

News from other European science organizations



News from the Initiative for Science in Europe

'Strengthening the European Research Area'
Barcelona, Spain; 3–4 May 2012

Scientific activity has always been international. More than a third of all scientific publications in the EU have authors from at least two different countries. Research funding, however, does not follow – over 90% of research funding is still national. To develop solutions for cross-border research funding, the Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE) therefore recently welcomed high-level representatives from EU member states, the European Commission and the European Parliament for discussions with scientists at a conference in Barcelona entitled 'Strengthening the European Research Area: What does science need to flourish?' ISE unites European learned societies and scientific organizations, including **FEBS**, to advocate the

involvement of scientists in European science policy.

To achieve most impact in Europe, a stronger role for Europe-wide funding schemes seems to be the way forward, where the best ideas compete for funding and there is no penalty for projects involving research teams from different countries. The European Research Council (ERC) shows that a central approach can work in a science-driven and efficient way. However, we have to face political reality: the EU-budget will not be increased substantially. Therefore, a different approach is rapidly gaining importance: coordination of national research money. For that purpose, more and more structures, multilateral funding schemes and instruments are evolving. As the complexity of the system increases, it is getting more difficult for the individual researcher to keep up to date on the calls, funding rules and regulations.



Octavio Quintana-Trias, European Commission; and Helga Nowotny, President of the European Research Council.

One of the recommendations of the conference was therefore to maintain a tool that lists the calls suitable for applications from individuals. Another key conclusion of the conference was to ensure a strong role of scientists in the establishment of the research agenda (e.g. through structures such as Joint Programming Initiatives). A full report of the conference conclusions will be available on the ISE website shortly.

Wolfgang Eppenschwandtner
Executive Coordinator, ISE

ISE website: <http://www.i-se.org>



News from the Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe

'The Future of Health Research and Innovation in Europe'
Brussels, Belgium; 23 May 2012

In the context of the proposed EU's Framework Programme for Research & Innovation (2014–2020) – Horizon 2020, the Alliance

for Biomedical Research in Europe (BioMed Alliance) recently organized a high-level meeting with the European Commission and other health research stakeholders. The event took place on 23rd May in Brussels at the Belgian Royal Academy of Medicine. It focused on identifying the current challenges faced by the biomedical research community, and sought to propose means to overcome these problems in the future.

The BioMed Alliance – representing some 20 major European health research

organisations and around 250,000 biomedical researchers – formed in 2010 to give the European research community a clear, co-ordinated voice to help boost research and keep Europe competitive. President Ulf Smith explained the need for such a body. "We assessed the numerous challenges facing Europe today in terms of health research and innovation: the disjointed research landscape, poor investment in health compared to our international competitors, the need for improved priority-setting of the research agenda and the

ageing population. After discussion on these huge obstacles, we knew we had to act.”

FEBS is a member of the BioMed Alliance and attended the high-level event. One idea proposed by the BioMed Alliance was the creation of a European Council for Health Research. Such a Council could act to mobilize biomedical research through actions such as better long-term strategic planning of biomedical research programmes, coordination of research funding, and the promotion of deeper and sustainable collaborative research that spans the full innovation cycle from research to market. Moreover, this scientific-led body would break down traditional barriers between medical disciplines, encourage cross-talk and encourage long-term multidisciplinary partnerships.

The need to combat current fragmentation, both in terms of funding and biomedical research disciplines, the need to attract and encourage young researchers and the need to work towards new funding and research models were also debated at the meeting, and strategic examples of how to combat such challenges were demonstrated. While the full next steps are currently being defined, the message was clear from all stakeholders attending: action is essential to increase the competitiveness and innovation of biomedical research in Europe in such a way that it improves the quality of lives of citizens.

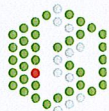


Ruxandra Draghia-Akli, Director, DG RTD, European Commission; and Ulf Smith, President, Alliance for Biomedical Research in Europe.

The BioMed Alliance Executive Board:
Prof. Ulf Smith, President
Prof. Julio E. Celis, Vice President
Prof. Karin Sipido, Vice President
Prof. Laurent P. Nicod, Treasurer

Further information on the BioMed Alliance is available at
<http://www.biomedenurope.org/>

EMBL-EBI



News from the EMBL-European Bioinformatics Institute

Launch of new resources

The European Bioinformatics Institute (EMBL-EBI), based near Cambridge in the UK, maintains the world’s most comprehensive range of freely available and up-to-date [molecular databases](#), and develops [tools](#) for data submission, and analysis. EMBL-EBI services are developed in collaboration with colleagues worldwide, and span genomics, gene expression, proteomics, structures, cheminformatics, reactions, interactions, ontologies, literature, and systems. Here, we introduce some of our new services.

[Enzyme Portal](#), a new resource for people interested in the biology of enzymes and proteins with enzymatic activity, mines data from many public repositories via a single search, and displays information on biochemical reactions, biological pathways, small molecule chemistry, disease, 3D protein structures and relevant scientific literature. It summarizes information from the [UniProt knowledge base](#); the [Protein Data Bank in Europe](#); [Rhea](#), a database of enzyme-catalyzed reactions; [Reactome](#), a database of biochemical pathways; [IntEnz](#), a resource with enzyme nomenclature information; [ChEBI](#) and [ChEMBL](#), which contain information about small molecule chemistry and bioactivity; and [CoFactor](#) and [MACIE](#) for highly detailed, curated information about cofactors and reaction mechanisms. The Enzyme Portal was created and designed based entirely on demand and feedback from users. www.ebi.ac.uk/enzymeportal

[MetaboLights](#) is a new database that provides a comprehensive, cross-species, cross-platform resource combining reference data on metabolites, information about their occurrence and differences in concentration between species, organs, tissues and cell types under various conditions. It also allows ready cross-referencing between experiments. MetaboLights is useful for studies ranging from toxicity assessment of chemical compounds to discovering metabolites that can be used as biomarkers to diagnose disease. MetaboLights is a joint project between EMBL-EBI and the UK’s Medical Research Council – Human Nutrition Research. www.ebi.ac.uk/metabolights

[PRIDE Inspector](#) is an open-source, user-friendly tool that offers new ways to review, evaluate and reuse mass spectrometry proteomics data. It mines proteomics data in the PRIDE