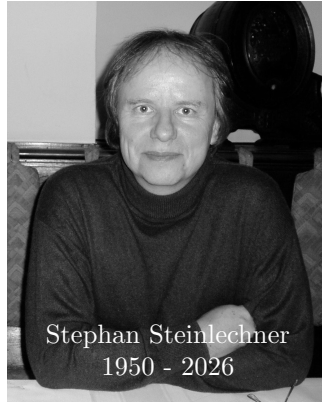


In Memoriam Stephan Steinlechner



Unexpectedly, Stephan Steinlechner passed on 26 January 2026 at 75 years of age. He is survived by his wife, two sons and two grandchildren. Stephan published more than 100 papers, mainly on the photoperiodic control of daily and seasonal rhythms, and was a member of the European Pineal Study Group, later EBRS, since the 1980s. Stephan was an extraordinary scientist, with unmatched expertise in studying Djungarian hamsters that he worked with since his PhD in Gerhard Heldmaier's group at the Goethe University Frankfurt, Germany (1977–1980).

After post-doctoral work with Russ Reiter at the University of Texas in San Antonio (1981–1982), and further collaboration with Gerhard Heldmaier at the University of Marburg (1982–1991), he was appointed Professor at the Institute of Zoology of the University of Veterinary Medicine Hannover, Germany, where he taught Physiology from 1992 to 2014.

Stephan was a brilliant physiologist and his contributions to elucidating photoperiodic control of metabolism have been seminal. Even after he retired he continued to publish carefully considered papers till the 2020s. He stayed connected with his former mentees and colleagues, attended their talks, celebrated their successes, and quietly supported them every step of the way. This rare generosity and kindness is what made him truly exceptional. He gave young scientists the freedom to explore, the trust to grow, and the encouragement to believe in themselves.

Music was his companion, he played classical guitar with passion and, in his later years, he discovered the piano, bringing joy not just to himself, but to all who were lucky enough to hear him.

Stephan's presence, wisdom, and warmth will be deeply missed. He was a unique soul, a mentor with a heart as vast as the mountains he loved, and a friend whose memory will live on in all of us who were fortunate to know him.

Annika Herwig, University of Ulm, Germany
Violetta Pilorz, University of Lübeck, Germany
Robert Dallmann, University of Warwick, UK