



## Draft EMBL Programme 2007–2011 presented to Council

The shape of things to come was the main topic of the November Council meeting with EMBL DG Iain Mattaj's presentation of the first draft of the EMBL Programme 2007-2011 and the accompanying Indicative Scheme (budgetary plan). The ground was prepared by the Strategic Forward Look 2006-2015, written by Iain and former DG Fotis Kafatos under the guidance of a committee established by EMBL Council. This long-term strategy was approved in 2003 by Council and served as a blueprint to define the major themes for the Programme. [page 2](#)

## It wasn't all work at "Biology at Work"

"Biology at Work", the seventh International EMBL PhD Student Symposium, was held on 1–3 December in Heidelberg. Attending were around 150 participants from 29 countries, representing 34 nationalities. An audience of PhD students and other young researchers interested in broadening their horizons got a chance to meet experts from a wide range of fields and engage in no-holds-barred discussions on the applications of current research. [page 3](#)



## High-throughput facility inaugurated in Hamburg

On 16 November EMBL-Hamburg inaugurated Europe's largest high-throughput crystallisation facility, an important addition to the services that the Outstation offers to researchers in the EMBL member states. In his remarks, DG Iain Mattaj emphasised the importance of combining modern high-throughput technologies with continued improvements in synchrotron sources under EMBL's expanded plan for systems biology in the upcoming years. [page 4](#)

## Kafatos named Chairman of ERC Council

Fotis C. Kafatos has been elected Chairman of the future European Research Council (ERC) by its newly nominated Scientific Council. The 22 founding members of the Council were appointed last July by European Commissioner for Science Janez Potočnik; Fotis' election followed a procedure agreed on at their inaugural meeting in October. At a meeting of the Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE) held at UNESCO in Paris in November, Fotis and other members of the Council presented their vision of future activities. The ISE was launched about three years ago by the ELSF (EMBL, EMBO and FEBS) and several other organisations. It has provided a platform for scientists to voice their opinions on the establishment of the ERC. Rapid progress is being made towards that goal; the EU hopes to launch the ERC in connection with its next Framework Programme (FP7). [page 3](#)

## Recipe for success at the EBI

Is eating 100g of raw turnip from Finland really twice as healthy as eating 100g from the US or Canada and nearly three times as healthy as the same amount from Denmark? You may soon find out at the EBI website. Researchers from 21 countries and 40 organisations, including the EBI, have launched a five-year project called European Food Information Resource Network to build and disseminate a comprehensive database of food composition data in Europe. [page 4](#)

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# Draft EMBL Programme presented to Council

The shape of things to come was the main topic of the November Council meeting with EMBL DG Iain Mattaj's presentation of the first draft of the EMBL Programme 2007-2011 and the accompanying Indicative Scheme (budgetary plan).

The Programme has been formulated with extensive input and support from internal and external sources such as the EMBL heads of units, faculty members and coordinators of services, training, outreach and technology transfer activities. Regular evaluations of EMBL units by SAC also provided crucial input. The ground was prepared by the Strategic Forward Look 2006-2015, written by Iain and former DG Fotis Kafatos under the guidance of a committee established by EMBL Council. This long-term strategy was approved in 2003 by Council and served as a blueprint to define the major themes for the Programme.

**EMBL's value to the member states.** Iain set the scene by highlighting EMBL's strengths. The institute is a recognised success in all areas of activity, from basic molecular biology research to the provision of research services to member states, the development of technologies and instrumentation, technology transfer, and advanced training. EMBL's participation in more than 60 EU-funded networks reveals its importance as a node for integrating European research. Its leading role in European molecular biology is confirmed by a survey of publications from 1992-2002 conducted by ISI.

EMBL services in bioinformatics and structural biology are unique in Europe. EMBL has been the leading provider of synchrotron radiation to life scientists for three decades. The integration of technology platforms within the Partnership for Structural Biology (PSB) in Grenoble and the planned Integrated Centre for Structural Biology in Hamburg will help maintain this leadership. In January EMBL Grenoble will celebrate the opening of a the first European centre to integrate the entire spectrum of structural biology technologies, a joint facility with the ILL, ESRF, IBS and the Institut de Virologie Moléculaire Structurale.

EMBL Hamburg is also involved in a major upgrade of its facilities for structural biology; the proposed construction of PETRA-III will provide a new quality of beamlines for structural biology on the EMBL-Hamburg/DESY

site. PETRA III construction will start in 2007, aiming to begin operations in 2009, hopefully with the German ministry for education and research financing most of EMBL's share in beamline design and construction.

The European Bioinformatics Institute (EMBL-EBI) is widely recognized as the European hub for biomolecular databases, as the European repository for biomolecular data and the partner for global collaborations with similar organisations in the USA and Japan. Data resources served through the EBI's website are accessed more than 2.5 million times every day. The amount of biological data will continue to grow exponentially; developing and maintaining the most important data resources will require a growth in the EBI from 265 employees today to at least 400 employees by 2011. The Wellcome Trust, UKMRC and BBSRC have already agreed to help EMBL fund a new extension to the EBI building. EMBL-EBI is currently only 50% funded by EMBL; the rest comes from the British Research Councils, industry and grants from the EU (22%) and the NIH. More stable funding of EMBL-EBI is necessary in the future and Council has been asked to contribute up to 65% to EBI's budget in the future. EMBL is also exploring the possibility of obtaining more stable funding from the EU.

Cutting edge services can only be provided if basic research and technology development drive innovative approaches and new techniques. Alongside synchrotron radiation techniques, biomolecular databases and software, key developments have been made in areas such as imaging using light and electron microscopy. EMBL's technology transfer arm, EMBLEM, holds more than 200 patents and patent applications and has helped to set up eight spin-out companies.

Advanced training has been a core mission since the beginning and each year EMBL trains 170 pre-doctoral students, hosts 2,000 facility users and 1,000 visitors, trains 190 postdoctoral fellows and 75 group leaders, most of whom will return to a member state upon leaving EMBL. More than 3,000 alumni form a unique network of researchers in Europe and the world.

**Highlights of the Programme.** The general scientific strategy will be to build on EMBL's strengths: the collaborative culture and excellent basic research, and to integrate existing

disciplines to pursue systems biology. Investments in new technologies such as chemical biology and high-throughput instrumentation are required, and the computing infrastructure needs to be improved to support the integration of computational biology throughout EMBL. The core facilities established under the last EMBL Programme already support interdisciplinarity by supplying equipment and expertise to individual groups, and this successful model will be continued. EMBL Centres are proposed as a way to promote ambitious interdisciplinary approaches and Iain emphasised how such critical horizontal activities that reach all parts of EMBL will be to the future of systems biology.

An area in which EMBL has already increased its efforts is disease-related research. While all the Units of the laboratory are engaged in such efforts, the mouse is growing in importance as a model for research into human disease. The Monterotondo Outstation has steadily established itself as a highly-regarded international centre within the mouse biology community. The new Centre for Disease Mechanisms will draw the Outstation together with other EMBL groups, working both with the mouse and in other systems, to further promote basic research related to disease throughout the Laboratory.

The new EMBL International Centre for Advanced Training (EICAT) will integrate the highly-successful EMBL International PhD Programme with the new postdoc programme, vocational training for scientific and non-scientific staff, the teacher training facility of the European Learning Laboratory for the Life Sciences (ELLS) and courses, conferences and workshops. EMBL has hosted more than 10,000 participants in the past five years at meetings that it has helped organise, many of them with EMBO support. Currently training and conference activities are constrained by space; thus Council has agreed to the construction of a new multi-purpose building in Heidelberg with considerable financial backing from Germany. Alternative scenarios are now being discussed including a state of the art advanced training centre, including conference facilities, made possible by a generous offer of support from a local foundation.

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## What else was decided at the Council meeting?

- Croatia will become the 19th member state of EMBL once the formal ratification process has been completed.
- New SAC appointments are Anna Tramontana (Genomics & Bioinformatics) and Hiroaki Kitano (Systems Biology).
- All chairs and vice-chairs of Council and the

Finance Committee have been re-elected. Eero Vuorio will serve another year as chair of EMBL Council.

- EMBL Allowances are reviewed on a regular basis by the Working Group on Term and Conditions of Employment, which makes recommendations about changes for Council approval to ensure alignment of salary conditions over different sites of European inter-governmental organisations with respect to

the host country costs. Council supports this policy and did not agree to the introduction of a site-specific allowance. In the case of childcare at the EBI, EMBL will make all efforts to ensure that sufficient childcare provision continues at a cost comparable to local rates.

- Long term care insurance will begin next year (see page 12).

## It wasn't all work at "Biology at Work"

Admittedly, the grounds at EMBL-Heidelberg have been a bit of a building site lately. But when red triangle "hazard" signs began to appear indoors, too, they caused even more confusion.

However, these referred to "Biology at Work"; not just the day-to-day type occurring at EMBL, but the 7th International EMBL PhD Student Symposium held on 1–3 December.

Though we're working in a basic research laboratory, we are also fascinated by the daily applications of biology. The symposium focused on the applications of science in diverse areas like food production, pharmaceuticals, evolutionary studies, environmental issues, neurobiology and health care.

Thanks to a Marie Curie Actions grant obtained by last year's organising committee to support the conference for another three years, this year's symposium was organised by a core group of eleven predoc students, representing all of the EMBL units.

The aim was to bring together participants from diverse areas of biology to promote communication between students and established

scientists from around the globe and give them the opportunity to discuss science in a relaxed atmosphere. Attending the symposium were around 150 participants from 29 countries, representing 34 nationalities.

The target audience was open-minded PhD students and other young researchers interested in broadening their horizons beyond their own research speciality.

A distinguishing feature of the symposium was its broad focus and diverse range of speakers. Ingo Potrykus (ETH Zürich) talked about 'Golden Rice'; Bobby Gaspar (University College London) discussed gene therapy, and Pascal Lee (SETI Institute and NASA Ames Research Centre) introducing us to extraterrestrial life. The speakers were terrific, giving stimulating talks accessible to everyone; they were eager to participate in all symposium activities and were a dream for the organising committee to work with. We even had the pleasure of an impromptu, entertaining song, composed and sung by one of the speakers, Ron Laskey of the University of Cambridge (pictured).

Virtually all of the new EMBL PhD students attended, fulfilling one of the event's major aims: to stimulate interaction between young and more experienced researchers. An animated, if occasionally "hot-headed", panel discussion covered topics such as the motivation to always mention the applications of basic research with respect to obtaining grants and the influence of societal views on scientific progression.

We would like to extend our appreciation to our understanding group leaders, as well as to everyone who helped make the three days a success. We sincerely hope that next year's symposium will be as successful and will motivate even more of EMBL's young researchers to attend.

– The Organising Committee

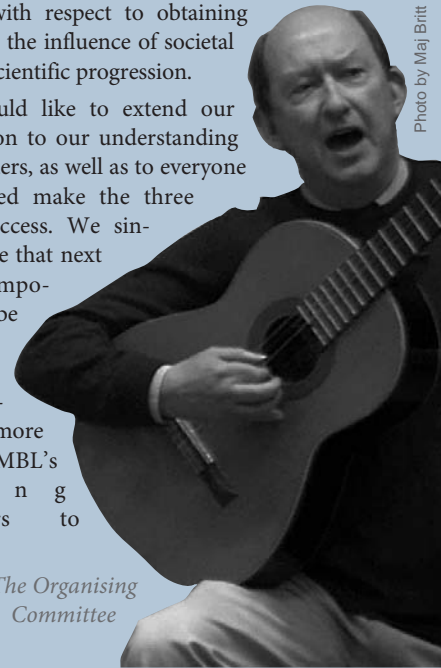


Photo by Mai Britt Hansen

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External integration with the member states will be increased through the activities of the Alumni Association, EMBLEM, EMBL partnerships, the EIROforum and outreach activities. EMBL will continue its very popular scheme that helps share expertise and establish partner institutes in EMBL member states along the EMBL model. Four partnerships have been established so far and several others involving institutions in Spain, France, the UK and the Nordic countries are being discussed, mostly in scientific areas that are complementary to EMBL and which offer excellent collaborative opportunities to EMBL scientists.

Over the past five years, outreach and communication have become essential components of EMBL's activities. Both the highly successful Science and Society Programme and teacher training organised by ELLS will be continued in close collaboration with EMBO. Public relations will include the publication of annual reports, newsletters and press releases, participation in conferences and exhibits as well as visits and open houses. With the EIROforum partners we will continue "Science on Stage" and participate jointly in other outreach events such as ESOF 2006.

In his final remarks on the Programme, Iain emphasised administrative issues including a plan to make voluntary long-term care insurance available to staff members (page 12), updates of the human resources personnel software and the continued refurbishment of the main lab.

## Kafatos named Chairman of ERC Council

Fotis C. Kafatos has been elected Chairman of the future European Research Council (ERC) by the newly nominated Scientific Council. The 22 founding members of the Council, were appointed last July by European Commissioner for Science Janez Potočnik; Fotis' election followed a procedure agreed at their inaugural meeting in October. Helga Nowotny and Daniel Estève, were elected Vice-Chairs.

Fotis and other members of the Council presented their vision of the future at a meeting of the Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE) held at UNESCO in Paris in November. The ISE was launched about three years ago by ELSF (EMBL, EMBO and FEBS) and several other organisations. It has provided a platform for European scientists to voice their opinions on the establishment of the ERC. 220 participants attended the November meeting.

EU budget negotiations are still underway, but the Council's goal is to start with a reduced budget and to increase the annual budget to one billion euros after the first year. Many questions remain to be addressed, including whether funding will be given mostly to younger scientists or established teams. The criterion for funding will be scientific excellence. An evaluation of the ERC is planned after three years. ISE will maintain its interest in the establishment and operation of the ERC.

The issue of Research Infrastructures is highly important to ensure Europe's competitive-

ness in science and is one of the main topics under discussion. John Wood, chairman of ESFRI (European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures) explained how the committee plans to establish a roadmap for future European research infrastructures. Robert-Jan Smits, Head of Directorate B at DG Research, presented plans for funding research infrastructures in FP7. Achilleas Mitsos, Director General for Research, had already provided insights into the budget negotiations in his welcome address to the ISE delegates. The UK presidency will most likely make a proposal that is slightly higher than an earlier one made by Luxembourg. If this is approved, the EC will be able to fund a preparatory phase for all infrastructures that have made it onto the opportunities list in the programme for FP7. However only a few projects are likely to receive EU funding beyond that preparatory phase, including databases.

Another topic concerned the new instruments under FP7. Commission representatives presented in some detail how they see the implementation of the various initiatives and specific programmes that will be launched with FP7. For more, see [www.cordis.lu/fp7](http://www.cordis.lu/fp7)

An interview with Fotis Kafatos following his nomination appears in *Nature* ([www.nature.com/nature/journal/v438/n7069/full/438723a.html](http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v438/n7069/full/438723a.html)). See [www.initiative-science-europe.org](http://www.initiative-science-europe.org) for more about the ISE.

For more information about the ERC, see [www.cordis.lu/fp7/ideas.htm](http://www.cordis.lu/fp7/ideas.htm)



# A cause for celebration

On 16 November the Hamburg Outstation took a major leap with the services it provides with the opening of Europe's largest high-throughput crystallisation facility.

The resource was officially opened on the DESY/EMBL-Hamburg site in the presence of Jürgen Roemer-Mähler of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), Josefina Enfedaque of the European Commission and Roland Salchow, representative of the city council of Freie und Hansestadt Hamburg.

Iain Mattaj delivered a speech emphasising the importance of modern high-throughput technologies together with continued improvements in synchrotron resources for the future challenges in the life sciences. High-throughput facilities are a critical area of EMBL's expanded plan for systems biology in the draft EMBL Programme (see page 2).

The official ceremony was followed by a one-day workshop on macromolecular crystallisation on 17 November. More than 60 participants from 16 nations attended the event, which consisted of demonstrations of the latest methods and techniques and lectures from world-leading crystallographers from Europe and the US, including EMBL-Hamburg's



Josefina Enfedaque, Jürgen Roemer-Mähler, Iain Mattaj and Edgar Weckert (HASYLab) make it official

Manfred Weiss and José Márquez from EMBL-Grenoble.

Participants were also offered the chance to bring along protein samples from their own laboratories to experience the services offered by the facility themselves. Many took advantage of this opportunity, and following the event the high-throughput crystallisation facility team was busy setting up the 32 samples.

The automation of each step in the process is

just one of the facility's innovations. The workshop proved that the resource is capable of setting up 100 plates (10,000 experiments) per day, and it has the capacity to store and image 10,000 crystallisation plates. In addition, users will be able to monitor the progress of their crystals from their own computers.

From 2006, the high-throughput facility will become accessible to the general user community. *– Jochen Müller-Dieckmann*

## New initiative for food composition data is a recipe for success

A turnip is a turnip is a turnip, right? You might think so, but if the figures are to be believed, eating 100g of raw turnip from Finland is twice as healthy as eating 100g from the US or Canada and nearly three times as healthy as eating the same amount from Denmark.

Each of these countries, like about 150 others, maintains a food information resource to provide information on the nutritional composition of foods. These provide values for the amount of energy, protein, fat, vitamins and minerals that a food item contains, based on chemical analyses that are carried out in analytical laboratories or derived, in the case of composite foods, from the nutrient composition of ingredients.

In some circumstances, though, different nutrient values are given for the same food – in the turnip's case, for example, levels of vitamin C are given as 39.7mg, 21mg and 16mg per 100g for Finland, the US and Denmark respectively.

Such variations can be attributed to many factors; the selenium content of cereals varies

depending on the selenium content of the soil, for example, or values for beef might be based on one particular cut of meat from one particular breed of cow.

Whatever the reason, the variations have become a hindrance to effective collaboration between national database compilers, end-users of the data and policy makers based in different countries. For example, extensive long-term studies are underway across Europe to look at correlations between diet and different types of cancer; however, the inconsistency in the data in food composition tables make comparisons difficult.

Now that's set to change. On 11 October, researchers from 21 countries and 40 organisations, including the EBI, launched a five-year project called EuroFIR (European Food Information Resource Network), designed to build and disseminate a comprehensive, coherent and validated databank to serve as a single, authoritative source of food composition data in Europe for nutrients, and for newly emerging bioactive compounds with potential health benefits.

The EBI's involvement in EuroFIR is to collaborate in the internet development and deployment of EuroFIR databank systems. Existing datasets are rather separate national efforts, with varying levels of funding, technical support and accessibility. As well as working on common XML data specifications, and exploring the role of SOAP-based web services to enable distributed access to the national datasets, the EBI will demonstrate a prototype implementation using the Sequence Retrieval System (SRS) as a way of rapidly deploying data from different sources in a common web-accessible query environment.

The EBI also hopes to exploit opportunities to connect the food composition data to other bioinformatics resources. The Chemical Entities of Biological Interest (ChEBI) database ([www.ebi.ac.uk/chebi](http://www.ebi.ac.uk/chebi)) is a dictionary of "small molecular entities", which includes vitamins and enzymes, and could include more of the specific food components and become a reference for EuroFIR.

Further details about EuroFIR can be found at [www.eurofir.net](http://www.eurofir.net)

# Grenoble goes global...

On 13 October EMBL-Grenoble hosted a scientific delegation from Cuba, led by Fidel Castro Díaz-Balart, Scientific Consultant of the Cuban government (and before you ask, yes, he *is* a relation). The group, which comprised directors from leading research institutes and the scientific attaché of the Cuban Embassy in France, toured the ESRF (European Synchrotron Radiation Facility) and the Grenoble Outstation.

First, Stephen Cusack summarised the research activities of the Grenoble groups, and then the guests saw the laboratory for them-

selves. Darren Hart showed how robotics are being used for high-throughput protein expression and José Márquez led the guests through the protein crystallisation laboratories. There was also a visit to the synchrotron beamline BM14 that EMBL runs together with the UK-MRC Team (headed by Martin Walsh), a demonstration of protein crystal handling using the EMBL developed sample changer and micro-diffractometer devices by Florent Cipriani.

The day ended with a visit to the ILL neutron source and the dedicated crystal-growing device Monika Budayova-Spano is developing within the Neutron Group.

From the numerous questions the delegation asked, the visit appeared to be much appreciated, and different opportunities for possible future collaboration are under discussion.

– Hassan Belrhali

Left to right: Martin Walsh demonstrates the BM14 beamline to Rolando Pérez (CIM), Ariel Felipe, scientific attaché, Carlos Rodríguez (IMRE) and Fidel Castro Díaz-Balart.



## Ich bin ein Hinxtoner

Staff at the EBI who want to make the most of working in a pan-European environment alongside their 23 German colleagues can now partake of free German lessons provided by Scientific Training Officer Lisa Mullan.

Lisa, who taught English in Nuremberg for seven years before joining the EBI, began offering the lunchtime courses in German after several staff members expressed an interest in better communication with their German colleagues – or their German spouses. Beginners as well as those needing a refresher course are all welcome.

“For Christmas we’re planning a Murder Mystery evening with Glühwein and Stollen,” says Lisa. “I’ll definitely carry on the lessons next year.”

You don’t have to be at the EBI to take part, either. Check out Lisa’s lessons online at [www.ebi.ac.uk/training/internal/courses](http://www.ebi.ac.uk/training/internal/courses), and don’t forget to take advantage of EMBL’s language training subsidy at all sites; see [www.embl.org/staffonly/personnel/forms.html#language](http://www.embl.org/staffonly/personnel/forms.html#language) for details.

### Lisa’s Language Learning Tips:

- Buy a good grammar book and work your way through it.
- Try to learn three new words every day.
- Write the names of household things on Post-It notes and stick them to the items they refer to.

EMBL is always open to interested visitors, and on 8 November, 16 Italian journalists made their way from Rome, Milan and Bologna to meet the community at EMBL-Hamburg. The visit was led by the vice-president of the European Association of Science Journalists (EUSJA), Hans-Joachim Neubert, and stemmed from his interest in the BIOXHIT project.

Manfred Weiss gave a lecture about the overall mission of EMBL as a whole, moving on to talk about the world of synchrotron radiation, 3D structures, diffraction experiments and structure determination and their practical applications. As well as BIOXHIT, he introduced other major EMBL-Hamburg projects including X-MTB and the PETRA-III collaboration with DESY.

## ...and opens its doors to those closer to home

On 7–9 October, the Grenoble Outstation took part in the city’s Fête de la Science with a joint EMBL/ESRF/ILL stand, which was visited by about 16,500 people during the sunny three-day weekend devoted to promoting communication between scientists and the general public, including a day specifically aimed at school pupils.

Part of a wider national programme, which involves other such institutes in other regions with open days and fairs, the Grenoble weekend offered a good opportunity for the three research institutes to demonstrate how they work together – and to show the public

what *really* goes on at the Polygone Scientifique.

The stand focused on structural biology, explaining that, thanks to the diffraction techniques used at the ESRF and ILL, scientists can look into the core of proteins to discover the secrets of their structure.

Fifty colleagues from the three institutes explained their work using models. Visitors could manipulate a laser set-up explaining diffraction, observe protein crystals through microscopes and explore the inside of a protein wearing stereo-polarised glasses.

– Hassan Belrhali



## Christina hands over the reins after three decades at EMBL-Heidelberg

There's usually a lot of coming and going at EMBL, but November saw the departure of one of the Lab's very first founding employees, Gene Expression secretary Christina Kjaer. Here she shares some of her thirty years of memories of EMBL before embarking on an exotic holiday.

### How long have you been at EMBL?

I started in July 1975, so 30 years and seven months ago, before EMBL was even built. At first we were spread out in different locations – I was down in Heidelberg's Altstadt, while others were in office space in the Max Planck Institute.

Before we moved into our new building in 1978, we were in a building where the Kinderhaus is now, and we stayed there for a year.

### What was EMBL like in the early days?

It was like a small community – everybody knew everybody else. There were only a few scientists and a few people in administration in 1975. There are only two people still at EMBL who were here before me – Anne Walter, who came in January 1975, and Frieda Glöckner.

### How has your job changed over the years?

I've been moving a lot, from one department to another. For 18 and a half years I was in administration, and then in March 1993 I came to Gene Expression. Within administration I had lots of different roles and worked with many different people, but the



most enjoyable part has been the last few years I've spent in Gene Expression.

Of course, another thing is that technology has changed so much over the years. When we started we just had a typewriter and had to make copies of things with carbon paper. I wouldn't want to go back to that!

The language of the lab also changed. In the

first ten years or so, papers were published in German and other languages, like French. Now everything is done in English.

### What particular memories of EMBL will you take away with you?

For me the best part was that it was a very varied job. It was very exciting because I was able to work with people from all the different departments. In the early days there were not enough people to do everything as the lab got bigger, so we took on jobs for other departments and got involved in pretty much everything – even technical and building maintenance issues. But I'll also remember the parties. There have been lots of parties!

### What will you miss most?

The international environment. I loved being able to work with people from all over the world. And this turnover all the time; it's sad when nice people leave, but they're always replaced by new nice people! And I hold the life scientists in very high esteem. They have such a hard job, yet they're always very kind. I've had nothing but good experiences working with them.

### What are your plans for retirement?

First I'm going to be touring India for three months! Then when I come back I'll resume my piano playing, do my gardening and maybe some voluntary work; and I'll be back here often to visit friends. It's such a great atmosphere; I'm very sad to leave.

## Stem cells go public at Communicating European Research conference

Stem cells offer great promise for the field of regenerative medicine, as researchers discover the mechanisms by which the body uses them to replace damaged or diseased tissue. They have also been the subject of considerable social controversy. So when scientists from institutes throughout Europe (including EMBL's Monterotondo Outstation) drew up plans for an integrated project called EuroStemCell, they decided to include a major communications and outreach component. This fit perfectly with the European Commission's desire to see researchers make a greater effort to present their work to the public. Journalists, politicians, scientists and many others got a look at the first results at the conference on "Communicating European Research" sponsored by the Commission in Brussels on 14–15 November.

"This communications initiative started with the scientists, who saw the integrated project structure as a unique opportunity to incorporate communications and outreach activities in a scientific project," says Kate Doherty, the project's communications and outreach officer.

"Our goals are to facilitate collaboration and communication within a diverse scientific community and also to engage the public in the project. We're using several mechanisms to accomplish this. The project includes training activities for scientists and clinicians, aiming to familiarise them with technologies and the various aspects of stem cell research, including ethical issues."

Other efforts are directed at the general public. At the CER conference, Kate and her colleagues presented a rough version of a DVD aimed to give high-school students an introduction to stem cell research. "We decided to develop this project collaboratively, with a group of independent filmmakers, so that the scientists could tell their own story. The film was made to be accessible to a broad general audience, people with no prior knowledge of the topic, and we think it will also be useful for patient groups and many others," she says. "The conference was beneficial because we received very useful feedback and some good ideas about how to distribute the DVD throughout Europe."

Clips should be available early next year on the project's website at [www.eurostemcell.org](http://www.eurostemcell.org). There you will also be able to order a copy of the DVD and find out about other dimensions of the project, from scientific results to stem cell events. These include public meetings, workshops on the ethical dimensions of stem cell research and numerous activities for basic and clinical researchers. To find out more you can also talk to Claus Nerlov and Liliana Minichiello, whose groups in Monterotondo are participating in the scientific and training activities.

"The purpose of the meetings and summer schools is to prepare the ground, to build the foundations for regenerative medicine," Kate says. "EuroStemCell researchers are developing new methods and technologies to understand the properties of different types of stem cells and their therapeutic potential, and those have to be communicated to both the clinical and research communities. As that happens, we'll do everything we can to engage the public in the process."



### Strengthening research communities

*Scientists become part of a research community based on shared interests, but what makes them remain in that community? What keeps a community resilient, interactive and sustainable?*

EMBO recognises that a successful research community needs to do two things – encourage interactions between its members and promote progress in its research area. The organisation therefore supports communities from two angles – both horizontally and vertically. Activities supporting horizontal communities encourage scientists to network across different research areas and career levels, while initiatives targeting vertical communities address specific fields.

Those who follow EMBO's activities closely will already be aware of its horizontal communities. EMBO members, fellows and young investigators represent highly diverse research areas across all fields of molecular biology. Individuals in each of these groups benefit

from regular contact with their communities through many channels including annual meetings, networking events and professional development opportunities.

While EMBO's commitment to these communities remains strong, it also recognises the need to support these groups in the vertical sense by focusing on specific research areas. Targeted initiatives include EMBO sectoral meetings, courses and workshops, the EMBO conference series and the new online open-access journal, *Molecular Systems Biology* ([www.molecularsystemsbiology.com](http://www.molecularsystemsbiology.com)).

Since 1999, EMBO sectoral meetings have brought EMBO members together to discuss trends and perspectives within particular research communities. This direct interaction enables detailed discussion on the research ambitions of specific areas and how EMBO can help to support these goals. Communities that have participated in past meetings cover a broad spectrum – neurobiology, plant biology, microbiology, computational biology, immunology and molecular medicine.

Follow-up meetings help to strengthen these communities and often identify particular research areas that require more targeted attention. One example is the EMBO Molecular Medicine Series, which concentrates on specific diseases. The next meeting, in May 2006, will focus on breast cancer ([breastcancer.embo.org](http://breastcancer.embo.org)). The aim is to

encourage practical dialogue between researchers and clinicians and find effective ways of moving discoveries from the lab to the clinic.

EMBO courses, workshops and conferences also provide a forum for sustained dialogue on a wide range of topics. In particular, the EMBO conference series provides a catalyst for long-term collaboration among communities in Europe and the rest of the world ([www.embo.org/courses\\_workshops](http://www.embo.org/courses_workshops)). Funding is granted for a series of three conferences over a six-year period, often alternating with related meetings held in the USA.

EMBO also serves vertical research communities through its journals. The *EMBO Journal* and *EMBO reports* cover all areas while *Molecular Systems Biology* specifically addresses the needs of the systems biology community, helping to set standards in this emerging field. An online feedback forum also stimulates discussion by encouraging readers to comment on the theoretical and experimental aspects of published papers.

Supporting strong and effective research communities requires investment and commitment. It is only by providing this type of individual attention to specific communities that EMBO can continue to identify, predict and react to the needs of European molecular biology research.

– Anne Seller & Lindsay Johnson

## News from EMBLEM

This autumn EMBLEM presented EMBL technologies to international audiences at two major Biotech events: Biotechnica Hannover in October, Germany's largest Biotechnology fair, and Medica Düsseldorf in November. Products such as the "Mini-Incubator" (an incubator which allows scientists to observe cells for several hours under the microscope) as well as other new EMBL technologies were the focus of intensive networking at the EMBL booth at Biotechnica; at Medica EMBLEM contributed to the European Space Agency pavilion. EMBLEM supports ESA technology transfer in the life sciences. With EMBLEM's consortium partners ISS Lab Ruhr (Germany), MEDES (France) and AGT (Italy) the EMBLEM team informed visitors about various commercial research possibilities in space.

EMBLEM's prize, the €1,000 "Preis der Fachhochschule Mannheim", was awarded this year to Christoph Färber of the Institut für Unternehmensführung for his thesis on the application of Controlling Instruments in Biotechnology Start-ups and the establishment of a successful business plan. The prize is awarded to outstanding theses in industrial engineering that bridge the gap between theory and practice.

## The MRC VIP comes to EMBL-Heidelberg

Chief Executive of the Medical Research Council (MRC) Colin Blakemore was EMBL's VIP on 18 November. He was accompanied by Dr. Mike Davies, Board Programme Manager of the MRC's Molecular & Cellular Medicine research board and EMBL's UK Council delegate.

Professor Blakemore was given a presentation about EMBL and a tour of the Core Facilities, and gave a seminar on interaction of genes and environment in the development and function of the cerebral cortex.

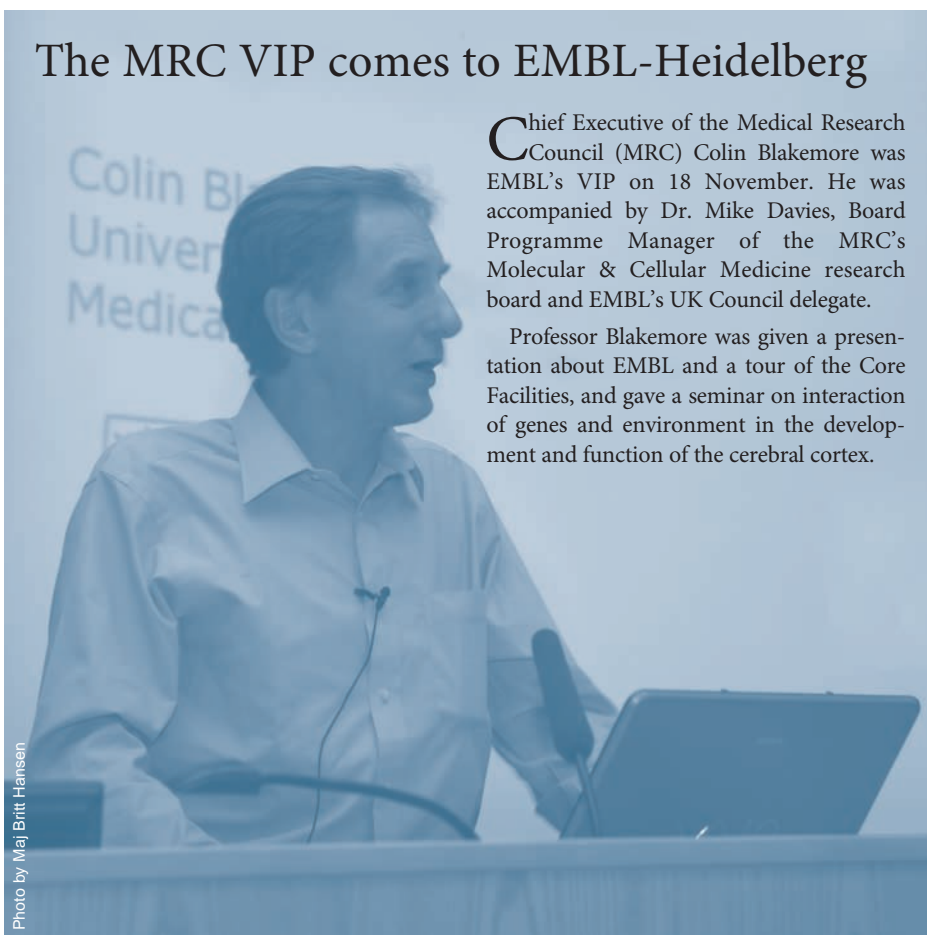


Photo by Maj Britt Hansen

## Sarah Sherwood moves on

Her face has never appeared in this newsletter, as far as we can tell after rummaging through the archives, but her presence has been felt on every page for many years. Usually the staff of the Office of Information and Public Affairs (OIPA) remains behind the scenes as it manages EMBL's internal and external information. In this case we have to make an exception: Sarah Sherwood, former editor of EMBL&cetera, left the Lab at the beginning of December to start a family and take up a new position in Spain. We thought we'd better tell you where to find her when all of your e-mails bounce.

Sarah joined OIPA in March 1999 to help out with all of the office's tasks and assist Halldór Stefánsson with the new Science and Society programme. On her first day she was plunged into the process of the annual report and given responsibility for planning a major EMBL alumni meeting, which saw the launch of the Alumni Association.

That went so well, she was given most of the association's administrative tasks. As well as setting up the alumni network, she coordinated the tracking down of over 3,700 alumni who have dispersed throughout Europe and the rest of the world. The task honed her detective skills, so if you leave EMBL for a sheep farm in the Outback and think you're safe, think again.

She quickly took on the production of the Research Reports and most other OIPA docu-

Sarah (left) is handing over her Alumni Association responsibilities to Mehrnoosh Rayner



Photo by Maj Britt Hansen

ments; she has been a main contributor to the Annual Report, doing its complete layout for a couple of years; she helped put together the grant that established the ELLS, etc., etc. The DG Office quickly discovered her talents, so when the Lab decided to hold an Open House in 2003, for the first time in 15 years, it was obvious she'd be involved.

Sarah really found her pace with EMBL&cetera. "EMBL was lacking a central means of communication for the five sites of the Lab and the extended community," she says. "In setting up the newsletter, we were given a great deal of freedom to think outside the box. We could carefully reflect on its functions, were encouraged to be very creative, and received a great amount of support from the DG Office, EMBL's scientists, the Photolab, IT Services and many, many others.

"Creating a newsletter aimed at the internal and external communities, alumni and our member states gave us a very interesting perspective: it was clear that good external relations depended on good internal communications. Sites and programmes needed effective channels to speak to each other. This was working well scientifically, but the Lab is a lot more complex, and the whole community needed to become involved."

Still, she says, the newsletter has limits of time and space: EMBL has much greater needs

in terms of internal communication. Several years ago she made a sketch for a web-based information service called "Today at EMBL". The project has been taken over by Sarah's successor, Vienna Leigh, and the web team. "Vienna is also doing the newsletter now and I'm very pleased to be leaving these projects in such competent hands," Sarah says.

She'll be sorely missed by practically everybody – EMBL staff and a lot of visitors, including external participants in several volunteer projects that she organised. One of those involved cleaning up the nearby "Waldpiraten" camp, where the German Children's Cancer Foundation runs summer camps and other activities. "These events showed that EMBL's staff has a lot of energy and enthusiasm for meaningful "extracurricular" projects, even when they involve hard work," Sarah says. "Events like this attract everybody, and are enormously important in drawing the community together: scientists, the many non-scientists who work here, and their families."

We'll miss her tireless energy and dogged attention to detail, to which much of OIPA's success can be attributed. Those qualities will serve her well as she joins a new scientific institute in Barcelona to head communications and outreach activities. We wish her all the best.

– Russ Hodge

### Looking for a predoc?

The details of predoc applicants not shortlisted during the PhD selection process will be made available to alumni, Council, the SAC, partners and supporters.

Each year EMBL's International PhD Programme has to turn down many good candidates due to various constraints. With the introduction of online applications, the number of applicants has risen to its highest point ever, meaning more than 100 very good candidates could not be invited for interview.

The predoc information sharing initiative will allow eligible external parties to access the pool of applicants online following a registration process. Data will become available to principal investigators after the PhD candidate invitation process closes in December; others will gain access after the predoc selection in January. Only data from applicants who explicitly agree will be shared.

More information can be found at [www.embl.org/training/phdprogramme/applicantpool](http://www.embl.org/training/phdprogramme/applicantpool). Queries should be addressed to [predocs@embl.de](mailto:predocs@embl.de).

### New faces on EMBL's Alumni Association board

The Alumni Association board was delighted by the number of candidates who stood for election and the number of members who voted in September. Election results were announced at a meeting in Rome on 2 November, bringing the board to 16 members. The board would like to thank past members who have stood down for their contributions.

Matthias Hentze has replaced Iain Mattaj in representing EMBL at the board meetings, and Mehrnoosh Rayner will take over the coordination of alumni activities from Sarah Sherwood.

The newly elected members are Oddmund Bakke (University of Oslo), Freddy Frischknecht (University of Heidelberg), Bernard Hoflack (Technical University of Dresden), Tony Hyman (Max Planck Institute of Molecular Cell Biology and Genetics, Dresden), Claudia Koch-Brandt (Johannes Gutenberg-Universität, Mainz), Richard Morris (John Innes Centre, Norwich, UK), Giovanni Paoletta (University of Molise-CEINGE Napoli, Naples) and Niovi Santama (University of Cyprus, Cyprus). Names of existing and past members can be viewed on the alumni website, [www.embl.org/aboutus/alumni/board](http://www.embl.org/aboutus/alumni/board)



## ELSO: promoting gender equality in the life sciences

The European Life Scientist Organization (ELSO) hopes to help address the issue of gender equality with a new Database of Expert Women in Molecular Life Sciences. Several of EMBL's senior women and many more female alumni are already included in the database.

Its aim is to provide a resource that will promote gender equality in Europe by improving the visibility of accomplished women from senior postdocs to senior independent scientists. The database will help scientists, universities, research institutions, political institutions, conference organisers and journal edi-

tors to identify appropriately qualified women scientists as candidates for professorships and other positions, to speak at conferences and in seminar programmes, to participate in advisory groups, on monitoring panels, committees and commissions and to review manuscripts, to write commissioned reviews and to serve on the editorial boards of journals.

Users can search the database using keywords, cities, institutions, research area or country, or by the general career stage of the expert.

If you are an expert in the molecular life sciences, you can apply to be included by registering on the ELSO website, [www.elseo-cdc.org](http://www.elseo-cdc.org). To qualify you should be female, and:

- have European nationality and/or be working in Europe;
- have published (as first or last author) a basic research article in an internationally recognised journal within the past three years (senior postdocs should have published at least one paper from their postdoctoral work).

### Setting standards for systems biology

An international team of systems biologists led by the EBI's Nicolas Le Novère has developed a new quality standard for biochemical models. MIRIAM (Minimum Information Requested in the Annotation of Biochemical Models) comprises a set of rules to help researchers to reuse, modify and combine models that are available in public databases such as the EBI's BioModels database.

MIRIAM's creators also include representatives from three other major databases (CellML Model Repository, DOQCS and SigPath). "With MIRIAM we will be able to provide users with a level of quality assurance, so they'll be able to get on with the business of generating and testing new hypotheses instead of recoding someone else's old hypothesis," says Nicolas. Work on MIRIAM and the BioModels database benefitted from seed funding from the US National Institutes of Health (NIH).

Nicolas will also be opening other doors in systems biology with a collaborative grant from the New Energy and Industrial Technology Development Organization (NEDO) in Japan to develop and spread the use of the Systems Biology Graphical Notation, a controlled way of graphically representing reactions and pathways. The EBI's partners in the project are the Hiroaki Kitano Systems Biology Institute in Japan and the SBML team at the California Institute of Technology (Caltech).  
– Cath Brooksbank

**Source Article:** N. Le Novère *et al.* (2005) Minimum information requested in the annotation of biochemical models (MIRIAM). *Nat. Biotechnol.* 23, 1509-1515.

## science&society

### The "right" research in the "wrong" hands?

Is there a kind of research that simply shouldn't be done?

Speaker Jan van Aken, head of Hamburg University's Study Group on Biological Arms Control, thinks so. His example was the artificial reconstruction of the genome belonging to the 1918 influenza virus, which killed around 50 million people in the one short year of its existence. The following year not a single example of the virus remained on the planet – until October 2005, when researchers from the US Armed Forces Institute of Pathology published their work.

This was just one of the themes of the 6th EMBO/EMBL Conference on Science & Society, on the theme of Science and Security, held on 28–29 October at EMBL-Heidelberg.

It is easy to see how society might regard such research as a threat, but what of its scientific merit? Here, too, van Aken was unforgiving: "I see no scientific reason why the researchers did it, given the multitude of current, equally deadly viruses to research."

Eckard Wimmer, Department of Molecular Genetics and Microbiology, Stony Brook, USA, disagreed. "I think you're dead wrong on that one. It's suspected that the 1918 virus was originally an avian 'flu, so it's very important to find out the source of its pathogenicity." Indeed, the 1918 monster had an RNA polymerase that was hyperactive compared to normal influenza, leading to an elevated rate of replication. Researchers fear that the current H5N1 avian 'flu virus will have similar properties.

Such a lively exchange of views set the tone for two days of pre-

sentations and discussions on types of science and technology that regularly hit the headlines because of their controversial nature, from bio-weapons and restrictions on research to biometrics and security databases.

For more information or to view the presentations, visit [www.embo.org/scisoc/conferences.html](http://www.embo.org/scisoc/conferences.html)  
– Andrew Moore

Other ethical questions were raised in an animated session following the related Science and Society Forum seminar on 29 November, "Forensic genetics and the UK's National DNA Database" by Peter Gill from the UK Forensic Science Service. Under the law of that country, all individuals must give a DNA sample if suspected of an offence, adding to the 3.4 million-and-growing samples in the National DNA Database (NDNAD).

Mr Gill talked about the kind of DNA testing that is done – the "workhorse" of the database is STR (Short Tandem Repeat) profiling, but less conclusive mitochondrial DNA tests are also done – and the ways with which samples can be taken from crime scenes, including laser microdissection. The audience was interested to hear how the use of such personal data is controlled.



The Science and Society panel contemplate questions from the audience: from left to right, Ross Anderson, Andrew Marshall, Dragan Primorac, Simone Scholze and Terence Taylor. Photo: Marietta Schupp.

# Tricks of the teaching trade

EMBL scientists were just some of the 500 contributors taking the floor at the recent EIROforum Science on Stage Festival.

This year's fair, funded by the EU and EIROforum, was held on 21–25 November at CERN in Geneva. It brought together science educators from 29 European countries who showed how exciting science can be and how to bring it into the classroom in an engaging way with inspiring projects presented at stands, talks and workshops.

A German class had constructed a working model of an ancient Chinese seismograph; a French group had taken pictures from a weather balloon showing the curvature of the earth; and a Romanian teacher had made an effective demonstration of the way the eye works using a shampoo bottle.

Eleanor Hayes, who recently joined EMBL as the editor of a new European journal for science teachers hosted a workshop to gather feedback from teachers, and other participants. *Science in School* will be launched by the EIROforum in Spring 2006 and will highlight best teaching materials and practices, as well as cutting-edge science.

"I asked the participants, who were mostly science teachers, journalists and museum curators from all over Europe, what would

make them want to read such a journal and what topics they would like to see covered," said Eleanor. "They were incredibly enthusiastic. It was encouraging to learn how interested the teachers were in finding out about comparative teaching practises in other parts of Europe."

In addition, ELLS (the European Learning Laboratory for the Life Sciences) presented the Virtual DNA Microarray game developed by EMBL alumnus Anastasios Koutsos to familiarise teachers with fundamental concepts of molecular biology and large-scale gene expression analysis. The game uses "hardware" (a custom-made mat, Velcro and torches) and "software" (metaphors) to familiarise participants with the applications of DNA-microarray technology. This and other practicals and workshops, which ELLS develop and test in their LearningLABs, will be turned into classroom activities for teachers all over Europe.

As part of the EIROforum jury, ELLS were involved in selecting those events which went on to feature at the festival. These were gathered from a pool of best projects in science teaching from each country, which had presented throughout the year at national events. Science on Stage was the highpoint of EIROforum's two-year-long programme of competitions, workshops and events in 29 participating European countries. The next festival is planned for April 2007, hosted by ESRF in Grenoble after another round of national competitions.

For more information, visit [science-on-stage.web.cern.ch/science-on-stage](http://science-on-stage.web.cern.ch/science-on-stage) and [www.scienceonstage.net](http://www.scienceonstage.net)

## EU funding: learning by doing

When it comes to EU funding, learning by other people's experiences is even better than learning by your own – and that was the idea behind a day-long event of talks and a poster session organised by the Grants Office entitled "Exchange of Experiences on FP6-funded Projects" on 29 November.

Evidence straight from the horse's mouth helped equip current and future grant applicants with insider information about what can go wrong and how to have the best chances of success when putting your project into motion. This was welcome information for the audience of Marie Curie fellows, participating scientists, co-ordinators, project managers, administrators of FP6-funded projects and other interested parties from all EMBL sites.

In her opening speech, Grants Office manager Genèvieve Reinke underlined the importance of EU funding for EMBL, gave an overview of its development during the last seven years and described how the Grants Office works with scientists, funding officers and administrators from all EMBL sites in the

successful implementation of EU-funded projects. Scientists and administrators then contributed their experiences and gave tips on what makes good grant management.

"This kind of event really helps people learn the ins and outs of grant management, and this is something that all EMBL scientists will benefit from at some point in their careers," says Phil Irving from the Structural and Computational Biology Unit, who talked about her experience managing a grant and the interface between administrators and scientists. "Some very interesting points emerged; for example, the changes in the grant procedure that will be happening in FP7, especially with the Marie Curie Programme."

The event finished with a fruitful panel discussion. You can find the list of speakers and the talks, as well as the winners of the poster session, on the Grants Office website ([www.embl.de/LocalInfo/GrantsOffice](http://www.embl.de/LocalInfo/GrantsOffice)), which is also a useful resource for deadlines, application templates and overviews of the funding process.

## DIY Tips #2: How to make a group at EMBL



Step 1: Poor Nick "No-Mates" Luscombe has been feeling pretty lonely since coming to the EBI earlier in 2005...



Step 2: ...but life took a turn for the better just a few weeks ago, when Paul Bertone joined him as staff member.



Step 3: Two's company, but three was even better when Juanma Vaquerizas joined the pair as an Exchange Fellow.



Step 4: Group members are like buses; you wait ages, then they all come along at once. Research fellow Aswin Seshasayee was the fourth addition...



Steps 5 and 6: ...et voilà. The arrival of postdoc Annabel Todd (above) and pre-doc Jeremy Darot (below, left) means the Regulation Group is all ready to research the genomic analysis of regulatory systems. Hurrah!





## Branco Weiss: bringing the outside in

The Branco Weiss Fellowship “Society in Science” at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH) has put out its Call for Proposals 2006. The fellowship is dedicated to exploring the relationship between science and society. It is aimed primarily at life science researchers who want to challenge the boundaries between the disciplines and incorporate social and cultural aspects into their scientific research.

Two EMBL alumni have won the award in previous years. Giuseppe Testa, awarded the Branco Weiss Fellowship in 2003, is grateful for the possibilities it has given him to explore the social and political implications of his research in embryonic stem cell biology and genome engineering. “When I heard about it, I was really pleased that ETH had this vision to combine society issues with scientific practice,” he says. “The work I’m doing raises very important ethical and legal questions, and I was especially interested to explore how such questions are dealt with in different countries. Even the countries within Europe, which you might think would have a similar take on these issues, can

have very differing attitudes.”

Giovanni Frazzetto’s fellowship, received in 2004, has allowed him to explore the genetic and molecular basis of emotions and behaviour, such as anxiety and attachment, in the Gross lab at EMBL-Monterotondo. He’s also a member of EMBL’s Science and Society committee. “It’s a very important initiative to give the chance bring different disciplines together,” he comments. “You have to be a bit of a rebel to look beyond the research and explore the different dimensions and applications in society.”

Both agree that the fellowship has allowed them to go down avenues with their research they might not have been able to pursue otherwise. “It gives you the freedom to go wherever you need to go for expertise or guidance,” says Giuseppe. Giovanni adds: “They really take care of you. It’s really great to be in this small group of fellows with similar aims.”

For more details on applying for a Branco Weiss Fellowship, go to [www.society-in-science.ethz.ch](http://www.society-in-science.ethz.ch). The next deadline for proposals is 15 February 2006.

## news&events

■ **This year the EMBL International PhD Programme** received the highest ever number of applications – 692 in total.

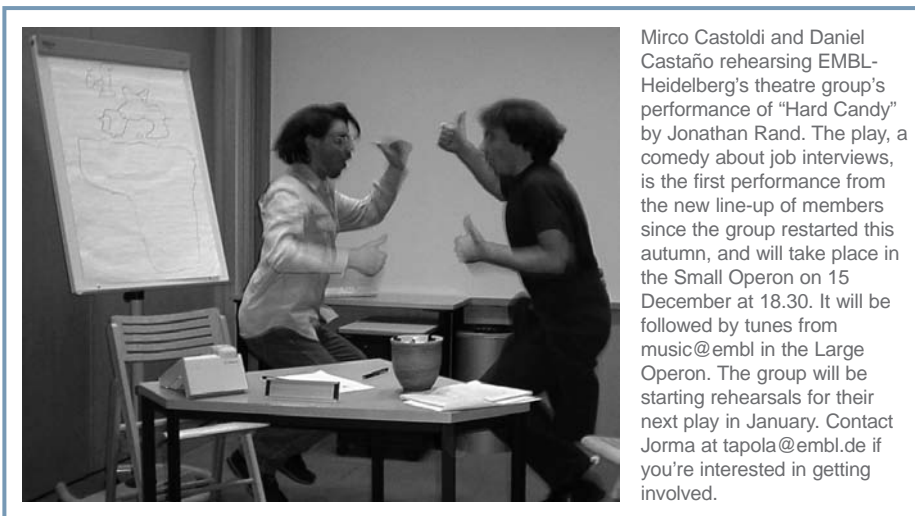
■ **The ISG Hotel** is closed for refurbishment until 21 January, 2006.

■ **EMBL-Grenoble** will be celebrating the completion of the Carl-Ivar Brändén Building on 13 January, 2006. The building, on the EMBL-Grenoble, ILL and ESRF campus on rue Jules Horowitz, will be the home of those three institutes’ Partnership for Structural Biology (PSB) and the Institut de Virologie Moléculaire et Structurale (IVMS), a partnership involving CNRS and the Université Joseph Fourier.

■ **A postdoctoral programme** established by the Ministry of Education and Science (MEC) in Spain will allow EMBL faculty members at all sites to select and host funded Spanish postdocs. It is projected that from 2006, around 5-7 fellowships will become available for EMBL each year. Trainees normally spend 24 months at the Lab, and the MEC finances the training with a grant (€2,400 per month). If you are interested to host a fellow (or to participate in the selection process) send an e-mail to the Graduate Office at [ecat@embl.de](mailto:ecat@embl.de). If you’re a Spanish scientist or engineering graduate wanting further training in a wide area of scientific topics, see the jobs link on the EMBL homepage.

■ **The University of Geneva** is the newest addition to the list of International PhD Programme partner universities, and the first in Switzerland.

■ **Did you know** that you can order a James Watson action figure at [www.scivon.com/jdw.html](http://www.scivon.com/jdw.html)? An optional fishing cap is available at the CSHL bookstore. Who will be next in the action figure line-up? Iain with an optional kilt?



Mirco Castoldi and Daniel Castaño rehearsing EMBL-Heidelberg’s theatre group’s performance of “Hard Candy” by Jonathan Rand. The play, a comedy about job interviews, is the first performance from the new line-up of members since the group restarted this autumn, and will take place in the Small Operon on 15 December at 18.30. It will be followed by tunes from [music@embl](mailto:music@embl) in the Large Operon. The group will be starting rehearsals for their next play in January. Contact Jorma at [tapola@embl.de](mailto:tapola@embl.de) if you’re interested in getting involved.

## Things’ll be great when you go downtown

As anyone at the Lab can tell you, it’s all too easy to become totally EMBL-ised within mere weeks of arriving. Despite all good intentions to make non-EMBL, Heidelberg friends and do non-EMBL, Heidelberg things, you soon find yourself hanging out with your lab mates 24 hours a day and spending every weekend at Operon parties.

What’s EMBL doing to ensure research projects don’t fall into a similar trap? For a while the main Lab has been strengthening its links with other Heidelberg-based institutes with initiatives aimed to bring the basic research that is being done here into the field of clinical development, in particular with those at the university and the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ).

The opportunity for collaborations with DKFZ played an important role when Heidelberg was chosen as the site for EMBL more than 30 years ago. Since then many collaborations have been established successfully, but it was not until recently that the first formal meeting of both organisations took place, initiated by both newly appointed heads of the institutes, Otmar Wiestler from DKFZ and Iain Mattaj.

The two-day retreat on 26 and 27 October was attended by 40 people and took place about one hour away from Heidelberg in the Palatine. The purpose of the meeting was to exchange information on scientific and organisational issues and to identify new areas for collaborations, and the scientific topics dis-

cussed included genomics, molecular medicine, imaging and systems biology.

Lectures in tumour immunology and structural biology complemented the programme, and the organisation of core facilities and training were discussed in separate sessions, with people leaving the retreat with ideas for collaborations.

Task forces were established in the following areas: chemical biology (Joe Lewis, Dietrich Keppler), systems biology (Jan Ellenberg, Roland Eils), core facilities (Christoph Niehrs, Christian Boulin), training of PhD students and vocational training (Matthias Hentze, Thomas Efferth). Overall, the event was very successful and will be repeated regularly in the future.





**Anne-Claude Gavin** is the newest Team Leader in the Structural and Computational Biology Unit at EMBL-Heidelberg. She's a familiar face to some, having completed her postdoctoral research here before spending five years as Director of Molecular and Cell Biology at Cellzome. Her team will be looking at Biomolecular Networks, in particular the charting of protein-protein interaction networks, the study of protein complexes, order of assembly and dynamics and the extension of interaction networks from proteins to other cell building blocks.

**Other faculty appointments:** **José Márquez** has been appointed Team Leader of the high-throughput crystallisation laboratory at EMBL-Grenoble.

**Santosh Panjekar** became Staff Scientist in Paul Tucker's group at EMBL-Hamburg in October.

## awards&honours

EMBO has announced this year's new EMBO members, of whom eight are current or past EMBL researchers or have links with the institute: **Christoph Müller** (Grenoble), **Andreas Kulozik** (MMPU), **Pierre Gönczy** (ISREC), **Achim Leutz** (Max Delbrück Center for Molecular Medicine), **Ulf Nehrbrass** (Institut Pasteur, Korea), **Giulio Superti-Furga** (CeMM, Research Center for Molecular Medicine of the Austrian Academy of Sciences), **Alfonso Valencia** (National Centre for Biotechnology, Madrid) and **Isabelle Vernos** (CRG, Barcelona). Each has been elected on the basis of excellence in research and joins the ranks of over 1,200 of Europe's foremost researchers. The new members will be welcomed into the organisation and give presentations on their research at the EMBO Frontiers of Molecular Biology meeting on 13-17 October 2006 in Sheffield, UK.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) has awarded the distinction of Fellow to **Fotis C. Kafatos** for outstanding contributions to the understanding of molecular and cellular aspects of insect development and the interaction between malaria parasites and their mosquito vectors. 376 AAAS members have been elevated to this rank because of their efforts toward advancing science applications that are deemed scientifically or socially distinguished. Fotis will be presented with an official certificate and a gold rosette pin on 18 February at the Fellows Forum during the 2006 AAAS Annual Meeting in St. Louis, USA.

EMBL alumna **Julie Thompson** was awarded the Cristal du CNRS (National Centre For Scientific Research) in Strasbourg on 24 November. The Cristal is awarded each year to engineers, technicians or administrators who, by their expertise and sense of innovation, contribute to the advancement of knowledge and research. Julie's award recognises research activities which began at EMBL-Heidelberg, where she helped Desmond Higgins and Toby Gibson develop the sequence alignment program CLUSTALW. This work put her in the top ten of the most cited scientific authors in biological disciplines for more than 10 years. On the day she received the award, the trio's CLUSTALW paper from 1994 hit the 17,004 citations mark.

The UK National Cancer Research Institute (NCRI) Informatics Initiative, which works in partnership with the **EBI** and the US National Cancer Institute, has triumphed as the Times Higher Research Project of the Year 2005. Its goal is to develop infrastructure to bring together data gained in every area of cancer science and medicine, from the molecule through to the largest population studies. By pulling these sources of data together, patients will benefit from research more quickly, and new avenues of study will be opened to cancer researchers.

## New long-term care insurance to start in 2006

If all goes according to plan, EMBL's long term care insurance will begin early next year. This type of insurance supplements current health care when a person requires substantial help with day-to-day activities on a long-term basis. Most commonly, it is needed for health problems related to advanced age.

The insurance is planned to include world-wide and family coverage. EMBL's contributions will be 50% for staff and 25% for family members.

Signing up to the scheme will be entirely voluntary for all EMBL staff. See [www.embl.org/staffonly/personnel/longtermcare.html](http://www.embl.org/staffonly/personnel/longtermcare.html) for more information.

Maud Achard-Joris (Meyer-Klaucke), Ashraf Al-Amoudi (Frangakis), Anne Hamm (Treier), Monika Binkeler (Social Services), Ana Sofia Bregieiro Eulalio (Izaurrealde), Gulcin Cakan (Rørth), Irina Charapitsa (Akhtar), Claudia Chica (Gibson), Foteini Christodoulou (Izaurrealde), Andrea Christofori (Lamzin), Christopher Creevey (Bork), Sabrina Diagui (Cusack), Helene Doerksen (Lamzin), Elisa Dultz (Ellenberg), Tobias Eisenberger (Treier), Laurence Ettwiller (Wittbrodt), Shih-Jung Fan (Ephrussi), Lionel Fraile (Grenoble Building Service), Phil Gardner (Thornton), Kouri Georgia (Akhtar), Alexandre Gobbo (Cipriani), Alexandre Gobbo (Ravelli), Luis Gutierrez (J. Müller), Florian Hahne (Huber), Fabian Härle (Stelzer), Christian Henrich (Surrey), Gemma Holliday (Thornton), Jon Ison (Rice), Philipp Keller (Stelzer), Hilmar Kopf (Finance), Gautier Koscielny (EBI Database Applications), Duncan James Legge (Sequence Database), Esther Lenherr (Scheffzek), Chen Li (EBI Computational Neurobiology), Cornelis Jacobus Liefink (EBI Proteomics Services), Dariusz Lorenc (EBI Database Applications), Elena Mancini (Nerlov), Raquel Matos (J. Müller), Andre Mourao (Sattler), Giuseppe Nicastro (Gibson), Agnieszka Nowak (C. Müller), Peggy Lucille Nunn (EBI Administration), Georgios Pavlopoulos (Schneider), Nicola Porter (Hamburg Administration), Sergey Prykhodzhiy (Neumann), Fabiana Renzi (Conti), Marco Rust (Witke), Radoslaw Ryzkowski (EBI Systems), Sylvia Schattschneider (Izaurrealde), Andrey Sitnov (EBI Database Applications), Brenda Stride (Gannon), Joe Vaughan (EBI Systems), Holger Von Möller (Conti), Hayretin Yumerefendi (Hart), Tina Zavasnik (Griffiths).

## events@EMBL

15 December, 2005

EMBL-Heidelberg

Course: Introduction into Biostatistics

13 January, 2006

EMBL-Grenoble

Opening celebration for Carl-Ivar Brändén Building

17-18 January, 2006

EMBL-Grenoble

1st 3D Repertoire annual meeting

18-19 January, 2006

EMBL-Grenoble

2nd BIOXHIT annual meeting

20 January, 2006

EMBL-Grenoble

BM14 Science Day

8-9 February, 2006

EMBL-Grenoble

Heads of Units/Senior scientists meeting

For more events, see [www.db.embl.de/jss/EmblGroupsOrg/t\\_1](http://www.db.embl.de/jss/EmblGroupsOrg/t_1)

EMBLEM would like to thank all inventors for contributing to a successful business year and wish EMBL staff a prosperous, healthy, creative New Year.