



Council Meeting: Australia to join as associate member state

Delegates at this summer's EMBL Council meeting in Hamburg agreed that Australia will become EMBL's first associate member state. The associate membership is planned to officially start in January next year and will initially last for seven years. Other news from the meeting includes Luxembourg's ratification to become EMBL's 20th full member state, the appointment of Anne Ephrussi as the new Unit Coordinator for Developmental Biology, Detlev Arendt's promotion to Senior Scientist and much more.

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New heads of units for EMBL Heidelberg

Following the departure at the end of last year of Structural and Computational Biology Unit coordinator Luis Serrano to the Center for Genomic Regulation in Barcelona, former Deputy Head of EMBL Grenoble Christoph Müller (right) arrived at EMBL Heidelberg at the start of August to fill his shoes as Joint Coordinator alongside Peer Bork. In addition, Anne Ephrussi has been appointed as the new Unit Coordinator for Developmental Biology. Inside, both talk about their plans for the units.



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EMBL-EBI throws open the doors to training facilities

Next time you pay a visit to EMBL-EBI, take a look at their new IT training suite, part of the newly completed East Wing. It's where visitors will receive tuition in the EBI's bioinformatics resources at its Genome Campus location for the first time. With 40 permanent workstations and the option to double the room's capacity for an additional 40 laptop-based users, the state-of-the-art suite also features touchscreen audio-visual controls, window blinds and lights. A complete programme of the free training on offer can now be found on the EBI's website.

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Lots of brave EMBL souls took part in the Heidelbergman Triathlon on 5 August and helped raise over €700 for the charity Adéquation Germany, started by Emmanuel Reynaud (left) in 2005. The money will go to the Foundation Green Heritage Fund Suriname's Dolphin Programme, in which volunteers collect data about the wild dolphin populations in the Suriname River, and other charities. Well done to teams Adéquation, JoMaKa, EMBL Men, CellZome I, II and III, Die Drei Bacalao and single participant Lorenzo Corsini. Well done, too, to the team EMBLEM, who together with EMBL Ventures raised over €3,500 for KiDi Ambulanter Hospizdienst, a charity for terminally ill children.

Thank you for the music



Vadim Sidorovitch presents US musician Mark Kroll with a bouquet following his recital in EMBL Heidelberg's Opern on 20 July. Mr Kroll, a member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and Professor Emeritus of Boston University, treated the audience to Baroque and classical pieces on the piano and harpsichord.

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EMBL Council descends on Hamburg

- Luxembourg ratifies as 20th member state
- Australia to become EMBL's first associate member
- Anne Ephrussi confirmed as Unit Coordinator
- Detlev Arendt appointed Senior Scientist

EMBL Hamburg hosted the Summer Council meeting on 3-5 July this year, during which several important decisions were made.

Two new countries have joined the EMBL family of member states. Luxembourg ratified after being approved at the last council meeting, becoming EMBL's 20th full member state. Council also agreed to Australia becoming EMBL's first associate member at the beginning of 2008 (see full story, opposite).

Council heard that construction of the Advanced Training Centre at EMBL Heidelberg is proceeding well. Main construction started in the second week of June, and by the end of the summer up to 80 builders will be working on-site. The Dietmar Hopp Stiftung has donated €500,000 for teaching lab equipment, and the ATC opening event is scheduled for autumn 2009. In addition, the multi-storey car park will be increased by two floors to add some 200 additional parking places. Construction is supposed to be finished by the end of 2007.

EMBL staff salaries were adjusted as of 1 July as follows: 1.8% in Germany, 2.3% in Italy, and 3.1% in France and the UK. These adjustments are calculated based on a remuneration

index, the national consumer price index and purchasing power parities, factors which are different for each EMBL site.

Council approved the acquisition of an 800 MHz NMR spectrometer and a new electron microscope for cell biological tomography for the EM core facility this year. Some reconstruction on the uphill side of the Heidelberg building, near the current NMR building, will be necessary to house the spectrometer.

The Annual Report 2006-2007 was approved by Council, and copies have been distributed around the main lab and to the outstations. Heidelberg people can get theirs from the OIPA corridor if they haven't seen it yet.

In staff changes, Anne Ephrussi has been confirmed as the new Unit Coordinator for Developmental Biology (see interview, opposite). Her appointment was also discussed at the recent SAC meeting and received their unanimous support.

Another Developmental Biology group leader, Detlev Arendt, was appointed to the rank of Senior Scientist, a position which reflects the involvement of the researcher in activities above and beyond leading a group, in

Detlev's case being the official faculty representation for the Postdoc Association. "I'll continue to work to improve the curriculum for the postdocs as well as working on new initiatives such as the EIPOD scheme," commented Detlev. "My involvement in the current EMBL partnership with the Sars International Centre for Marine Molecular Biology and involvement in organising joint activities with other marine stations has also contributed to this appointment." As part of his new job, Detlev will also attend senior scientists meetings and advise the DG on faculty appointments and promotions, as well as giving feedback to him and the Heads of Units on matters of scientific importance. He will also coordinate the evolutionary module of the newly-reorganised predoc course.

"In summary, this was a very positive meeting at which the member state delegates showed a high level of support for our plans, and took the important decision that in addition to member states from Europe and the immediate surroundings, EMBL should also have formal interactions with some other, more distant, countries in the form of associate membership," said EMBL DG Iain Mattaj.

Christoph's back to front unit

Christoph Müller has come home to Germany after 15 years away to head the Structural and Computational Biology Unit alongside Peer Bork.

Following the departure at the end of last year of coordinator Luis Serrano to the Center for Genomic Regulation in Barcelona, the former Deputy Head of EMBL Grenoble arrived at the start of August to fill his shoes as Joint Coordinator alongside Peer Bork.

Senior Scientist Christoph was at the outstation for 12 years, and as well as heading his group, which is interested in the molecular mechanisms of transcriptional regulation, he was an active and approachable second-in-command to Grenoble head Stephen Cusack. His research combines X-ray crystallography and electron microscopy (EM), and in leading the SCB Unit he will be looking to expand on and improve these and

other methods and technologies of structural and functional studies.

"One of our first tasks will be to recruit new group leaders to replace the several who have left or are in the process of leaving," Christoph says. "We've already appointed a new NMR specialist and will be acquiring an 800 MHz NMR machine.

"A major objective is to maintain the integrative structure of the unit, and in dealing with the turnover in staff at the moment we'll be looking to make sure that all the specialised techniques – cryo-EM, EM tomography, NMR, X-ray crystallography and so on – are well maintained and that the collaborations continue to make them available to all users both inside and outside the SCB unit."

There are many things he will miss about Grenoble, but he's also pleased to be returning to his homeland after so long. "I'll miss

the mountains," he says, "and coming back to Germany after 15 years will almost feel like moving to a foreign country again. I'm sure things have changed a lot since I was last here. However, I'm looking forward to being involved in the main lab and the scope it offers for collaborations."

He brought most of his group with him and they can be found (still surrounded by chaos and half-empty boxes) in room 435. A warm Heidelberg welcome to Christoph and his lab!



Photo: Marietta Schupp

Australia hops on board as first associate member state



The Land Down Under is set to become EMBL's first associate member state.

During July's Council Meeting, EMBL's member state delegates agreed to Australia joining EMBL's international community. The associate membership is planned to officially start in January next year and will initially last for seven years. We asked Iain Mattaj to find out more.

Why was Australia chosen to become EMBL's first associate member?

Australia is a highly valuable addition to EMBL and I am very pleased to welcome it as our first associate member. In recent years Australia has become a central player in the landscape of molecular biology. With its spe-

cial expertise, for example in the fields of medical epidemiology and stem cell research, it will be an excellent complement to EMBL's focus on basic research in molecular biology. Closer links between Europe and Australasia are desirable for both sides.

Who is supporting the associate membership in Australia?

The Australian government through its Department for Education, Science and Technology as well as leading Australian research institutions including Monash

University, The University of Western Australia, The University of Queensland, The University of Sydney and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). Funding will be provided by the Australian National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS) and through contributions made by the participating institutes.

What is the difference between full membership and associate membership?

Only European countries and Israel can become full members of EMBL. Other countries might join as associate members for a limited amount of time that can be extended.

How will scientists at EMBL collaborate with Australian scientists?

Collaborations and exchange will occur between all five EMBL sites and leading Australian research that have indicated their interest in engaging in collaborative activities. Australia will contribute to EMBL activities by sending young scientists to join EMBL as faculty, postdoctoral and predoctoral fellows, while EMBL will share its expertise in researcher training and research infrastructure development with Australian institutes.

Anne Ephrussi: new head of developmental biology

Following the recent review by the Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC), Anne Ephrussi has been appointed as the new Unit Coordinator for Developmental Biology.

Anne has been at EMBL since 1992. In addition to heading her own research group, she has been very committed to training. Together with Associate Director Matthias Hentze she started to implement EICAT, EMBL's International Centre for Advanced Training, two years ago. She is also EMBL's Dean of Graduate Studies and thus the contact person for hundreds of PhD students.

"I strongly believe in the importance of training, and after two intensive years of setting up EICAT, I'm delighted to now concentrate on my new role as head of the Developmental Biology Unit," she says. "Nevertheless, for the moment I will continue to consult with and give strategic advice to EICAT."

Anne has a clear idea of how she will tackle the upcoming challenges as Head of Unit and is really enthusiastic when looking ahead. "Scientifically, the challenge is to define the big questions in developmental biology, identifying and recruiting the most promising young scientists in emerging areas of the field."

Developmental biologists at EMBL already work with a number of model organisms, such as mice, flies, fish and the marine worm *Platynereis*. "There are more genetic model organisms we would greatly benefit from having in the Unit, for example *C. elegans*, the nem-



Photo: Marietta Schupp

atode worm, which has been used as a model organism in molecular and developmental biology since 1974. Also, why should we limit ourselves to animals? The thale cress *Arabidopsis thaliana* is an excellent model: changes in the plant are easily observed, excellent genetic tools have been developed, and it is also the first plant to have its entire genome sequenced. Working with a variety of organisms will allow us to learn more about evolution," she says.

Another important aspect Anne stresses is applying state-of-the-art methods to address questions in developmental biology. "With live imaging and new probes and reporters, we can now visualise how cells form organs, how they interact, and how higher order complexes move within cells and where and when signalling occurs, all in real time. Live analysis gives an

entirely new picture of the phenomena we have been analysing through static images, and leads one to think entirely differently, forcing one to define new parameters for the description of living organisms.

"We have the great fortune of having as neighbours the ALMF and groups developing optical tools that are the envy of many scientists worldwide. Developmental biology represents the integration and precise coordination of all basic cellular and molecular processes, in the context of a whole organism: multicellular organisms are nothing other than the living representation of complex regulatory networks.

"I'm looking forward to fostering interdisciplinary projects and collaborations across units. We will need to hire researchers from different disciplines, including physicists and mathematicians. Their skills and ways of thinking are needed to develop models to simulate processes in organisms and to predict cellular behaviour."

When she's not busy talking science, mentoring is another issue Anne cares about. "From personal experience and my work with the PhD Programme, I know how important it is to coach young researchers. It can be difficult, but at the same time it's very rewarding to see one's junior colleagues growing into new positions."

Anne can still be found in her old office but will eventually move to Steve Cohen's office to be closer to the unit's secretary Tatiana later this year.

– Lena Raditsch

24-hour party people

Scorching temperatures didn't keep more than 1,000 guests away from this year's Staff Association Summer Party at EMBL Heidelberg. Bouncy castles, puppet shows, face painting and pony rides were just some of the attractions for the children. The Walldorf youth orchestra played while everyone enjoyed the wonderful food prepared by Claus Himburg and his team – and the iced cocktails went down a treat again this year. Evening entertainment came from the Alptrauboys (above right) and "Robbie Williams" (right), and DJ Fay kept the disco going for hardcore partiers. Best of all, an incredible €3,276 was raised for the Waldpiraten camp from this year's tombola! Waldpiraten is located near EMBL Heidelberg and holds summer camps and year-round seminars for children with cancer and their families.

The Staff Association would like to thank all the many volunteers who helped make the party such a success. Next year's is planned for 21 June, so make a note in your diaries!

Keep up-to-date with these and many more topics at the Staff Association website: www.embl-heidelberg.de/~staff/. (Site for EMBL pensioners: www.embl-heidelberg.de/~staff/pensioners/).

– Catherine Floyd



Photos: Thomas Heipertz



Say hello to the new Szilárd librarians

The Szilárd Library at EMBL Heidelberg has two new custodians since the departure of David Westley and Regina Herhoff in June.

First on the scene was Anne Barkworth, a Canadian who has been in Europe since 1993. After working as a librarian and archivist at institutes such as the National Library/ Archives of Canada, Anne's first post when she moved to Europe was at the Landbouwniversiteit Wageningen in the Netherlands. She has since held similar posts, mainly in Holland, at such diverse places as the Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the World Bank, the International Court of Justice and even the Royal Geological Survey of Morocco.

"I've wanted to be a librarian since I was eight years old, and apart from a brief spell as an archaeologist, that's what I've been," she says. "I've been a little bookworm all my life!"

She moved to Heidelberg to take up her EMBL position and so far is very impressed by what she sees. "It's great to be back in a scientific environment and one that is so young and international," she says. "It's so alive here – it's lovely that everyone is on first-name terms."

The second newcomer is Tobias Sack, who returns to Germany after eight years in London. As a student of History and Political Science, he began working in the library while writing up his dissertation, and has stayed in

that line of work ever since. He completed a masters in library and information studies and has worked in the British Medical Association and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) libraries.

"I'm used to being in an academic environment like EMBL, and it's very positive to be among such a lot of individually motivated people," he says. He's also enjoying his new surroundings. "The quality of life here is so much better than London. Heidelberg is a beautiful, relaxed place, and I'm looking forward to exploring the local area with my family."

What are their plans for the Szilárd Library? "The first challenge is to make sure the library runs as smoothly and successfully as it did under Regina and David," Anne says. "We'll also be concentrating a lot on the pending move into the new ATC and trying to make that as painless as possible."

"We'll also be expanding more into e-books, which will go a long way to improve our service to the outstations. Technological advances are a real priority as the lion's share of our budget is spent on electronic resources."

So thank you to Regina and David and best wishes for the future, and a warm EMBL welcome to Tobias and Anne!



Left: Tobias gets to grips with the library website; right, Anne among the journals



EMBL-EBI throws open the doors to training facilities

EMBL-EBI is proud to unveil its new state-of-the-art training facilities, a central part of the newly completed East Wing. The IT training suite (right) allows visitors to receive expert tuition in the many EBI bioinformatics resources at its Genome Campus location for the first time.

The modern, hands-on training suite houses 40 permanent workstations, with the option to double the room's capacity with space for an additional 40 laptop-based users. It's not just the training that is interactive – so are the touchscreen audio-visual controls, window blinds and lights!

Comprehensive audio-visual equipment ensures that training can incorporate all types of media and maximise the efficient blend of instruction and practical demonstration that has become a hallmark of the EBI's external training roadshows.

The emphasis of the training provided at the EBI is to equip researchers with the bioinfor-

matics knowledge they need to identify the most relevant resources for their areas of work and gain the most from them. Training spans both introductory, overview-level courses and more advanced, resource-focussed courses. The 2007/2008 training programme will start at the beginning of September, followed by an average of one course every month, including:

- An overview of the EBI's data resources;
- Tools integration for proteomics and systems biology;
- From sequence to gene; genome resources at the EBI;
- Patterns, similarities and differences in biological data.

The complete training programme can be viewed on the EBI's training website at www.ebi.ac.uk/training/handson/. Courses are

free, although participants are required to cover their travel, accommodation and subsistence expenses.

In addition to providing a dedicated training space for EBI visitors, the new facilities will be used to enhance the institute's wider campus-based activities, such as its Industry Programme workshops and hosted meetings.

"The opening of the IT training suite represents an exciting time in the expansion of the EBI's training activities. We're delighted with the new facilities and look forward to welcoming many trainees to the EBI," says Cath Brooksbank, Head of Outreach and Training.

– Louisa Wright



Louisa Wright is the new Scientific Outreach Officer at EMBL-EBI. With a background in plant molecular biology, her PhD took her first to the John Innes Centre in Norwich, UK and then to the Max Planck Institute for Plant Breeding in Cologne. Afterwards, Louisa applied her interest in science at a position away from the lab bench at the University of York, where she was responsible for the science and society activities of EPOBIO, an international project funded by the EC. She's looking forward to being part of the EBI as it expands its bioinformatics training activities and contributing to EMBL's strong public engagement record.

Vicky Schneider is EMBL-EBI's new Scientific Training Officer. Her research career has covered a range of subjects, from behavioural ecology to comparative interactomics, and taken her to a variety of places. Her last position was in Switzerland as an Assistant Professor working on adaptive evolution and the origins of genetic diversity. Since joining the EBI in March, Vicky particularly enjoys the international atmosphere and the institute's wider European interactions since she speaks several languages and appreciates the opportunity to practice them all! With the expansion of the EBI's on-site, roadshow and e-learning training activities, Vicky anticipates a stimulating and busy time ahead.



Caught in a trap

An EMBL Grenoble group's collaboration with a pharmaceutical company has revealed the unexpected mechanism of action of a new anti-fungal compound.

Working with Anacor Pharmaceuticals Inc. from California, head of outstation Stephen Cusack's group published findings in the 22 June edition of *Science* describing how a new compound kills fungal pathogens by blocking an enzyme crucial for protein synthesis.

The compound, AN2690, interferes with the leucyl-tRNA synthetase enzyme, which is involved in translation of the genetic code by attaching the amino acid leucine to the end of a tRNA. The group generated crystals of

the enzyme bound to tRNA in the presence of AN2690 and examined them with the ESRF synchrotron X-ray source.

They found that AN2690 sticks in one of the two active sites, called the editing site, of the enzyme and makes a very strong bond to the end of the tRNA, trapping the tRNA on the enzyme. This inactivates the enzyme, blocking protein synthesis and killing the fungal cell. The bond formation with the tRNA depends crucially on a boron atom in AN2690.

Anacor reports promising results during clinical trials of the compound as a treatment for chronic toe fungus. "Now that we know how AN2690 works, the same approach

could be adapted to target other aminoacyl-tRNA synthetases with editing sites and also other pathogenic microbes," says Stephen. "We are now working towards finding related antibacterial compounds that could help counter the problem of antibiotic resistance."

It's a very nice example of how EMBL Grenoble, with the help of EMBLEM, transfers their basic scientific findings to applied research of biomedical relevance. Indeed several other Grenoble projects are moving in this direction, notably some of those done within the new international research unit, the Unit of Virus-Host Cell Interactions, jointly set up by EMBL, CNRS and the University of Grenoble.

Three weeks at EMBL for young contest winner

Gerard Frigola (right), a 19-year-old student from Barcelona University, has spent three weeks at EMBL Heidelberg this summer as a winner of the 18th European Union Contest for Young Scientists.

Gerard presented his project "From 606 to PCR: Paul Ehrlich's legacy – from salvarsan to antibiotics" to an international jury in Stockholm, Sweden on 23-28 September last year and was one of eight lucky winners of placements at the seven EIROforum intergovernmental European research organisations, of which EMBL is a member. During his stay in Matthias Hentze's lab he helped postdoc

Mayka Sanchez with her experiments.

"I became interested in science because of the way it helps us understand the amazing amount of order and logic in the world around us," Gerard says. "In addition, science is like a global language – a meeting point for people from all over the world."

After his degree Gerard would like to leave his native Spain to do his PhD. "My time spent at EMBL has confirmed that I really want to continue with basic research," he says. "I'd like to express my gratitude to Matthias and Mayka for everything they have done for me and for the training I've been given."

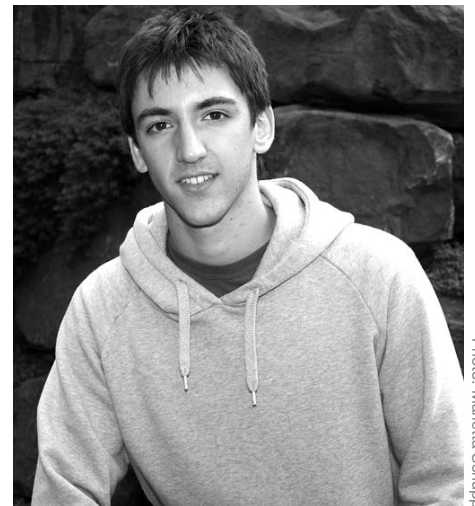


Photo: Marietta Schupp

behindthescenes

"Part of me will always belong in Ghana"

When things go wrong around the EMBL Heidelberg building, what do you do? Contact Building Maintenance, of course, and most of the time your call will be answered by Gabi Dzackah at the helpdesk. You may have met her when you filled in your sign-in sheet; she's the one who gives you your office key and calms you down on the phone when your heating breaks or if you get stuck in the lift.

But have you ever wondered why the jovial German speaks English with such an unusual accent? Like many EMBL people, Gabi modestly guards a fascinating life history.

As a student in Köthen, near Halle, she met a Ghanaian man studying in Dresden...and love blossomed. Suddenly Gabi was leaving everything behind to go with him to Ghana, but it wasn't an easy process to get out of former East Germany. "It took about a year before I got permission to marry, and then I immediately applied for a passport, and that took another year," she says. "Then one day I got a letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, saying my passport was ready."

Gabi couldn't work there because she didn't speak the language, which is English – and that's the reason for her distinctive accent. "I speak Ghanaian English. I had learnt only Russian in school."

Gradually Gabi adapted to the lifestyle and had two sisters for her son, who had been born in Germany before the family left. "But I was determined to come back to Germany before I was 40. In 1988 I did, after 15 years," she says. "I brought my girls, who were ten and 13, but my boy, who was 16, stayed at school in Ghana. He then came here at 22."

She started her job at EMBL in 1995 and immediately loved it. "I started doing 50% draughtsmanship with Ernst Heinmöller and



Photo: Marietta Schupp

"When I say my birthday is 1 April, people think I'm joking"

50% building maintenance administration," says Gabi, who originally trained as an engineer and draughtsperson. "Back then there were only two others in the office. As EMBL grew, though, the job changed to just admin.

"It's a very interesting job. Lots of different workers come in every day, and in between the regular tasks there are always new things that have to be dealt with. I'm flexible and used to adapting to anything," she says.

"EMBL is exactly the mentality that I was looking for, with all its nationalities. It's perfect for an open person like me – I love meeting all the newcomers. It's in my nature. My star sign is Aries. When I say my birthday is on 1 April, people think I'm joking!"

While she loves her job, it does have its annoyances, mainly because of people not obeying the rules – which, like all rules, are there for a reason. "Please, everybody, register your car number plate with me!" she pleads. "Every week something comes up, like lights being left on or a car parked in an awkward place. If we have your registration we can contact you directly and everybody won't have to get these mass e-mails."

Another issue she'd like to iron out is the keys. "When you move, please bring your key back rather than passing it straight on to the next person," she says. "There's a record of the keys here and it helps us know where everyone is, and saves us having to have extra keys made all the time."

EMBL's now a big place, and Building Maintenance are always busy with jobs around the house. Another way you can help Gabi is by filling in a proper request form if you want anything done. "We want to help as quickly as possible, and this helps us prioritise," she says. "It also helps the workers to have a written record of the room a number and contact name."

Gabi has an early start every day, having to get up at 5:00 and be here at 7:00 to start dealing with all the visiting workers. But at weekends she makes sure she relaxes at home in Ludwigshafen, and always has time to go cycling and see her three grandchildren, the latest of which, a girl, was born as we went to press.

For holidays, she visits her middle daughter at home in Mallorca, and also goes back to Ghana – the next trip is in October – and will continue to do so as long as she can. "I will always want to keep my ties with Ghana and its people," she says. "Life wasn't always easy, but after 15 years there, part of me will always belong there."

“Reinforcing EMBL’s footprint on the chemical biology map”

One of EMBL’s current aims is to expand further into the growing field of chemical biology. Here’s how we’re doing it...

Researchers at EMBL have just started the first phase of a three-year initiative aimed at translating basic research into new anti-cancer drugs and transferring technology from EMBL into a new start-up company.

A Go-Bio/BioChance Plus award of €3.4m from the BMBF will focus on translational research and is coordinated by Joe Lewis, head of the Chemical Biology Core Facility, who is supported by George Reid of the Frank Gannon Group in Heidelberg. This grant enables basic biologists, medicinal chemists and computational chemists to pursue leads that have promise as anti-cancer drugs and to enhance the expertise that is currently in house.

The most promising series of small molecules will be tested for efficacy *in vivo* using models of different tumours, such as leukaemias, lung cancer and breast cancer. This project-driven research will integrate chemistry into biology and raise the profile of EMBL in its chemical biology efforts.

The project depends on industry experienced talent; Jochen Ammen has just been hired from a large pharmaceutical company to lead a team of medicinal chemists who are working in labs temporarily rented from BASF in Ludwigshafen. They have just started to synthesise the first variations of compounds identified in the EMBL Chemical Biology Core Facility from screens inspired by the basic research of the Gannon and Conti laboratories.

The Go-Bio project pursues two different avenues: one is to inhibit Aurora kinases, a key player in many tumours, through a novel allosteric binding site. The details of this site

were uncovered by Elena Conti’s group and Isabelle Vernos’ group at EMBL Heidelberg.

The other projects under development arise from ground-breaking discoveries by the Gannon group in transcriptional cycling. The complexity of these events suggested that it may be possible to modulate estrogen signalling, a key factor in the development of breast cancer, not only with small molecules that directly interact with ER- α , but also with small molecules that target other processes involved in transcription.

Not all of this project will be done at EMBL: after an initial period of one year, part of the BMBF funding and the staff will be transferred to ELARA Pharmaceutical GmbH, a start-up company that was founded by Joe, George, Frank Gannon and others last year, for further development.

EMBL Heidelberg will eventually have a dedicated chemistry infrastructure to reflect the growing importance of the field in molecular biology.

“Small molecule screening has lately moved away from pharma and industry into academic labs,” explains Joe. “Its methods are becoming more amenable to basic research groups, and so chemical biology is becoming increasingly important to the work done at EMBL. With this, the Go-Bio project will be a great demonstration that basic research can address the expectation of society that new medicines can and will be developed from basic biology.”

“Through creating a project-led, seamless flow from basic research through preclinical development, we will increase the opportunities for drugable targets and offer greater prospects for the treatment of cancer,” says George.

Planting the seed

Synergy is a word often misused in biology. The 20-22 June EMBO workshop at EMBL Hamburg, “Integrated Approaches in Structural Enzymology: The Chemistry and Biochemistry of Catalysis by Biological Systems”, was excellent proof that true synergy is to be obtained at the interfaces between scientific disciplines.

The workshop, which aimed to give an overall perspective on current concepts on the chemistry and biology of enzyme function, brought together about 100 crystallographers, NMR specialists, enzymologists, biochemists and computational biologists for sessions on drug design, molecular motors, new technologies, the origin of the catalytic power of active sites and the design of new biocatalysts. One highlight among the exceptional presentations by high-ranking speakers was Vern Schramm (Albert Einstein College, NY), who mapped in detail the transition-state structure of small molecule substrates in enzymatic reactions such as for the enzyme purine nucleoside phosphorylase. This provides powerful mechanistic insights into enzymology that can be used to aid rational design of substrate competitive inhibitors with very high potencies. Using this approach, his lab has developed a new class of inhibitors that are currently being tested in clinical trials against T-cell malignancies.

The response from the participants was very positive. Extensive discussions and extremely productive poster sessions complemented the lectures. The idea of integrated multidisciplinary approaches for an in-depth investigation of enzymes was highly appreciated by the audience. Specific emphasis was given to the application and the use of information for the elucidation of structure function relationships.

There was general agreement from the current participants that having such a workshop on a yearly basis could provide a platform for fruitful discussions, networking and future collaborations and reinforce EMBL’s footprint on the chemical biology map.

Organising committee:

Andrea Schmidt and Victor Lamzin (EMBL Hamburg), Joe Lewis (EMBL Heidelberg), Rikkert Wierenga (Uni. of Oulu), Andrea Mattevi (Uni. of Pavia), Hartmuth Oschkinat (FMP Berlin)

New participant in joint chemical biology core facility

Heidelberg University is set to join the DKFZ/EMBL Chemical Biology Core Facility, resulting in an even better service to help scientists develop new research tools.

The three-and-a-half-year old facility, based at EMBL, offers researchers the ability to screen small molecules and identify biological inhibitors and drug precursors. The new set-up will pay off not only by pro-

viding excellent research possibilities but also by benefitting each of the three institutes by attracting scientists and improving external funding for medicinal chemistry. “It adds significant value by creating possibilities for successful technology transfer or for our spin-off companies such as Elara Pharmaceuticals,” commented Martin Raditsch of EMBLEM, the commercial arm of EMBL.

Paul goes back to the classroom

An EBI staff member is making an unusual career move; after five years as the coordinator of the institute's industry support programme, Paul Matthews is taking what he knows back to the young and impressionable by becoming a science teacher.

On a scheme called the Graduate Teacher Programme, Paul will go straight into two schools for one academic year, by the end of which he will be expected to have passed all the standards to become a qualified teacher. It's designed to encourage professional people with financial commitments, and scientists in particular, to enter teaching and fill the shortage of science teachers.

"I feel really lucky to have got on this scheme; in my area it involves academic help from Cambridge University, some very good local schools in the partnership and the local authority," explains Paul. During his 13 years in bioinformatics in industry and institutes such as Sanger and Glaxo as well as the EBI, he's had a lot of experience in teaching, but as he says, "so far it has always been adults, and they were always already interested in science!" In his new job, Paul will be teaching children from age 11-16 biology, physics and chemistry, and 16 to 18-year-olds his specialist subjects, biology and human biology, for A-level and the international baccalaureate.

So what made him want to face classrooms full of potentially disinterested teenagers? Last year, Paul underwent major surgery for a congenital heart problem, and the three months' convalescence gave him a lot of time to reflect on his future. "I'd recommend open heart surgery to anyone who needs to work out what to do with their life!" he laughs. "I love the EBI, the



"I'd recommend open heart surgery to anyone who needs to work out what to do with their life!"

– Paul Matthews

campus and especially the people, but I think to be able to switch kids on to science – to find ways to engage them and make science relevant for them – will be a really rewarding challenge."

Paul has young children of his own, and this also helped him make his decision. "I want them to be educated well by good teachers. But there's a serious shortage of science teachers, and if science isn't taught in a way that kids can relate to then they very quickly dismiss it. If the people who are teaching it aren't interested because they're covering for someone or supply teachers, they can't convey excitement for the subject. I thought why shouldn't someone like me, with real experience in the field, teach?"

"It's not going to be easy – I don't assume to think that everyone wants to learn science – but the challenge is to get the ones that think they don't like science to see that it's relevant for them."

He's already done some weeks' placements in his host schools. "One day was a taster day for 10-year-olds having their first science lesson, learning how to light a Bunsen burner and doing flame tests," he says. "Looking at their faces, not one of them was bored. Not every science lesson is that much fun, but if you see the light switch on in someone's face as they see something or understand something for the first time, it gives you a real buzz."

"To get the first PhD thesis sent to me by a former student will be fantastic!"

The EBI's industry support programme will be handled by consultant Dominic Clark until a new appointment is made, but Paul will still maintain ties with the institute. "The EBI feels like my home. There are more than 1,000 people on the whole campus now, and many are good friends. But I'll be persuading them to come to school and give talks. They're not going to escape me!"

science&society

Communicating the value of communication

The first ever EMBL Science and Society Symposium organised with the EBI, Biology and Language, brought linguists and scientists together for some unusual and thought-provoking talks.

Beginning the afternoon-long symposium held at Robertson College in Cambridge on 21 July, Svante Pääbo of the MPI in Leipzig talked about the FOXP2 gene, mutations of which causes severe language and speech problems in humans, and demonstrated its effect by playing back recordings of the squeaks of mice.

Faraneh Vargha-Khadem of the UCL Institute of Child Health in London went into more detail about the identification of FOXP2 following research into three generations of

the "KE" family, half of whose members were affected with a speech and language disorder, inherited simply as the result of a defect in that single gene.

Finally, W. Tecumseh Fitch of the School of Psychology, University of St Andrews, discussed the potential to discover more key genes by pinpointing mechanisms involved in language and searching for analogues in animal behaviour.

Feedback on the symposium, most of which came from postgraduate biologists, overwhelmingly voted the event "excellent" and praised, in particular, the way two disciplines were presented coherently to a mixed audience of scientists and non-scientists.



W. Tecumseh Fitch addresses the question of what makes us human



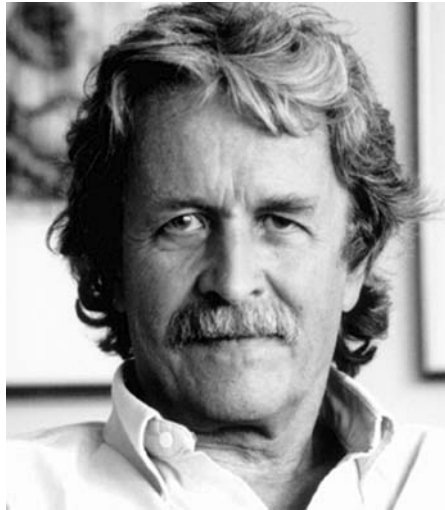
EMBO welcomes Hermann Bujard

New Executive Director helped bring EMBO and EMBL to Heidelberg

Hermann Bujard is EMBO's new Executive Director, following Frank Gannon's move to Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) at the end of June. The German-born molecular biologist has had long-standing links to EMBO, having been a member since 1976 and EMBO Council member from 1989-1995. He will lead the organisation until the next Executive Director is appointed.

Hermann's association with EMBO dates back to 1970. After hearing that EMBO was moving to Germany, he got together with the late Peter von Sengbusch and EMBO Member Ken Holmes to spearhead the drive to bring EMBO to Heidelberg. Although Munich was the favoured location at the time, Heidelberg eventually won out thanks to the group's persuasive arguments and the support of Heidelberg's mayor and local physicists, as well as a number of other factors.

"The physics connection was an important



Hermann Bujard

one," explains Hermann. "There were very strong links between biology and physics in those days. Heidelberg-based physicists like Wolfgang Gentner and Nobel Laureate Hans Jensen had the vision to see the opportunities that biology presented and were determined to bring a base for modern biology to Heidelberg." In the early seventies, Hermann also served on the EMBO Laboratory Committee, laying the foundations for the establishment of EMBL, which was one of the founding goals of EMBO. He also co-organised some of the early EMBO scientific meetings.

In addition to an obvious affection for EMBO and a belief in its role in European science, Hermann brings a wealth of experience from research, industry and politics. He currently leads a research laboratory at

Heidelberg's Center for Molecular Biology (ZMBH), which he helped to establish in the mid-eighties as its first Director. For some time, Hermann's research focused largely on mechanisms of gene regulation. A well-known by-product was the tetracycline-dependent transcription control system, widely used today in the study of gene function.

Today Hermann's research focuses exclusively on developing vaccines against malaria. His strong biological and humanitarian interest in the disease explains his long-term commitment to its research. While working at EMBO, he will continue his malaria project. His future plans include returning to Africa to continue his studies in the countries most affected by the disease.

On an academic level, Hermann has published over 140 peer-reviewed articles and holds 25 international patents. Amongst a string of honours, including his EMBO membership, he is a member of the Max Planck Institute for Medical Research and holds an honorary doctorate from the University of Würzburg. The Karl Heinz Beckurts Prize, the Curie Institute's Yvette Mayent Prize for Cancer Research and the 2005 Medal of Merit from the German state of Baden-Württemberg represent some of the awards he has received in his still active career.

"My first introduction to EMBO and EMBL over three decades ago was the beginning of a very rewarding relationship with both organisations," recalls Hermann. "I look forward to the challenge this new role brings and to be able to contribute actively towards EMBO's further development."

– Anne Seller & Lindsay Johnson

"O, ye'll tak' the high road and I'll tak' the low road..."

...an' I'll be in Scotland afore ye!" Two of Monterotondo's familiar faces are leaving the outstation to try their hand at a different sort of lifestyle – running an inn in the Scottish countryside.

Rosie Maccagnano, Administration Liaison Officer and Nadia Rosenthal's PA, and her husband, General Maintenance Assistant Alex Regan, are returning to native pastures at the end of their contracts. While Rosie will take up a similar position at Edinburgh University as Graduate Organisation Manager, in her spare time she'll help Alex run their new village inn and restaurant.

"We've been looking for a suitable spot and have narrowed it down to two or three places within easy reach of Edinburgh," says Rosie. "It's going to be an exciting challenge. In fact, the idea to set up a traditional inn came from Alex's tradition of organising the Friday night beer sessions here at Monterotondo."

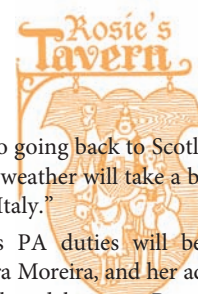


Photo: Alex Regan

For visitors and staff alike, Rosie has always been a cheery, helpful first port-of-call at Monterotondo, and though she'll be sorely missed she's sure it's time to return home. "I've really loved my job here – it's the kind of job where you never stand still – and I'll miss everyone," she says. "But I'm really looking

forward to going back to Scotland. Having said that, the weather will take a bit of getting used to, after Italy."

Rosie's PA duties will be taken over by Alexandra Moreira, and her administrative jobs will be shared between Pascale Beudin, Silvia Rossetti, Flavio Zizzo and Tanja Rimbach.



Money made easy

There's a handy new SAP interface on WebBudget View. It makes it easier for budget holders to see at a glance the breakdown of their expenditure, and also allows Heads of Units to get an overview of external and internal grant division in their groups. Best of all, it allows immediate export of a page to Excel or as a pdf. Go to www.embl.org/staffonly/finance/matters/sap/index.html for more.

News from the Alumni Association

The double life of Silke Pichler

Former EMBL predoc Silke Pichler does a juggling act with her roles as full-time cadre athlete in the Austrian national team, employee of the Austrian Triathlon Federation and Research Associate in the Department of Genetics at Cambridge University, UK.

Silke, who studied in the Cell Biology Unit at EMBL Heidelberg from 1997-2001, points out that "athletics at this level needs absolute commitment, a professional coach, sponsorship, good training partners, and the moral support of family and friends". These components have all been there for Silke: from Tim Williams, her trainer at the Cambridge triathlon club, to her sponsors Mike's Bike in Cambridge and Orca, a wet-suit company in New Zealand, to name a few. She is particularly grateful for the encouragement and understanding of her supervisor, Prof. David Glover, for making her double life as scientist and athlete possi-

ble. In turn, she feels that her scientific work has benefited from the endurance training and racing (ironman, for instance, constitutes over nine hours of 3.8k swimming, 112k cycling and 42k running) which have given her the mental stamina to compete in science at a very high level, to change her research field twice, and to keep publishing.

In 2006 she competed in both the Ironman Triathlon Worldchampionships in Hawaii in October and the Ironman 70.3 Triathlon Worldchampionships in Florida in November. The latter qualified her for a professional triathlon licence and since then she has completed her first pro race in Ironman Austria 2007 as 11th pro woman. She hopes to match this achievement scientifically by completing her article on nuclear tracking in the syncytial blastoderm of *Drosophila* in the coming months.

Silke will then return to Austria and is currently investigating of postdoctoral fellow-



Alumni facts...
55% of EMBL's 46 alumni in Austria hold senior or faculty positions

ships and grants for group leaders. This means that she can stay involved with the local chapter meetings there. Watch this space for news of future meetings, and let us know if you or someone you know would like to help organise them.

– Mehrnoosh Rayner

We want to hear from you! Tell us about your personal or scientific achievements, an interesting event in which you are involved or give us feedback on alumni matters at alumni@embl.de.

First meeting for alumni in Germany

EMBL alumni in Germany, from former pre-docs to Unit Coordinators, met in Heidelberg during the Summer Party on 14 July to discuss their science and career paths after leaving EMBL. This, the first German Local Chapter Meeting, provided staff and alumni the opportunity to share tips on life after EMBL and find out about potential collaborations.

The meeting, which began with a welcome by Iain Mattaj, was a great success, with stimulating talks by Christoph Niehrs, Gaia Tavasani, Marek Cyrkloff and Ralf Jansen, a colourful EMBL update by Matthias Hentze and a creative discussion on what should be offered at future meetings, led by Claudia Koch-Brandt and Freddy Frischknecht.

One issue which emerged was the unanimous wish to involve more EMBL staff who would benefit from an awareness of the science undertaken by EMBL alumni in Germany and the issues they encounter after leaving. To this end, a popular suggestion was to hold these meetings during working hours, or in the winter to coincide with the EMBL Burns' Night party. Finally, the event was rounded off nicely with one of Claus Himburg's famous giant strawberry cakes!

For programme details and the participants list visit www.embl.org/aboutus/alumni/chapters/germany.html.

– Mehrnoosh Rayner

Microarray just a click away

Sick of using Excel spreadsheets to organise your microarray data? Help is at hand with emBASE, a microarray storage and analysis database which, as well as providing a complete resource and place to keep your data well organised, allows the annotation of uploaded data in compliance with all the standards.

The database, which is available to all EMBL groups, supports both commercial and home-made microarray platforms, and is usable without special bioinformatics skills. emBASE will store your highthroughput results safely and privately until you choose to make them public and allows easy submission to EBI's ArrayExpress repository, so

there's no more going over old ground when publication time arrives. In addition, as you enter data you can also do analysis, and if you feel like it's not enough, data export in various formats is available.

"With emBASE, you can manage all aspects of your experiments, from chip production to ArrayExpress publication," says developer Charles Girardot from the Furlong and Boulin groups at EMBL Heidelberg, who has been working on the database with the help of Sajoscha Sauer and Julien Gagneur (HTFG Center). For more see <http://embase.embl.de/base/> or contact Charles at girardot@embl.de.

Please mark your diaries with the following alumni events and opportunities:

- **EMBL Alumni** at the 2007 ELSO Meeting, Dresden, 2 September. Talks by Daniel Louvard, Matthias Hentze and Kai Simons begin at 18:45. See www.else.org, and contact alumni@embl.de for your free entrance pass.
- The 3rd Local Chapter Meeting in Spain will be held on 7 September at the CIC bioGUNE near Bilbao. Iain Mattaj will present what's new at EMBL, and as well as the standard programme there'll be a visit to the Guggenheim. Contact María (mdmvivanco@cicbiogune.es) or visit www.embl.org/aboutus/alumni/chapters/spain_portugal.html
- 14 September is the application deadline for the **John Kendrew Young Scientist Award**. Nominate a former EMBL pre- or postdoc for the award of €1000 or apply directly at www.embl.org/aboutus/alumni/careers_awards/index.html#kendrew.
- To celebrate the opening of the new East Wing, the EBI invites all EMBL alumni to an **Alumni Day** on 24 October. See www.embl.org/aboutus/alumni/news/oct07.html for more details.

newsinbrief

- **A delegation headed** by the vice-chancellor of research from Monash University, Australia, visited EMBL Heidelberg on 23-24 July to look around and discuss Australia's new associate membership status.
- **Strategy developers from top institutes** Janelia Farm and The Pasteur Institute have both visited EMBL Heidelberg over the summer to see how it runs and use it as a benchmark for their own organisations.
- **For the second year** running, a group of 30 North American undergraduate biology students visited EMBL Heidelberg as part of the RISE (Research Internship for Science and Engineering) programme funded by the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service), in which scientists-to-be get to know some of the most interesting research places in Europe.
- **Applications are open** for EMBL's new Interdisciplinary Postdoc (EIPOD) positions, aimed at promoting interdisciplinary research, until 31 August. Visit www.embl.org/training/eipod for details.
- **Free courses in the new EMBL** Non-Scientific Training and Development programme for the autumn include Interviewing Skills, Minute Taking with Confidence, Presentation Skills, Strategic Thinking, Project Management for Research Group Leaders and a variety of Information Technology tutorials. Visit the website at www.embl.org/staffonly/personnel/training_dev/index.html for more.
- **The winner of this year's** EMBO gold medal is Jan Löwe of the Medical Research Council's Laboratory of Molecular Biology (MRC-LMB) Cambridge, UK, who was selected in recognition of his landmark work on the structure and function of proteins involved in bacterial cell division.
- **Ludwig-Maximilian's Universität** (LMU) Munich has now joined as EMBL's second German partner university for joint PhD degrees. The LMU was one of only 3 German universities which won in the "Exzellenzinitiative" last year.
- **The Thalia EMBL Theatre Club** performed their own adaptation of "The Three Little Pigs" for the Kindergarten kids on 24 July. This was a result of a suggestion by the Kindergarten teachers that the club visit once a week and, together with the older kids, make the props for the play. It was a lot of fun for everyone, and the club hopes to make it an annual event. For more details about the theatre club and other things to get involved in, see www.embl-heidelberg.de/~staff/clubs.htm.

Spending quality time in Vienna

EMBL presented its research profile to the international gathering of scientists, policy makers, journalists and members of the public at the 32nd annual Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS) congress, held in Vienna on 7-12 July.

FEBS, which has more than 46,000 members throughout Europe, promotes biochemistry, molecular biology and biophysics. This year's congress was centred on "Molecular Machines and their Dynamics in Fundamental Cellular Functions". In an interactive exhibition and countless lectures and workshops, more than 2,200 visitors learned about the importance of molecular machines in the coordination of cellular processes like cell division or movement, as well as the development of diseases resulting from the impairment of these molecular machines. EMBL's DG Iain Mattaj, Head of EMBL Hamburg Matthias Wilmanns and group leaders Rob Russell, Elena Conti, Darren Gilmour and Elisa Izaurralde contributed as speakers.

Apart from scientific exchange, FEBS2007 stressed the need for communicating science to the public. In collaboration with EMBO, dialog<>gentech and the APA-OTS

Originaltext-Service GmbH, several Science and Society workshops and lectures encouraged researchers to improve their communication skills and gave the public an opportunity to discuss scientific hot topics and their impact on society. In addition, FEBS2007 engaged school children in popular scientific topics with the Kids Congress, a collaboration between KinderuniWien and Kinderbüro, University of Vienna. Strategies to facilitate careers for women were also a particular focus, with a FEBS/EMBO workshop, "Women in Science".

Scientists from Europe, the US and Asia stopped by at the EMBL stand to find out more about research, recruitment, scientific training possibilities, services and the visitors programme. The FEBS congress was a great opportunity to deepen the knowledge of congress visitors about EMBL, to recruit new scientists and to seek new collaborations. Ten days later, the EMBL stand returned to Vienna to exhibit with the EBI at another conference, the joint 15th Annual International Conference on Intelligent Systems for Molecular Biology (ISMB) and 6th European Conference on Computational Biology (ECCB). – Sabrina Grass

bookreview

"Won for All" reviewed by Mark Green

Michael Ashburner has provided insider insight into the history of the *Drosophila* genome and how it was sequenced. I know he was there, as I processed the more extreme of his travel bills; such are the joys of being an institutional bureaucrat.

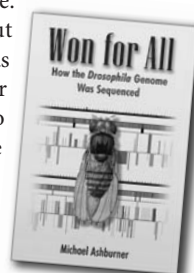
Why is this story important? Craig Venter, ex-Californian beach bum and Vietnam Vet, is gunning to sequence the human genome and make a fortune by selling it. Sequencing *Drosophila* will be his proof of concept that this can be done quickly, cheaply, privately. The sense of panic in the scientists engaged on the publicly funded, and of economic necessity much more leisurely sequencing of *Drosophila*, is palpable. The story Michael tells is not just of heroes and anti-heroes, but of a clash of cultures. If this was science fiction, it would be the Empire against the Rebel Alliance. But this is science and the story is more complex, fascinating and the stakes are far higher. Michael leaves nothing out of the warts-and-all view apart from sex (which, if one imagines *Drosophila* biologists doing it in sequence, on the fly or in base pairs, is an entirely commendable decision).

We are accustomed to watching scientific presentations that are thoroughly professional,

well-ordered and given in a calm and methodical manner. However, we just know that it will have been put together under pressure on the plane coming over, and that the final touches to the slides will have been made in the taxi from the airport. This book deals with presentation, with the effort, agony, turmoil and high energy that resulted in *Drosophila* being sequenced and kept in the public domain. It is very much the story of scientists, and of science on planes, in taxis, as much as in labs themselves.

What are the reasons for buying the book? It is short, funny, the prose breathless, the story fast-paced, the use of footnotes both extensive and imaginative. Michael writes without fear or favour – and was fortunate to find an editor who allowed full rein to his recollections. It is the history of scientific endeavour as it is lived.

"*Won for All: How the Drosophila Genome Was Sequenced*", Michael Ashburner, Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, 2006, 107 pp. ISBN 0-87969-802-0.





New Gene Expression group leader **Christian Haering** is from near Munich and studied biochemistry at the University of Regensburg, Germany. During his undergraduate study he joined Tom Cech's lab at the University of Colorado, Boulder, USA, and completed his diploma thesis there. He then did his PhD in Kim Nasmyth's lab at the IMP in Vienna and was a postdoc at Oxford University, UK. His group will use yeast to study chromosome dynamics during mitosis, with an emphasis of the mechanism of two SMC protein complexes, cohesin and condensin, using biochemistry, cell and structural biology.

Grenoble's newest group leader **Daniel Panne** grew up in Freiburg, Germany and did his PhD in Basel, Switzerland and his postdoctoral research at Harvard University in Boston. His lab will focus on the switching mechanisms that underlie transcriptional regulation in eukaryotes, with a special interest on cooperative assembly of "generic" transcription factors into specific superstructures (sometimes also called "enhanceosomes"). They will continue to focus on the structural analysis of these complex transcriptional assemblies, with an emphasis on systems that are important in the immune system.



Tanja Rimbach's position at EMBL Monterotondo designates 50% of her time to support users' IT needs and 50% to support the outstation's administration. Her IT responsibilities will establish a much-needed on-site computer support service in Monterotondo, mainly in the area of desktop support. When she has completed a four-month training period at EMBL Heidelberg, she'll be off to join her colleagues in Italy. Originally from Wanne-Eickel in the Ruhr area, Tanja has lived in Rome for six years working on major IT consulting projects.

Lars Hufnagel will join EMBL Heidelberg as group leader on 1 September. He will start in the Cell Biology and Biophysics Unit with a joint appointment in Developmental Biology.

Yann Chabod will start as new Head of Personnel on 1 September.

awards&honours

The Lautenschläger Research Prize 2007 goes to **Matthias Hentze** and the University of Heidelberg's **Andreas Kulozik** for the successful cooperation of basic research and clinical application in their Molecular Medicine Partnership Unit. The prize, donated by Manfred Lautenschläger, founder of the MLP AG financial services company, is Germany's most generously endowed research prize donated by a private individual, and is awarded to scientists of the University of Heidelberg and to those from elsewhere with close research links to the university.

Postdoc **Jan Medenbach** has been awarded two prizes by his former institute, the University of Giessen. He won the Promotionspreis, awarded every year for the best PhD thesis, and a brand new award, the Fachbereich Biologie und Chemie, from his old department. Jan, who is in Matthias Hentze's lab, will be awarded the Promotionspreis in a ceremony in November.

Former EMBL PhD student **Andreas Lingel** from Elisa Izaurralde's lab has been awarded the ETH medal for an outstanding thesis by ETH Zurich in Switzerland. The award comprises a silver medal and 1500 CHF. It's the second time Andreas has received a medal from ETH, the first being for his diploma thesis in 2002.

EMBL Heidelberg postdoc **Stephen Rea** from the Akhtar lab is one of this year's winners of the prestigious President of Ireland Young Researcher Award (PIYRA) awarded by the Science Foundation Ireland. The five-year award will help Stephen start his own lab at the University of Galway, where he will continue to study epigenetic mechanisms and their role in cancer.



Right: Irish President Mary McAleese congratulates Stephen.

22-31 August EMBL Heidelberg

EMBO Practical Course on Methods in Cell Biology: Exploring the Dynamics of Cellular Organisation

2-8 Sept EMBL Heidelberg

EMBO Practical Course on Chromatin Immunoprecipitation and related techniques

3-4 Sept EMBL Heidelberg

Conference: 4th PARP Regio Meeting "NAD Metabolites in Genome Regulation"

12-16 Sept EMBL Heidelberg

Conference: EMBO Conference on Protein Synthesis and Translational Control (in partnership with Cold Spring Harbor Laboratories)

17 Sept EMBL Heidelberg

Science and Society: Unconceived Alternatives and the Funding of Scientific Research. P. Kyle Stanford, Department of Logic and Philosophy of Science, University of California

17-19 Sept EMBL Heidelberg

Joint EMBL/Affymetrix Exon Arrays Workshop: From Experiment to Biological Understanding

18-19 Sept EMBL Monterotondo

Heads of Units Meeting/Senior Scientists Meeting/Faculty Retreat

25 Sept EMBL Heidelberg

EMBL Distinguished Visitor Lecture: Barbara J. Meyer, Univ. of California, Berkeley, Department of Molecular & Cell Biology

2-5 Oct EMBL Heidelberg

Course: A joint EMBL/Agilent Technologies Practical Course on MicroRNA profiling using *in situ* synthesised oligonucleotide Microarrays

3-5 Oct EMBL Heidelberg

Conference: EMBO Workshop: Common Regulatory Mechanisms in Haemopoiesis and Neurogenesis

8 Oct EMBL Heidelberg

EMBL Distinguished Visitor Lecture: Margaret Buckingham, Institut Pasteur

25-27 Oct EMBL Heidelberg

Conference: 9th International PhD Student Symposium. Patterns in Biology: Organisation of Life in Space and Time

2-3 Nov EMBL Heidelberg

8th EMBL/EMBO Joint Conference 2007 on Science and Society: The Future of our Species – Evolution, Disease and Sustainable Development

For more events, visit www.embl.org/events