European Biological Rhythms Society

In memory of Horst-Werner Korf

1952–2026

A great anatomist, neuroendocrinologist, chronobiologist, and a very warm-hearted person

Prof. Dr. med. Horst-Werner Korf
Professor of Anatomy at the Institute of Anatomy II, Dr. Senckenbergische Anatomie, Goethe University Frankfurt, and later substitute professor at the Institute of Anatomy I, Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Germany.

With great sadness we report the death of Professor Horst-Werner Korf on 10 November 2026. Prof. Korf studied human medicine at Justus Liebig University Giessen, where he obtained his medical licence and doctorate in 1976. During his doctoral work, supervised by Prof. Dr. Andreas Oksche, he developed a keen interest in the anatomy and comparative morphology of the pineal organ. After his medical internship and military service, he pursued these interests as a research associate at the Institute of Anatomy and Cell Biology at the University of Giessen, where he completed his habilitation in anatomy in 1986. From 1987 to 1988, he worked with Prof. David C. Klein at the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, USA. In 1990, he became Professor of Anatomy and Neurobiology and Head of the Institute of Anatomy II at Goethe University Frankfurt. In 1995, he became Head of the Dr. Senckenbergische Anatomie at Goethe University's Faculty of Medicine and joined the Faculty Council. He served as Dean of Study Affairs from 1997 to 1999. After retiring in 2017, he worked as a substitute professor and research associate at the Institute of Anatomy I at Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf until 2023.

Prof. Korf was an internationally recognised scientist and anatomist. He contributed to numerous textbooks and authored around 300 publications, making significant contributions to chronobiology, neuroendocrinology and chronomedicine. Translating basic research into applications for human health was particularly close to his heart. He participated in several research consortia and served on the boards of scientific societies including the Anatomische Gesellschaft and the European Society for Comparative Endocrinology (ESCE). His honours included honorary membership of both societies and membership of the German National Academy of Sciences Leopoldina. He was active in the European Pineal Study Group (EPSG), the predecessor of the EBRS, and helped guide its renaming as the EBRS on 4 September 2005 in Frankfurt. He served as EBRS President from 2005 to 2009 and received the Johannes Ariens Kappers Medal in 2017.

Prof. Korf was intelligent, warm-hearted, generous, cheerful and energetic. He formed many lifelong friendships with scientific colleagues and was a supportive mentor and role model to his students and colleagues in research and teaching. His wife, Dr. Beate Korf, supported him throughout his stays abroad, congress trips and scientific projects. He was a caring and devoted husband, father and grandfather. Alongside his family, science remained central to his life until his death.

For me, Prof. Korf was a scientific mentor and an important father figure from 1996 onwards. He played a significant role in fostering my academic career and offered practical support and advice in all areas of life. His scientific approach and leadership style will always be a model for me. Whenever I face a challenge, I ask myself what Prof. Korf would say about it. Among my fondest memories are dancing together at a disco during the ESCE conference in Uppsala in 2004, and visiting him and Beate at their wonderful home in Bad Schwartau during the 2025 EBRS meeting in Lübeck. I will sorely miss him.

We have lost a great scientist, anatomist and human being.

I warmly invite all of Prof. Korf's friends and colleagues to share their thoughts and memories in the online condolence book.

Charlotte of Gall
Head of the Institute for Anatomy II, Heinrich Heine University Düsseldorf, Germany