

**PART II - Prof. Alexander Lerchl**

## Summary

With this second part of the documentation *About The Handling of Scientific Findings regarding Mobile phone Research at the Medical University of Vienna (MUV)*, we now add a report about the events that took place outside MUV. Within the framework of the Europe-wide REFLEX study, Prof. Rüdiger had observed that both ELF- and RF-electromagnetic fields have genotoxic potential. In a follow-up study, his team had shown that the genotoxic potential of the radiation considerably depends on the modulation of the carrier frequency. In comparison to GSM radiation (2nd generation mobile phone technology), UMTS radiation (3rd generation mobile phone technology) has shown to be approximately 10 times more effective in producing DNA strand breaks in isolated human cells.

In Part I of the documentation, we reported about all actions that had been taken by the rector of the Medical University of Vienna, Prof. Wolfgang Schütz, or his office to remove the research results from the scientific literature, which had been looked upon as suspect by the mobile phone industry. Now, Part II of the documentation deals with the activities of the initiator of this campaign: Prof. Alexander Lerchl.

### **Assaults and its methods**

The campaign had been launched anonymously and as an ambush in mid-2007, which we will see are quite common features of Prof. Lerchl's actions. This "blitzkrieg" against the REFLEX study, orchestrated most probably with Prof. Schütz, the rector of MUV, and supported by - who can still doubt that - the mobile phone industry, had erupted without warning in April 2008 and had failed within a few months due to their own scheming. Mid-2008 it turned into a "trench war" in which constantly new attacks were followed by constantly new defeats. Now this war moves into its fourth year. Although it is pointless by now, there seems to be no end in sight.

- Prof. Lerchl launched his attacks against the Vienna team in the *Laborjournal* in April 2008. Through numerous other articles and through all further stages of the campaign, this scientific journal is his most important ally when it comes to spreading his message within the scientific community that the research findings from Vienna are fraudulent.
- In two articles, for which Prof. Lerchl supplied the contents and the journalist Manfred Dworschak the writing, the German newsmagazine *Der Spiegel* broadcasts the news of alleged data manipulation to the public. These articles convey the impression as if the team from Vienna would have already been convicted of fraud. And on top of all that, the team is even exposed to ridicule because of the assumed clumsy way it manipulated data.
- In his self-published book "Fälscher im Labor und ihre Helfer [*Fraudsters in the Lab and Their Helpers*]" from 2008, Prof. Lerchl presents the accusation of data manipulation as part of the historically proven cases of scientific misconduct. By exposing the fraudulent behaviour of this team, he already sees himself going down in history as a prominent investigator. He tells the mobile phone industry in no uncertain terms that, should the results of the team from Vienna be true, they would announce the beginning of the end of wireless communications. Thus, he shows the mobile phone industry in his own blatant way how important he is for them, because with his awareness campaign he has eliminated a problem of gigantic economic proportions.
- At a workshop in Vienna in 2009 by the German Research Association for Radio Applications e.V. (FGF) - a lobby group of the mobile phone industry within the scientific community - there was hope to finally being able to lay the Vienna REFLEX study results to rest at their place of origin with a lecture by Prof. Lerchl. With its unexpected course, however, the workshop also showed the cracks in the already crumbling disguise of Prof. Lerchl's intentions to serve the mobile phone industry.
- The editors of both scientific journals, in which the suspected studies have been published, face the joint pressure from Prof. Lerchl and the rector of MUV to withdraw the studies during the course of this campaign. When, despite quite some irritations, after a thorough examination they cannot find any reason for withdrawal, Prof. Lerchl goes with his complaint to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) in London.
- Even after MUV's Council for Scientific Ethics had already rejected the suspicion of data manipulation in 2008, Prof. Lerchl requests that the newly appointed Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (OeAWI) examine the fraud accusations once more in order to make the apparently impossible somehow possible, that is, to remove the Vienna research findings from the scientific literature. But in December 2010 this organization also acquits the Vienna team of the fraud accusations.

By exploiting the forum of the German information centre against mobile communication (IZgMF) Prof. Lerchl's campaign reaches its lowest point so far. It shows that this scientist stops at nothing in order to advertise his accusations of fraud in public. Since for years this forum of interested people has not only been known for his defamation of those who challenge the mobile communication industry, but also for his statements that confuse criticism with slander, freedom of opinion with defamation. Considering the chosen media and thus the audience addressed, the series of attacks against the Vienna research findings provide a rather diffuse picture at first. But when looked at them altogether, the actions and the consistency of many arguments actually reveal a general unifying strategy:

- The foremost criticism has always focused on the observed statistical abnormalities and the assumption that the research team did not adhere to the "blinding" protocol during the experiments. This criticism lacks any basis, and for none of the investigative reviewers was there ever sufficient evidence to consider the data manipulation, as claimed by Prof. Lerchl, proven.
- In order to widen the narrow scientific basis of his claims and to make the fraud appear more likely, in many cases Prof. Lerchl systematically obliterates the otherwise common distinction between alleged and proven fraud.
- With his accusations of fraud, Prof. Lerchl intends to ruin the scientific and ethical reputation of the members of the Vienna team, especially those of the senior authors. The ultimate goal of all the efforts is meant to culminate in the withdrawal of the studies from the scientific literature.

### ***Stages of failure***

By now Prof. Lerchl's multilayered campaign also includes an impressive series of serious defeats:

- As early as mid-July in 2008 - after the first commission chair, an employee of the Austrian mobile phone industry, had been forced to be replaced - the MUV Council for Scientific Ethics states that there is no evidence for the data manipulation as claimed by Prof. Lerchl and Prof. Schütz.
- After many month of dealing with Prof. Lerchl's request to have the suspected studies withdrawn, the editors of the two scientific journals where the studies of the Vienna research group have been published come to the conclusion that his claim is unfounded.
- The complaint regarding this issue that Prof. Lerchl had filed with COPE in London is definitively rejected in September 2009; and COPE explicitly confirms to the editors that they have acted correctly.
- The newly appointed OeAWI also acquits the Vienna research group of the fraud accusations in December 2010 even though Prof. Lerchl and Rector Schütz had placed new hope in this - for them - highly unsatisfactory situation in this agency to still reach their goal of having these unpleasant research findings withdrawn after all.

Yet all these commissions, which deal with Prof. Lerchl's accusations of fraud and are unable to confirm them, are criticized by him for their poor review work in a rather rigid and arrogant manner. The MUV Council for Scientific Ethics, which under its new chair had come to a different conclusion, he accuses of incompetence and even corruption. The editors of the two scientific journals, who reviewed the request for withdrawal but also rejected it, he accuses of incompetence and irresponsibility. The OeAWI he attacks as a 'Research-Fraud-Investigation-Prevention-Commission', which obviously is unable or unwilling to fulfil its task. There is only one fact he does not dispute, namely, that the MUV Council for Scientific Ethics under its first chair, who purely by chance turned out to be an employee of the mobile phone industry, meant to quickly confirm the accusations of fraud.

### ***'Investigating' as a way to unmask oneself***

The ungracious verdicts not only reveal the dilemma Prof. Lerchl has run into because that which he announced to the public and promised to the mobile phone industry is quite different from what the results turned out to be. They are also coloured by the awareness that his acceptance of the outcome of the review commissions would be equal to his admission of having for years committed character defamation and slander. But they also reveal Prof. Lerchl's relationship to the latest research that has confirmed in multiple studies the genotoxic effects of mobile phone radiation and, thus, handed him the worst of all defeats, which he is obviously unable to admit to himself. Because if the new research findings registered with him, he would now have to tell industry, government, and the public - based on his own theory - that the end of mobile phone technologies has come. However, if he plans to continue or even expand - which seems to be his intention - his campaign against the available results, he reduces himself to a funny character, his attacks to a piece of absurd theatre.

The documentation shows that Prof. Lerchl's alleged unmasking of his scientific opponents as frauds continues to be an unmasking of himself. His denial of an advancing international research, his own scientific failure within the German Mobile Telecommunication Programme and his derision of two commissions and two editors of scientific journals, who rejected his accusations of fraud, altogether disqualify him as a scientist. The methods of his campaign against the Vienna research group and their publications as well as his commitment to the interests of the mobile communication industry, for which the protection of human health and nature is the lowest-ranking priority, also disqualify him from an ethical and moral perspective. Under these circumstances it can be ruled out that he would do justice to the mandate at the Commission for Radiological Protection (SSK) of the German Federal Office for Radiation Protection (BfS) assigned to him by political decision makers.

In the history of science there seem to be only a few examples in which someone with a similar fanatic attitude and similar doubtful methods tried to prove that the results reported in scientific publications are fabricated, as occurred in the REFLEX project. Would Prof. Alexander Lerchl, who started the smear campaign, be just a biologist at the private Jacobs University in Bremen, this must unfortunately be taken as one of the rare examples of a misguided scientific activity in which limited qualification is mixed up with serving commercial interests. However, in the meantime Prof. Lerchl has been appointed for a second term head of the Committee Non-Ionizing Radiation in the SSK of the BfS, and as such he is at the same time the most important adviser of

the German government in regard of the biological effects of electromagnetic fields. His proven deficits in scientific and ethical competence and his misunderstanding of radiation protection turn out to be a danger for the health and the environment of 80 million Germans. Without doubt, steps have to be taken against this.

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## Introduction

In this part of the documentation *About The Handling of Scientific Findings regarding Mobile phone Research at the Medical University of Vienna (MUV)*, we now add a report about the events that took place outside MUV. Within the framework of the Europe-wide REFLEX study, Prof. Rüdiger had observed that both ELF as well as RF electromagnetic fields have genotoxic potential. In a follow-up study, his team had shown that the genotoxic potential of the radiation depends considerably on the modulation of the carrier frequency. In comparison to GSM radiation (2nd generation or 2G mobile phone technology), UMTS radiation (3rd generation or 3G mobile phone technology) has shown to be approximately 10 times more effective in producing DNA breaks in isolated human cells.

In a completely unexpected move, Prof. Alexander Lerchl, a biologist at the private Jacobs University in Bremen and a member of the German Commission for Radiological Protection (SSK) at the Federal Office for Radiation Protection (BfS), conveyed his suspicions to the MUV rector, Prof. Wolfgang Schütz: that the research findings produced at the Department of Occupational Health at MUV and published in *Mutation Research*<sup>1</sup> in 2005 were fraudulent. In early 2008, he levelled similar charges of fraud against a study<sup>2</sup> from MUV that had been published in the *International Archives of Occupational and Environmental Health* (IAOEH).

Prof. Alexander Lerchl's unprecedented campaign pursues the goal of eliminating research findings that pose a threat to commercial interests. The threat occurs because the reported findings challenge existing exposure limits, which until now have been considered adequate for protection of the public; they have challenged those in senior positions in industry and politics to reflect on the possibility that the current levels could cause serious and irreversible biological long-term effects and incalculable risks for humans and the environment.

The detailed events of the campaign that occurred at MUV are described in detail in Part I of this documentation. The focus of Part II is on Prof. Alexander Lerchl, who initiated this campaign. We will present his varied activities to spread and maintain the allegations of fraud within the scientific community and among the public. We will also report on his abject failure to succeed in his goal, as a result of his limited scientific competence, his over-inflated opinion of his abilities, and his unscrupulous handling of the truth. This scandal has reached far beyond Austria and Germany: it has spread internationally and shines a light on the problematic network of relations between the mobile phone industry, politics, and those agencies responsible for protection of the public from radiation. Because of his position and his responsibilities, Prof. Lerchl plays a key role in this case. It is irrelevant whether his actions are based on his own free will or whether he is being used by others. As authors of this documentation, we make no pretence - science plays a most disgraceful role in this conglomerate of industrial, political, and scientific power. The scandal of science as *claimed* by Prof. Lerchl has now turned into an *actual* scandal of science in quite a different sense.

### 1. The *Laborjournal* brings Prof. Lerchl's allegations of fraud before the scientific community

In numerous articles, the research magazine *Laborjournal* presented the research findings of Prof. Rüdiger's team, but each time it was from the perspective and interpretation of Prof. Lerchl. In the first editorial, written by the journalist Siegfried Bär, the findings were referred to as suspicions, but in the following editorials, all of which Prof. Lerchl signed as the author, they had quickly become allegations.

**Prof. Lerchl: There is no biophysical mechanism that could lead to damage**

The campaign against the Vienna research findings was launched with an article<sup>3</sup> by Siegfried Bär in April 2008. Without making any inquiries or investigating the circumstances, the journalist simply adopted Lerchl's ideas. It was their common goal to call the attention of the scientific community to the events in Vienna - as seen through Lerchl's eyes. The accusations are not only directed at the research results but also the authors of the report. Prof. Franz Adlkofer, the coordinator of the REFLEX project, became a special target of the accusations despite the fact he was not involved in the actual research but because he took a stand against the defamation of the research group.

Siegfried Bär headed his editorial from 25 April 2008: *"Who is actually being paid by industry? – Are mobiles a danger for your health? A recent study by Schwarz et al presents evidence that electromagnetic fields from mobiles lead to DNA breakage in human fibroblasts. Biologist Alexander Lerchl however finds serious faults in this study."*

Bär freely admits that he has neither insight into mobile phone radiation research nor any particular interest in it. What would usually be considered as a journalist's lack of competence, he makes up for by placing great confidence in the outstanding professional competence of Prof. Lerchl. As a result, the article reads in many instances as if Prof. Lerchl himself had guided his hands across the keyboard.

- As to mobile phone radiation risks in general and the question of DNA damage in particular, the following statement is made:

*"...: the vast majority of scientific investigations concerning the possible risks of mobile phone electromagnetic fields is negative, i.e. no effects were seen. Indeed, such effects would be difficult to explain since the energy of such fields is too weak to break chemical bonds, e.g. in DNA strands. So far, there is no biochemical mechanisms, which would be able to explain such damages."*

In science, usually majority - which, as we know, can change rather quickly - does not decide whether something is correct or not. That, according to the latest body of scientific research, mobile phone radiation does not *directly* cause DNA breakage but *indirectly* through miscommunication between intracellular processes has been known in science for quite some time, but obviously has not yet filtered down to Siegfried Bär or Prof. Lerchl.

- After assurances of how safe mobile phone radiation is, statements about statistical abnormalities in the Vienna studies are made:

*"At the beginning of April, the German research magazine Laborjournal anonymously received a manuscript written by Alexander Lerchl, a biologist from Bremen, Germany, that had been accepted by Int Arch Occup Environ Health.[...] Lerchl took a close look at the paper by Schwarz et al. and concludes in his paper: 'The critical analysis of the data given in the figures and the tables furthermore reveal peculiar miscalculations and statistical oddities which give rise to concern about the origin of the reported data'."*

The word "anonymously" shows that camouflage and deception are an integral part of the Vienna scandal. What Prof. Lerchl refers to as statistical oddities correspond to the normal conditions of experimental design and the process. This misinterpretation has received detailed discussion in Part I of this documentation.

- Additional statements deal with corruptible scientists:

*"That scientists have been bribed by industry to play down possible dangers of their products has been shown and is probably still the case. One example is the tobacco industry. [...] In Germany in 1975, the 'Verband der Cigarettenindustrie' (association of tobacco industry) founded the 'Forschungsrat Rauchen und Gesundheit' (research board on smoking and health), which was the centre for such activities. [...] Whether the mobile phone industry uses similar tools is unknown to me. [...] During my inquest into this case I was told repeatedly that Alexander Lerchl is a lobbyist for the mobile phone industry. I could find no proof of this allegation. The following is, however, interesting: The second senior author, Franz Adlkofer, is a member of the foundation board and CEO of the Verum foundation, the successor of the research board on smoking and health [...]."*

Thus, Siegfried Bär states that bribery was common in the tobacco industry, while he had not found any such evidence for the mobile phone industry or specifically for the person of Prof. Lerchl. Reading between the lines, Siegfried Bär and Prof. Lerchl are alluding to their intent: with the help of a conspiracy theory, which we will get back to later, Prof. Adlkofer's cover as a lobbyist of the tobacco industry is to be blown. He supposedly arranged funds from the tobacco industry to be invested into research that would be of disadvantage to the mobile phone industry, thus drawing attention to a new health issue and away from the issues and risks of smoking and passive smoking.

Prof. Rüdiger and Prof. Adlkofer, who are asked a few questions by Siegfried Bär for the sake of appearances, refute all his statements - which, as expected, is of no interest to either Siegfried Bär or Prof. Lerchl. The differences in opinion about the current knowledge and the legitimacy of the procedure are irreconcilable.

**Prof. Lerchl: This is the end of the reputation of the Medical University of Vienna, the worst-case scenario**

On 26 June 2009 - over a year after the launch of Prof. Lerchl's campaign, and almost a year after the Vienna team had been cleared of the fraud allegations by the MUV Council for Scientific Ethics - the *Laborjournal* offers Prof. Lerchl an opportunity to go public with his accusations of fraud. The headline summarizes the contents of the article as follows: *Worst-case scenario in Vienna. There are scandals nobody is interested in at some point, and there are those that get worse. Into the last category falls that which is currently happening at the Medical University of Vienna (MUV).*<sup>4</sup>

➤ Initially, the fraud allegations are repeated. But it becomes clear that there is an irreconcilable conflict between Prof. Lerchl's wishful thinking and the rationale of the Council for Scientific Ethics as he states, and we translate:

*What happened? Nothing. Not one of the suspect studies was withdrawn. Neither the five publications from between 2002 and 2005 nor the publication from 2005 published in Mutation Research. Since the corresponding experiments had been carried out before September 2005, Rüdiger and the Ethics Council assume or do not rule out that the blinding must still have worked at this time. In view of the data fabrication in the quality management [...] and the strange statistics in both publications a naïve assumption.*

The five publications between 2002 and 2005 refer to papers dealing with the biological effects of extremely low-frequency electromagnetic fields. In the interim, their results have been confirmed<sup>5</sup> beyond doubt. The data for the publication in *Mutation Research*<sup>1</sup> have been generated at the Free University of Berlin, now Charité. The blinding was not the responsibility of the lab technician from Vienna, who carried out the experiments, but the lab personnel on site in Berlin.

➤ According to Prof. Lerchl, the damage to science associated with the failure to heed his allegations could hardly be greater, and we translate:

*The Ethics Council from Vienna should have requested the withdrawal of all seven publications. Unconcerned Hugo Rüdiger and Franz Adlkofer, senior authors of the studies, continue to publish posters and papers. This is the end of the reputation of the Medical University of Vienna, the worst-case scenario.*

Prof. Lerchl has absolutely no idea that the damage caused by him - if he should be mistaken about his judgment of the research findings from Vienna - would be much greater than he assumes, because the well-being of the people is concerned. That he has lost any sense of proportion, especially regarding his own greatness, is also indicated by his statement about the end of MUV's reputation.

➤ Prof. Lerchl bestows a certain level of understanding of the MUV rector, Prof. Schütz, who had been accused of lacking determination in the handling this affair (see chapter 2). After all, Prof. Schütz had never made any secret of his conviction in his press releases that the studies have been fudged, and we translate:

*In his press release from 1 September 2008, Schütz had, indeed, demanded from Rüdiger to withdraw both publications, the one in Int Arch Occup Environ Health (2008) and the one in Mutation Research (2005). There is no denying Schütz's determination.*

*Especially when considering that Schütz had to reckon with the possibility that the same fate that had befallen Clemens Sorg, who at that time had been dismissed -or put more frankly 'fired' - as rector from the Medical University of Innsbruck, could also befall him. Sorg's downfall was that he had concerned himself too much with the investigation of a clinic scandal. [...]*

*The events bear an uncanny resemblance. Ethics commissions, by the way, are independent in their decision making, also from the rector, and for better or worse Schütz had to accept the decision of the MUV Council for Scientific Ethics as presented in their final report.*

The rector's initial support and later disregard of a compromise are not even mentioned by Prof. Lerchl. The slant of his line of argument becomes very clear when you consider the differences between the events in Innsbruck and Vienna. In Innsbruck, the dismissal of the rector was intended to prevent the clarification of a proven fraud. In Vienna a case of fraud had to be invented so as to clarify it in the desired way. Prof. Lerchl's loss of reality is demonstrated by equalizing these kinds of differences as well as in perceiving and evaluating the findings of the Council for Scientific Ethics as a worst-case scenario.

**Prof. Lerchl: Science alone is not able to clean up its act - that much is clear**

To launch another very well-timed attack at the research findings from MUV, Prof. Lerchl once again uses his connections to the *Laborjournal*. In April 2010, he recaps all that he dislikes about the MUV publications and their authors in a 10-part series of editorials<sup>6</sup>. The sweeping headline summarizes the objects of his discomfort, and we translate: *Strange comets and how science cleans up its act. Rarely have we seen research findings that have stirred up such a whirlwind: Magnetic fields and mobile phone radiation destroy DNA molecules - at least the EU-funded REFLEX Program says so. It turned out, however, that the data of the Vienna team had been fabricated. In this series of articles the background and (non)responses of publishers and journals are described. Science alone is not able to clean up its act—that much is clear.*

Prof. Lerchl obviously wrote this series of articles to convince the newly appointed Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (OeAWI) of the validity of his fraud accusations and the necessity to act accordingly. The agency had been established to pass final judgment on the events in Vienna and Innsbruck. After Lerchl's accusations of fraud had been met with very little understanding by the Council for Scientific Ethics and the editors of the scientific journals, he and probably also the rector of MUV placed their last hope in the OeAWI to force the virtually impossible, namely the withdrawal of the publications.

The series of articles offers very few new points. However, there is a new twist: Prof. Lerchl now casts doubt over those papers that study the genotoxic effects of extremely low-frequency electromagnetic fields. This is obviously meant to counteract the emerging misleading impression that he would only be interested in mobile phone studies, and not all other investigations from this laboratory in Vienna. Furthermore it is confirmed that a trap, disguised as a 'quality control procedure' was set up for the suspect lab technician. And at last it is also confirmed that the classified minutes from 24 July 2008, in which Prof. Rüdiger's team was exonerated, was sent 'anonymously' to Prof. Lerchl.

**Prof. Lerchl: Flawed investigation of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (OeAWI)**

On 23 November 2010, the OeAWI published a statement<sup>7</sup> regarding the investigation and cleared the Vienna team of the fraud allegations. According to Prof. Lerchl, again science was not able to clean up its act in order to meet his expectations, and of course, those of the mobile phone industry. Otherwise, the highly controversial research results would have been withdrawn as part of the essential scientific clean-up.

After the release of the OeAWI report, Prof. Lerchl sent a commentary<sup>8</sup> to the *Laborjournal*, with last changes on 13 December 2010 - it appears he had access on short notice. We reproduce part of his commentary here:

*The report or investigation, respectively, is flawed in various ways:*

- [...] *It is, therefore, doubtful whether the Commission has actually been provided with all the relevant files from MUV, and it should be clarified which files may possibly not have been made accessible to the Commission.*

- *My firm request a day prior to the release of the statement not to publish it, but to go right back into the investigation due to the changed situation was rejected by the commission chair on the same day.*

- *The Commission could 'neither confirm nor invalidate the fraud allegation' made by me or further 'fraud allegations could not be verified', respectively. In such a case, the rules of procedure of the Commission (4.2.) stipulate: 'If a sufficient assessment of the facts is not possible on the basis of the material submitted, the members of the Commission may hold a hearing with the parties involved.'*

*Not at any time have I been heard or invited to a hearing at Vienna, neither in written or oral form. A hearing would have prevented the above-mentioned neglect as well as perhaps further mistakes.*

*It, therefore, can be established that the Commission has not investigated the fraud allegations with the required effort and necessary care, and has acted against its own rule of procedure.*

*Prof. Dr. Alexander Lerchl*

In his line of argument, Prof. Lerchl fails to recognize two things: first, if a fraud cannot be verified, the act of maintaining the allegation of fraud is regarded as defamation; second, the rector and the affected persons who alone can report about the events in Vienna have been heard by the OeAWI. Prof. Lerchl only has distinguished himself by slandering the team from afar but otherwise has no relationship with it. A hearing with him would probably have produced only more of the same coming straight from his imagination, which the Commission obviously could do without.

On 4 January 2011, the commentary in the *Laborjournal* is followed by an editorial<sup>9</sup> by Prof. Lerchl where he makes it clear that he plans to continue his campaign. He also criticizes three

commissions dealing with the investigation of alleged or perhaps also actual cases of fraud, including the case at MUV, which he calls *Research-Fraud-Investigation-Prevention-Commission*. To carry his nonsense to extremes, he encourages the readers of the *Laborjournal* to support his efforts to resolve this issue by sending in their comments, which he will collect and forward to the relevant commissions.

At the same time, he makes serious accusations against OeAWI regarding their decision on the REFLEX case. He suspects partiality. As the *Bremen Sherlock Holmes*, a byname he was awarded by *Spatenpauli*, the host of the IZgMF forum, for his exposure of the Vienna scandal, he believes to have discovered a network of connections which would explain his recent failure to invalidate the research. He suspects the chair of the commission mandated by the OeAWI to carry out this investigation is biased. He also states that the investigation conducted by the commission was flawed in several ways and as a result, certain events and two investigative reports regarding the research findings from Vienna have not been considered. In the end Prof. Lerchl only reiterates: he is always right and others are stupid, irresponsible, or even corrupt. Prof. Lerchl urgently calls on the OeAWI to *reopen the investigation regarding the REFLEX Programme*.<sup>10</sup>

In his letter<sup>11</sup> to the OeAWI, he asks a question under the headline "*Who does and who does not benefit from the Commission of the Austrian Agency for Research Integrity (OeAWI)?*" - which he himself answers as follows, and we translate:

- I. *The Commission protects the ones committing research fraud.*
- II. *The Commission damages the reputation of the Austrian science community.*
- III. *The Commission harms its whistleblowers.*

Then he adds, and we translate: *After studying this letter, I am certain, you will come to understand my - admittedly - harsh criticism. I (still) nourish hope that the serious mistakes that have been made will be corrected.* It remains to be seen whether or not he will actually succeed in having a third commission look into his concern and fulfil all wishes of the REFLEX foes. That he can imagine truth and the progress in science only according to his subjective standard of knowledge provides the conditions for a potentially never-ending story. And as we know from experience, the support of influential people makes many things happen in Germany, and almost everything in Austria.

## **2. The newsmagazine *DER SPIEGEL* provides Prof. Lerchl's campaign with the desired broad public exposure**

Since Prof. Lerchl sees the public at risk of falling victim to uncertainty because of irresponsible scientists, he expands his campaign to the general public at the start. It was his declared intention to present alleged risks of mobile phone radiation as misinformation and to expose the originators of the information as fraudsters. In order to emphasize his point, he compares them to known frauds in science history. The newsmagazine *DER SPIEGEL* provides the campaign of Prof. Lerchl with the desired broad public exposure. This might have to do with their lack of understanding the interrelationships but also with being considerate of their business relations. However, to those readers of the *SPIEGEL* who are familiar with the situation in Vienna and the current body of research, the irresponsible handling of this issue by a leading German newsmagazine is a great disappointment - especially regarding the independence of our media and their ability to criticize. The *SPIEGEL's* support - certainly appreciated by the mobile phone industry - was obviously provided without validating Prof. Lerchl's allegations and, in the course of the story, contributed to deceiving the public so completely that it can hardly be undone.

In May and August 2008, the *SPIEGEL* journalist Manfred Dworschak and Prof. Lerchl published two slanderous articles about the Vienna researchers and their work. Undoubtedly, Prof. Lerchl is responsible for the contents and Manfred Dworschak for the sensational language. A few quotes illustrate the style and the intention of their work.

### ***Caught at foul play***

In *DER SPIEGEL* 22/2008, Manfred Dworschak reports on the sensational turn of events that the assessment of the worldwide quoted MUV research findings of the biological effects of mobile phone radiation has taken<sup>12</sup>, and we translate:

*It was one of the most horrific findings about the danger of mobile phones. Mobile phone radiation, so it said, would break the fragile strands of the DNA inside the cells. Possible effect: cancer.*

*A research group from the Medical University of Vienna had announced the terrible news. [...]*

*Now, it has turned out that most likely all of this is a fraud. A lab technician simply invented tons of data.*

*Worse still, this woman has obviously continued to play foul for many years - until now when an investigative commission of the Vienna University succeeded in catching her in the very act. 'Ms. K. confessed immediately,' said Wolfgang Schütz, the rector of the Medical University of Vienna. 'We terminated the employment contract.'*

Reflecting the views of Prof. Lerchl, Manfred Dworschak points to the necessary consequences this alleged foul play must have, and we translate:

*After her confession, two much discussed studies have basically become obsolete. The university demands that they are withdrawn. The older study from 2005 deals with mobile phone radiation as used in common GSM networks. [...]*

*The second study, published this spring, came to a similar conclusion but this time with radiation of modern UMTS networks.*

Again in keeping with the position of Prof. Lerchl, Manfred Dworschak covers the infamous role of the professors Adlkofer and Rüdiger which, according to Lerchl, at least in the actions of Adlkofer are rooted in the tobacco industry, and we translate:

*That mobile phones cause 'strand breaks' in the DNA is dogma among the mobile phone opponents. As early as 2003, the much quoted EU research project 'Reflex' had announced a similar finding. The coordinator of the latter study, Prof. Franz Adlkofer from Munich, is now also involved in the dubious studies from Vienna.*

*Adlkofer looks back at a distinguished biography: for almost two decades, he has been a senior scientist with a lobby association of the tobacco industry. [...]*

*He [= Prof. Lerchl] has had his suspicions about the studies from Vienna for quite some time. "There is simply no imaginable effect mechanism that could explain the DNA damage at such low energy waves," he says.*

*Due to Lerchl's persistence, the University of Vienna became active. Now the infamous role of the professors Adlkofer and Rüdiger still awaits clarification.*

Even in the Internet forum of the German information centre against mobile communication (IZgMF), which - with the support of its hosts - Prof. Lerchl had chosen as his preferred tool in his fight against the research findings from Vienna, the question is raised whether or not it was an appropriate decision to have Manfred Dworschak deal with this issue. A forum member with the alias *Doris* voices her doubt on 26 May 2008 as follows<sup>13</sup>, and we translate:

*To me it seems to be anything but clever to once again have Manfred Dworschak tackle this serious issue when he has his very own way of dealing with mobile phone radiation. Among critics the name Dworschak is very well known and does certainly not stand for factual and serious reporting on this issue, which is why the majority of the critics will wearily turn away by now and not attach any further importance to it. Rüdiger/Adlkofer will just like Dr. Oberfeld go down as victims of the mobile phone industry in the history of its opponents.*

### **The professor's favorite**

Under the headline *Die Favoritin des Professors [The Professor's Favourite]*<sup>14</sup> in the *SPIEGEL* edition of 35/2008, Manfred Dworschak begins his article with an announcement printed in bold, and we translate: *Vienna researchers believe to have shown that mobile phone radiation damages DNA - with apparently fabricated studies. The case is a lesson of how to handle tough fraudsters: who should uncover fraud cases when science itself cannot cope with it?* The article goes on to relate what Prof. Lerchl will later present in his book about the *Fraudsters from Vienna and Their Helpers*. The previous allegations are more or less presented as facts. A new element is added: ridicule the enemy and make the campaign initiator a hero. Illustrated with corresponding images, the *old* Prof. Rüdiger is portrayed as some kind of *Professor Unrat* (a book by Heinrich Mann) who is infatuated by a young and beautiful woman, without realizing how she is fooling him. He is juxtaposed with the *proper* Prof. Lerchl who has bravely taken up the fight against the infamous fraudsters in science and succeeded against all opposition. Prof. Lerchl and Manfred Dworschak largely ignore that the MUV Council for Scientific Ethics was unable to verify the fraud claims and that recent studies confirm the validity of the research findings from Vienna. Both these facts only seem to serve as a motivation to continue the campaign with even more dedication.

### **The conditions at MUV are made responsible for the unsatisfactory result of the investigation**

The second Dworschak article obviously owes its existence to Prof. Lerchl's extreme disappointment about the course of the investigation regarding the 'causa Rüdiger' at MUV. It is reported with displeasure that the investigation at MUV drags on and on and that the current

results of the investigation are highly unsatisfactory - despite the clear circumstances of the fraud, as claimed by Lerchl. According to the minutes of a meeting on 24 July 2008, the serious accusations made by Prof. Lerchl and the rector have been rejected as unfounded by the Council for Scientific Ethics. In these minutes it is stated explicitly that there is no evidence for accusations of data fabrication. Consequently, the article does not spare discriminatory language when referring to the responsible persons at MUV. The rector of MUV is also given a taste of Prof. Lerchl's anger. It seems as if the rector has not acted according to their agreement and thus is made jointly responsible for the unexpected result of the investigation, and we translate:

*Everything must be checked, Wolfgang Schütz, the rector of the Medical University, promised when the scandal became public.*

*There is no more talk about that, yet a surprising turn of events took place. A three-person commission of the university half-heartedly pokes at the case; K. juggles confessions and retractions; her superior professor denies any misconduct... .*

Prof. Lerchl interprets his campaign as a lamentable object lesson of a failed investigation, and we translate:

*At the end of the day nothing did happen. Not a single study has officially been withdrawn. Instead, the case turns into a lesson: it seems that science is incapable of resolving an obvious fraud scandal by its own effort. [...]*

*For questionable cases the university has a Council for Scientific Ethics. The names of the council members are classified information; the commission is accountable to the rector only. Now this ethics council arrived on the scene, met, debated, heard the persons involved, considered what it had heard, and debated again.*

*Result: not worth mentioning. [...]. There is hardly anything to connect the suspects with.*

### **Independent journalists criticize the SPIEGEL article**

There are still journalists who go to the trouble of doing their own investigations before they inform the public about bold claims. In an article entitled *SPIEGEL slanders researchers critical of mobile phone radiation as fraudsters with unfounded information - and in this context refers to persons who are close to the mobile phone industry* the journalist Torsten Engelbrecht states on 1 February 2009<sup>15</sup>, and we translate:

*Regarding the issue whether mobile phones cause cancer, the SPIEGEL published two articles in May and August 2008, which were also published at SPIEGEL Online. Readers were given a clear message as if it were a fact that the studies of researchers from Vienna, which were designed to clarify the genotoxic and carcinogenic potential of mobile phone radiation, would have been tampered with. [...] It was especially the lab technician Elisabeth K. who was incriminated, but also the principal investigators of the studies, professors Hugo Rüdiger and Franz Adlkofer. [...]*

*And most important: just as indignant as the SPIEGEL writes about the researchers and as prematurely as it condemns them as fraudsters and persistent manipulators, so badly and far from the facts were the stories investigated.*

Tina Göbel from the Austrian newsmagazine *profil*, who locally made efforts to discover the background of the evident scandal at MUV, turns the observed conflict between mobile phone industry and science into a study of Austrian morality. In her article called *Reputation suppression: The morality behind the allegedly fabricated mobile phone studies* from 24 November 2008, she concludes<sup>16</sup>, and we translate

*The fraud scandal of the mobile phone studies at the Medical University of Vienna received a worldwide response. But documents accessible to profil appear to make a fraud questionable - and show the conflict of interest between the mobile phone industry and science.*

In the interim, the MUV Council for Scientific Ethics<sup>17</sup> and the OeAWI<sup>7</sup> both rejected Prof. Lerchl's accusations of fraud in public statements. In this situation it would have been an appropriate measure to limit the damage committed, if in a third article the *SPIEGEL* had reported that two ethics commissions were unable to confirm the scientific misconduct suspected by the newsmagazine and his contributor Prof. Lerchl.

### **Prof. Lerchl seeks a strange deal with profil journalist Tina Göbel**

When pursuing his goals, Prof. Lerchl is not too particular about the means to accomplish them. One example among others is the handling of the minutes of the Council for Scientific Ethics meeting on 24 July 2008<sup>18</sup> which had been declared classified information by the MUV rector, but passed on - anonymously - to Lerchl. Obviously he had a hard time accepting what was written in the minutes about the lack of evidence for his fraud allegations. In an attempt to determine if the document, which had probably been leaked from the rector's office at MUV, was truly authentic, he asked the aforementioned *profil* journalist Tina Göbel to verify it through her connection to Prof.

Adlkofer and Prof. Rüdiger. She had told him previously that she did not know the document that the rector had declared classified. Even though she was known to him as a harsh critic of his activities, he now hoped - in return for giving her a copy of the minutes - that she would help him to verify the authenticity of this document. An e-mail from 25 June 2009 explains the suggested deal, and we translate:

*Now you did receive it from me. Service in return: You look into its authenticity and immediately let me know. Deal? I know, you would probably prefer to do anything else but a deal with me, the evil radiation risk denier, but it is worth it, isn't it?*

*For security reasons only: Without my written consent, none of the contents of my mails to you may be forwarded or published. I hope you have understanding for this safeguard.*

AL

We will refrain from making any comment or judgment on this.

### **3. A book about *Fraudsters in the lab and their helpers* unmasks its author as an unbridled slanderer**

In his short book on *Fraudsters in the lab and their helpers - The Vienna mobile phone studies - A single incident or a symptom*<sup>19</sup>, Prof. Lerchl repeats and expands with more details the condensed versions that had been published in the *Laborjournal* and *SPIEGEL*. Already in the Preface, he points to the extent of the fraud he uncovered and its consequences. He also does not fail to mention the lack of understanding he had to endure from others with his analyses. The message he tries to convey is that he unwaveringly supports the implementation of ethical principles in science and for this he should receive thanks and appreciation, but instead he is suspected of representing the interests of the mobile phone industry. In the Preface he reports the scandal he uncovered and the reactions he went through, and we translate:

*It has taken me over a year and still occupies my time, and most likely the scandal will be discussed for a long time to come. It brought an entire university into discredit, careers were cut short, and many critical questions about the system of quality control in science were raised. When in summer 2007, I analyzed the data for the first time in my office over a weekend and noticed that something was definitely off with the study from Vienna, I had no idea what this discovery would unleash. The reactions ranged from colleagues who were critical of my analyses to editors of scientific journals who did not adhere to their own ethical principles, culminating in attempts to withhold important documents and to prematurely terminate investigations, to say nothing of the personal attacks by mobile phone opponents from whom I took their strongest arguments [research findings at MUV]. This even went so far as to slander me as a paid lobbyist of the mobile phone industry.*

#### ***The difference between alleged and proven fraud is levelled***

The topics of the book have the obvious goal to destroy the scientific and moral reputation of the members of the MUV team, and Prof. Lerchl must have completely lost his sense of proportion. In the chapter called *Research fraud - not a single incident*, he describes a number of major fraud cases in science, including the case of the South Korean cloning researcher Hwang, to whom we will return later. Prof. Lerchl points out that falsified data are more common in science than realized and makes clear where the team from Vienna must be ranked. In the chapters called *The first incident: Diem et al. 2005* and *The second incident: Schwarz et al, 2008*, he provides a detailed account of how he arrived at the conclusion that the study results of the Vienna team must be falsified. In the chapters called *The non-response by Mutation Research* and *The strange responses by the journal IAOEA*, he goes into his dispute with the editors of those scientific journals who declined to withdraw the publications he considered as fraud. Since the editors did not believe his claims, they incur the accusation of irresponsible behaviour.

In several chapters Prof. Lerchl describes how he and the rector of MUV assessed the events in Vienna. A separate chapter is dedicated to the Verum Foundation in Munich and its executive director Prof. Adlkofer. The latter is alleged to have become involved in mobile phone research at the instigation of the tobacco industry so as to distract public attention from smoking and passive smoking by establishing new risks. In the concluding chapters called *Consequences for science* and *Legal consequences?*, Prof. Lerchl lectures the public about the consequences for science and jurisdiction, which arise from scientific misconduct, and makes suggestions on how to resolve this problem.

#### ***Commercial interests dominate public health interests***

One paragraph in his book is especially revealing, because Prof. Lerchl explains the commercial motives for his actions (page 141), and we translate:

*When, as in the present case, studies are published that discredit an entire technology - in this case mobile communication - the damage is probably a considerable one, and that for very different reasons. When a new base station is to be installed, citizens who see their health put at risk routinely protest against it. Mobile phone service providers are criticized, they have to defend themselves at town hall meetings and are sometimes exposed to harsh criticism why a base station is to be placed exactly at the proposed site. Often, after having obtained expert assessments, alternative sites are sought and found, all of which is associated with high costs. And then there are those people who are so confused that they decide for themselves and their families to use mobile phones as little as possible or even to completely do without mobile phones. These damages (non-completion of contracts) are also difficult to quantify and in the end are not suitable as a basis for damage claims.*

This quote clearly shows that commercial interests are given precedence over public health interests. If Prof. Lerchl were a physician, he would be violating his Hippocratic Oath. There is a large discrepancy between the mandate assigned to Prof. Lerchl to protect the public from health risks and his own self-image as a biologist; he cannot even see the obvious conflict of interest. This clearly illustrates how close Prof. Lerchl became a tool of the mobile phone industry.

### **Genotoxicity evoked as a risk of mobile phone radiation**

In terms of the services he offers, the following sentence from his book takes on a special meaning (page 43), and we translate:

*The findings of Diem et al. were truly alarming. If they should be confirmed, would this be not only a wake-up call but also the beginning of the end of wireless technologies because DNA damage is the first step in the process of cancer development.*

When taking the actual conditions of the Vienna experiments into consideration, this claim is unsubstantiated and it certainly overshoots the mark. But it may have been designed to show the mobile phone industry how much they are dependent on Prof. Lerchl for defending their interests. His chumming up to the mobile phone industry, on the other hand, also demanded that decisive action is taken after such big words. That Prof. Lerchl expected to receive recognition from the scientific community for that casts doubt on the way he sees himself as a scientist.

In the afterword Prof. Lerchl summarizes the conclusion of his investigation, delivers his damning verdict of the Vienna team, and again demands that all their publications should be withdrawn, and we translate:

*Two studies about DNA damage in human cells alleged to be caused by electromagnetic fields of mobile phone radiation have clearly been uncovered as a fraud. A lab technician - for whatever reasons - faked the data. It was easy for her to commit the fraud because the allegedly secure blinding mechanism of the exposure chambers could be overridden with a simple trick. [...]*

*In addition, a grave accusation is also justified against the editors. Due to their inaction, the impression was created that evil forces were out to get the responsible scientists and discredit them. That the exact opposite is true is of as little interest to the editors as the extensive damage they have caused through their actions for the reputation of science as a whole.*

*When considering the 'speed' and the 'determination' of the agencies in charge, probably many years will pass until finally an end can be put to the affair of the Vienna studies. This can only happen when all publications, which have been produced with the collaboration of the lab technician Elisabeth Diem/Kratochvil or with an exposure set-up that can be so easily manipulated, are withdrawn.*

Nearly four years after Prof. Lerchl had unleashed the scandal and nearly three years after the publication of his book about the fraudsters from Vienna, it should be noted that to this day the evidence of data manipulation at MUV could not be produced. Already on 24 July 2008<sup>18</sup>, the MUV Council for Scientific Ethics had stated that it does not accept the statistical abnormalities challenged by Prof. Lerchl nor the knowledge of the blinding code - which was contested by the accused team member - as evidence for the fabrication of the obtained research findings. The OeAWI confirmed this conclusion in December 2010<sup>7</sup>.

As usual, Prof. Lerchl ignores the judgment of the Council for Scientific Ethics with an argument that is so typical of him: the Ethics council is either incompetent or corrupt. He also confronts the OeAWI with comparable insinuations. An important reason for why he is defending his wild fraud accusations so bitterly and aggressively may be found in the misjudgement of his own research findings, which, according to his assessment, indicate no adverse effects of mobile phone radiation. Insofar as biological effects exist at all, in his opinion the positive ones even seem to predominate. It is his mistake to mostly block out the advances made in international research while attaching a

completely inappropriate significance to his own modest, perhaps erroneous, findings - which we will get back to later.

#### ***An author and two obliging reviewers misunderstand the nature of clarification***

In his book, Prof. Lerchl presents himself as a fearless public interest watchdog of mobile phone research. And two obliging reviewers are eager to confirm this status. Dipl.-Ing. (FH) Anja zur Nieden<sup>20</sup> from the Institute of Hygiene and Environmental Health in Giessen is stunned at the possibility that two mobile phone studies from Vienna, whose data fabrication is so well documented, are not being immediately withdrawn. And Stephan Schall, whose mobile phone forum we will get back to later, not only pays his respects to the *unfailing determination to uncover* in his review<sup>21</sup> from 2 January 2009, but he also praises Prof. Lerchl as the *Bremen Sherlock Holmes*, who has finally put an end to this fraud, and recommends his *very reasonably priced book*. Yet all three of them, Prof. Lerchl as well as the two obliging reviewers ignore the profound difference between alleged and proven fraud, which is a legal and an accepted standard in an educated society. The misinterpretations of his own research findings can help to understand some aspects of Prof. Lerchl's campaign. But altogether they also reveal limits of his own scientific horizon and prevent that industry and government respond to new knowledge in a timely and appropriate manner. For the mobile phone industry, Prof. Lerchl has become a highly valuable instrument protecting their economic interests. For the citizens of this country, however, the likelihood has increased that he - by means of his position - is causing irreparable harm to them.

#### **4. A workshop by the Research Association for Radio Applications e.V. (FGF) is meant to destroy the MUV research findings**

Until the completion of the REFLEX project in 2004, the German mobile phone industry had been content with simply ignoring the MUV research findings presented at numerous national and international conferences. Any criticism, at first limited to the methodology of the experiments, started only after the publication of the study in *Mutation Research*<sup>1</sup> in 2005. A first culmination point was achieved at the workshop on *Genotoxic Effects of Radiofrequency Fields - Lessons from the Conflicting Results*,<sup>22</sup> which took place in Neuherberg/Munich in 2007. It had been organized by the Research Association for Radio Applications e.V. (FGF), which represents the interests of the mobile phone industry in the scientific community.

Even back then, the vehemence of the attacks revealed that consequences were expected from the new research findings on public health policies and the acceptance of wireless technologies among the public, and this was to be avoided. The emerging threat to commercial interests required a quick and permanent solution. The FGF supported the search for a solution wherever possible even though it could not be open about it without risking damaging its reputation. In this situation, hope obviously concentrated on Prof. Lerchl who at that time most likely might have been encouraged to proceed against the Vienna research findings, and he launched his campaign. In fall 2009, a workshop of the FGF in cooperation with the Austrian Forum *Mobilkommunikation* (FMK) in Vienna was designed to assist in getting rid of the controversial research findings.

#### ***Fraud accusations by Prof. Lerchl became the core theme of a scientific event***

The FGF/FMK workshop called *Serious Research or "Junk Science"? Quality Standards for Scientific Work in Mobile Phone Research* took place in Vienna on 22 November 2009. The workshop presenters included Prof. Emilio Bossi, president of the committee *Scientific Integrity* of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences; Prof. Michael Kundi, member of the organizing committee of the BioInitiative Report; Prof. Mats-Olof Mattsson, chair of the team electromagnetic fields at the Scientific Committee on Emerging and Newly Identified Health Risks of the EU Commission (SCENIHR); as well as Prof. Alexander Lerchl, chair of the committee on non-ionizing radiation at the Commission on Radiological Protection (SSK) of the Federal Office for Radiation Protection (BfS). The ambitious set-up of the event and the selection of highly esteemed presenters were obviously meant to disguise the goals hinted at in the invitation. They read as follows, and we translate: *One core theme will pursue the question as to how fabricated and falsified studies should be handled.*<sup>23</sup> That this, however, was going to be *the* theme of the entire event could not be discerned from the announced lecture by Prof. Lerchl, who intended to speak about the SSK assessment guidelines.

Prof. Lerchl wasted no more than 5 minutes on the announced topic when he dedicated the remaining 20 minutes to the research findings from MUV. He goes on to list all his reasons that have made him realize that the Vienna research findings must be based on data fabrication. The organizers of the workshop mostly adopt Prof. Lerchl's account in their press release. Again, the fraud is presented as a proven fact. The conference is considered a success because it was possible to demonstrate that the MUV research findings must not be taken seriously when applying the assessment criteria of the SSK as well as those of other national and international agencies. The press release conveys the overall impression as if the faked Vienna studies would finally have been put to rest at the site of their origin. All of this occurs against better judgment, because at this time Prof. Lerchl's arguments had already been invalidated by the MUV Council for Scientific Ethics. It says in the press release of the FMK<sup>24</sup>, and we translate:

*Experts from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland discuss good, bad, and faked research.*

*'How are research results assessed and how can you protect yourself against "black sheep" in science?' Four international presenters shed light on this and other questions at the information session of the Research Association for Radio Applications (FGF) and the Forum Mobilkommunikation (FMK) in Vienna on 22 November 2009. Against the background of numerous and at times hotly debated mobile phone research results, the assessment criteria of research results from national and international agencies were presented. The focus was also placed on individual publications of the last years, especially of mobile phone research, that had been accused of inaccuracy or even fraud. [...]*

*The lecture [by Prof. Bossi] showed the reasons how scientific misconduct develops and which strategies can be employed to limit it. "Scientific integrity is a basic moral attitude. It cannot be separated from the responsible use of human thirst for knowledge and human curiosity." [...]*

*After reporting about the work of the German SSK and the classification of scientific results, Alexander Lerchl discussed the impact of controversial studies: "An increasingly serious issue are studies that, based on faked data, claim adverse effects which cannot be reproduced in follow-up studies, but cause continuing great unrest and fear in the public because of their alarming findings. It has been demonstrated that science management shows considerable shortcomings when dealing with fabricated data."*

Reports by Prof. Adlkofer and Prof. Mosgöller, however, show how the public was misled about the course of the conference and the current state of research.

### **Prof. Adlkofer's statement offers a different picture of the conference**

Prof. Adlkofer, a workshop participant, offers the following comment on the event a few days later<sup>25</sup>:

*"Title and location of the event did make clear its actual purpose. In his introduction, Emilio Bossi was to point to the disastrous effects of scientific misconduct. Subsequently, Alexander Lerchl was to talk about an especially serious fraud to the detriment of the mobile communication industry which he revealed, so to speak, single-handedly. The results obtained at the Medical University of Vienna (MUV) during the last years that point to a genotoxic potential of mobile radiation are, in his opinion, based on 'data fabrication'. [...]*

*In the following discussion I asked Emilio Bossi if he knows any cases in which data fabrication had been claimed unjustly in order to elegantly get rid of unpleasant scientific results. He stressed that such cases happen and that they are of special meanness because from such a slander always something is remembered that even might lead to an irreparable damage of the results. Of course, someone who acts in this way must be treated the same way as the forger.*

*In the first few minutes of his talk Alexander Lerchl did explain the study evaluation system of the SSK, which seems to be well-founded and which can surely contribute to a gain in knowledge in the difficult area of mobile radiation research. [...]*

*As expected, further 20 minutes Alexander Lerchl dealt with the papers published by the MUV research team which altogether would show that the reported results cannot have been derived from decent laboratory work. This assumption would not only be supported by the revision of the statistical data analysis by himself and others; also in the Final Report of MUV's Council on Ethics in Science the research team is confronted with the allegation of scientific misconduct. Though he would like to, he could not understand why the editors of the scientific journals did accept the manuscripts for publication in first place and why they still refuse to withdraw the studies from the scientific literature considering the overwhelming evidence. A Letter of Concern published already in the one case and asked for by the Committee on Publications Ethics (COPE) in the other case would not be sufficient to compensate for the already emerged detriment.*

*In the following discussion I, being a co-author of the criticized papers, confronted Alexander Lerchl with the fact that according to the Final Report of the MUV's Council of Ethics in Science there is no evidence of data fabrication and that his accusations would be solely based on suspicion. Of course, I had expected that finally he would realize his mistake and that he would apologize to the MUV research team for his excessive assault on their scientific and personal integrity. Instead, I had to experience that the assault was not only repeated but even intensified. Obviously, Alexander Lerchl would be unable to correctly interpret the refusal of the editors to follow his ultimate request to withdraw the papers from the scientific literature. One has to wait how he would act when soon further papers are published that confirm the research result of the MUV team. To classify also these papers as 'junk science' would not be possible.*

*The host's question if Alexander Lerchl wants to reply to these comments remained unanswered."*

### **Prof. Mosgöller poses the question what Prof. Lerchl wants to achieve with the vehemence of his allegations**

Prof. Mosgöller from MUV shares his impressions in a similar way<sup>26</sup>:

*"A performance of sorts was put on by Prof. Dr. Alexander Lerchl, chair of the committee on 'non-ionizing radiation' of the German Commission on Radiological Protection (SSK). He was the one who originally launched the fraud allegations against the Vienna group of scientists. The topic of his presentation was announced as a discussion of the study assessment guidelines of the German SSK. Rather disappointing - or even to be expected? - he quickly changed gears and discussed the alleged fraud at Vienna in detail. It was beyond his comprehension that the investigation he had initiated had not yet generated the desired results. The relevant scientific journals have not yet withdrawn the publications in question. The questions as to whether this might have anything to do with the fact that his fraud allegations may be unjustified or the playful question if everybody else but him were corrupt remained with the audience.*

*Lerchl used his allotted time in order to reinforce his fraud allegations. But anything he said about, for example, the time periods for analyzing cells, good laboratory practices, even hair-splitting sample calculations sounded far from convincing to a research specialist. And maybe he did not know yet that there had already been new studies accepted for publication that confirm the DNA breaks observed by the Vienna researchers.*

*To the disappointment of all those who had followed the announcement and would have liked to learn more about the study assessment guidelines of the German SSK, the presenter who had obviously been shaken by the critical questions left the event – hastily and all alone. In the audience quite a few then were left with the question as to what he wanted to achieve with the vehemence of his allegations."*

### **Fraud allegations as in the case of the Vienna studies are not an isolated incident**

Louis Slesin, the editor of *Microwave News*, reports on the unchallenged assumption that Prof. Lerchl owes his career first and foremost to his demand to bring Prof. Rüdiger of MUV to account for his scientific misconduct<sup>27</sup>. That this misconduct could not be verified does not faze Lerchl. Slesin counts this case among the innumerable attempts of the mobile phone industry to use their middlemen in science to publicly accuse researchers, whose findings interfere with their interests, of scientific misconduct. But Slesin also demands that the conduct of these industry-controlled scientists be scrutinized and punished according to the same guidelines that apply to any other scientist without such a background. With great concern, he raises the question: *"Why doesn't anyone speak out against the corruption in our midst?"* This is exactly what is happening here.

## **5. The defamation campaign fails with the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) in London**

In December 2008, Prof. Lerchl turns to the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE) in London, a forum that advises and supports publishing companies and editors on how to handle ethical issues. He complains about the fact that the editors of the scientific journals, in which the Vienna research findings<sup>1,2</sup> had been published, would not respond to his fraud allegations in an appropriate manner and thus would not have fulfilled their contractually binding responsibility as members of COPE. When faced with the rejection of the editors of *Mutation Research* and *IAOEH* to follow his request for withdrawing the publications of the Vienna team, Prof. Lerchl considers his course of action to *clean up science* as urgently needed.

### **COPE rejects Prof. Lerchl's complaint as unfounded**

COPE does not consider the question of whether fraud has occurred, but it limits its investigation to the question whether or not the two relevant scientific journals violated the *Code of Conduct* they have signed. In its reply<sup>28</sup> to Prof. Lerchl from September 2009, COPE explains first how to proceed in this case: The editors' decision would have to depend on the evidence of the fraud allegation and its assessment by MUV. In case of any indication of data fabrication the editors should first contact the scientific institution at which the authors of the criticized publication work. If there is verifiable evidence of fabricated data that implicate the authors, the editors would be obligated to immediately withdraw the paper. When, however, the relevant scientific institution provides unsatisfactory answers or does not respond at all, the editors would be well advised to publish a *Letter of Concern*. Should there be any doubts as to the fairness of the hearing of the accused authors or the thoroughness of the investigation again a *Letter of Concern* appears to be more appropriate than the withdrawal of the publication. While in this case Prof. Lerchl is personally convinced that the evidence of data fabrication had been provided long ago, the editors apparently have quite a different opinion. But the latter certainly did accommodate Prof. Lerchl when they had

an *Expression of Concern* [IAOEH]<sup>29</sup> and a critical *Editorial* [Mutation Research]<sup>30</sup> published. Overall, the reports received from MUV had been so contradictory and confusing that no conclusions could have been drawn.

Prof. Lerchl, who probably had hoped at the start of his campaign against the Vienna team to handle the issue as an anonymous prosecutor in a way that suits him and in close cooperation with the MUV rector, he himself is not spared criticism. COPE confronts him with the fact that despite the request of the editors of *Mutation Research*, he declined to substantiate his concerns in a letter to the editors - which would not have been possible as an anonymous person. Altogether, COPE comes to the conclusion that the editors' decision to not comply with his request for withdrawing the publications was correct. It is then confirmed that they have satisfied the *Code of Conduct*. The editors of *Mutation Research*, however, are advised to also publish a *Letter of Concern*, which clearly indicates that these research results may be subject to reservations, in addition to the *Editorial*, which by its very nature is better suited for the scientific debate of different opinions.

### **The IAOEH editors decline Prof. Lerchl's request after initial irritations**

While COPE issued its decision without consulting with the authors of the publications, the latter had been heard by the editors of the scientific journals before decisions were being made about the destiny of their publications in the scientific literature. Even though, according to the agreement with the rector of MUV from 24 June 2008, Prof. Rüdiger had basically given his consent to withdraw the 2008 publication on the genotoxic effect of UMTS radiation<sup>2</sup> from IAOEH and to inform the editors accordingly. However, Prof. Adlkofer, co-author of the publications, told the editors that, based on his current knowledge, he would have to resolutely oppose the withdrawal of the publication:

*"In contrast to him [Prof. Rüdiger], I start from the premise that the analysis of the data has actually been performed under blind conditions. This corresponds with the, as far as I know, unchallenged statement of his former team member Ms. Kratochvil who repeatedly maintained that all assessments had been performed to the best of her knowledge. [...]"*

*Presently, there are numerous reasons that enforce the assumption that the request for the withdrawal of our publications by the rector of the Medical University of Vienna has nothing to do with science, but a great deal with politics. My conscience, therefore, commands me to decline his request. The inspection of the minutes of the ethics commission meeting from 26 August 2008 revealed that the investigation had been carried out correctly in all respects.*

The *Expression of Concern* by the editors of IAOEH<sup>29</sup> had come about in a situation where, on the one hand, the events at MUV were rather unclear and, on the other hand, major pressure originating from Prof. Lerchl<sup>31</sup> had been put on the editors. Prof. Adlkofer and Prof. Rüdiger, who had quickly realized the limited value of a compromise with the rector of MUV, provide their view of Prof. Lerchl's fraud allegations in the scientific journal *Umweltmedizin in Forschung und Praxis* [*Environmental medicine: research and practice*]<sup>32</sup>. They acknowledged that the editors of IAOEH had rejected Prof. Lerchl's criticism of the statistical analysis of their data as unfounded after they had been thoroughly reviewed by specialists. Prof. Lerchl's request for the withdrawal of the publications would certainly have come to nothing had it not been for a new and unexpected event at MUV, which was timely for him.

Also in a *revealing report*<sup>33</sup> in *Bioelectromagnetics* Prof. Christian Wolf, a former colleague and then acting successor of Prof. Rüdiger, accuses the lab technician, who was responsible for the counting of the cells, to have analyzed the samples without blinding. This information, which contradicts the statement of the accused lab technician, provides an opening for Prof. Lerchl to not only continue his campaign but also to expand it. The editors of IAOEH, irritated by the mounting pressure from Prof. Lerchl, seize the opportunity to bring this unpleasant incident to a satisfying close - this, however, at the authors' expense.

They do not ask how Prof. Wolf's evidence regarding the missing blinding had come about, and they do not know that this was the basis for a fatal compromise between Prof. Rüdiger and the rector. They also have no idea about the power struggle within the university that followed when Prof. Rüdiger retired from MUV. They also did not file a request for access to the minutes of the Council for Scientific Ethics. Without checking the facts and in great haste, they use Prof. Wolf's<sup>33</sup> revelations as an opportunity to apologize to their readers for publishing a study that they now find unworthy of publication. Shortly thereafter the editors share their change of judgment in their *Expression of Concern*<sup>29</sup>. Unintentionally, they generally follow the COPE guidelines even if only based on the vague suspicion that no blinding had occurred. How the revealing report by Prof. Wolf

should really be judged, that is, how misleading it is, can be gathered from Prof. Kuster's<sup>34</sup> statement.

Shortly after the publication of their *Expression of Concern*, the editors of IAOEH must have realized themselves that bowing to the pressure of Prof. Lerchl was unnecessary. This assumption is supported by the fact that they did not make use of the opportunity to withdraw the publication when Prof. Rüdiger, as the corresponding author, offered it in his *Letter of Retraction* (see Part I). The worthless compromise between Prof. Rüdiger and the rector of MUV must obviously have convinced them that this was about a scheme at MUV, in which they were supposed to have been involved. And their controversy with Prof. Lerchl may also have raised doubts about his credibility<sup>35</sup>. With their final decision not to withdraw the publication, they remained faithful to their original judgment of this study.

### ***The editors of Mutation Research decline Prof. Lerchl's request as well***

The editors of *Mutation Research*, in which the REFLEX study about genotoxic effects of GSM radiation<sup>1</sup> had been published in 2005, ask the authors to comment on the allegation that blinding had been lacking from the process of generating the data. Prof. Rüdiger, who had shown himself to be open to compromise regarding the study from 2008, stated very strongly<sup>36</sup>:

*"Here and now, I clearly wish to state that our paper published in 2005 in Mutation Research [...] is not affected by these considerations. All experimental work for this publication was finished in February 2003. Moreover, the experimental work was performed by the first author in a foreign laboratory (Free University of Berlin, Germany), because we did not have a high-frequency exposure unit at that time. She [= the lab technician] was then completely unfamiliar with the settings of the exposure unit, and the programming of this instrument was done by co-workers of the hosting laboratory. As a consequence, doubts about the reliable blinding of the experiments described in our publication in 2005 are unfounded."*

As recommended by COPE, the editors of *Mutation Research* then publish - in addition to the *Editorial*<sup>30</sup> - also a *Letter of Concern*<sup>37</sup>, in which they explain their decision not to withdraw the study. In August 2007 a scientist, who did not wish to have his name mentioned, claimed that the study by Diem et al. was based on fraudulent experiments. The review by two independent peer reviewers, however, did not confirm this claim, even though statistical abnormalities were present. The suggestion to detail the reasons for the allegation voiced in a letter to the editor of *Mutation Research* had been declined - probably because this author did not intend to reveal his identity. In May 2008, a letter from the rector of MUV arrived in which the willingness of the authors to have their paper withdrawn was announced<sup>38</sup>. The editors, however, had to reply that this was not correct. They had received letters from Prof. Rüdiger<sup>36</sup> and Prof. Adlkofer<sup>39</sup> in which these authors very strongly rejected the allegations of fabricated data and the cracking of the blinding codes prior to analysis. An information exchange with the editors of IAOEH, in which the paper by Schwarz et al.<sup>2</sup> had been published in 2008, could not resolve the open questions.

At this state of the affair, the editors of *Mutation Research* saw no reason to withdraw the paper by Diem et al.<sup>1</sup> But in their *Letter of Concern*<sup>37</sup>, they agreed to "leave this issue open for scientific debate."

## **6. Prof. Lerchl's last attack on the REFLEX results so far turns out to be a flop**

Prof. Lerchl, of course, would not miss any chance to continue his campaign. Despite all the defeats in his fight against the Vienna research findings, backing down is not an option for him. He ignores the decision of the Council for Scientific Ethics, which cannot find any evidence for fabricated data, saying that the council is either incompetent or even corrupt. The rejection of the editors of the scientific journals to withdraw the relevant publications because they interpret the documents available to them in a different light than himself, he also explains away with scientific and moral failure. Unperturbed by all the rejections of his allegations, he launches a crucial attack at the end of 2009 with which he hopes not only to finally finish off the Vienna research findings but also the Vienna team behind it.

Together with his colleague Prof. Adalbert F.X. Wilhelm, a statistician, Prof. Lerchl sends a letter with the title *Critical comments on DNA breakage by mobile-phone electromagnetic fields [Diem et al., Mutat.Res. 583 (2005) 178-183]*<sup>40</sup> to the editors of *Mutation Research* in December 2009. Because of its length the letter is called *Comment* by the editors. Out of desperation, both authors once again present the entire spectrum of allegations that are known from Prof. Lerchl's previous

accusations. No new arguments are presented, but the phrasing is further intensified - maybe based on the wrong assumption that this way the editors of the scientific journal could still be convinced of the validity of the fraud allegation. The withdrawal of the criticized publication from the scientific literature, which Prof. Lerchl must have initially promised the mobile phone industry, could still be achieved, and the REFLEX study could be disposed. The recognition for his valuable contributions as a fearless fighter to the truth in science would surely be his. And he would finish the elaborate campaign stretching over years not as a funny character, but as a triumphant winner.

With fierce determination, the *Comment* presents the fraud allegation as proven; the possibility of being wrong is ruled out. But the actual infamy of the text resides in the fact that - as is often the case with Prof. Lerchl - truth, half-truth, and falsehood are presented as a colourful mix, which can make a detailed reply quite a challenge. Together with this *Comment*, however, *Mutation Research* also publishes a letter by Prof. Rüdiger and Prof. Adlkofer<sup>41</sup>, who take a stand on the five topics of the *Comment*. In their letter, they explain why (a) Prof. Lerchl's description of the Vienna team as a fraud gang, (b) his explanation for proceeding against the Vienna team, (c) his evidence of fraud by statistical means, (d) his description of the events at MUV, and finally (e) his presentation of the current scientific body of knowledge need to be corrected.

***(a) Equating the Vienna team with known fraud gangs must be regarded as the result of Prof. Lerchl's progressive loss of reality***

Prof. Lerchl and his co-author begin their *Comment* with a list of serious fraud cases in science to highlight the significance and far-reaching consequences of the fraud uncovered by them. Since his contributions to the *Laborjournal*, in his book on the fraudsters, and at the Vienna Workshop in September 2009, Lerchl by now has refined this approach, following his very own standard and style of scientific argumentation. Due to a lack of evidence, he replaces scientific argumentation with speculative suggestion. Along this line, the fraud allegations turn into libel and defamation of character. In this case, they are also a testament to the progressive loss of reality suffered by the author of these allegations.

***(b) His aggressive approach against the Vienna team, Prof. Lerchl justifies with the argument that the public, medical doctors, and politicians should not be disturbed by negative research findings such as from MUV***

With respect to the economic and socio-political importance of mobile communication technologies, Prof. Lerchl and his co-author rightly demand from scientists in this research area to adhere to the highest ethical standards that guarantee the integrity of their work. Both of them, of course, are convinced that the team at MUV is lacking those qualifications. But even scathing criticism quickly loses its credibility and turns into hypocrisy when it is passed on by someone who himself very much falls short as a scientist and a person. Prof. Lerchl conveniently forgets to mention that the Vienna research group never called for doing away with mobile communication technologies, but simply for making the technologies biocompatible with the human body - not vice versa. There are sufficient reasons for this demand. The number of scientists whose research indicates concern increases with each year. They are juxtaposed against the research projects with null results that are used by governments and industry to provide assurances of safety, which in a very big way applies to the project results of Prof. Lerchl<sup>42,43</sup>. It should give us pause that these research projects were usually wholly or at least partially funded by the mobile phone industry<sup>44,45</sup>, which for its money obviously expects a certain cooperation.

***(c) Prof. Lerchl's statistical explanation of the fabricated data is based on impaired reasoning***

In their *Comment*, Prof. Lerchl and his co-author initially describe the basis of the criticized research project as well as the method used to verify DNA strand breaks - and this was done quite correctly. They explain their fraud allegation as follows: There are several statistical parameters that, based on the provided numerical values, can be checked, and they speak against a correct generation and evaluation of the data. The low standard deviations and the equally low variation coefficients as well as the fact that certain final values are not as evenly distributed as to be expected, they quote as proof of data fabrication. In their opinion, the abnormalities can be best explained with the assumption that the data were fabricated and that there was no blinding in place prior to counting the cells.

But, as has already been documented in Part I, the statistical abnormalities have nothing to do with an alleged cracking of the code, but with the used method of analysis. The type of visual data analysis used in the study is inherently associated with what was referred to as abnormalities and thus for the most part cannot be avoided. An experienced and highly qualified lab technician such as Ms. Diem, who was involved in the study, can quickly recognize under the microscope as to whether a sample was exposed to RF radiation or not. As a result, the blinding is at least partially eliminated, which can certainly have an impact on the counting of the cells. However, no positive effects can be produced when they do not exist. This type of analysis, if performed by qualified personnel, is on par with the automatic one, if not superior.

Prof. Lerchl and his co-author simply lack the insight that, even in research of natural sciences, there is some latitude for subjectivity, which requires a high level of responsibility on the part of the scientists. Undisturbed by the assessment of the Vienna research findings by several other peer reviewers, who also speak of abnormalities, but certainly do not regard them as a proof of fraud, they still prefer - out of a lack of insight or scruples - to cling to their claim of data fabrication. Otherwise, they would be forced to acknowledge the Vienna research findings as valid and to draw conclusions they themselves and especially the mobile phone industry would dislike very much.

**(d) The account of the events at MUV contradict the facts**

In their *Comment*, Prof. Lerchl and his co-author also recount the almost unbelievable events at MUV. To what extent Prof. Lerchl is responsible for what transpired there is not mentioned. Rather an account of the events in contrast to the facts is used to further support their fraud allegations. To what extent this account contradicts or rather distracts from the actual course of events is described in great detail in Part I of our documentation and will not be repeated here.

**(e) The genotoxic potential of mobile phone radiation can now be considered confirmed**

As expounded in his book about the *Fraudsters in the Lab*, Prof. Lerchl considers genotoxic effects of mobile phone radiation neither proven nor fathomable. If anything, they are certainly consistent in their *Comment* on the Vienna studies when he and his co-author claim that, to date, there is no other evidence of a genotoxic potential for mobile phone radiation. This claim, however, is not consistent with the facts. For years there have been publications in which structural and functional changes in genes of isolated cells or lab animals have been documented after exposure to RF electromagnetic fields<sup>46,47</sup>. It is correct, though, that none of the other studies could ever demonstrate the extent of the DNA damage as clearly as the studies from MUV.

To support rejection of the possibility of genotoxic effects caused by RF electromagnetic fields, Prof. Lerchl and Prof. Wilhelm rely on a study by Speit et al.<sup>48</sup> that used the same cell line as the MUV study, without observing genotoxic effects. Somehow they forget to mention that in their study Speit et al. only used the GSM carrier wave at 1800 MHz, which other research groups could not demonstrate any effect, either. In Vienna, however, a modulated GSM radiation was applied. In several studies published since mid-2009 - like in the two Vienna studies - evidence has been provided that this type of radiation has a genotoxic potential<sup>49,50,51,52,53</sup>. This fact, for whatever reasons, is simply ignored by Prof. Lerchl and Prof. Wilhelm.

To cast even more doubt over the Vienna studies of the REFLEX project, Prof. Lerchl and his co-author prefer referring to a study by Scarfi et al.<sup>54</sup> in which 50-Hz ELF electromagnetic fields were studied with no genotoxic effect observed. Meanwhile this question has also been clearly answered by Focke et al.<sup>5</sup>, whose findings have been published in *Mutation Research* at the end of 2009, but they are not mentioned: 50-Hz ELF electromagnetic fields also show a genotoxic potential - as was observed in Vienna. In contrast to other research areas, the comparison of the study results once again confirms that it is much easier for authors of scientifically less convincing studies with negative results to have their studies published in scientific journals than authors of well-substantiated positive results<sup>55</sup>. After all, this is the true reason for the dismal state of mobile phone radiation research as a whole and to a large extent the logical consequence of the peer-review system that is dominated by scientists who are close or even dependent on the mobile phone industry.

It remains to be seen when Prof. Lerchl will start attacking the authors of these more recent publications. Otherwise, his campaign against the Vienna team would have been pointless.

### **The editors of Mutation Research stick to their earlier decision**

Considering the reputation of *Mutation Research* as a scientific journal, as of yet the *Comment* by Prof. Lerchl and Prof. Wilhelm represents the most apparent attack on the significance of the Vienna research findings and the scientific as well as the personal integrity of their authors. This one missed its target, too. Their account, which clearly contradicts the facts, did not prompt the editors of *Mutation Research* to withdraw the paper by Diem et al.<sup>1</sup>. The excessiveness of the attacks should have strengthened their earlier decision with which they had rejected Prof. Lerchl's request as scientifically unfounded. Perhaps they also looked into the motivations that would make Prof. Lerchl's fanatic dedication factually comprehensible, but they could not find a scientifically or morally satisfactory answer. So far nobody has taken *Mutation Research* up by its offer to continue the scientific debate.

### **7. Using a defamation-friendly mobile phone forum finally turns the campaign against the REFLEX findings into mudslinging**

Prof. Lerchl's campaign certainly hit rock bottom when he began using the information centre against mobile communication (IZgMF) for his goals. Starting out as a public forum critical of mobile phone technologies, it has now turned into a medium with a rather dubious reputation for vehemently attacking scientists, medical doctors, and citizens critical of mobile phone technologies. Any person who publicly discusses possible health risks of mobile phone radiation and expresses a dissenting opinion will have to reckon with attacks in which criticism is basically met with defamation. This practice of the forum offered Prof. Lerchl a perfect opportunity to continue his campaign against the Vienna research group at a level that would have repelled any other media that had a minimal sense of fairness. Conflict communication styles not common in science showed up in this dirty forum, and industry-friendly activities can be disguised behind the empty façade of a formerly critical platform. The pull to this forum seemed to be so great for Prof. Lerchl that in May 2008, i.e. shortly after the launch of his campaign, he joined the circle of forum contributors.

#### **Prof. Lerchl turns the allegedly fabricated data of the REFLEX project and the person of Prof. Adlkofer into core issues of the forum**

The IZgMF forum starts discussing the REFLEX project when its final report is released in 2004. In the introduction of a first statement, and we translate<sup>56</sup>:

*Since August 2003 the REFLEX research project must have been a thorn in the side of mobile communication providers. Using live cell cultures, the project justly showed that the radiation of common mobile phones is strong enough to cause serious cell damage. It is still unclear if the results can ever be extrapolated to humans. But if this should be accomplished, the devastating message would be: Mobile phone radiation can cause cancer. The mobile communication industry, therefore, can have no interest whatsoever in seeing the results of the REFLEX project enter their clients' awareness.*

A more intense discussion of the REFLEX project at the IZgMF only occurred when Prof. Lerchl took up this subject since mid-2008. At first, all his interest was exclusively focused on two papers of the Rüdiger team in *Mutation Research* (2005)<sup>1</sup> and *IAOEH* (2008)<sup>2</sup> that he had criticized. Right from the beginning, he leaves no doubt about his conviction that the results of these papers are fabricated and implies that, beside the Vienna team, especially Prof. Adlkofer, the coordinator of the international REFLEX study, is responsible for this. He suspects the latter of lobbyism in favour of the tobacco industry.

The forum member "Doris" summarizes Prof. Lerchl's obvious intention as follows, and we translate:

*After the extensive study of Prof. Lerchl's articles in the Laborjournal, I for myself have come to the conclusion that he does not join a public forum and possibly expects to discuss the study results among experts. The background about Does Dr. Adlkofer still work for the tobacco industry, however, could be discussed or at least these thoughts should be shared.*

Prof. Lerchl replies to this critical comment on 1 May 2008 and shares his thoughts about what made him join the IZgMF forum. The suspicion of "Doris" is confirmed, and we translate:

*My motivation to join a "public forum" has several reasons:*

*1) The study of Schwarz et al. seems to confirm earlier findings of this team around Rüdiger, namely, that mobile phone radiation causes DNA damage. It is **completely irrelevant** in this context whether the damage*

is found in cells (in vitro) instead of animals or humans; had these effects really been observed at as low as 0.05 W/kg SAR, this would certainly have an effect in intact living organism. We are talking about the type of damage here that, otherwise, is only known to occur through ionizing ("radioactive") radiation. This study, however, is riddled with numerous errors, inconsistencies, and inaccuracies (also with respect to earlier findings of the same team), not to mention the lack of an effect mechanism. I, therefore, expected to initiate a discussion about this study **at your forum**, which obviously is somewhat difficult because none of you feels competent enough to **objectively** comment on my points of criticism (positive or negative). But this does not require any special knowledge in biology, but rather some basic knowledge in statistics and logic, and anybody has that. This tells me, however, that a detailed description of the problems and statistical backgrounds is obviously needed, which I hopefully will provide soon through a suitable venue (either at the forum or at my home page).

2) Mr. Adlkofer's motivation etc. was news to me in the form it was discussed in the Laborjournal and casts a new, glaring light on the entire mobile phone debate.

But "Doris" remains skeptical, and we translate:

*Either Dr. Lerchl together with Siegfried Bär is on to something rotten, which with all the mobile phones around us would be very objectionable in view of the emerging public fear. [...] Or a dirty trick is played on Dr. Adlkofer. I am anxious to see whether this issue will be resolved.*

Prof. Lerchl's reply is as elusive as it is ambiguous: *Let's wait and see. Sincerely, Alexander Lerchl.*

### **The course is set for a frontal attack on Prof. Adlkofer**

Only a little later, on 27 June 2008, the webmaster Stephan Schall (to his friends and critics better known under his forum name *Spatenpauli*) addresses Prof. Adlkofer. He asks him to answer six questions that concern the replication study of the Vienna findings by Prof. Primo Schär from Basel University, which is depicted as a failure at IZgMF. Based on his convictions, Prof. Adlkofer replies that - in contrast to Prof. Lerchl's depiction - there is no reason to doubt the credibility of the findings of the REFLEX study or its follow-up study<sup>57</sup>. That there is a campaign against him in the making that is orchestrated from the background by Prof. Lerchl while *Spatenpauli* gets the forum ready, he is unable to anticipate at this time.

In order to effectively heat up the discussion, shortly thereafter Schall adds another question that is hotly debated at the forum: does base station radiation cause health risks? Even though Prof. Adlkofer is more cautious by now and others concluded for quite a time this to be a trap, he is naïve enough to believe that, if someone asks him as a scientist a serious question with the explicit request to answer he must do so. In his posting he takes the view that the current body of evidence altogether is not too convincing, but that some evidence certainly indicates health risks. Puzzled by the aggression aimed at him, Prof. Adlkofer includes in his statement<sup>58</sup> the announcement that he is not planning to continue the discussion at the forum:

*" [...] in the hope that the silent majority of the readers of your forum are capable of distinguishing between all the trash you heap on others and their desire to be objectively informed about the difference between base station radiation and mobile phone radiation, I have decided - despite my dismay about how forum members treat each other online - to answer your final questions. I will not reply to any further requests."*

On 10 July 2009, *Spatenpauli* says thank you for the information, but already predicts that his refusal to continue any further discussion will probably turn out to be a mistake regarding the defence of Prof. Adlkofer's study, and we translate:

*I hear with regret that you will not be available to share further information with me. Considering the serious accusations made against you at the IZgMF forum, I can understand your decision. The forum is not censored so that everybody can make use of his right of freedom of expression as long as he abides by the rules. [...] I, hereby, can only offer all my support to help you post replies. However, I think, I already know that you will neither take me up on my offer nor reply. From my point of view, this is a mistake because, when in an open and uncensored forum the voice of the opposing position keeps silent, this certainly cannot be helpful for the opposing position. Should I be mistaken and you would like to directly reply to one or two accusations, please let me know.*

*KlaKla*, wife of *Spatenpauli* and official operator of IZgMF, explains to the forum members on the very same day what in her opinion has to happen next. The actual hunt begins, and we translate:

*[...] In my opinion, Dr. Adlkofer has shattered the basic trust in science, and for this reason alone, I would as a person in charge not support any other study Adlkofer is involved in. His actions regarding smoking must have consequences. Maybe the SPIEGEL could again stick to his heels and publish an eye-opening article. You should continue to complete the story on the REFLEX research project in the whirlpool of economic interests. Be sure to mention his link to the tobacco industry.*

### ***The conspiracy theory of tobacco against mobile phone industry elicits diverse responses***

Almost as if by chance, another contributor joins the IZgMF forum at this time; Günther Krause from the German non-smoking initiative (NID) is known as a fanatical opponent of tobacco and has pursued Prof. Adlkofer for almost two decades. By his own account, he picked an alias called *Sektor3* out of fear from the tobacco industry. From now on Prof. Lerchl, *Spatenpauli*, and *Sektor3* form a tight trio, assuming different roles but concentrating on the dismantling of Prof. Adlkofer.

In his postings, *Sektor3* compares Prof. Adlkofer with crimes against humanity, similar to Pol Pot and Idi Amin - which goes too far for even *Spatenpauli* so that he decides to delete this posting. But they agree with one another over the common goal to unmask Prof. Adlkofer as fraud acting in the name of the tobacco industry. A sweeping conspiracy theory on the background of the REFLEX project features Prof. Adlkofer as the main character in a scheme of the tobacco industry that allegedly crusades against the mobile phone industry<sup>59</sup>, and we translate:

*It sounds almost unreal: Tobacco multinationals have researchers investigate the disease-causing consequences of mobile phone radiation, not out of their love for humanity, but to be able to present a scapegoat worldwide that is meant to distract from the disease-causing consequences of smoking. The basis for this speculation was the REFLEX study coordinated by Prof. Franz Adlkofer, and because the results were highly alarming caused quite a stir back in 2003: weak electromagnetic fields below the currently valid exposure limits can potentially cause carcinogenic effects, so it said!*

The story continues under the headline: Suspicions grow stronger, and we translate.

*For quite some time, the enormous suspicion was only sheer speculation; there was the plausible motive of distracting with this research, but no concrete facts were to be had. This changed suddenly at the end of May in 2008: For the first time, the Med. University of Vienna informed the public about the justified fraud allegation that had been made against the REFLEX study and a similar follow-up study (UMTS). This gave the suspicion of distraction research new food for thought because this type of research got to be successful: it must find something of concern under all circumstances that can provide for a distraction. If necessary, so the new speculations from back then, the urgently needed alarming finding must be arranged at the expense of the truth. It actually took another year before the thread of the alleged distraction research of the tobacco multinationals was picked up again. At the end of June 2009, a new member with the alias "Sektor3" signs on to the IZGMF forum who stuck to Prof. Adlkofer's heels and meticulously searched for signs that could transform the suspicion of a tobacco-industry-instigated mobile phone distraction research from an idée fixe to a proven fact.*

Intoxicated by the exchange of their ideas, which under *Spatenpauli's* direction turns ever more ludicrous, the three activists increasingly lose their grip on reality. In his posting on called *Clone fraud Hwang belongs in prison* on 1 September 2009, *Sektor3* goes so far as to say, among other things, that Prof. Adlkofer would even outstrip the clone fraud Hwang on the fraud severity scale:

*With this level of experience, Hwang cannot keep up. Adlkofer has corrupted science for decades, bought decision makers, and nobody really pissed on him ever.*

This went too far even for Prof. Adlkofer who until then had responded to defamation with the motto that you cannot fight wars against fools. He enlists the help of a lawyer. Only with the reservation of a prior review as to whether the accusations made were truly unjustified, the IZgMF is willing to delete this posting. Since this apparent concession only seems to discretely continue the invectives, the case has now been decided by the Berlin regional court. We translate the legally binding verdict:

*The forum posting under investigation here [...], when taking the whole picture into account, obviously pursues only one goal, that is, to libel the defendant [Prof. Adlkofer] in a criminal sense by referring to the actual, completely unfounded, and therefore formally offending core message under the headline "Experience with research fraud" while using a pseudo-objective pretext in a particularly perfidious way, stating that the defendant had "corrupted science for decades and bought decision makers...". [...] Thus the entire posting represents an attempt to deeply manipulate a reader's opinion by seriously degrading the personality and the professional recognition of the defendant in this manner; for such an extreme case, there exist no grounds for justification or liability relief.*

Most IZgMF members have adopted the theory of a great conspiracy of the tobacco vs. mobile phone industry developed by Prof. Lerchl, *Spatenpauli*, and *Sektor3*, which does not surprise when considering the intellectual level of many postings at the IZgMF forum. Doubts about this interpretation, however, have also been raised. The greatest opposition was raised by the forum member *wuff*. In his opinion, the text of the discriminating posting was not penned by *Sektor3*, but Prof. Lerchl himself. In his posting called *Assault via remote-controlled missile* from 18 September 2009, one day after the deletion of the defamatory posting had been enforced by a court order, he explains his assumption as follows:

*In the deleted posting, Sektor3 seemed to write in a totally different style than usual, namely, in the smooth style of a professor and at the intelligence level of a university lecturer. This caught my eye because Sektor3 has been trailing me extensively in the past, and he has written in a completely different style back then. Whose posting could Sektor3 have posted under his own name? Only the birds in the fields [Lerchl = Lerche = lark in English] will ever know for certain. Most likely Sektor3 uploaded the posting on behalf of the person who also encouraged him to write his own postings in the first place.*

Even though Prof. Lerchl and *Spatenpauli* respond to this assumption with an outcry of indignation, *wuff* continues to repeat and clarify his assumption several times, for example, on 23 September 2009, and we translate:

*After I had challenged Sektor3 in my posting „Assault via remote-controlled missile“ and rumoured “that he who controls the switch to the remote control of Sektor3, the remote-controlled missile, would know best. Hopefully, the remote control does not get out of control,” it was interestingly enough Lerchl who chimed in. This would be nothing out of the ordinary if Lerchl had not sworn only recently to never read my postings again. If he does not read them himself, someone else must have called his attention to them. This could have been Sektor3 as the front man to the person behind him.*

*Another strange fact is that Sektor3 does not at all deny my assumption that he uploaded a text not authored by him.*

*But: I cannot help myself that everything that Sektor3 writes about tobacco immediately reminds of the suspicious activities of the mobile communication providers, their associations and foundations, and the Bioelectromagnetics “researcher”. From hindsight, in maybe 20 years when the denial of health relevant biological effects has become obsolete, the most important difference between smoke and smog will only be expressed in the number of deaths.*

On 28 September 2009, *wuff* sums it up by saying, that he recognized with certainty beyond all reasonable doubt - based on the style, contents, and above all the level of intelligence - [...], that *Sektor3* himself could not have written the deleted posting. Prof. Adlkofer has also come to the conclusion that *wuff* is right about all three of these evaluation criteria. Another piece of evidence for Lerchl's authorship, he also sees in the fact that Dr. Hwang Woo-Suk had already starred in several of Lerchl's publications where famous fraudsters were lined up, which now also include the Vienna authors thanks to Prof. Lerchl's awareness campaign. And all of this occurred long before Prof. Lerchl used the clueless *Sektor3* for his purposes.

With this and other critical statements, *wuff* assisted in uncovering the true intentions of this strange trio. But, when he was excluded from the forum, he also had learned that the alleged freedom of expression of the open-minded IZgMF may better not violate the interests of those operating the forum.

### ***Prof. Adlkofer stands by his former activity of tobacco research***

The authors have thought long and hard whether to include this chapter, because they fear that its contents could be misunderstood. They would also have preferred to spare the readers the encounter with all kinds of distortions and lapses due to a lack of culture in the media. Finally, though with lingering doubts, they decided to take a stand on this issue. They do not want to leave it to the IZgMF operators and their ally Prof. Lerchl to continue to spread their stories without contradiction. Especially, as both violate in a grotesque way their claim of clarification and democratic opinion-forming.

The conspiracy theory of tobacco vs. mobile phone industry and the major role of Prof. Adlkofer is, in all likelihood, a figment of Prof. Lerchl's imagination. With the help of the IZgMF, he made the ruthless attempt to ruin Prof. Adlkofer as a scientist and as a person with the goal to exclude him from the public discourse about mobile phone radiation for good. Prof. Adlkofer stands by his role in tobacco research. From 1976 to 1992, he was secretary of the German *Research Council Smoking and Health* and at the same time the chair of the science department of the German *Tobacco Industry Association*. A comprehensive documentation of the activities of the *Research Council Smoking and Health*, which included leading German scientists from the medical and natural sciences between 1975 and 1992, is in preparation. While sifting through the American tobacco documents, *Sektor3* only looked for those quotes that after having been taken out of context would serve the purpose of distorting Prof. Adlkofer's image. It may not have been by accident that there are also other quotes that were withheld from his readership as can be found, for example, in the following document<sup>60</sup>:

### ***A Voice of Honesty within the Industry***

*"This document reveals a pivotal moment in 1988 when members of the global tobacco industry came together to talk about the difficulties they faced regarding the issue of environmental tobacco smoke (ETS). Thanks to a*

rare voice of reason from within their ranks, they had an opportunity at this moment to decide between staying their present course of global deception on ETS, or deciding to deal with the issue honestly and realistically. It isn't often you get to see a tobacco industry scientist stand up to the rest of the industry and urge them to deal with reality, but we see it in this document. These are privileged and confidential minutes of a joint industry meeting held in London in 1988. Representatives of the European, Japanese, Canadian, the American and United Kingdom tobacco companies were present. Of particular interest are the statements of German cigarette industry scientist, Dr Adlkofer, who questioned the industry's creation of its own "marketable science." In a stunning departure from typical industry plotting, Dr. Adlkofer stated his view that what the industry was really seeking was "good public relations material, not good science." Dr. Adlkofer further said that "real science" would be "essential if the industry was to prevail on the ETS issue." Admirably, Dr. Adlkofer proved to be a voice of honesty from within the industry. According to these minutes, Dr. Adlkofer "refused to endorse a situation in which scientific research is guided by public relations needs." Moreover, Dr. Adlkofer questioned the wisdom of the industry's present course on ETS. He urged the industry instead to concentrate on identifying a threshold level for risk of ETS exposure. This controversial suggestion instantly caused a flurry of "widespread disagreement" among the meeting's participants. [...] To this Adlkofer responded, "Science cannot propel the industry any further on the ETS issue unless it is able to say that not one person has died from exposure to ETS." There was nothing further added in discussion of this landmark statement."

As this excerpt shows, the tobacco industry expected science to deliver good PR material rather than new knowledge. Dealing with the mobile phone industry teaches us that its way of thinking does not differ from the one of the tobacco industry in the slightest. In the same manner as Prof. Adlkofer took a stand against the abuse of science through the tobacco industry back then, he now opposes similar efforts of the mobile phone industry. His dispute over the activities of Prof. Lerchl is to be understood in this context.

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## Conclusion

The documentation shows the effort and the methods that Prof. Lerchl has tried to remove two publications of the Medical University of Vienna from the scientific literature, which indicate that mobile phone radiation has a genotoxic potential. It also shows how he failed. Neither scientific ethics commissions nor the editors of two scientific journals could be convinced that the data of the Vienna research group was fabricated.

From this point of view, Lerchl's campaign can be safely considered settled. In spite of his failure, his actions did not remain without consequences for science and for the protection of the public from mobile phone radiation risks.

- According to the motto „semper aliquid haeret“ (something always sticks), the research findings from MUV must be considered damaged goods, although they have now been confirmed multiple times. As a result of the defamation campaign - certainly to the great delight of the mobile phone industry - a major portion of its credibility has been lost.
- The two Austrian ethics commissions in science, which acquitted the Vienna team of the fraud allegation, were also instrumental in this regard. Out of consideration for the high-ranking positions of the slanderous professors Lerchl and Schütz, they questioned the quality of the research findings in an inappropriate manner and to such an extent that their criticism - if it were true - would be equivalent to a devaluation of these findings.

The two commissions had been asked to investigate the fraud allegation only. That they lacked the qualification to also evaluate the scientific dignity of the research findings, which would be a breach of their mandate, becomes clear, if nothing else, in their lack of knowledge regarding the latest body of evidence in this research area. Apart from that, an advanced investigative mandate would not only have required the selection of different commission members, but another question should have been asked: what damage does the campaign cause to the defamed scientists, to the research that studies the risks associated with electromagnetic fields for humans and the environment but also to the public, and what demands should be placed on the liable parties? The course of events shows how susceptible science is to external influences and how this is exploited when specific interests are at work to even rob those research findings, which have been confirmed multiple times, of their deserved importance.

### **The facts about Prof. Lerchl's scientific qualification and his ethical/moral attitude speak a clear language**

The chief culprits for the damage to the Vienna research findings in science and society are Prof. Wolfgang Schütz, rector of MUV, and to an even greater extent Prof. Alexander Lerchl. As far as the rector is concerned, we have already shared our evaluation of him in Part I of the documentation. Prof. Lerchl's drastic actions against the Vienna team and individual members of the group were described in this Part II of the documentation. His activities and the methods he uses raise questions that go far beyond his person and

especially concern his mandate within the radiation protection office in Germany. What right does he have to damage the reputation of the scientists associated with the Vienna studies in such a fundamental way that their professional career would have already been destroyed if only a fraction of the accusations had been true? And does he have such outstanding qualifications that he should feel himself called to disqualify anything that is not in line with his own thinking with the label "junk science"? Or is the opposite true where his huge shortcomings of scientific and ethical competence made it easier for external interests to use him as a means to an end and thus also motivate his highly aggressive approach?

Our documentation confirms the coming together of shortcomings in scientific and ethical qualifications with the exploitation from forces outside of science in a number of points:

- The basis for his claim that research on electromagnetic fields from mobile communication over the past decades could not observe any other biological effect mechanism than heating, Prof. Lerchl has created himself by labelling all research findings of the international scientific community that are not in line with his thinking as "*junk science*."
- Several of his scientific studies within the framework of the German Mobile Telecommunication Research Programme Prof. Lerchl had designed and carried out in such a way that from the beginning it was to be expected that the desired results would support the safety of mobile phone radiation. Occasional outliers, i.e. data that did not meet his expectation, were met with contempt<sup>42,43</sup>. This kind of research approach, however, has nothing to do with science.
- On numerous occasions Prof. Lerchl rated the Vienna research group among the top fraudsters whose activities have shaken the international scientific community. Considering the fact that his fraud allegations could not be confirmed by any of the follow-up investigations, he is guilty of defamation of character.
- The editors of scientific journals and the ethics commissions in science, who dealt with Prof. Lerchl's fraud allegations and were unable to verify them, were arrogantly and heavily criticized by him for the shortcomings of their work and accused of incompetence or even corruption. Beyond the misjudgements and hubris, this is also a testament to his shortcomings in scientific culture.
- In his book *Fraudsters in the Lab and Their Helpers*, which combines a heavy dose of self-praise with the most incredible slanders of his opponents, he offers his services to the mobile phone industry between the lines: he dramatizes the economic impact, which could follow from the Vienna research findings, in order to also evaluate the path of how the issue could be solved with his help.
- For the mudslinging against Prof. Adlkofer at the Internet forum IZgMF, which ended with a crushing defeat for the forum before the court, Prof. Lerchl bears the main responsibility with his obvious backstage involvement. That he made use of the criminal energies of the IZgMF to slander an opponent should be difficult to reconcile with his position in the radiation protection office. Or is it?

That industry and politicians would even get involved with such a support as offered by Prof. Lerchl does not bring honour to either of them, but it is certainly nothing unusual in dealing with science. At the Vienna Symposium in September 2009, Prof. Emilio Bossi, president of the committee "Scientific Integrity" of the Swiss Academies of Arts and Sciences, states that scientists who wrongfully accuse others of data fabrication and thus bring their research findings into disrepute would have to be punished in the same way as those who commit fraud. Prof. Lerchl obviously did not take this statement to heart, which had been following his slanderous presentation. The request made to him to see reason on this occasion he did not follow. Should it not have dawned on the politicians and industry by now that the damage done by this man may have already exceeded the benefit quite some time ago - even from their perspective?

#### ***Prof. Lerchl disqualified himself as the highest ranking German radiation protection officer***

Considering the above-described circumstances, it is only with resignation that we take note of the fact that the Federal Environment Ministry (BMU) has recently confirmed Prof. Lerchl, who lacks both the scientific as well as the personal qualifications for any public office, for another two-year term as chair of the Committee Non-ionizing Radiation. Thus that which had begun a year and a day ago and had reached a new climax a few months ago will continue. In mid-2010 the BfS granted Prof. Lerchl 600,000 euro for a research project that - following his previous intention - will most likely show that mobile phone radiation considerably improves the quality of life of rats. The BMU - of course in agreement with the mobile phone industry - can then deduce that the further expansion of mobile communication technologies will be good for humans.

The continued support of Prof. Lerchl through the BMU and the BfS can only be understood as further evidence that the representatives of these agencies either lack any scientific competence or that they are unable to assume the responsibility for public health because they, together with Prof. Lerchl, are under the control of the mobile phone industry. Recently Prof. Lerchl was informed by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in Lyon, the cancer research institute of the WHO, that his participation in the Monograph Team, which will start meeting in May 2011 to investigate the issue whether high-frequency electromagnetic fields have a carcinogenic potential, is not welcome. The IARC explains it as follows: "*Taking the above points into account [consultancy for the German Informationszentrum Mobilfunk; about half of your recent publications are [...]*

*criticisms of studies that suggest harmful effects of exposure to radiation], we feel that your participation would not contribute to a balanced search for consensus within the forthcoming Working Group."*

For ten years BMU and BfS have relied for their advice specifically on Prof. Lerchl and made him the highest ranking radiation protection officer in Germany. Any warnings concerning his person were rejected, evidence as to his dismissal of current scientific knowledge was regularly brushed off with the standard argument that serious risks are not known to BMU or BfS. Now both of these agencies had to have the currently most important international organization regarding radiation protection attest to the fact that Prof. Lerchl has close ties to the industry and is biased. It remains to be seen if the BMU and BfS are willing to accept this public disclosure, owing to Prof. Lerchl's need to talk and justify himself at the dirty IZgMF forum, or if they might take the necessary action after all, even if far too late. If it were not about the health protection of 80 million people who live in Germany, you could simply pity Prof. Lerchl and those who got involved with him - but the seriousness of the situation prohibits any gloating.

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