

Max-Planck-Institut für Physik (Werner-Heisenberg-Institut)



Max-Planck-Institut für Physik • Föhringer Ring 6 • D - 80805 München

Mr.
Nihat Ergün
Minister of Science, Industry and Technology
Turkey

Prof. Dr. Dieter Lüst
Director of Max Planck Institute
for Physics
Director of
Arnold Sommerfeld Center at LMU
Tel. 089 / 32354 – 282
Email: luest@mpp.mpg.de

Munich, August 16, 2011

Dear Minister Nihat Ergun,

His excellency,

As members of the international theoretical physics community, we are concerned about the relocation of the Feza Gursey Institute (FGI) from its current premises at Kandilli in Istanbul to a remote location outside the city. We believe that this relocation will amount to an effective closing down of the only theoretical physics and mathematics research center in Turkey. It is clear to us, for reasons we will explain below, that if the Institute becomes a part of BILGEM, TUBITAK's cryptology center, it will cease to function as an international institution devoted to research in the basic sciences. The necessity of fundamental science in any country hardly needs explaining, and Turkey, a rapidly developing country with the potential to play a leading role in the region, would be doing itself long-term harm by such a move:

* All but two of the G-20 countries have at least one such institute. One need only mention IAS (United States), ICTP (Italy), IPMU (Japan), KIAS (South Korea), KITP (United States), Perimeter (Canada). One may add IPM (Iran) and Weizmann (Israel) to this list as examples of such world class institutes in the region. Beyond their scientific value, such centers are a source of considerable national pride and intellectual prestige for their home countries.

* The FGI is crucial to continued collaboration with similar international institutes outside Turkey. In fact, during the past 15 years, the FGI hosted joint conferences, workshops and schools with IPM, IARS and ICTP, to mention just a few. Some of us attended a number of those meetings.

* It is paradoxical, to say the least, that the FGI is being terminated just as Turkey's full membership in CERN, the world's premiere center for fundamental research, is about to become a reality.

The reasons advanced by TUBITAK for terminating the institute are vague and have failed to convince us. Allocated only slightly over 0.1% of the TUBITAK's current budget, the FGI could not possibly have been a significant financial burden. The facts seem to be that at one point the institute was thriving with 29 members (some part-time, some full-time) and this was systematically brought down to only four full-time researchers. The resulting decrease in the volume of scientific activity is simply a result of that policy. We believe that this situation cannot be reversed by moving the remaining staff to an industrial research campus, access to which requires security clearance. Even without this, it is clear to us that the geographical isolation of the new location, outside Istanbul, some 60 kms from the great majority of the city's leading universities, represents an insurmountable obstacle to the organization of international schools, workshops and conferences.

This is perhaps an appropriate time to think of turning this crisis into an opportunity and injecting new life into the institute through reorganization. The working principles of such an institution are essentially universal, consisting of the following:

Max-Planck-Institut für Physik

(Werner-Heisenberg-Institut)

-2-

- 1) A small permanent staff of distinguished scientists capable of providing scientific leadership, a larger group of postdoctoral researchers, and a steady stream of local and international visitors as at CERN, the Max Planck Institute, ICTP, IAS, etc.
- 2) The periodic evaluation of such personnel on the basis of well-defined performance criteria.
- 3) Overall supervision of the institute by an international scientific advisory board.
- 4) Strong ties with similar centers in the World.
- 5) A postdoctoral research program capable of competing with the world's major research centers in attracting bright, young researchers in mathematics and theoretical physics
- 6) A short-term visitor program in conjunction with a lively weekly seminar schedule.
- 7) Long-term and sabbatical visitor programs to foster national and international collaboration.
- 7) Activities such as workshops, conferences, and national and international summer and winter schools at the graduate and undergraduate level.
- 8) Additional facilities such as an up-to-date library, computing facilities and accommodation for visiting scientists and students.
- 9) Finally, the location of the institute should be determined by the attractiveness of the city and the site, easy accessibility, and proximity to leading universities in the city. Needless to say, Istanbul is such a center of attraction. In fact, some of us have found on our previous visits that the Kandilli site meets these criteria quite satisfactorily.

We urge you to reconsider the decision to relocate the FGI, and hope to see it revived as an independent fundamental research center with the highest international standards in research and organization, perpetuating the legacy of the late Prof. Feza Gursey. We firmly believe that Turkey has all the resources and capability to make this happen.

With Our Kindest Regards



Prof. D. Lüst, Director at the Max Planck Institute for Physics and Director at the Arnold Sommerfeld Center (ASC) of the Ludwig Maximilians University, Munich
Prof. E. Bergshoeff, (University of Groningen, Netherlands)
Prof. G. Bossard, (Ecole Polytechnique, France)
Dr. G. Compere, (University of Amsterdam, Netherlands)
Dr. S. Cremonini, (Texas A&M University, U.S.A.)
Prof. M. Cvetič, (University of Pennsylvania, U.S.A.)
Prof. T. Eguchi, (Kyoto University, Japan)
Prof. M. Gunaydin, (Penn State University, U.S.A.)
Dr. U. Gursoy, (CERN, Switzerland)
Prof. H. Fritzsch (Munich University)
Prof. M. Henningson (Chalmers U. Tech., Sweden)
Dr. C. Kozcaz, (CERN, Switzerland)
Prof. N.D. Lambert, (CERN, Switzerland)
Prof. D. Lüst, (Max Planck Institute, Germany)
Prof. R. Percacci (ICTP, Italy)
Prof. C.N. Pope, (Texas A&M University, U.S.A.)

Max-Planck-Institut für Physik

(Werner-Heisenberg-Institut)

-3-

Prof. S. Randjbar-Daemi (ICTP, Italy)
Prof. F. Riccioni, (University of Rome, Italy)
Prof. A. Sagnotti, (Pisa Scuola Normale Superiore, Italy)
Prof. H. Samtleben, (Ecole normale Supérieure de Lyon, France)
Prof. S. Sheikh-Jabbari, (IPM, Iran)
Prof. E. Sezgin, (Texas A&M University, U.S.A.)
Prof. K.S. Stelle, (Imperial College, U.K.)
Prof. P. Sundell (UMH, Mons, Belgium)
Prof. S. Vandoren, (University of Utrecht, Netherlands)
Prof. S. Watson (University of Michigan, U.S.A.)
Prof. M. Zagermann (Leibniz University, Germany)

CC: - Professor Nüket Yetis, TUBITAK President
- Dr. Hüsnü Tekin, Deputy Undersecretary, Ministry of Science, Industry and
Technology
- Professor Nüket Yetis, TUBITAK President