

# Huge response for first self-run ELLS event in Monte

More than 60 teachers from all over Italy applied to take part in the LearningLAB “Benefici e rischi delle nuove tecnologie applicate al DNA”, the first course organised since the European Learning Laboratory for the Life Sciences (ELLS) gained a dedicated staff member at EMBL Monterotondo.

It was decided to do this first course in Italian because the language is one reason a local organiser is necessary in Monterotondo. This won't always be the case, however, because one aim of ELLS is also to give EMBL scientists a chance to practice their teaching and communication skills.

Only 23 teachers could be selected for the course on October 3-5, which started with a presentation by former EMBL PhD student Massimiliano Mazza, who gave an overview of molecular biology techniques. Associated hands-on activities showed how to isolate, modify and express genes. The first day ended with a bioinformatic activity conceived by



Teachers Cristina Vinattieri and Faustina Tondolo get some hands-on experience in the lab

The last day was dedicated to genetically modified organisms (GMOs). Maddalena Querci, Scientific Coordinator in the Biotechnology and GMOs unit of the EC's Institute for Health and Consumer Protection, presented the topic, and then the teachers went to the lab to screen different foods.

The course has been a wonderful debut for ELLS activity in Monterotondo, with huge enthusiasm from both the teachers and the speakers. While the talks were very high quality, they were also accessible to a non-specialist audience, who bombarded the speakers with interested questions and comments.

I have many people to thank for making it all possible: first of all, Head of Outstation Nadia Rosenthal, who strongly believes in the importance of science education; the OIPA and ELLS groups in Heidelberg for their support; and the CNR on campus, for making their teaching lab available for the ELLS courses and for taking part.

For this course in particular I would like to thank ELLS' Alexandra Manaia and Christine Panagiotidis from the Photolab in Heidelberg; and at Monterotondo, Pascale Beudin, Flavio Zizzo, Alexandra Moreira, Mark Carter, Richard Butler, Marco D'Ercole for administrative and IT support; the group leaders for lending lab equipment; Emerald Perlas for preparing one of the practical activities; and Arianna Nenci, Luisa Lo Iacono, Daniela Marazziti and Patrizia Calandra for participating. I hope this is the first in a long series of successful events!

– Rossana De Lorenzi

## Honours for MMPU



Photo: Stefan Kreshin

Above: EMBL Associate Director Matthias Hentze and his University of Heidelberg colleague Andreas Kulozik receiving the Lautenschläger Research Prize in the lavish surroundings of the Old University's Great Hall on September 28. The award, Germany's most generous to be bestowed by a private source, is presented every two years to support the realisation of internationally cooperative research projects. Matthias and Prof. Kulozik received it in recognition of their Molecular Medicine Partnership Unit (MMPU). During the ceremony, the project was presented to the public in an ongoing bid to communicate academic research to the press and community.

high school teacher Cristina Gritti with help from EMBL Monterotondo.

Representatives from science communication associations opened the second day to inform the teachers about different initiatives in Italy, while the second scientific seminar was given by former Monterotondo postdoc Ralph Gareus. He explained the basic principles of mouse genetics and the techniques used to introduce mutations to study gene function. The day ended with the virtual microarray activity, an educational game developed by former EMBL PhD Anastasios Koutsos.



Photo: Nina Schlegelmann

## Adieu... to you and you and you

There were tears amid the laughter at EMBL Heidelberg's last big party on August 31, as the occasion was to say goodbye to the Sattler and Conti groups, both of which were destined for Munich. Michael Sattler and Elena Conti got

into the spirit of the evening by donning Bavarian dress (inset), while they and their group members were joined by EMBL friends past and present to party till dawn.



Photo: Jean-Baptiste Couffais