



First EMBL Council meeting for newest Member State

Ministers Dragan Primorac (left) and Radovan Fuchs and new delegate Krešimir Pavelic represented Croatia at the beginning of July for the summer Council Meeting, their country's first as a Member State. Other matters included continuing discussions on the EMBL Programme and Indicative Scheme 2007-2011, a decision on which is expected at the next meeting on 22-23 November, and the first ever joint session of EMBC/EMBO and EMBL Council. [page 2](#)

Hopes for a bigger, brighter future for the EBI

Janet Thornton and Graham Cameron, Director and Associate Director of the EBI, talk about the challenges facing bioinformatics, an essential ingredient in all life science research today. Heavyweight computing has long been a staple of physics; now biology needs to catch up. The EBI's unique recipe of closely integrating service and research will be vital as molecular biology assembles a holistic view of organisms and biological processes. [page 3](#)



Group Leaders head to the coast in pursuit of a Partnership

Existing ties with the Station Biologique de Roscoff (SBR) led to a mini-conference for faculty members of both institutes to explore new areas of collaboration and a possible EMBL Partnership. EMBL Group Leaders and Core Facility heads met Roscoff staff at the meeting on 10-12 July, which took place at the SBR's coastal location in Brittany, France. While the SBR would benefit from access to our Core Facilities and the possibility to increase their activity in the field of developmental biology, EMBL would gain access to their diversity of marine species. [pages 4-5](#)

FEBS in Turkey: the impact of affirmative action

The choice of location for the annual Federation of Biochemical Societies (FEBS) congress is traditionally made in order to raise awareness of the needs of certain countries for improved research funding, technology, infrastructure and training. This year's event was held in Istanbul on 25-29 June. One of the points that emerged from the meeting was that although Turkey has deficits in many of these areas, the situation for women pursuing scientific careers is surprisingly positive. In the natural sciences, women occupy 25.7% of the full professorships in Turkey, compared with 11.3% across the 25 EU member and associated states. We spoke to Turkish scientists, and women in particular, both here and there to learn about their experiences of a career in science in the country. [page 4](#)

A party to remember



Staying on the bull was only the first challenge faced by guests at this year's Staff Association Summer Party. Eating, drinking and dancing kept EMBL staff, their friends and family members up until the wee small hours. [page 7](#)

2 | Jan takes the helm of Gene Expression

5 | Crystallisation experiments hit the million mark

6 | A Croatian alumna's insider tips

Council welcomes 19th State

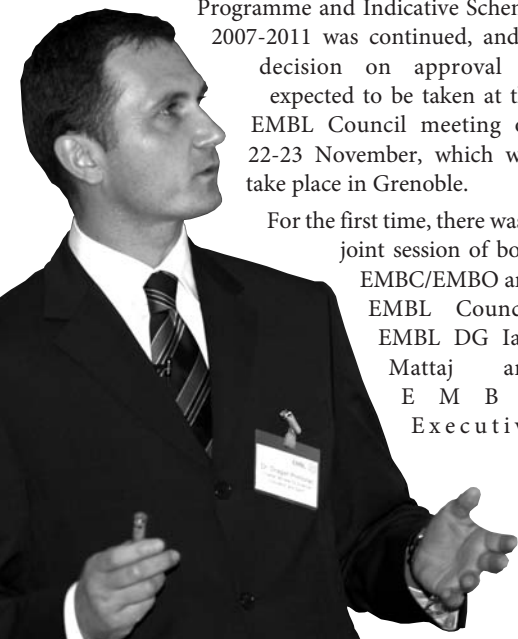
Warm reception for Croatia

EMBL Council's regular summer meeting took place in Heidelberg from 4-6 July. The meeting welcomed the new Croatian delegate, Krešimir Pavelic, who assumed his seat following his country's ratification of its EMBL membership.

Dragan Primorac, the Croatian Minister for Science, Education and Sports, gave a presentation to EMBL Council. He also enjoyed a tour of EMBL along with the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Radovan Fuchs, and EMBL Council's new Croatian delegate, Krešimir Pavelic. EMBL's 19th Member State, Croatia is the first of the transition countries to join EMBL.

The discussion of the EMBL Programme and Indicative Scheme 2007-2011 was continued, and a decision on approval is expected to be taken at the EMBL Council meeting on 22-23 November, which will take place in Grenoble.

For the first time, there was a joint session of both EMBC/EMBO and EMBL Council. EMBL DG Iain Mattaj and E M B O Executive



Photos: Maj Britt Hansen

Croatian delegate Krešimir Pavelic, left, and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Radovan Fuchs take their places in the EMBL Council meeting; below left, Dragan Primorac addresses the audience

Director Frank Gannon gave overviews of their organisations, followed by a discussion about the ways EMBO and EMBL work together.

Organisational changes are afoot with the departure of Elisa Izaurralde, who for the past year has been acting Head of the Gene Expression Unit. The new Head is Jan Ellenberg, who has been a group leader in the Unit since 1999. He talks about his plans for Gene Expression below.

The introduction of a voluntary long-term care insurance scheme was formally approved by Council. The insurance covers part of the costs for home or institutional care if a person requires help with normal day-to-day activities on a long-term basis as a result of physical or mental illness or disability. The sign-up period for EMBL staff will end on 31 August 2006. If you'd like more information, please visit www.embl.org/staffonly/personnel/longtermcare.html.

The Annual Report 2005-06 was approved, and is being distributed throughout EMBL.

Finance news

The following salary and pension adjustments were approved by Council for 2006:

Salary adjustments (effective 1 July 2006):

- France 0.8 %
- Germany 0.9 %
- Italy 3.9 %
- United Kingdom 0.7 %

Pension adjustments (effective 1 July 2006):

- France 1.7 %
- Germany 1.8 %
- United Kingdom 1.6 %

Ellenberg appointed head of Gene Expression Unit

With the recent departure of Elisa Izaurralde, the Gene Expression Unit was in need of a new Head, and Group Leader Jan Ellenberg took up the post in July. What are his plans for the Unit?

"In the next six months I'll be concentrating on shaping the department by trying to attract the best new Group Leaders," he says. "We're one to two groups below the normal strength, with the departure of Elisa and the fact that Iain's group has for the past year been part of the Directors' Research Unit. Finding the best people to replace them will be my most important short-term goal."

The long-term future is harder to predict. "With EMBL being so dynamic, it's hard to say now how the Unit will develop in the longer term," Jan says. "At the moment it has many strong areas, including chromatin, nuclear structure and cytoplasmic gene regulation, but there are areas that could be further strengthened, like RNA biology, modelling and simulation of gene expression pathways and functional genomics/systems biology. While I'd like to put some emphasis on under-represented or newly emerging themes, the search for new scientists won't be restricted to those areas, but rather we'll try to get the best individuals to complement the existing structure of the department.

"We're also very well connected as a Unit, with good ties to many other EMBL Units both in Heidelberg and at the Outstations, including the EBI and Grenoble."

Jan's pleased to be taking on the role but feels he has some big shoes to fill. "Elisa did a great job as interim Head and, before her, Iain was a very successful coordinator. One important lead I'll take from him is that scientific excellence and recruiting the best young scientists is key for the future success of the Unit."

- Goodbye and good luck to Elisa, who is now director at the Max Planck Institute for Developmental Biology in Tübingen.

When its extension (see below) opens in summer 2007, the EBI will be able to accommodate 400 staff members. How will it use this extra capacity?

“Bioinformatics is at the core of modern molecular biology, as well as being a vital tool for industry,” explains the EBI’s director, Janet Thornton. “In the past, if researchers wanted to answer a particular question, they would have to gather the data before they could analyse it. Now, huge quantities of data are there for the taking. It’s our job to provide resources that organise biological information, as well as tools for data analysis. But it’s also important that we perform some of this analysis ourselves, not least because it helps us to remain responsive to the rest of the research community.

“Because bioinformatics is both an enabling technology and a growing area of research, the EBI must expand both its research and its service programmes if it’s going to serve the needs of Europe’s biomedical researchers over the next decade. The Wellcome Trust and the UK Research councils have very generously provided us with funding to build our new extension, but at present the EMBL Member States appear to be the only possible source for most of the funding required to scale up our activities.”

Molecular biology’s reductionist philosophy has paved the way for a more holistic methodology in which all the components of biological systems and their interactions are analysed. This systems-based approach has many applications, in medicine and agriculture for example. But systems biology also creates a slew of challenges that need bioinformatics to solve them.

“Ever since the EMBL Data Library was launched in the early 80s, we’ve had to cope with an accelerating avalanche of biological data,” continues Graham Cameron, the EBI’s

Associate Director and head of its Service programme. “This challenge is not going to go away, but the volume of data is only one of our concerns. Whereas previously our users needed information on the properties of individual molecules, we now have to consider their behaviour and interactions. Building the right interconnections – not only among the core molecular databases at the EBI but also to many specialised data resources outside – is an enormous task. Systems biology has also created a demand for new types of data resource: it’s no longer enough to think of biological systems as bags of DNA, RNA and protein: small molecules, kinetic parameters and intra-species variations have entered the fray. We

Bioinformatics is at the core of modern molecular biology, as well as being a vital tool for industry

have responded to this need by launching new databases and by expanding the functionality of existing ones. Many of our established databases have now become part of the public record of science, and yet without an adequately dimensioned stable funding mechanism for them their continuity is far from assured. Both our well-established databases and our newer resources need a more stable financial footing if we are to continue to serve our user community. Although the computational infrastructure required for effective bioinformatics has long seemed substantial to biologists, really heavyweight computing has remained the domain of the physical sciences. This has to change: to truly exploit the quantity and range of information available, a steep increment in investment in compute power is now vital.”

“One of the EBI’s great strengths is the mutual compatibility of our research and services programmes, and the way in which they profit from one another,” says Janet. “In order to maintain this benefit, the research programme needs to grow in line with the services. As well as making important biological discoveries through data analysis (our newest research groups are studying regulatory networks and stem-cell biology on a genomic scale, for example), many of our research projects have spawned promising new services. For example, our text-mining group has developed some powerful and innovative ways of mining the biomedical literature that are now being built into our CitExplore literature resource and will form the basis for mining the research papers in UKPubMedCentral, the open-access literature archive that we’ve just been funded to run in collaboration with the British Library and the University of Manchester.”

“User training is another area that we need to develop further,” says Graham. “The new building will contain an 80-seater IT training suite, but at the moment we have to rely on our database curators and developers to do most of our training. This has prevented us from scaling up our training efforts because it’s difficult to release these staff members from their regular jobs without disrupting the smooth running of our data resources. We need to raise the funds for one dedicated training officer per data resource to solve this problem. To enable European scientists to make the most of the bioinformatics resources available to them, we need a training programme that covers all of our data resources and that helps users to integrate them.

“Europe has a long history of innovation in bioinformatics but a very patchy record of long-term support for bioinformatics resources because there is no mechanism for supporting established biological data resources in Europe at an adequate level. Now that bioinformatics has become an important part of every biologist’s toolkit, its more important than ever that the EBI’s services have a stable funding mechanism. The cost of bioinformatics pales into insignificance compared with the outlay necessary to collect the data; a relatively small investment will enable the EBI to continue to provide essential cutting-edge services to the biomedical research community in the years to come.”

A bigger, brighter future for the EBI?

On 26 July the EBI held a “topping out” ceremony to celebrate the completion of the shell of its new 2000m² extension.

John Cooper, Director of Resources for the Wellcome Trust (which, together with the UK Research Councils, is providing the bulk of the funding for the building) gave the opening welcome, which was followed by speeches from architects NBBJ and builders COMO.

The highlight was the symbolic planting of a yew tree by EBI Director Janet Thornton and the laying of the first internal block using a silver trowel which, complete with inscription, was later presented to her as a memento

of the day. Janet also gave a brief speech to thank those involved with the planning, design and construction of the building, and to provide an overview of the EBI and how it will use the extension.



FEBS in Turkey: the impact of affirmative action

The 31st Federation of Biochemical Societies (FEBS) congress, held in Istanbul on 25-29 June, brought together researchers from all over Europe. Nadia Rosenthal, Rolf Apweiler and EMBL Council delegate Anna Tramontano were keynote speakers at the event which, true to FEBS form, was held in a country that offers fewer opportunities with regard to research funding, technology, infrastructure and training.

Founded in 1964, FEBS has more than 40,000 members throughout Europe and promotes biochemistry, molecular cell biology and biophysics, with a special emphasis on providing support to Central and Eastern European countries. EMBL, EMBO and the European Life Science Organisation (ELSO) joined with FEBS in 1999 to form the European Life Sciences Forum (ELSF), with the aim of stimulating scientists to take an active role in strategic and science policy issues.

Though there is much room for improvement in the conduct of science in Central and Eastern European countries (one reason that FEBS hosts meetings there), there are often areas in which these countries are surprisingly progressive. As far as women are concerned, for example, it's well known that they are severely under-represented in science in Europe and the USA – but in Turkey it's a different story.

A FEBS/EMBO workshop on Women in Science at the congress featured a presentation by Canan Özgen, Professor of Chemical Engineering at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara. The number of women in the department of biological sciences there is almost twice that of men, even in full professorships and other top positions. This reflects a larger trend: in the natural sciences, women

occupy 25.7% of the full professorships (compared with 11.3% in the 25 EU member and associated states); in the medical sciences the numbers are 34.5% (Turkey) compared with 15.6% (EU-25).*

This state of affairs is the direct result of reforms put into place under the new Turkish Republic with the leadership of Atatürk after World War I. Equal rights of citizenship and opportunities for higher education were given to Turkish women as a sign of westernisation. Women's career acquisition became a goal and the accepted norm for middle- and upper-class families, promoted by the state's policies of encouragement.

“State policies ... have contributed to the high percentage of women in academic life” – Canan Özgen

Women scientist visitors to EMBO's stand at the congress agreed that being a scientist in Turkey is a well-respected and glass-ceilingless career choice for females – and many agreed that they'd rather be there than anywhere else. According to Gülçin Toker, a professor in the Biochemistry department of Istanbul University: “It's very easy for women here, probably more so than in the USA, because there are more of us in science, and no obstacles to achieving high positions.” Semra Demokan, a PhD student, agreed. “Our labs have a lot of women in high positions. There *are* men in biology, but women tend to lead.”

Aynur Kaya, an EMBL PhD student, recounts similar experiences. “When I was an undergrad-

uate there were 23 in my class, 15 of whom were women. Women in Turkey are generally more ambitious.”

Dr Özgen's take-home message at the congress could be a lesson to other countries. “The Turkish case is a good example of how political will and affirmative action can result in a significant change,” she said. “Deliberate state policies promoting women's upward mobility and empowerment through education have contributed to the high percentage of women in academic life.”

But while opportunities for getting into science and moving up the ladder are good, there's a downside: scientists of both sexes are very poorly paid in Turkey, access to equipment and materials is limited, and working conditions do little to encourage scientists to stay in the country. As Idris Mehmetoglu, a (male) professor at the University of Selçuk, said: “It's very difficult to form collaborations with scientists in other parts of Europe because we just don't have the resources to give back.” Nuray Erin is an assistant professor at Akdeniz University and has been trying to set up her own lab: “Things move much faster elsewhere. We just can't get the equipment.”

Aynur is aware of these problems but is nevertheless planning to return to Turkey to work as a scientist one day. “Most of my classmates went abroad, about 70% of them to the USA,” she says. “It's true that there are a lot of women in high academic positions in Turkey, but a lot of young scientists still feel that leaving will lead to a better career. The problem is that if people carry on going away, the situation isn't going to get any better.”

* “She Figures” 2006, ec.europa.eu/research/science-society/pdf/she_figures_2006_en.pdf



Photo: Vladimir Rybin

Thorsten Henrich, Detlev Arendt, Carsten Schultz and Claude Antony get to grips with a ribbon worm, *Lineus longissimus*

Group Leaders face to

A Group Leader's interest in marine biology has helped lay the foundations for a brand new EMBL Partnership.

Detlev Arendt's lab studies the marine ragworm *Platynereis* to get a handle on the evolution of the animal brain. He led an initiative to hold a mini-conference for faculty members of EMBL and the Station Biologique de Roscoff to explore possible areas of collaboration.

Several EMBL Group Leaders and Core Facility heads met Roscoff staff at the three-day meeting on 10-12 July, which took place at SBR's beautiful coastal location in Brittany, north-west France. The programme of presentations and round-table discussions left time for a field excursion of the marine biology station's variety of biotopes – at low tide, of course.



Online funding navigator: EMBO Life Sciences Mobility Portal

EMBO Long-Term Fellowships are widely used by the scientific community. There are limits, however, to the number of fellowships EMBO can award and not all postdocs moving to a new laboratory can be funded. There are plenty of other opportunities out there – the challenge is finding them. This is where the EMBO Life Sciences Mobility Portal can help.

The EMBO Life Sciences Mobility Portal was launched in 2004 to provide a service that would complement the Long-Term Fellowship Programme. The portal is tailored to the needs of life scientists, helping them to make sense of the multiple opportunities available and to pinpoint exactly which suits their needs best. Currently featuring over

1,200 grants listings, almost 450 funding agencies and over 600 scientific meetings and courses, the portal is a rich resource for researchers starting out on their careers.

Currently, about 10,000 scientists make use of the service every month. The person at EMBO who makes sure these users find what they are looking for is Sabine Rehberger-Schneider. Sabine collects information from various agencies and organisations in Europe, analyses the data for its relevance to life scientists and presents it on the portal in an accessible and searchable format.

Imagine, for example, you are an Italian researcher looking for a fellowship in France. Instead of trawling through the relevant websites individually, a few clicks on the portal take you to a tailored list of opportunities.

A unique consultancy service is also available for researchers with a tricky combination of requirements or an unusual CV. This is where Sabine's understanding of the system really comes into play. Dealing with around 15 personal queries per week, she guides scientists through the maze of funding information.

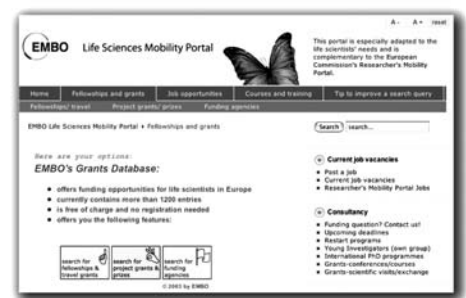
The portal is also a useful tool for scientists outside Europe. Information can be one of the major barriers to entry into European science

and the portal tries to combat this by featuring information for researchers from other parts of the world. Over 600 listings cater for non-European scientists searching for opportunities in Europe. Scientists worldwide also use the portal as a source of cultural and practical information. An annual writing prize encourages researchers to share their experiences of moving to a new country. These entertaining personal accounts are available on the portal and offer valuable advice.

So, the next time a postdoc is looking for funding to visit your laboratory, or if you are the one making the move, remember – you can save yourself a lot of time and trouble by visiting the EMBO Life Sciences Mobility Portal.

– Frank Gannon/Lindsay Johnson

<http://mobility.embo.org>



One million experiments and an all-access users' meeting for HTPX in Grenoble

The high-throughput crystallisation laboratory at EMBL Grenoble recently celebrated the landmark of one million experiments.

One of the key technological platforms of the Partnership for Structural Biology (PSB) and central to the newly created Centre for Integrated Structural Biology (CISB), the facility has also recently held its first users' meeting, which was broadcast on the web for the

benefit of its growing number of remote users. Since starting operation in 2003, the facility has helped more than 180 crystallographers at the four PSB partner institutes to find crystals.

"We are able to develop structural biology projects in conditions that were unthinkable before," says Team Leader José Márquez. "A recent example is the Epstein-Barr virus pro-

tein Barf1, for which the only viable expression system is cultured human cells. After several rounds of protein expression and purification, only a few microlitres of sample were available. We not only identified crystallisation conditions, but because we used only a fraction of the sample, the rest of it could be used for refinement and heavy atom soak experiments that resulted in a structure."

face with sea creatures in Partnership talks

"There were very positive signals that a partnership with Roscoff is something from which several labs on both sides would gain a great deal," says Detlev. "The meeting was a great chance for the faculty members to get to know each other and find out more about all our areas of expertise.

"While Roscoff would benefit from access to our Core Facilities and the possibility to increase their activity in several fields of molecular biology, EMBL would gain by having access to the huge diversity of marine species available at the SBR."

Detlev's lab isn't the only one that has already forged solid links with the SBR. Elena Conti's lab has collaborated with scientists at the station to look at how animals living at hydrothermal vents adapt to the

high temperatures and produce proteins that can withstand higher than 40°C – a question that could have a huge impact on the process of protein purification.

"Exploring new territories is at the heart of EMBL Partnerships," says Detlev. "SBR has very specialist knowledge of oceanography, ecology and marine chemical biology, and these are areas to which we don't usually have access."

The potential Partnership is currently under discussion by representatives of the CNRS, SBR, the Université Pierre et Marie Curie (Paris VI) and EMBL and, if approved, will join a growing list that already includes the MMPU, the PSB, the CRG and the Partnership with the Sars International Centre for Marine Molecular Biology.

GR and HH strengthen ties

An EMBL-wide crystal scoring competition and the standardisation and adaptation of beamline equipment were just two of the ideas that came out of the third bilateral meeting of scientists and staff from EMBL Hamburg and Grenoble in Hamburg on 26-27 June.

José Márquez and Jochen Müller-Dieckmann introduced their respective high-throughput crystallisation laboratories, before discussions turned to research and developments in software and hardware. A special session was dedicated to PETRA-III, a state-of-the-art synchrotron radiation source at DESY which will be available in 2009.

The annual event has proved a valuable opportunity for the Outstations to share ideas and explore new possibilities for joint working groups. Next year's meeting is already being planned, and it will be EMBL Grenoble's turn to host.

News from the Alumni Association

The future's getting brighter

Croatian alumni returning to their home country now find themselves taking their skills back to the newest EMBL Member State. We caught up with one of them, Sanja Tomic, to ask about her experiences at EMBL and the situation in general for scientists coming from Croatia. Sanja, formerly a postdoc in Rebecca Wade's group, is now a higher research associate at the Ruđer Bošković Institute in Zagreb, in particular looking at the development of new algorithms to study protein-protein docking.

Is it easy to get into science in Croatia? Is science taught well in school?

Education is constantly improving. There's little access to materials, though, so it mostly relies on teachers' skills. But after school, it's not easy to continue a career in science. There are a very small number of positions available.

How did you find out about EMBL before you came here?

I already had a collaboration with Rebecca, who was a group leader at EMBL. Until now, EMBL hasn't been so well known in Croatia, but that's changing. It's great that Croatia has become a Member State because more scientists will have a chance to come here, and Croatia will be able to become more involved in European science as a whole.

How easy was it to get funding?

I was lucky – I came with a fellowship from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, which allows post-doctoral foreign scientists under 40 to spend a long-term stay doing

research in Germany.

What was your area of study?

I was working on 3D QSAR (quantitative structure activity relationships), classifying small auxin (plant hormone) related molecules according to the similarity of their molecular interaction fields. I used force field-based methods and simulated conformational changes in molecules, studying the specificity of binding between transcription factors and DNA.

How has your career benefited from your time at EMBL?

It has benefited significantly. I learned so many new things, and what's perhaps even more important, I was introduced to another working system and environment.

What advantages did you have here that you might not have had in Croatia?

It was great to be able to use the advanced techniques and up-to-date equipment available at EMBL, and I had access to almost all the scientific journals I needed. You have to be very established in your scientific career in Croatia in order to have access to the latest in technology and materials.

What would be your advice to other Croatian pre- or postdocs wanting to apply to come to EMBL? Any helpful tips?

EMBL is certainly an excellent place for working in science and I can recommend it to all young scientists. Voluntary work at an institute like the one I'm at now, the Ruđer Bošković Institute (www.irb.hr), or in a university might help provide useful lab experience first.



Sanja enjoys a paddle near Susak, one of Croatia's islands

Finally, what do you miss about EMBL?

Our group – it was really international, with scientists from France, Germany, Italy, India, Russia, Belgium and the UK, and we all were really good friends. I am still in contact with most of them and am continuing to collaborate with Rebecca, who has also left now.

Manolis says goodbye to Monterotondo with MS breakthrough

EMBL Monterotondo Group Leader Manolis Pasparakis has said goodbye to the Italian outpost – but not before making a breakthrough which may lead to new therapies against multiple sclerosis (MS).

In a collaborative study with researchers from the University of Göttingen, Geert van Loo, Manolis and other group members have discovered that symptoms of the disease are aggravated by a specific signalling cascade, NF- κ B, in brain cells. NF- κ B regulates the production of messengers that are released during inflammation to recruit and activate immune cells. In MS it is exactly these immune cells that cause the problem – symptoms of which include depression, coordination and speech problems, muscle weakness and disability – and their hyperactivation through NF- κ B only makes the situation worse.

“We have known for a long time that NF- κ B is crucially involved in MS,” says Manolis, who now has a lab at the Institute for Genetics at the University of Cologne, “but until now it was not clear if it was friend or foe.”

Manolis and his colleagues investigated what happens to mice with an MS-like condition if the action of NF- κ B is blocked in brain cells. Shutting down the signal involved deactivating IKK2 and NEMO, two proteins that activate NF- κ B, in the brain cells only. The results were mice that showed much milder MS symptoms than normal, so IKK2 and NEMO are promising as potential drug targets for new therapies against the disease.

In his new lab, Manolis continues to use genetic mouse models to study the function of NF- κ B and of other signaling pathways in the

pathogenesis of inflammatory diseases. What does he miss about Monterotondo? “I definitely miss walking the streets of Rome in a warm summer evening. I also miss good pizza!” he says. “It was a unique experience to be part of the Monterotondo team and see the Mouse Biology Programme grow, becoming a successful Unit. Being exposed to the EMBL environment was a great experience and I feel privileged to have lived it.”

One of Manolis' lab members, PhD student Rossana de Lorenzi, voiced the thoughts of all the others about the departure of Manolis from EMBL Monterotondo. “When I started, I was immediately impressed at Manolis' ability to communicate and to explain biology,” she said. “I would like to wish all the members of the Pasparakis Lab all the best and tell them that I had a great time with them.”

Cooking up a storm

A brief shower certainly didn't stop play at this year's Staff Association Summer Party on 22 July. The otherwise sultry summer's day saw hundreds of EMBLers and their friends enjoying the great food, music and entertainment until the small hours. All our hearty thanks go to the Canteen, the Building Maintenance team and the Staff Association and their helpers for making it a party to remember!



Help for mothers to balance the juggling act

Mothers at EMBL Heidelberg or Hamburg may like to apply for a fellowship from the Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard-Stiftung, a foundation devoted to helping women with children facilitate their progress in science.

Founded in 2004 by Nobel Prize-winning EMBL alumna Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard, the foundation recognises that science loses many talented female scientists if motherhood leads them to abandon their scientific careers. Many women find themselves obliged to look for a type of employment that's less demanding of their time, particularly in Germany where availability of provision for childcare is limited.

The fellowships provide financial assistance for childcare or household chores to help women find more time for their scientific

research. The funds may be used to cover expenses for cleaners or other household help, the purchase of household goods such as dishwashers or washing machines or for additional childcare during evenings or business trips.

"We support women regardless their nationality – but they do have to be doing their PhD at an institute in Germany," explains Sabine List, the manager of the foundation.

The foundation awards up to ten fellowships each year, and the next deadline for applications is 31 December. At the moment only PhD students can apply, but the foundation is planning to start a programme for postdocs next year. For more information, visit the website at www.cnv-stiftung.de/content/vorhaben.html.

news&events

- ❑ **EMBL's second Postdoc Retreat** will take place from 30 September to 2 October at Limes Thermen Hotel in Aalen, Germany. Registration is open until 15 August, and more information can be found at www.embl.de/staffonly/generalinfo/postdocs/retreat06/index.html.
- ❑ **The second joint retreat** for EMBL faculty and DKFZ junior group leaders or young investigators will take place on 12-13 October at the Hotel zur Krone in Herxheim-Hayna (Pfalz), one hour by car from Heidelberg. For more information and to register, see www-db.embl.de/jss/EmblGroupsOrg/conf_50#registration.
- ❑ **From 5 September**, EMBL Heidelberg's Theatre Group will start rehearsing a new play for December. They will meet weekly on Tuesdays at 19:00 in 6.51b, and if you'd like to join them, contact Jorma at tapola@embl.de. No previous experience is necessary, and family members (over 16 years old) are also welcome to get involved.
- ❑ **Brain gain for Europe:** On 14 July, 30 biology students came all the way from the USA and Canada to visit some of the most interesting research places on the continent, including EMBL, as part of the RISE (Research Internship for Science and Engineering) programme. Funded by the German academic exchange service (DAAD) for a stay in Germany for up to 6 months, some of them might reappear next year for an internship.
- ❑ **Yann Chabod is the new face** in the Budget Office and will assume responsibility for grant accounting for the EBI and EMBL Grenoble.

Second ESOF draws young and old

On 15-19 July, Munich hosted the second Euroscience Open Forum (ESOF), an international conference to engage the public, journalists and young scientists in cutting-edge research. EMBL was there to present its work and opportunities for young scientists as an EIROforum member organisation.

Over 2,100 participants from 58 countries attended the sessions and exhibition, which covered everything from ageing to volcanoes, as well as the ethics of brain research and international security. There were interactive exhibits and experiments especially for young scientists-to-be, including an EIROforum weblink which enabled students to chat with scientists all over the world.

people@EMBL



There's been a reshuffle in Building Maintenance, and **Hermann Weber** is the new Head, with Rainer Menzel overseeing everything as Estate Manager. Hermann started full-time at EMBL in June, having previously worked as an electrotechnical engineer on several projects at the Lab. Before this he was employed at an engineering company for electrotechnology in Mannheim. Staff should contact him with any technical questions about breakdowns and repairs, and Rainer about modifications and renovations. The Building Maintenance team would appreciate your attention to the emails that are periodically sent around, such as those about the Kinderhaus drop-off zone and ongoing building work at the Lab.

Who's new?

Gleb Bourenkov (Wilmanns), Yann Chabod (Finance), Eulashini Chuntharpursat (Bastiaens), Simone Eicher (Pepperkok), Emel Esen (Gross), Martin Etzrodt (Nédélec), Charlotta Funaya (Electron Microscopy Core Facility), Kyriaki Galani (Böttcher), Oriol Gallego (Gavin), Maria-Cristina Gambetta (Müller (Jürg)), David Gloriam (EBI Proteomics Services), Mark Hink (Bastiaens), Jürgen-Otto Jahnke (Security), Christine Kastinger (Personnel), Yvonne Kaul (Office of Information and Public Affairs), Lucia Kayserova (Furlong), Jung-Jae Kim (Rebholz), Kirstin Krauter (Finance), Otto Kyrieleis (Cusack), Jorun Ledin (Canteen and Cafeteria), Ioannis Legouras (Nédélec), Lennart Martens (EBI Proteomics Services), Simone Mayer (LAR), Jan Medenbach (Hentze), Sandra Müller (Cohen), Nikolay Nikolov (Sequence Database), Ye Ning (Steinmetz), Jens Odenheimer (Nédélec), Chuang Kee Ong (Centre for Computational Biology), Piotr Pezik (Rebholz), Barbara Pogwizd (Canteen and Cafeteria), Florian Reisinger (EBI Proteomics Services), Joel Savard (Bork), Andrea Schulz (LAR), Devaraj Subramanian (Schultz), Frank Thommen (Bork/Serrano), Arno Ulrich (Security), Maria Vittoria Verga Falzacappa (Hentze), Sabine Wimmer-Kleikamp (Bastiaens), Justyna Wojdyla (Tucker), Yue Zhang (EBI Proteomics Services)

The hills are alive with the sound of tapping



Wolfgang prepares to scale some alms and jochs

The ragged peaks of the Dolomite Alps are an unlikely place to find bioinformatics, but that's exactly where Robert Gentleman, one of the authors of the R language, Zhijin Wu, author of the popular GCRMA algorithm for Affymetrix genechip data, and I found ourselves in June. We'd invited 62 scientists from Europe, the USA and Australia for the fourth course in "Computational and Statistical Aspects of Microarray Analysis" at Brixen, South Tyrol. Lured by the mix of Italian *dolce vita* and Austrian *Alpenromantik*, we explored new heights of statistical computing, argued hard over clever new ways to integrate different data sources and scaled the *alms* and *jochs* of the spectacular mountainscapes by foot and bike. Who said bioinformaticians are a pale and sedate bunch?

Wolfgang Huber

awards&honours

Gillian Adams, who finished her time as Janet Thornton's PA at the EBI at the end of June this year, has been awarded an MBE (Member of the British Empire) for her lifelong contributions to the administration of science. These honours are awarded by HM The Queen to acknowledge those who have made a significant contribution to UK society through charity work or in their day-to-day job. In Gillian's case, this award recognises her long contribution to science administration over many years, first running the *Journal of Molecular Biology's* office in its early years, then as a PA to Sidney Brenner and Aaron Klug at the Laboratory of Molecular Biology, and most recently at the EBI. "In every case she has given much more than could ever have been expected. Many at the EBI have benefited from her kindness, wisdom, efficiency and humour," said Janet Thornton. Gillian and the other recipients will be decorated by the Queen at a ceremony held at Buckingham Palace later in the year.

Also from the EBI, **Annabel Todd** is one of only five recipients of a 2006 Microsoft Research European Fellowship, which provides support and funding for promising post-doctoral scientists who are establishing a track record of world-leading research in emerging science and technology. Annabel, who is a postdoc in Nick Luscombe's group, will use the award to investigate metabolic regulation in yeast on a genomic scale.

EMBL scientists, EMBLEM and EMBL Ventures have founded **Elara Pharmaceuticals GmbH**, a spin-off company that will translate basic research findings into new anti-cancer drugs. It will follow up on promising small molecule leads that have shown powerful anti-cancer actions in screening experiments and has been granted exclusive license rights to selected discoveries made at EMBL. Elara Pharmaceuticals' co-founders from EMBL are Joe Lewis, head of the Chemical Biology Core Facility, George Reid, Scientist in the Gannon Group and CEO of Elara, and EMBO Executive Director and EMBL Senior Scientist Frank Gannon.

It is with deep regret that we inform the EMBL community of the death of Florence Horn on Thursday, 13 July in Grenoble. Florence was a postdoc in Gert Vriend's group from 1996-1999.

events@EMBL

10-24 September Heidelberg

EMBO Practical Course: Molecular approaches to Evolution and Development

13-15 September Hamburg

Faculty Retreat/Heads of Units Meeting/Senior Scientists Meeting

2 October Heidelberg

Science and Society: "Dawkin's Meme: Why is there still no science of memetics?" Susan Blackmore, freelance writer, lecturer and broadcaster

14-17 October Heidelberg

3rd EMBL Biennial Symposium: From Functional Genomics to Systems Biology

19-23 October Heidelberg

EMBO Conference on Molecular Microbiology: Dynamics, Evolution and Expression of Prokaryotic Genomes

23-30 October Hamburg

EMBO Practical Course: Solution Scattering from Biological Macromolecules

3-4 November Heidelberg

7th EMBL/EMBO Joint Conference 2006 on Science and Society: Genes, Brain/Mind and Behaviour

For more events, see www-db.embl.de/jss/EmblGroupsOrg/events_2.html