, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India Department of Soil Science, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology-Kashmir, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India Department of Drought Science, ICAR-NIASM, Baramati, New Delhi, India MRCCFC, Sher-e-Kashmir University of Agricultural Sciences & Technology-Kashmir, Srinagar, Jammu and Kashmir, India Zoology Department, College of Science, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia Department of Botany & Microbiology, College of Science, King Saud University, Riyadh, Saudi Arabia Department of Plant Physiology, Slovak University of Agriculture, Nitra, Slovakia Department of Botany, Hindu College Moradabad (Mahatma Jyotiba Phule Rohilkhand University Bareilly), Moradabad, India		

Source: retractiondatabase.org

Research misconduct vs. European Commission

Presidium of the Slovak Research and Development Agency

The scientists are asking the government to dismiss the member of the board of the grant agency, Marian Brestič from the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra. The reason is serious suspicions of violation of scientific ethics and integrity. In November 2022, Denník N was the first **to write** about them.

Scientists and at the same time members of the board of the Agency for the support of research and development state that Professor Brestič published a total of 90 scientific articles in 2021, an average of one article every four days, while three of them were withdrawn by the journal PLOS One due to concerns about authorship, conflict of interests and review proceedings.

Later, one of the articles was identified as plagiarism, where the authors used texts from other studies without citing the original source. Even the summary of the work was largely copied from other publications without any citation. According to the authors, the mentioned work was supported by the APVV grant.

Furthermore, a study co-authored by Professor Brestič was identified, where the section describing the irrigation and fertilization of corn referred to an article on breast cancer metastases, which was additionally withdrawn at the time of the citation.

Source: Denník N, 5.5.2023

European Commission

The full opinion of the members of the APVV presidency:

The undersigned member and members of the APVV presidency react to the information published in the media and to other serious findings in connection with suspicions of violation of the ethical principles of the scientific work of the member of the APVV presidency, prof. Ing. Mariana Brestič, CSc.

The Presidency of the APVV allowed Professor Brestič to explain the mentioned suspicions, but he did not convince us with his opinion, on the contrary, he strengthened our doubts. With this, Professor Brestič has lost our trust, and we cannot imagine further cooperation with him in the presidency of the APVV.

We care about the observance of ethical standards in the field of academic and research work in Slovakia, and we also feel the need to fulfill the obligations defined in the European Code of Conduct on Research Integrity.

In the event that Professor Brestič remains in the presidency of the APVV, we ask the Slovak government to dismiss him.

RNDr. Imrich Barák, DrSc.
prof. M.Phil. Jozef Bátora, PhD
doc. MUDr. Ing. RNDr. Peter Celec, DrSc., MPH
prof. Mgr. Martin Lysák, PhD., DSc.
prof. PhDr. Zdenka Mansfeldová, CSc.
PhDr. Slavomír Michálek, DrSc.
dr. Ing. Robert Mistrík
prof. RNDr. Peter Moczo, PhD.

Research misconduct vs. European Commission

[News](#)[Highlights -](#)[Laureates](#)[Commission](#)

European Commission

Statement of the board of directors of the ESET Foundation

Published: 19/05/2023

The board of directors of the ESET Foundation, based on the recommendation of the ethics commission, decided that prof. Ing. Marián Brestič, CSc. and prof. Ing. Miroslava Kačániová, PhD., will not be listed among the finalists of the ESET Science Award. The Ethics Commission was created by the ESET Foundation based on suggestions from the media and was made up of representatives of various domestic and foreign scientific institutions, including specialists in scientific ethics and integrity.

The finalists of the ESET Science Award represent scientific personalities who are exceptional not only from the point of view of scientific performance, but also in matters of scientific ethics and integrity.

We consider this decision important not only in the context of the ESET Science Award, but above all for emphasizing the importance of ethics and integrity of the scientists themselves and scientific institutions.

The Ethics Committee identified serious violations of scientific ethics in the work of Prof. Ing. Marián Brestič, CSc. also prof. Ing. Miroslava Kačániová, PhD. The Board of Directors of the ESET Foundation therefore decided that prof. Ing. Marián Brestič, CSc. and prof. Ing. Miroslava Kačániová, PhD., will not be listed among the finalists of the ESET Science Award.

The ESET Foundation will reflect the findings of the ethics commission in the evaluation and nomination process, so that unfair practices can be better identified.

Members of the ethics committee: RNDr. Imrich Barák, DrSc., prof. RNDr. Peter Fedor, Dr.Sc., prof. Ing. Miroslav Fikar, DrSc., RNDr. Soňa Ftáčniková, CSc., prof. RNDr. Karol Marhold, DrSc., RNDr. Jan Martinec, CSc.

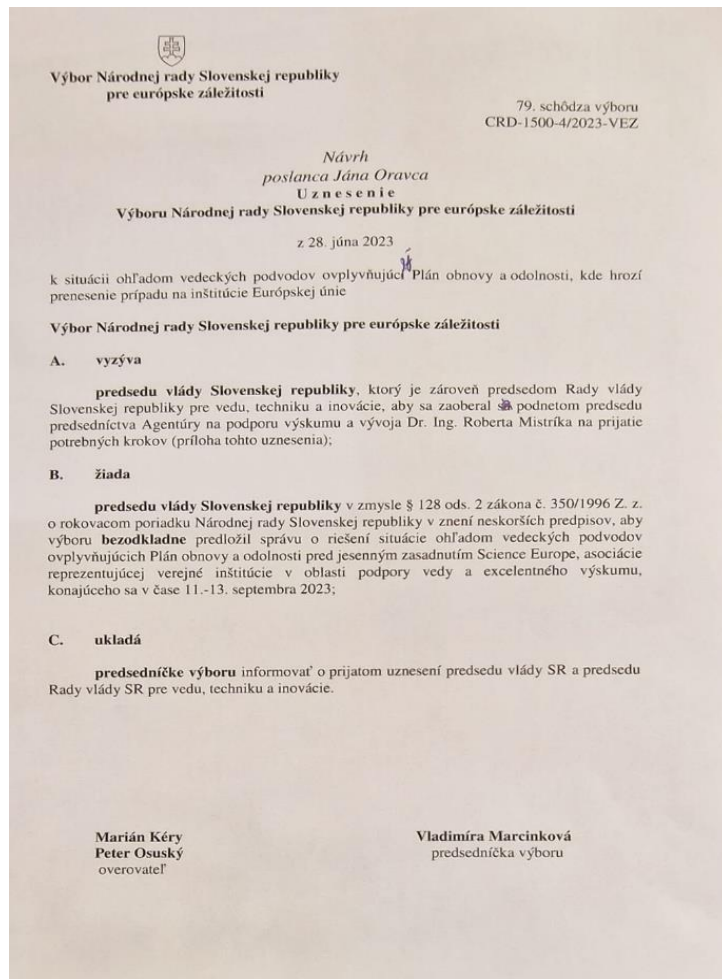
Members of the board of directors of the ESET Foundation: Ing. Miroslav Trnka, Ing. Richard Marko, Ing. Palo Luka, doc. JUDr. MUDr. Peter Kováč, PhD. et PhD., prof. RNDr. Eva Zažímalová, CSc., dr. h.c., prof. RNDr. Pavol Šajgalík, DrSc.

Source: ESET Foundation, 19.5.2023

Research misconduct vs. European Commission

Committee of the National Council of the
Slovak Republic for European Affairs

European Commission



Research misconduct vs. European Commission

Prime minister

European Commission



Predseda vlády Slovenskej republiky
Eudovít Ľudovít

- David Price - bývalý prorektor pre výskum na University College London (UCL) a profesor fyziky minerálov. Pôsobí aj ako člen Academia Europaea, Geologickej spoločnosti v Londýne a je voleným členom Americkej geofyzikálnej únie a Mineralogickej spoločnosti USA.
- Vladimír Šucha – vedúci zastúpenia Európskej komisie na Slovensku. Pred nástupom do Európskej komisie zastával rôzne funkcie v oblasti európskych a medzinárodných záležitostí a v minulosti viedol Joint Research Center Európskej komisie.

Predpokladám, že pán Mistrík nemá pochybnosti o odbornosti či etickom konaní vyššie uvedených, vrátane bývalého ministra, ktorí podporili členstvo profesora Brestiča v RVVTI. Neodbornosť, dokonca "klientelistické pozadie", však pán Mistrík zmieňuje len v súvislosti s pracovníkmi VAIA, ktorí nominačný proces podporovali administratívne.

Zopakujem, že činnosť VAIA je pod neustálym drobnohľadom príslušných orgánov na národnej a európskej úrovni, svoju činnosť reportuje na mesačnej báze. Všetky relevantné informácie transparentne zverejňuje na webe vaia.gov.sk a komunikuje s verejnosťou aj s médiami. Dovoľujem si preto v tejto súvislosti vyzvať pána Mistríka a pripomenúť mu, že v prípade, ak má informácie či dôkazy o protizákonnom konaní akéhokoľvek pracovníka Úradu vlády, je povinný bezodkladne oznámiť to orgánom činným v trestnom konaní podľa § 340 Trestného zákona.

Ubezpečujem členov Výboru, že k ohrozeniu prostriedkov POO v súvislosti s členstvom profesora Brestiča v RVVTI nedošlo ani nedôjde. V prípade akýchkoľvek nejasností v tejto súvislosti sme členom Výboru pripravení odpovedať na ďalšie otázky.

S úctou

Conclusions

- Prominent representatives of European Commission nominated person who has committed research misconduct to the highest decision making body in Slovak republic
- Fail to apologize for their mistake
- They neglected to address the error, they just ignored it, regardless of public outrage
- EC sent a message to the scientific community that The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity is just peace of paper, feel free to ignore it
- Dishonesty appears to be rewarded and plenty of dishonest scientists can further benefit from EU funds
- **EC should ensure that consequences for fraudulent activities are strict and consistent, serving as a deterrent for potential offenders**