

The OIE pays tribute to Prof. Dr. Nikola Tanev Belev



The OIE regrets to announce the passing of Prof. Dr. Nikola T. Belev on 3 August 2020 in Sofia, Bulgaria.

His friends and former colleagues remember him as a pivotal figure in the veterinary world during his professional career, which lasted several decades. His name evokes respect not only among veterinary professionals but also among high-ranking authorities at European and global levels.

Prof. Belev was a Bulgarian veterinarian and epidemiologist. He graduated from the Higher Institute of Veterinary Medicine in Sofia, and began his career as a veterinary practitioner, later specialising in epidemiology and practising in Germany and Finland.

He was Director of Regional Veterinary Centres in Bulgaria, later Head of Unit at the Ministry of Agriculture and, in the period from 1978 to 1991, Deputy Director General and Director General of the Veterinary Service of Bulgaria and Director of the Central Veterinary Scientific and Research Institute, Sofia.

He was actively involved in OIE work over many years, holding the following functions:

- 1972 to May 2015 – Delegate of Bulgaria to the OIE
- 1986–1987 – OIE Auditor
- May 1988 to May 2009 – member of the OIE Administrative Commission (former OIE Council)
- May 1988 to May 2012 – President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe
- 1992 to 2015 – OIE Regional Representative for Eastern Europe
- After 2012 – Honorary President of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe.

He was instrumental in the establishment of OIE regional offices in Europe and advocated the expansion of OIE activities, especially in Eurasian countries and the Balkans, supporting fruitful and permanent dialogue between all OIE Members in Europe and worldwide. Prof. Belev helped countries to improve their Veterinary Services thanks to his constant professional contribution and significant commitment.

Prof. Belev was also a member of the Executive Committee of the FAO European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EuFMD), and, later, a first Vice-President of the Executive Committee (1989–1993).

He was a member of a number of professional organisations, an editor-in-chief and a lecturer. He published over 130 papers, manuals and reviews in the fields of the organisation of Veterinary



Services, infectious and non-infectious diseases, veterinary inspection and environmental protection. He received many international awards for his services to the veterinary profession and international cooperation. He was a member of the Agricultural Academies of Russia, Serbia and Ukraine, and Doctor Honoris Causa of the Thracian University of Bulgaria. In 1999, he was awarded the OIE Gold Medal and in 2007, the French Government bestowed on him the title of Officer of the French Order of Agricultural Merit.

In the *OIE Bulletin*, in 2009, Prof. Belev confided in readers that over the years the OIE had become more or less his home and family. In fact, he continuously supported the children of OIE employees, raising a fund in the name of his son Tony and providing his generous personal support through the OIE Amicale.

The OIE has lost a great colleague, a highly respected professional and visionary, whom we will all sadly miss.

■ August 2020