



Diether Sperlich

* 15.1.1929 † 29.4.2017

DIETHER SPERLICH, Professor emeritus of population genetics at the University of Tübingen in Germany and a foreign member of the Finnish Academy of Science and Letters, died on 29 April 2017.

Sperlich had studied initially at the University of Vienna, where he worked on inversion polymorphisms in natural *Drosophila* populations, the same polymorphisms which Theodosius Dobzhansky had used in the 1930s when laying the groundwork for the synthetic theory of evolution.

Having worked as a visiting scholar at Dobzhansky's laboratory in New York in 1964, Diether Sperlich was appointed associate professor of population genetics at the University of Tübingen. Five years later he was made full professor and head of department. He organized a network of European population geneticists and wrote textbooks in population and medical genetics.

By the 1970s Diether Sperlich was already stressing the importance of student exchanges between European countries: German students were sent to the Universities of Helsinki and Oulu on a regular basis and Finns visited not only Tübingen but also other German universities under the auspices of Sperlich's programme. The European Commission is now running exchange programmes in a similar, albeit somewhat more bureaucratic vein. Several Finnish geneticists have actively collaborated with Diether Sperlich and his colleagues.

The Finnish Academy of Science and Letters invited Professor Sperlich to become a foreign member in 1983 in recognition of his contribution in promoting scientific cooperation between Finland and Germany, and in 1984 he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Oulu. Friends of Diether Sperlich remember him as a soft-spoken and invariably friendly person.

*Obituary by
Anssi Saura and Outi Savolainen*