

**OBITUARY**

**Farewell to Professor Jaan–Mati Punning (1940–2009)**



Jaan–Mati Punning.  
Family archive, 2005

Doctor Habilitus Jaan–Mati Punning, one of the most remarkable natural scientists and science managers in the Baltic States, Professor of Tallinn University, long-time president of the Estonian Geographical Society, passed away on November 21, 2009.

Jaan–Mati Punning was born on March 13, 1940, in Mooste in SE Estonia and graduated Tartu State University earning a speciality in chemistry. He started to work for the Institute of Zoology and Botany of the Academy of Sciences, followed by working in the Geological Survey and the Institute of Geology of the Academy of Sciences, where he participated in the development of the innovative radiocarbon dating method. In 1969 J.–M. Punning received a candidate of

sciences degree in the field of geology and mineralogy and shortly thereafter he established one of the leading isotope laboratories in the world at the Institute of Geology. He investigated the dynamics of glaciers in Svalbard and Pamir and Ural mountains. His doctoral dissertation on the dynamics of glaciation processes during the Late Pleistocene in Northern Eurasia was presented in 1982 and J.–M. Punning received a doctor's degree in the field of natural geography.

One of the most important accomplishments J.–M. Punning's career was the establishment of the Institute of Ecology at which he was the director between 1992 and 2005. In 1995 he received the Scientific Price of the Republic of Estonia. Prof. Punning was a generalist in many fields of bio–geosciences and environment, geography and regional studies. His latest research projects were connected with the lake–level fluctuations during the postglacial period, causes and impact on the lake ecosystems and formation of the bottom sediments of Lake Peipsi. Altogether he published more than 500 scientific papers.

He was the president of the Estonian Geographical Society since 1985. J.–M. Punning took an active role in the formation of scientific, educational and environmental policies in the Baltic States. He has earned a number of awards and merits, including the Estonian White Star Order. J.–M. Punning was a honorary member of Estonian and Russian geographical societies.

His initiative and energy was hard to keep up with. The facilitation of uncompromised science–based thinking, organizing and executing scientific work while neglecting personal interests were all conducted with an intense internal flare, which illuminated several generations of scientists and allowed them to set their own paths. We have lost one of our great natural scientists.

Tiiu Koff, Anto Raukas

## ADDENDUM

### List of selected publications of Prof. Jaan-Mati Punning

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