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# Young European Biotech Network

Newsletter | May 2010

Official newsletter of the Young European Biotech Network (YEBN). Edited by the YEBN communication task group.

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*Dear all,*

*Already two months passed since you received the first issue of the YEBN newsletter in its new design, and from this issue onwards, we want to welcome contributions from the YEBN community: you can read more in the box at page four. Further on the news, we created a section to report recent breakthroughs in life sciences that you should not miss.*

*In this issue we present ASSB, the Polish organisation of students in Biotechnology and member of*

*our network and we highlight two forthcoming events: check out the close deadline (15<sup>th</sup> May) to participate at the btS ScieTalk in Heidelberg.*

*One final note, since a few days (early May) our website is down, as you can read on the last page of this issue. We invite you to follow us on twitter and facebook for more updated information on this.*

*Enjoy your reading!*

*Denis Bilotta, Annika Hohendahl, Marie Müller  
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## Institutional Member focus - ASSB



*Interview to Natalia Borkowska, ASSB Chairwoman*

### Natalia, what is the aim of your organisation given in one sentence?

The main aim of ASSB is to connect Biotechnology students and everyone connected to this field from different universities all over Poland.

### How did your organisation evolve?

Our association was founded in 1999 during the "First Seminar of Biotechnology Students in Poland", where students collected their ideas for an all-Polish organisation and built up the first statutes of the association. In 2006, a meeting of chairmen and members of all groups of Biotechnology students in Poland was organised. During this meeting new

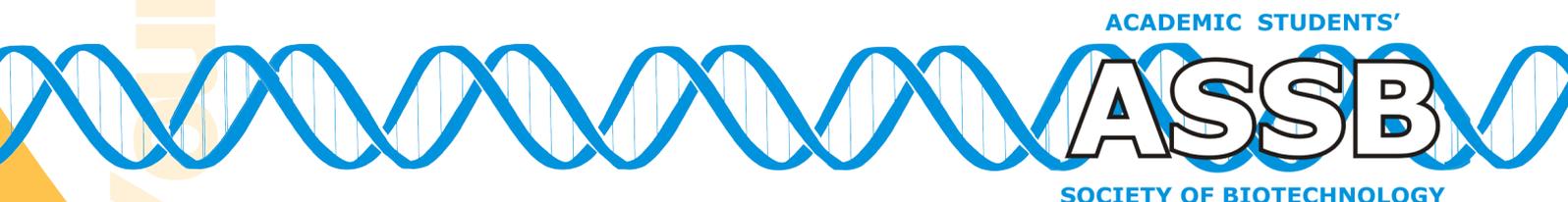
statutes were signed, which enabled us to register ASSB in the National Court Registry.

### Who are your members?

ASSB gathers about 200 members. The majority of them are undergraduate students (BSc. and MSc.), yet there are also some PhD students willing to support us. They are all students of Biotechnology, Biology or related subjects, including Food Technology or Pharmacy.

### How did you join the YEBN?

We got in touch with the YEBN in 2003. Since then we have been developing our role as an institutional member (IM) of the YEBN. We are eager to gain more experience, to expand our horizons and learn how to contribute to international projects. The collaboration with the YEBN gives us an opportunity to get in touch with the other IMs and to get inspired by their way of building up projects. Most of our members are still



beginners in the Biotech field, thus we youngsters always add fresh, new ideas to the network. It is fascinating to learn from each other and to see how easy it has become to spread information, news and events all over Europe.

#### **And on the national level?**

We represent the opinion of Polish biotechnologists at a national level by publishing letters concerning controversial topics, like GMOs. In April we planned to conduct a project related to a previous YEBN project - DNA Encyclopaedia

of Life, which aimed at familiarising the Polish public with Biotechnology and Life Sciences by fun and entertainment. The project was set up by Joanna Szlichcińska in 2007 and this year we had planned to repeat her success, but due to the tragic accident of Lech Kaczyński we decided to suspend this year's edition and reintroduce it in 2011. Further, we host one of the Satellite Events taking place on Bioforum 2010 (20<sup>th</sup> May in Lodz, Poland).

#### **How could I get in touch with you, if I was a young Polish biotechnologist?**

Anyone who would like to join us or become our partner can contact us via [assb\\_eb\[at\]yahoo.com](mailto:assb_eb@yahoo.com) or join us on Facebook. We welcome any suggestions and proposals to start new collaborations or further develop existing projects. As Bachelor and Master students we are happy to share information on summer training programmes and student exchange programmes.

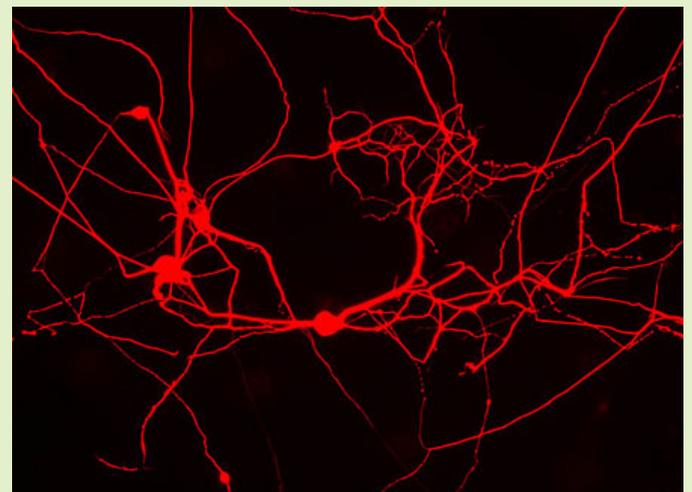
Interview by Marie Müller

## **A smart gene cocktail allows the transformation of skin cells into brain cells**

Nowadays there is a constant need for flexibility. Changing job conditions and exciting lifestyles make it necessary to adapt quickly and effectively to a new environment. This ability to withstand stress without injury and to undergo changes and modifications is important to survive, also for young biotechnologists. An impressive example for this phenomenon was recently published in *Nature*. The cellular differentiation and lineage determination have been considered as robust and irreversible processes, but recently researchers at Stanford University showed that cell fates are more flexible than previously thought.

Skipping the stem cell step, they were able to convert one type of adult cells directly into another. Adult cells can be reprogrammed to a pluripotent state by the integration of the genes for four transcription factors. These induced pluripotent stem (iPS) cells can be differentiated into nearly any cell type.

The upcoming question was whether the combination of several transcription factors, known to play a role in the neuronal development, could directly convert skin cells into brain cells. From 19 candidate genes, the scientists discovered a combination of three factors, converting mouse fibroblasts directly into functional neurons *in vivo*. The induced neuronal (iN) cells show all the



Mouse fibroblasts turned into neurons after treatment with a three-gene cocktail. (Credits: Thomas Vierbuchen, M. Wernig)

hallmarks of neurons: The ability to generate action potentials, the formation of synapses and the expression of neuron specific proteins.

To succeed in reproducing this in human cells, thus to generate human iN cells from non neuronal cells, would be a big leap for studies of neuronal development and neurological disease modelling: a breakthrough in regenerative medicine.

Christine Weckenmann

#### **References**

Vierbuchen et al. "Direct conversion of fibroblasts to functional neurons by defined factors" *Nature* 463, 1035-1041

### Breakthroughs in Life Sciences

## **Interview with Dr. Heinz-Hubert Fischer, recruitment consultant with Kelly Scientific Resources®**

*Since its foundation in 1995 as Kelly's scientific business unit, Kelly Scientific Resources® (KSR) has emerged as the leading scientific and clinical trials recruitment company in the world today. On average KSR assigns 5000 scientists in temporary and full-time positions each year, from more than 100 locations in North America, Europe and the Pacific Rim. Only life scientists work as consultants, because they appraise best the needs of their clients and the quality of the applicants.*

To make their first steps in the working world out of university, young life scientists and students often have to find internships, and they can mostly find those in the R&D labs rather than in specific applied positions. These first industry experiences are very valuable and often necessary to open the door to more applied and specific positions in the industry. These first jobs in R&D are not mediated by recruitment agencies; so you have to find your first job on your own. Recruitment agencies mostly assign young professionals or specialists, but can students already foster their career with agency help? Can agencies help in career entry? To get an inside view I have interviewed Dr. Heinz-Hubert Fischer recruitment consultant from Kelly Scientific Resources®.

### **I found the future scientist programme on your homepage, what is the programme about?**

The Future Scientist programme appeals to graduate or advanced life science students, who want to gain industry experience. We provide moderately paid internships during the university-free period. The students can gain

hands-on experience in the laboratory and get to know the company. This programme is unique among recruiting agencies, but very important to us.

### **Why did you start this programme?**

We want to accompany our life scientists through their whole career path and facilitate their career entry, so therefore we start when they are students.

### **Do you provide internships throughout Europe or only in Germany?**

We have programmes in the USA, New Zealand, the Netherlands and in Germany, but of course our concept can easily be applied to the whole Kelly World which means Europe, the Americas, Australia and Asia.

### **What about salary: do you have any figures?**

As salaries have a wide range depending on the position, the size of the company, the local market and possibly national laws and regulations, it is not possible to provide you a reliable number here. To get an impression beforehand, international job boards may represent a good source of information. In some cases, if planning to go abroad from Germany for example,

cooperation with DAAD or another national organisation providing grants can be advisable.

### **Is there the opportunity to transition from this internship and get a 'real job'? Does this happen?**

This depends on your personal career level.

Usually we recommend starting with internships while being an undergraduate student and gain insights during semester breaks to give your career the appropriate momentum as early as possible. Internships can lead to a 'real job'. I myself started as an intern, parallel to writing my PhD thesis in inorganic chemistry, with Kelly Scientific Resources® and was offered a permanent contract even before my internship ended. I then finalised my PhD while being on a full-time job.

### **How do I apply? What is important for you in the application procedure?**

The application procedure for the Future Scientist programme is the same as for all our offers. You have the best chance if you send us a profile of interest in your cover letter, your CV and your latest credentials. If we have a client with an adequate position, we call you and have a telephone interview. If the applicant is convincing, we invite him or her to an interview.

Grades are not that important to us; more important are your qualifications for a certain job like internships, special skills and laboratory experience.

Valentina Ahl, Master student at University of Bayreuth, Germany

(originally published in *New Biotechnology*, Sept 2009)

## YEBN website down

As some of you probably already noticed, our website [www.yebn.org](http://www.yebn.org) is temporarily down, after experiencing severe technical problems. We are currently working to be online again as soon as possible with a more reliable service. We apologise for any inconvenience this might have caused. Please check our twitter and facebook pages for future updates.

## Upcoming events in Life Sciences

### DEADLINES

**15<sup>th</sup> May** abstract/poster submission for "btS ScieTalk"

### Conference "Young Generation in BioBusiness" 20<sup>th</sup> May in Łódź, Poland

Interested in the field of Biotechnology? Unfortunately being hard-working, ambitious and fully engaged is not enough. Transferring ideas from academia to industry is complicated and meets numerous obstacles. This conference will help you out: In a series of lectures and

workshops you will learn how to cope with these problems and debate on "How to improve the transfer of ideas and concepts from academic centres to Biotechnology business". In the BioBusiness Competition undergraduate and PhD students, young scientists of Biotechnology, Pharmacy and the Life Science sector can get active themselves and present their business ideas. After the conference, the Jobvector career day will offer you a place to find the job of your dreams.

Further information at <http://www.assb.pl/files/upload/file/newsletter%20Bioforum%202010.pdf>

Marie Müller, Annika Hohendahl

give a talk about their research to an audience of students, representatives from universities and the business world, whilst still not having finished their studies. The ScieTalk bears no participation fee and the best talk will be rewarded with a publication in *New Biotechnology*. Additionally, a poster presentation will be held and great prizes are to win. If you are a student, PhD or doctoral candidate in the Life Sciences and want to address questions such as "How to make potential targets visible?" and "Which innovative approaches will be turned into therapies?", then submit an abstract or poster until the 15<sup>th</sup> of May to participate. Read more about the ScieTalk at [www.ScieTalk.btS-eV.de](http://www.ScieTalk.btS-eV.de)

Irina Epstein

### YEBN member focus

This could be your spot - Your spot to present your professional activity to the YEBN community. In this section we want to present the whole scope of how working in Biotechnology could look like. From researchers (Bachelor/Master/PhD/Post-Doc) to journalists, lobbyists, politicians, consultants, patent attorneys, salesmen, managers, etc. It is an opportunity to raise interest in your field and projects and promote possible collaborations all over Europe. Just drop us an email at [newsletter.editors\[at\]yebn.org](mailto:newsletter.editors[at]yebn.org) describing what you do, and we might get back to you to have a piece published under "YEBN member focus".

### "btS ScieTalk - Biomedical Sciences Congress", 8<sup>th</sup> June in Heidelberg, Germany

From students. For students. For the first time the btS, Germany's largest network of Life Sciences students, is organising an innovative student congress. Under the topic "**Novel Insights in Human Diseases - How cutting-edge methods lead to breakthroughs in Therapy**", students have the opportunity to