

## New head of personnel knows what you're going through

Ulla Böhme, who started work at EMBL Heidelberg as the new head of the personnel department on 1 February, is a bit of an expert on integration into another culture – and that's certainly something many other newcomers to the institute have to face. "It has a lot to do with identity," says Ulla, who studied social psychology at university, in particular the physical and biological effects on people who transfer to different cultures. "In scientists, professional identity is hugely strong; whether you're from Poland or Burundi, you have science in common, and that makes integration easier." [more on page 2](#)



## Laurence set to 'animate' associations in the PSB

The Partnership for Structural Biology (PSB) has enlisted the help of Laurence Serre who, as Scientific Coordinator/Animator, will coordinate the science, events and training for the PSB partners – EMBL Grenoble, the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility, the Institut Laue Langevin and the Institut de Biologie Structurale. "I think the best place to start is with the young scientists," she says. "I try to encourage them to network as much as possible; in an environment like this, they can meet people who will be very useful to them and their careers in the future." [page 4](#)

## PETRA progressing

The PETRA III building on the DESY campus is now complete (on the outside, anyway). While the outstation scientists are getting used to the view of the brand-spanning new synchrotron from their windows, Thomas Schneider's PETRA III team is busy putting the final touches to the 3D drawings of the 'hutches' to be built inside the hall to house the actual experiments. "After two years of planning and designing, we're now warming up for the construction phase," says Thomas. The new beamlines are expected to be ready for user experiments next year. [page 5](#)



## Making the world smaller

The European Cytometry Network ([www.eurocyt.net](http://www.eurocyt.net)), which launched online last year and now has more than 425 members, is the brainchild of Flow Cytometry Core Facility head Andy Riddell (left) and his colleague Alexis Perez Gonzalez. The networking site allows you to edit your own profile page and search for colleagues and groups to join up with, and there are forums, events listings and news pages. "The idea was to try to get European cytometrists working together and communicating to establish initiatives," says Andy. [page 4](#)

## Goodbye Gareth



Good-time guy extraordinaire (and Cell Biology and Biophysics group leader) Gareth Griffiths left EMBL Heidelberg after 31 years in January. He'll be taking up a professorship at Oslo University, and doubtlessly showing them how to party in the process. [page 8](#)

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# New head of personnel knows what you're going through

New to EMBL? Feeling a bit of a culture shock? Don't worry, you're not alone. Ulla Böhme, head of personnel, is new too – but she's an expert on what her brain and body are going through as a result of being plunged into a new environment.

Ulla, who's Swedish with German descent, has a background in social psychology. "For my degree I was looking at the physical and sociological effects on people who transfer to different cultures," she says. "We looked at the connection between acculturation strategies and psychosomatic diseases in countries with active immigration policies, like Canada, Australia, and Britain – which is a particularly special case, with people coming from the former colonies – and Sweden, Norway and Finland, which are more restrictive and only take the quotas that the UN has set for refugees. The way you integrate into another culture – in fact, the way that particular culture *allows* you to integrate – has a real affect on your health and wellbeing."

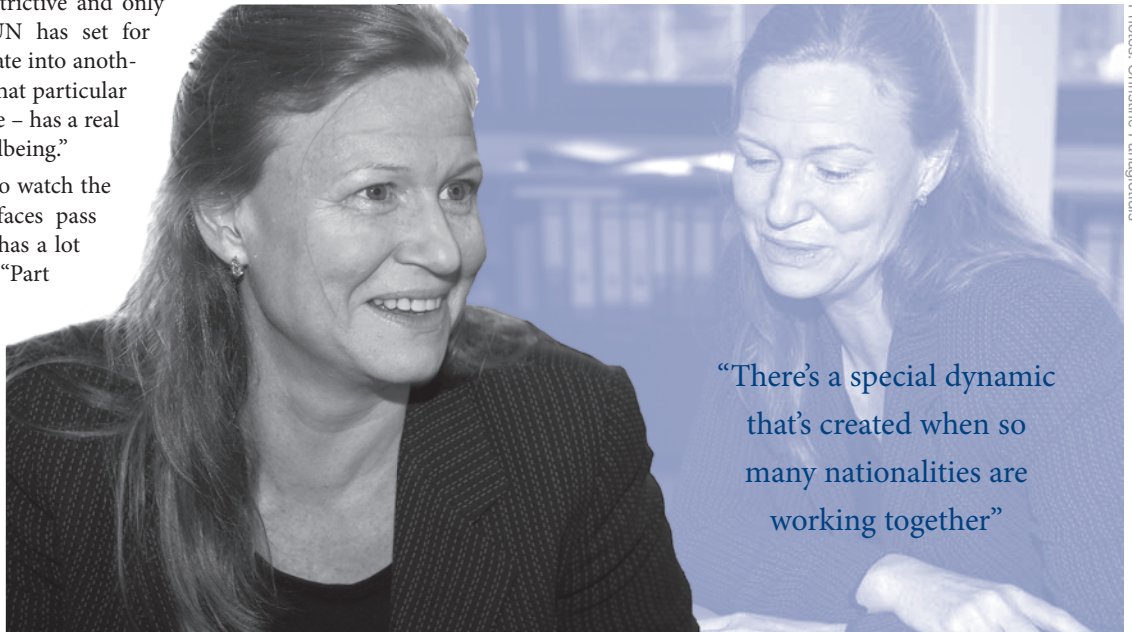
At EMBL, then, Ulla gets to watch the process first hand as new faces pass through her department. "It has a lot to do with identity," she says. "Part of that is your professional identity, which can be

strong or weak. In scientists, it's hugely strong, and you have so much in common with other scientists that it doesn't matter where you come from. Whether you're from Poland or Burundi, you have science in common, and that makes integration easier too: you have a common goal."

Ulla is pleased to be staying in an international working environment, having just come from a not-for-profit organisation in Stockholm where she was building up the HR department. Before that she held a number of senior personnel positions at Lufthansa, dealing with development and movement of people within the organisation and its alliances. It's the mindset within such international organisations and

corporations that attracts Ulla. "There's a special dynamic that's created when so many nationalities are working together," she says. "You have to live it to understand it, and it's such good training for people to move around. Having outstations, like at EMBL, gives a further dynamic, because you can't be inward-looking."

It's early days for Ulla to have any concrete plans about EMBL's personnel department, but she's grateful for ideas and feedback from EMBL staff. "I'm really lucky that the admin questionnaire was done so recently and that the evaluation coincides with me starting here," she says. "I'm also lucky to have a very strong and experienced team to work with."



Photos: Christine Panagiotidis

"There's a special dynamic that's created when so many nationalities are working together"

New head of personnel  
Ulla Böhme

## Test your own text-mining tools...and help out with a project

Researchers now have the opportunity to test out the effectiveness of their text-mining programs while helping to advance a new project by the EBI's Rebholz group.

The EC-funded project, the Collaborative Annotation of a Large Biomedical Corpus (CALBC), provides an unseen,

large scale collection of texts, known as a corpus, to the text-mining community. While researchers test their text-mining programs on the corpus, Dietrich Rebholz-Schuhmann and his collaborators will evaluate their contributions using an automatic submission and evaluation system, which compares the alignment of annotations. All submissions will contribute to the next, improved annotated corpus, meaning that its quality will improve during the project, raising the bar for participating researchers.

"As an overall outcome, the project will lead to the definition of standards for the automatic annotation of

scientific literature with semantic links, such as links into biomedical data resources (UniProtKb, ChEBI, UMLS and others) and better exploitation of literature content through automatic text processing techniques," says Dietrich. "With the help of all the text-miners out there, we will be able to establish a framework for the future standardisation of literature."

Eventually the annotated body of text will become a publicly available resource to use as a reference for developing improved text-mining applications.

For more information on the project and to get involved yourself, visit [www.ebi.ac.uk/Rebholz-srv/CALBC](http://www.ebi.ac.uk/Rebholz-srv/CALBC).





## Getting closer to influenza – er, no thanks

Despite suffering from terrible flu since coming back after Christmas, researchers in Grenoble have just published findings defining an important target for anti-influenza drug design.

You may remember that a few months ago we reported that the researchers in the EC-funded FLUPOL project had identified and produced an image of a key component of the influenza polymerase subunit, PB2, that recognises and binds to ‘cap’ at the end of the host’s messenger RNA. Now, a high-resolution image of a domain from another subunit, PA, reveals details of the active site responsible for cleaving the RNA, information that could guide the design of future antiviral drugs. Taken together the two findings provide a close-to-complete picture of the mechanism called ‘cap-snatching’ that allows the influenza virus to hijack the

cell’s protein making machinery.

“Inhibiting the cleaving of the cap is an efficient way to stop infection, because the virus can no longer multiply,” says Stephen Cusack, Head of EMBL Grenoble and Director of the joint Unit of Virus Host-Cell Interaction (UVHCI) which carried out the research. “These insights can be exploited to optimise inhibitors that target PA.”

As well as being a result of the collaborative work of the UVHCI, which includes EMBL, the University Joseph Fourier and the National Centre for Scientific Research, the breakthrough was very dependent on a close working relationship with the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility. The findings were published in the 4 February issue of *Nature*.



## Happy Birthday, Darwin!

Don’t let Darwin’s bicentennial go by without a celebration! Mix up a batch of the Beagle Cocktail, which encapsulates all the excitement, thrills and camaraderie of the epic voyage of HMS Beagle in the 1830s.

Recreated by Dean Madden for Reading University’s ‘DNA to Darwin’ project, the recipe takes its ingredients from the most memorable stopping-off points of the historic expedition, which led young naturalist Charles Darwin to formulate his theory of evolution.

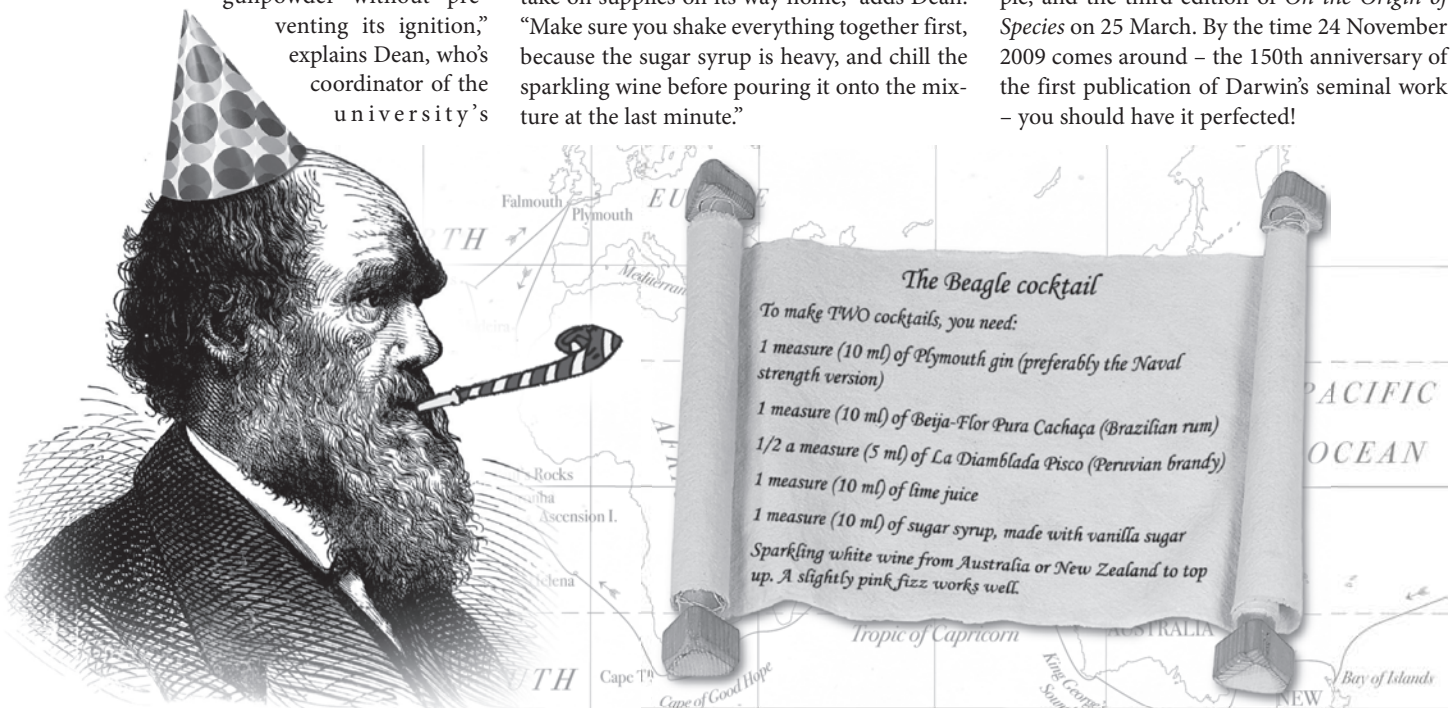
“The Beagle set sail from Plymouth carrying 100% proof naval gin, which could be spilt on gunpowder without preventing its ignition,” explains Dean, who’s coordinator of the university’s

National Centre for Biotechnology Education. “The ship called into various ports in Brazil, hence the Cachaça, which is a sort of rum. The lime juice, also from Brazil, recalls the lime taken by British sailors to prevent scurvy, although sauerkraut was the antiscorbutic on the Beagle.”

Before setting sail for the Galapagos, the Beagle called at Lima, Peru, hence the Peruvian pisco. After the Galapagos, the Beagle visited first New Zealand and then Australia, hence the sparkling wine. “We also used vanilla sugar from Mauritius, which the Beagle visited to take on supplies on its way home,” adds Dean. “Make sure you shake everything together first, because the sugar syrup is heavy, and chill the sparkling wine before pouring it onto the mixture at the last minute.”

It’s not known for sure whether the Beagle crew came up with something similar, but all the ingredients were certainly there. “I’m sure Darwin would have approved,” says Dean. “By all accounts the captain of the Beagle, Robert Fitzroy, was a bit straight-laced, but Darwin got on well with the rest of the crew and certainly enjoyed a tippie now and again.”

Darwin’s 200th birthday may have just been and gone, but there are plenty of other anniversaries in February and March to celebrate with a Beagle Cocktail or two; the publication of *The Descent of Man* on 24 February, for example, and the third edition of *On the Origin of Species* on 25 March. By the time 24 November 2009 comes around – the 150th anniversary of the first publication of Darwin’s seminal work – you should have it perfected!



## Into thin air

Two EBI faculty members swapped mountains of data for real peaks last autumn when they undertook a gruelling, month-long cycling trip across the Himalayas.

Setting off just after the faculty retreat at the end of September, Microarray Informatics team leader Alvis Brazma and Wolfgang Huber, who heads a research group in functional genomics, joined a group of international cycling enthusiasts for the 1,100 km expedition.

Starting in Lhasa, Tibet, the journey took them 11,781m of ascent in altitude across the martian landscape of the Tibetan plateau, passing the Mount Everest base camp on the way and finishing with the world's longest downhill cycle into Nepal.

"Of course it was difficult to drag ourselves away from our microarrays for that long, but it was certainly a journey to remember," says Alvis.



Alvis (left) and Wolfgang

## "Everyone's a cytometrist – they just don't know it"

Flow Cytometry Core Facility head Andrew Riddell has 76 'friends', ten groups and one event invitation – and we're not talking Facebook here!

Andy's the driving force behind something much more useful, the European Cytometry Network ([www.eurocyt.net](http://www.eurocyt.net)), which launched online in September and now has more than 400 members.

The way the site works will be familiar to most people; membership is by invitation, you can edit your own profile page and search for colleagues and groups to join up with, and there are forums, events listings and news pages.

"The idea was to try to get European cytometrists working together and communicating with each other to establish initiatives and grow our field," says Andy, who, together with EMBL colleague Alexis Perez Gonzalez, has been developing the resource since 2007. "We did some research to determine how well-informed a number of our colleagues were about cytometry across Europe, and found that many felt 'out of the loop' – and that language was a major barrier."

Andy and Alexis put the idea for the online network before a panel of advisors from all areas of the field and from a diverse range of locations at a meeting in February last year, and are pleased to report that within a year of doing so, not only is the site up and running, it has a membership base of 429 to date and 29 groups – including one devoted to improving



wine by cytometry! Thanks to the network, a number of national cytometry societies are starting to plan joint meeting with other countries, and several members have also started forums in other languages such as Czech and French, all of which helps to connect people who might never have known about each other before.

Andy would like to encourage everyone at EMBL to join up. "It's not just for those working directly in the field; everyone's a cytometrist, actually, even if they don't realise it!" he says. "Networking sites like this one can really help build connections. It's so helpful to be able to go online and see someone's portrait instead of dealing with a faceless person by phone or e-mail."

The next step is to get funding and, ideally, to be able to support a full-time administrator for the site. "The three main issues are communication, collaboration and education, and the network is the right environment to allow all three of them to flourish," says Andy.

If you'd like to join the European Cytometry Network, e-mail Andy at [riddell@embl.de](mailto:riddell@embl.de).

## Laurence set to 'animate' associations in the PSB

Collaborations and major projects with several partners can only work effectively if communication is good, and that's why the Partnership for Structural Biology (PSB), of which EMBL Grenoble is one quarter, has enlisted the help of Laurence Serre.

With the impressive title of Scientific Coordinator/Animator, Laurence, who is a protein crystallographer 'on loan' from the CNRS, will coordinate the science, events and training for the PSB partners – EMBL Grenoble, the European Synchrotron Radiation Facility, the Institut Laue Langevin and the Institut de Biologie Structurale.

"The PSB is made up of international and French institutions that are all very different," explains Laurence. "Although they're close together physically, it's sometimes very difficult to get people connecting with each other. Even here, in the the Carl-Ivar Brändén Building

(the PSB 'headquarters', which houses 100 people affiliated to the partners, laboratory space and several technical platforms) it's not always obvious how to have the most effective exchanges with those on different floors!"

Laurence has lots of ideas. "I think the best place to start is with the young scientists," she says. "I try to encourage them to network as much as possible; in an environment like this, they can meet people who will be very useful to them and their careers in the future. Last week we had the first PSB student's day, where we had 50 students – more than half our total number of PhD students – from all four partners."

Laurence also organised an event in December for the people running the PSB platforms to present their

activities, and plans to help the group leaders with grant applications. "There are 300 people in the PSB – scientists, technicians and students – and it's like a big machine. I hope that building on and improving the networking within the partnership will mean that people outside will associate the PSB with excellence in science and education."

[www.psb-grenoble.eu](http://www.psb-grenoble.eu)





## PETRA progressing

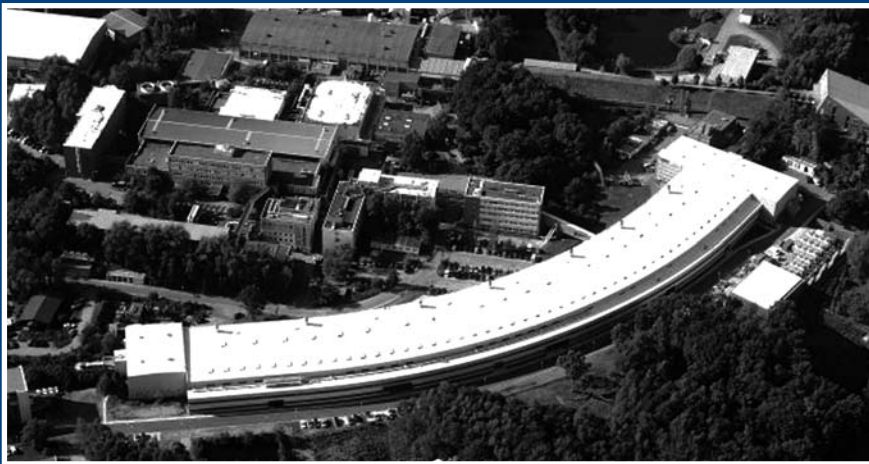


Photo © DESY

It's not just the EMBL Heidelberg landscape that's undergoing a drastic change. Here's a recent aerial view of the DESY campus (with EMBL Hamburg dead centre), showing not just an artist's impression but the real thing; the PETRA III building is now complete (on the outside, anyway).

While the outstation scientists are getting used to the view of the brand-spanking new synchrotron from their windows, Thomas Schneider's PETRA III team is busy putting the final touches to the 3D drawings of the 'hutches' to be built inside the hall to house the actual experiments. "After two years of planning and designing, we're now warming up for the construction phase. The first instrument for the new beamlines, an EMBL/ESRF designed MD2 diffractometer, will arrive in May," says Thomas.

The new beamlines are expected to be ready for user experiments next year.

## behindthescenes

### Playing with the boys

Next time you're in the EMBL Heidelberg canteen and your steak is particularly succulent, it may be because it's been tenderised by someone more used to smashing heads together on a rugby field than dicing carrots. But new trainee chef Laureen Ripperger, who's also one of Germany's youngest international rugby players, is keen to dispel the myth that it's a dangerous game.

"I think rugby looks rougher than it really is," says Laureen, who at just 17 is actually officially too young to play for her team, the Frauen-Nationalmannschaft des Deutschen Rugby-Verbandes (the German national women's team). "I've never been seriously injured myself, and it's actually less dangerous if the playing field is wet and muddy – although that does mean you look frightful afterwards!"

It's certainly not an obvious choice for a young woman, but rugby runs in Laureen's family. "My uncles and sister played rugby and so it seemed only natural that I should also take it up. I was seven when I started," she explains. "Rugby is something special, particularly for women, and the rules are rather complex. I like the fact that it is an outdoor sport, but the thing I love most is the team spirit."

That's something that helps in the kitchen, too. Laureen has always liked cooking, so after several internships she's training as a professional chef with the help of the EMBL canteen. "Being a good team player makes working together a lot easier. That's also something I like about EMBL – people have different cultural backgrounds but everyone is in the same boat, trying to make things work. My colleagues in the canteen are helpful and support-

ive, and I've really come to appreciate that in the months that I've been here."

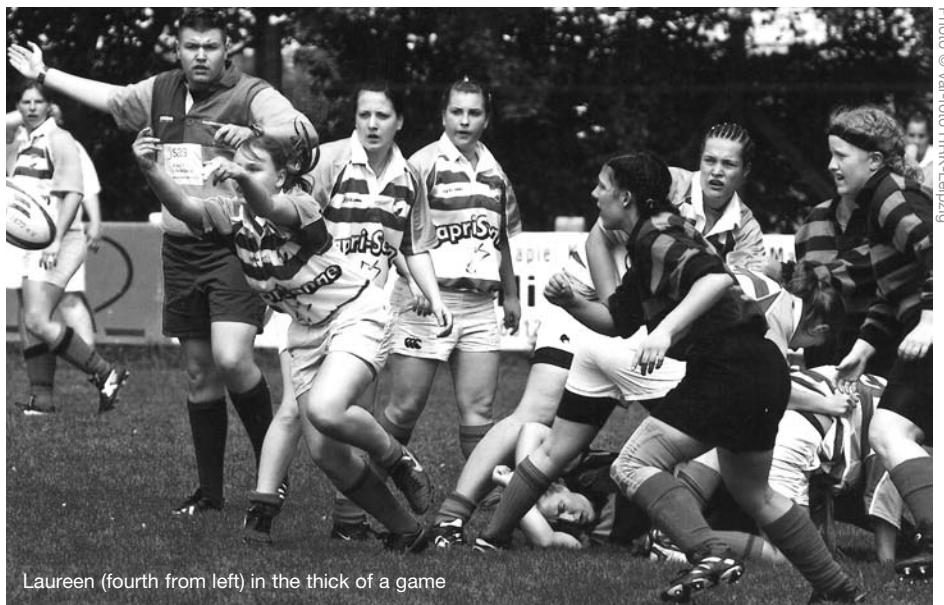
Women rugby players don't earn anything either in the Premier League or in the national team, and so Laureen plans to continue to juggle her career as a chef with rugby in her spare time. "After this I would love to go to New Zealand to see something completely different.

**"People have different cultural backgrounds but everyone's in the same boat, trying to make things work"**

*– Laureen Ripperger*

I've always wanted to live abroad for a while, and I find the landscape absolutely fascinating," she says. "The nice thing about being a chef is that you're independent and can work all over the world."

The next highlight in the rugby calendar is the European Championship in Stockholm this summer – for which we hope Claus will see fit to give her some time off from the kitchen – but Laureen, much as she loves competing at a national level, does harbour a secret sentimentality for the old days. "When I was younger I played in the same team as the boys, and although their way of playing is a lot tougher, it was also more fun," she smiles. "I've really had to adjust to a more female style!"



Laureen (fourth from left) in the thick of a game

Photo © vef-foto HRK-Leipzig

## Nadia's wow factor

Head of Monterotondo Nadia Rosenthal (right) was the latest high-flying women scientist to give an Insight Lecture at EMBL Heidelberg for the Set-Routes programme on 16 January. Nadia talked about 'Stem Cells and Regeneration' to the audience of more than 160 students from four local schools and then joined a panel discussion about careers in science. The other panelists were Birgit Kerber from EMBLEM and EMBL predocs Fay Christodoulou, Tobias Stuwe, Elisa Dultz and Johanna Scheuermann.

SET-Routes, an FP6-funded collaboration between EMBL, CERN and EMBO that encourages young women to pursue scientific careers, will run three more Insight Lectures events split between EMBL Heidelberg and CERN, totaling a number of ten by the end of the project.



## Greetings from Martinique

A postdoc had the opportunity to spread the EMBL message in the Caribbean over Christmas when she got involved with the French-speaking world's Fête de la Science on the island of Martinique.

Mirana Ramialison from the Wittbrodt group was in her native Guadeloupe over the festive season making school visits as an ambassador for the SET-Routes programme. While there, she was also offered the opportunity to man a stand explaining the rudiments of molecular biology in neighbouring Martinique, where the Fête de la Science was holding a festival for more than 15,000 students and other visitors.

As well as making DNA necklaces and origami and learning about transcription with the help of an artificial ribosome, visitors to the

stand, most of whom were between the ages of six to eighteen, were also fascinated by the green fluorescent protein demonstrations. During one of the three days, the festival was covered in a live broadcast by the local radio station, for which Mirana became the subject of an interview.

"As the only guests from overseas, we were the stars of the show," says SET-Routes Programme Administrator Philipp Gebhardt, who also went along to help at the stand. "It was a brilliant opportunity for us to give out SET-Routes, PhD programme and ELLS information in a new part of the world. The president and various other dignitaries visited the stand, and Agnès Lezin, the local delegate for research and education from the French ministry, who has visited EMBL in the past, invited us to dinner!"

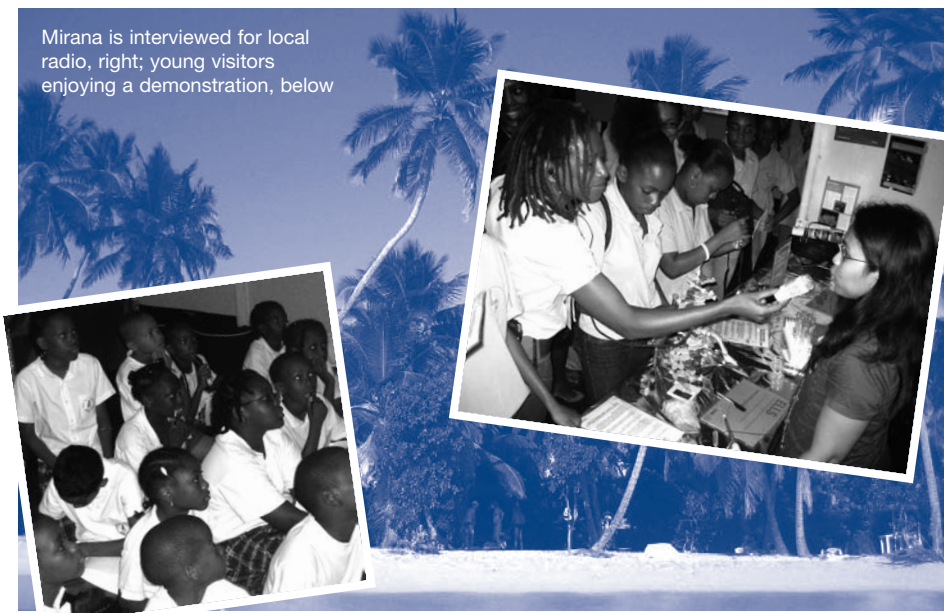
## A united front

Group and team leaders from four EMBL sites gathered in the wine-producing town of Bad Dürkheim, near Mannheim, on 23-24 January for a structural biology retreat. It was the first event of its kind for a while, and is planned to be the beginning of a regular series of biennial get-togethers to help EMBL's many structural biology groups keep in touch and maintain integration across the sites.

"One topic we discussed intensively was EMBL's involvement in INSTRUCT (the Integrated Structural Biology Infrastructure), the pan-European initiative aimed at building a network of infrastructures and platforms for integrated structural biology," explains joint Head of Unit Christoph Müller, one of the organisers. "Three EMBL units – Hamburg, Grenoble and SCB Heidelberg – are involved, and it's important to inform group leaders about the current state of the project and to discuss our common strategy. We were all in agreement about presenting an integrated structural biology approach across the EMBL sites involved."

Sessions entitled The Proteome of the Cell, Conformational Dynamics of Complexes, Gene Expression and Cellular Trafficking were followed by a lively discussion. "There were 31 group and team leaders in attendance, which is representative of the spread of structural biology across EMBL but still not too many for a spontaneous discussion," says Christoph. "It was a very effective way of pinpointing complementary techniques, introducing group leaders who recently joined EMBL and helping everyone stay abreast of innovations in the field."

Mirana is interviewed for local radio, right; young visitors enjoying a demonstration, below





# Making time for chemical biology

The first EMBL Chemical Biology retreat was held in Heidelberg in January. We asked organiser Carsten Schultz how it went

## Why has it become necessary to hold a specialised retreat for this field?

Chemical biology is becoming more visible at EMBL, especially after a second chemistry group apart from my own, led by Maja Köhn, and two chemoinformatics groups have started. Problems that may be solved by chemical biology are now widespread at EMBL. I was really pleased that we had representatives from all EMBL sites among the attendees.

## What was the aim of the meeting?

For those group leaders interested in chemical biology find out where overlap of expertise and applications will foster new collaborations. Most of them knew each other already, but we did have the addition of the newest member to EMBL's faculty, Edward Lemke, who presented his plans to expand genetic codes by introducing artificial amino acids into proteins.

## What other presentations were there?

From the Heidelberg side, Joe Lewis introduced the Chemical Biology Core Facility; myself and Maja Köhn presented our chemical approaches for the synthesis of small molecule and peptide modulators for cellular processes.

Claude Antony explained the special

demands on chemistry for visualising cellular structures by electron microscopy. Top of his wish-list is an equivalent to green fluorescent protein, a genetically encoded entity that provides contrast for the imaging procedure.

## What about the outstations?

As well as introducing new databases, Janet Thornton (EBI) explained the difficulties of describing and identifying chemicals by name. Cornelius Gross (MO) presented new methods to manipulate chloride channels in neurons in the mouse brain by using drugs such as ivermectin; and Andrew McCarthy (GR) presented his studies on protein-protein interactions of Robo-Slit and heparin binding sites.

## What sort of discussions came up?

Rob Russell discussed the possibilities for addressing motif-protein interactions by a combination of bioinformatic and wet lab approaches, asking what role chemistry will play in personalised medicine. Lars Steinmetz stressed that it would need thousands of biosensors that can be used for routine measurements on over 100 million people across the world; they need to be label free, cheap and applicable in high-throughput.

## Where are the issues and bottlenecks in chemical biology at EMBL?

From the chemoinformatics side, introduced by John Overington and Christoph Steinbeck from the EBI and Heidelberg's Reinhard Schneider, who presented the identification of disease markers and druggable targets, it

became obvious that the huge amounts of data are easily overwhelming for biologists and that the database infrastructure needs to be made available to a larger user group. This could be effectively tackled by providing specific training sessions.

Teresa Carlomagno, who explained how NMR can be used for studying structure-activity relationships (SAR) of weak protein-ligand interactions, showed that a bottleneck is the preparation of compound derivatives for SAR. What's needed is the development of improved modulators for biological experiments.

The final presentation came from Hamburg head Matthias Wilmanns, who put forward the problem that for a lot of proteins structures have been determined, but their function still remains to be discovered; it also arose that groups in Grenoble, too, feel the need for new methods such as cross-linking procedures to study protein complexes. The lack of synthetic medicinal chemistry capability was named as one of the major limitations to produce more effective modulators for biology.

## How successful was the retreat?

Very! None of the speakers was able to finish in time, due to the intense discussions on each of the subjects. Another retreat in 2010 will be required to make full use of the capacities throughout the five outstations. An important outcome was that EMBL should look more into training its staff in chemoinformatics, medicinal chemistry and patent issues.

## newsfromembo

### “The opportunities at EMBL helped me make this choice”

If you've been to any PhD parties or symposia, Staff Association meetings, ELLS or Set-Routes events or indeed anything away from your bench lately, you may recognise one of the new faces on the EMBO staff.

Former EMBL PhD student Anne-Marie Glynn started work as the new Courses and Workshops Programme Manager at EMBL's sister organisation back in November, having already packed up and returned to her native Ireland just six weeks previously. Now she's involved full-time with the part of science she discovered she enjoyed most – the people.

“Thanks to EMBL I was able to do lots of activities in addition to labwork while I was doing my PhD,” says Anne-Marie, who studied the structure of the nuclear pore complex and microtubules in the Frangakis lab at EMBL

Heidelberg. “I got involved in everything I could, from helping to organise the PhD symposia and retreats to teaching on the core course, and I loved doing it. All that experience helped me decide to apply for the type of jobs that would let me interact with people and concentrate on the ‘human’ side of science.”

In her new role, she evaluates meeting and course proposals from organisers and is essentially the ‘face’ of EMBO when scientists come to run their events. “I enjoy the fact that my current work impacts scientists at all career stages, giving them the opportunity to exchange ideas, transfer knowledge and receive both scientific and managerial training,” she says.

Graduating with a PhD is a critical time for scientists to decide whether to stay in research or not, but she feels leaving the bench was

absolutely the right choice for her. “When you're doing your PhD you can sometimes work at something for a very long time with few or no tangible results,” she says. “In this job, you have more immediate satisfaction. It's still busy and hectic, but its pressures are very different.”

Her advice to others interested in such a career change? “Get involved in as many ‘extra curricular’ activities as you can,” she says. “If you find something outside research that you enjoy, whether it's teaching, organising events or anything else, at EMBL you'll find many opportunities to gain valuable experience.”



Photo: Christine Panagiotidis

Alumni facts...  
**EMBL alumni are 67%  
 scientific, 25% technical and  
 8% administrative  
 staff**

## Gareth Griffiths: the man behind the EMBL parties

It's the end of an era whenever an EMBL legend departs. At the beginning of this year, Cell Biology and Biophysics unit group leader Gareth Griffiths left EMBL for the sunny climes of Oslo after an amazing 31 years. As well as being remembered for his group's work on how mycobacteria interact with macrophages, Gareth himself is just as likely to be recalled in a pose not unlike this one (right).

"Parties are the social glue that keep people together," maintains Gareth, and since his earliest days at EMBL he has set about making sure that glue never dries. Few of us will remember the ten years of Christmas parties, instigated by Gareth in 1978, at which staff across EMBL united with their compatriots to provide colourful spreads of their national dishes. "I was delighted that the Staff Association held a Christmas party again in 2008," Gareth says. "I hope it'll become an annual event."

Even more elaborate were the CBB leaving parties, which he started around 1984 in honour of the departures of group leaders such as Thomas Kreis, David Meyer, Keith Stanley, Keith Howell, Carlos Dotti, Wieland Huttner, Temo Kurzchalia, Bernard Hoflack and the 'Dresden Gang' – Kai Simons, Tony Hyman Marino Zerial and Suzanne Eaton. Preparation for these lavish themed parties always began at a fancy dress shop near Bruchsaal, discovered by Kai and Gareth.

His vision for a "really big party" was finally realised when he joined the Staff Association in 1999. "The thinking behind it was to have an event where current and former staff could get together with their families, and that's why the first focus of the party is always the children," he says. "The party is as successful now as it was then, thanks to



"Parties are the social glue  
 that keep people together"

– Gareth Griffiths

the same handful of people who organise it: Doros Panayi, Thomas Heinzman, Mustafa Uyguner, Tom Cord and Claus Himburg." Gareth has already booked his return flight to attend this year's party on 11 July.

It hasn't all been about parties, though. Among Gareth's achievements was the identification of the trans-Golgi network and the mapping of endocytic compartments in cells; he also developed, applied and taught electron microscopy antibody labelling methods to identify proteins. Additionally, he dedicated time to promoting EMBL abroad with the EMBL summer school, an initiative he set up in 1996. This three-day event was held in Italy, Denmark, Spain and Belgium, and was attended by group leaders and postdocs native to the country to spread the word about EMBL to potential students. Gareth

plans to continue promoting EMBL at his new institute, the University of Oslo.

In honour of Gareth's party spirit, speakers at his leaving do on 13 December – from current staff Eric Karsenti, Damian Brunner and Darren Gilmour to alumni Kevin Leonard, Robin Buckland, Graham Warren, Jacques Dubochet, Marino Zerial and Kai Simons – presented role plays and numerous photo slides of EMBL parties inspired by the legend himself.

There's something else he'll miss, too, a much more day-to-day luxury than the parties: "I spent many hours in the cafeteria with my group, figuring things out and finding solutions. It's a great asset."

### Brought to book

EMBL non-scientific alumni Russ Hodge (OIPA) and Maj Britt Hansen (Photolab) are still very much involved in effectively communicating science to the public. Together with freelance graphic designer Nicola Graf, who has also worked for several years on the EMBL Annual Report, they have put together a lavish coffee-table book with the title *Translations*.

Through interviews with 25 scientists at the Berlin-Buch campus, the book offers a window onto an exciting time in science where many fields are rapidly moving closer together. "The close proximity of basic and clinical researchers on the campus offers a unique flavour to some of the stories," says Russ, who left OIPA in 2006.

You can request a free copy by writing to the publisher, the Max-Delbrück-Zentrum, at [translations@mdc-berlin.de](mailto:translations@mdc-berlin.de).

### ter news . . . Chapter news . . . Chapter news . . .

EMBL alumni in **Spain and Portugal** met for the fourth year running on November 28 at the Spanish National Cancer Research Institute (CNIO) in Madrid. The programme, which was organised by host Guillermo Montoya, included scientific talks by Ignacio Dolado, Robert Kypta and Fatima Gebauer, and an update on EMBL news from Christian Boulin.

The EMBL Spanish Council delegate Cristina Espa, Deputy Head of the International Organisations and Programmes at the Ministry of Science

and Innovation's, outlined Spain's participation in EMBL, EMBC and EMBO activities. Her talk led to a lively discussion on how Spanish scientists can take advantage of the programmes offered by these organisations, and gave participants the opportunity to provide feedback on recruitment and funding issues in the life sciences.

Finally, Sarah Sherwood and Maria del Mar Vivanco presented the tools available to the alumni network, including the new wiki web resource for those leaving EMBL.

### Please mark your diaries:

- **11 May: Alumni Association Board meeting.** If you have any issues you would like the Board to consider, e-mail [alumni@embl.org](mailto:alumni@embl.org) by 24 April.
- **May/June: Local Chapter meeting in Dilofo, Greece:** Contact Anastasia Politou at [atadakevri@yahoo.gr](mailto:atadakevri@yahoo.gr).
- **18 June:** John Kendrew Award Ceremony at EMBL Lab Day



## newsinbrief

Registration is now open for the following EBI hands-on bioinformatics training courses, aimed at helping researchers get to grips with their data: Programmatic Access to Biological Databases (27-29 April); our introductory course, A walk through EBI Bioinformatics Resources (11-15 May), and Interactions, Pathways & Networks (15-18 June). See [www.ebi.ac.uk/training/handson](http://www.ebi.ac.uk/training/handson) for more details and to register. Course registration closes approximately one month before the course date, so be sure to register in good time!

Two EIROforum organisations welcomed new Director Generals on 1 January: Rolf-Dieter Heuer took office as the new DG General at CERN, while Francesco Sette succeeded William Stirling as DG of ESFR.

Czech visitors from the BIOCEV project, which was established in 2007 by Charles University and the Czech Academy of Sciences and proposes to open a cellular and molecular research centre in Vestec, 13km south of Prague, visited EMBL Heidelberg on 4 February to get some ideas and advice. They were given presentations on training postgraduates and technicians, communication with the public and intellectual property protection.

Both candidates selected at last year's November Council meeting for appointment to the Scientific Advisory Committee in the areas of cell biology and biophysics and gene expression have confirmed their willingness to serve. The new members in 2009 are Barry Dickson, Vienna (AT) and Leena Peltonen, Hinxton (UK). A complete list of EMBL's SAC members for 2009 is available from [www.embl.org/aboutus/generalinfo/leadership/sac/index.html](http://www.embl.org/aboutus/generalinfo/leadership/sac/index.html).

The next ELIXIR stakeholder and work package meeting will be held at the University of Copenhagen on May 19-20. See [www.elixir-europe.org](http://www.elixir-europe.org) for more.

EMBL has been advertising itself at several events lately: with the EIROforum stand at the MIT Career Fair on 24-26 January; at the AAAS Annual Meeting on 12-16 February in Chicago, and at a jobs fair held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin (very well attended; see below!).



Upcoming free courses in the EMBL Non-Scientific Training and Development Programme include:

Course	Date / site
Advanced Presentation Skills	23-24 Feb (MO)
Advanced Presentation Skills	26-27 Feb (EBI)
Access Advanced	7-8 April (HD)
Time Management	6 May (EBI)
Managing your career after EMBL	7 May (HD)
How to boost your chances of getting a job	8 May (HD)
The Effective Team Leader (group leaders only)	12 May (GR)
How to be a Successful Interviewee	13 May (GR)
Effective Writing	14 May (GR)

Visit [www.embl.org/staffonly/personnel/training\\_dev/index.html](http://www.embl.org/staffonly/personnel/training_dev/index.html) for more details.

## Increase in EIPODs

Thanks to a Marie Curie COFUND grant of €3.6m from the EU, the EMBL Interdisciplinary Postdocs (EIPOD) initiative is now able to offer funding to up to 20 postdocs per year, allowing even more EMBL labs to get involved in the programme.

The selection process begins in February, with group and team leaders being asked to choose a partner and submit a one-page project proposal by the end of March. The Heads of Units meeting in Hamburg in April will see the final selection of projects, which must be shared across two labs. Online applications will then be received from June until the end of October, with the final selection of candidates taking place on 12-13 January 2010.

Group and team leaders who would like to submit a project proposal should contact the EIPOD administration office ([eipod@embl.de](mailto:eipod@embl.de)), for which a new programme officer, Brenda Stride, has just been hired and will take up duty soon. Potential postdocs wanting to apply for an EIPOD position should visit the [www.embl.org/eipod](http://www.embl.org/eipod) webpages from June.

## from the Staff Association

**Staff Association General Assembly:** The EMBL Staff Association would like to invite all staff to their Annual General Assembly which will be held at each outstation on the following dates:

10 March: Grenoble

3 April: Heidelberg

3 April: Hamburg (the Heidelberg General Assembly will be video-conferenced)

3 April: EBI

6 April: Monterotondo

This will be a chance to learn about how your Staff Association has been working for you over the last year. Each site will also be announcing the upcoming elections; if you would like to be part of the Staff Association committee, please contact the Staff Association office at [staff@embl.de](mailto:staff@embl.de).

**Clubs Fair:** Following Heidelberg's Assembly on 3 April, the annual Clubs Fair will be held in the Operon Foyer. Joining a club is a great way to get to know other EMBL colleagues, and clubs are able to offer special rates due to Staff Association subsidies. Free drinks and snacks will be available.

The Staff Association covers all categories of staff and has representatives at all outstations. Keep up-to-date with these and other events at [www.embl-heidelberg.de/~staff](http://www.embl-heidelberg.de/~staff) (for EMBL pensioners, [www.embl-heidelberg.de/~staff/pensioners](http://www.embl-heidelberg.de/~staff/pensioners)). – Catherine Floyd

## Is there a doctor in the house?

Yes, several new ones, actually. On Thursday 11 December Malgosia Duszczyk, Ricardo Pires, Lindsay Murrells, Helena Jambor, Raju Tomer, Anne-Marie Glynn, Evangelos Pafilis, Johan Hattne, Keren Guy, Konrad Förstner and Peter Bieling graduated with their PhDs. Good luck to all of them for the future!



Photo: Christine Panagiotidis

## people@EMBL



EMBL Heidelberg's newest Structural and Computational group leader, **Edward Lemke**, is thankful that he arrived here from California a week after the infamous 'Big Freeze' at the beginning of January. Originally from Berlin, Edward did his PhD at the MPI for Biophysical Chemistry at Göttingen before working across two labs as a postdoc at the Scripps Institute in La Jolla. At EMBL, his lab will combine modern chemical biology and molecular biology methods with advanced fluorescence and single molecule techniques to study the nature of protein disorder in biological systems.

Also coming to EMBL Heidelberg from the Golden State is **Marcus Heisler**, who'll be starting a new group in the Developmental Biology unit in March. Marcus received his PhD from Australia's Monash University in 2000, and then went to the California Institute of Technology to do his postdoctoral research, where in 2007 he became a Senior Research Associate. At EMBL, his group will investigate plant development – specifically organ positioning, differentiation and growth – by focusing on lateral organ (leaves and flowers) formation in the model species *Arabidopsis thaliana*.



Photo: Nicolas Handschuh

### Diving? - you crazy!

If you'd like to join this merry band of underwater adventurers (otherwise known as the EMBL Dive Club) on their next globe-trotting diving holiday, you'd better get your skates on (well, not literally) and join up for the new beginners' diving course starting in early March. Contact Vibor (laketa.embl.de) or Fatima (verissim@embl.de).

## awards&honours

**Aswin Seshasayee**, a member of Nicholas Luscombe's group at the EBI, has been nominated as a Tucker-Price Research Fellow in Biological Sciences at Girton College, University of Cambridge, to continue his work on genomics of bacterial adaptation and interactions with hosts. Research fellowships are awarded to researchers at the postdoctoral stage of their career and provide three years' funding for the individual to pursue their area of interest in depth. Despite being a third year PhD student and thus only just embarking on his postdoctoral career, Aswin beat other applicants for this prestigious award, which was founded in 1940.

Developmental Biology unit head **Anne Ephrussi** was elected to the French Académie des Sciences in December. The academy, which has 246 members, brings together the most eminent French and foreign scholars to form associations, playing an active role in the development of international scientific relations. Anne will attend the official ceremony at the Institut de France, Paris, on 16 June.

A paper from the group of EMBL Hamburg's **Wolfram Meyer-Klaucke**, 'Iodide accumulation provides kelp with an inorganic antioxidant impacting atmospheric chemistry', has been included in *Discovery* magazine's Top 100 Stories of 2008.

**Markus Mall**, Molecular Medicine Partnership Unit group leader and member of the medical faculty of Heidelberg University, has been awarded a rare and highly competitive Heisenberg Professorship by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft.

Structural and Computational Biology unit team leader **Reinhard Schneider** has been elected as the treasurer of the International Society for Computational Biology (ISCB).

## events@EMBL

9-10 March EMBL Heidelberg

**Course:** Joint EMBL/Genomatix Workshop on mRNA-Seq and ChIP-Seq: Comprehensive methods for next generation sequencing data analysis. Vladimir Benes

13 March EMBL Heidelberg

**Inauguration ceremony** of the upgraded high-field NMR centre at EMBL Heidelberg

16-18 March EMBL-EBI Hinxton

**Course:** Sequence to Gene: Genome informatics. EMBL-EBI Outreach & Training Team

17-18 March EMBL Grenoble

**Review of EMBL Grenoble**

18-20 March EMBL Heidelberg

**Course:** ELLS LearningLAB: Cell Cycle and Disease

20 March EMBL Monterotondo

**EMBL Distinguished Visitor Lecture:** Wnt, Lgr5 stem cells and colon cancer. Hans Clevers, Hubrecht Institute, The Netherlands

3 April EMBL Heidelberg

**Staff Association General Assembly** followed by **Clubs Fair**

16 April EMBL Heidelberg

**Piano Recital:** Nikolai Tokarew, in cooperation with Heidelberger Frühling. 15% discount for EMBL staff, 25% for EMBL students. Please contact Tamara Kantzos-Marinkovic for EMBL tickets.

18-24 April EMBL Heidelberg

**Course:** Practical course on microRNA profiling: From *in situ* hybridization to next generation Sequencing.

20-21 April EMBL Hamburg

**Heads of Units Meeting**  
**Senior Scientists Meeting**

30 April EMBL Monterotondo

**EMBL Distinguished Visitor Lecture:** Grid cells and the entorhinal-hippocampal network for spatial representation. Edvard Moser, Department of Neuroscience, Medisinsk teknisk forskningscenter, Norway

For more details about these events and more, visit [www.embl.org/events](http://www.embl.org/events).

**Next issue:**  
**Don't miss the new look, full-colour EMBL&cetera!**

