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Young European Biotech Network

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Dear all,

This issue shows impressively how our Institutional Members (IMs) are actively networking - take a look at NGB's new social network presented on page 2 or ANBI's new Biotechjob 2.0 platform on page 3. You can find information about our Spanish IM FEBiotec right below. The section Best of YEBN in New Biotechnology presents this time an interview with Chris St Pourçain of the Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council about a

grant for early-career researchers. Get active yourself in one of the new networks or take a look at one established network and visit the EMBO meeting, presented on page 5. Tips and hints as well as criticism are very welcome. Enjoy your reading!

Annika Hohendahl, Marie Müller

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Institutional Member focus: FEBiotec



Interview with Roi Villar Vázquez, FEBiotec Communication Officer

When did FEBiotec join YEBN?

FEBiotec took over the Spanish IM position that ASBTEC had chaired for ten years. At that point FEBiotec had already become a mature institution with a real impact in social and mass media and with clear needs of internationalisation. The first YEBN General Assembly that FEBiotec attended as IM was the Annual Meeting 2010 in Wrocław.

Can you tell us something about the history of your organisation?

A similar story to the one of ASBTEC (see IM focus in YEBN Newsletter Jan. 2011) in Barcelona took place again in different faculties and cities across Spain, and different associations of biotechnologists began to sprout in the academic environment. Our first general assembly was held during the 3rd edition of our biggest event, the Inter-University Congress of Biotechnology. FEBiotec was founded in Leon in 2008 with the main aim to coordinate and represent all biotechnologists (present and future ones) working in Spain, allowing a decentralised framework for each local member association. This is the reason why we are organised as a federation

instead of an only one association.

What does your organisation add to YEBN?

YEBN was already joined by ASBTEC, so its working guidelines are all expected to be continued: We will keep on working in EPQ's-TG (as many of our associates are early career biotech professionals) and dealing with communication and information management, one of the hardest issues to deal with in a federative framework. Nevertheless, we focus our efforts in other areas such as science popularization, networking events, staff training and other projects that we would be happy to share within YEBN.



Who are your members?

FEBiotec is currently composed of six local associations (Catalonia, Andalusia, Leon, Valencia, Salamanca & Madrid) which bring together young biotechnology students and early career professionals (e.g. working in public centres, pharmaceutical companies, contract research organisations, technology transfer offices or as independent consultants).

Which activities characterise your network?

We offer a wide variety of activities: Life Long Learning seminars and training, career assessment, professional regulations, science communication to the public and networking events. Our next big event is the 5th Inter-University Congress, which will take place in Tarragona on July 6th–9th. During this event, students across Spain

will gather in a unique venue and can attend lectures, visit outstanding research centres and biotechnological industrial plants and build networks that will help them in their near future. The current local conferences "Graduated, and then what?" give young students the opportunity to listen to talks of different people on their career after their graduate studies in biotechnology. And finally, the ByE "Biotechnology & Business" national conferences, where professionals who stood up because of their performance from different backgrounds (academia, public institutions and industry) discuss live on current bottlenecks in knowledge-workers productivity.

Which communication tools do you use?

We make intensive use of Google Apps management system

for our internal workflow and organisation. When interacting with members, other IMs and society, we are proud of having one of the most solid virtual communities within Facebook and Twitter in Spain. We are considering expanding to LinkedIn, SlideShare, Flickr and YouTube. We use these tools to disseminate information about our events and programmes, and to perform social marketing actions, such as creating debates about conflictive points in the everyday life of biotechnologists and uncovering unmet professional, educational and social needs to biotechnologists, institutions and society. Of course we keep on making use of traditional media tools (press releases, radio interventions, traditional websites and mailing campaigns). More info about us at www.febiotec.es

Roi Villar Vázquez

NGB's new social network

Nouvelle Génération des Biotechnologistes (NGB), member organisation of YEBN in France, is the first YEBN member organisation to launch its own social network for young biotechnologists. Members of the website can create and participate in group discussions, exchange documents and access special content. Soon, the website will contain even premium information for members of the organisation, who will also be able to join and to pay their membership fee there.

NGB is planning to enlarge and encourage the forum activities by inviting special guests from industry and academia to answer questions in special topic weeks on student-related topics such as careers or research. Moreover, student job offers are collected and the new YouTube channel is closely linked to the website. With special video interviews of PhD, Post Doc or Master students on their research or 'daily

lab routine', the project shall give ideas for career choices and opportunities.

Last but not least, not only the members, but also the association itself profits from the new website – the executive board uses it also to exchange thoughts and ideas online.

While the site is still in its testing phase, almost all the functions are already fully implemented, and access is done within seconds thanks to the connection to the popular social media network Facebook.

Try it out by yourself: www.biotechnologistes.fr

Evelyne Gaillard, Sebastian Olényi, Marie Müller



Biotechjob 2.0: the new hub for Italian biotech

May 1st, 2011: Biotechjob 2.0 is finally online at www.biotechjob.it. With this project, ANBI poses a milestone for the consolidation of biotechnology in Italy and promotes career development in the biotech landscape of Italy.

Biotechjob 2.0 aims at grouping and connecting the Italian world of biotechnology. The portal is structured into four different and highly interactive sections:

- **"Bioplayers"** represents companies and institutions active in the field of biotechnology in Italy; upon joining Biotechjob 2.0 companies can have a personal home page and get the possibility to post job offers and access CVs in the portal.
- **"Biopeople"** groups professionals of biotechnology in Italy.
- **"Biojobs"** hosts the job offers and serves to connect member CVs with companies and institutions active in the field.
- **"Biotechs"** encompasses technologies, tools and projects shared among participants of the portal; the boundaries of this fourth section are deliberately less defined than those of the others. This section aims to match technology offers or requests and

professional networking.

Several companies have already registered to Biotechjob 2.0, including all companies that are part of Assobiotec and bioPmed, a network of about 300 companies, three universities and several research centres. At its launch, Biotechjob already counted 400 members, a number that is expected to double within one year. It is estimated that 200–300 vacancies will be published per year.

Key feature of the portal is the high level of interaction between the four sections, in order to facilitate networking and integration: Biotechjob 2.0 is a dynamic and constantly evolving project and provides its members, be they companies or individuals, with up-to-date tools for their professional growth and competitiveness.

Chiara Cipollina



Best of YEBN in New Biotechnology

Supporting careers of young researchers in the biosciences – An interview with Chris St Pourçain of the Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), UK

Q1: Can you give us a short overview of the main goals of the New Investigator Scheme?

The future of the biosciences lies in the young researchers of today, so it is crucial that these young scientists are supported in developing their careers and making the transition to being highly effective independent researchers. A variety of support is needed and it is the responsibility of several different parties. These include

the young researchers' more senior colleagues, heads of department, their institutions, the learned societies and the funding agencies. Support for young researchers is a key part of the Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council's (BBSRC) activities. BBSRC is one of the seven UK Research Councils. The Research Councils are the principal public funders of research in the UK. BBSRC funds nonmedical research in

the biosciences: in plants (it is the principal public funder of plant science in the UK), micro-organisms, animals (including humans), and also in tools and technology underpinning biological research. It funds research from the level of molecules and cells, to tissues, whole organisms, populations and landscapes. The Research Councils are funded from the UK Government's Department for Innovation, Universities and Skills (DIUS). BBSRC's current budget is £450 M, and it supports a total of around 1600 scientists and 2000 research students in universities and institutes in the UK. The BBSRC New

Investigator Scheme is designed to assist researchers in their first independent research position as a lecturer, fellow or researcher of equivalent status, in securing their first major element of funding for research. Many newly appointed researchers have managed to obtain small grants for equipping their laboratory, or for small pilot projects. Some have also been involved as coinvestigators on grants led by more established colleagues, but have not yet been awarded funding for a research grant on which they were lead applicant and which included funds for research staff. It is these researchers that the scheme is designed to help. It is expected that applicants to the scheme would usually be the sole applicant. However, BBSRC is keen to encourage multi-disciplinary collaborations and so applicants with a background in the biosciences can include coinvestigators from the physical sciences, computer science, engineering and mathematics, whilst applicants with a background outside the biosciences can include a bioscientist as a co-investigator. Applicants to the scheme can apply at any time within the first three years of their appointment. There is no limit on the number of times that an applicant can apply under the scheme, if they have been unsuccessful in the past, but they can only have one application to the scheme at any one time. There is no maximum limit on the funds that can be requested, but clearly relatively inexperienced researchers need to be realistic about the size and complexity of

the project that they will be able to manage. The New Investigator Scheme was reviewed recently. Part of the evidence considered in the review was a survey of applicants to the scheme, both successful and unsuccessful. There was strong support for the scheme and it was seen as an effective way of giving a new researcher the confidence and ability to undertake early stage research. At a departmental level it has been argued that it allows a more independent development of lecturers at an early stage.

Q2: At which stage of a young scientist's career (just after PhD, after a first PostDoc, later on) is the New Investigator Scheme targeted?

The BBSRC New Investigator Scheme is one of a range of mechanisms that BBSRC has in place to support career development for early-career researchers. Support for post-doctoral researchers includes opportunities such as:

- The David Phillips Fellowship.
- Researcher Co-Investigator status on a research grant.
- Research Councils UK (RCUK) Academic Fellowships.

The New Investigator Scheme is designed to assist researchers who have taken an additional step, and have secured their first independent research position as a lecturer, or as a fellow or researcher of equivalent status, in a UK university or research council institute.

Q3: In your webpage you state that research potential rather than track record will

be taken into account: this is particularly important to guarantee early stage researchers have greater opportunities. On which basis do you evaluate the "research potential"?

The scheme operates in responsive mode, which is an investigator-led funding mechanism that accepts applications in any area within the scientific remit of BBSRC. The peer review of responsive mode applications involves assessment of the grant applications by several referees, both from the UK and overseas, and an opportunity for the applicant to respond to the referees' reviews. The application, the referees' reviews and the applicants' responses are then assessed by one of the four research committees. On the basis of this information it is the responsibility of the research committee to rank the applications it receives. Members of the research committees are experts in the scientific area covered by the committee, and are drawn from universities, research institutes and industry. The track record of the applicant is one of the considerations in assessing an application, but clearly this is often limited for early career researchers, so for applicants to the New Investigator Scheme the research potential rather than the track record is taken into account. In responsive mode the success rate, by number of applications, is the same in each of the four research committees. When calculating how far down the ranked lists it is possible to fund with the money available,

applicants to the New Investigator Scheme gain an advantage. These applicants are considered more favourably, if they are sufficiently close to the funding cut-off, and displace applications at the bottom of the funding region in the ranked list.

Q4: In your experience, what are the main difficulties young scientists encounter when setting-up their own lab?

Although schemes such as this can play an important part in helping young researchers to establish themselves as independent researchers, it is only a part of the support that they need. Support from their institution is also essential and is likely to increase their ability to secure research funding and to develop as an effective independent researcher.

Q5: Complementary skills such as management or communication are essential in running a laboratory: to what extent are these skills taken into account in the evaluation phase, and how is their development supported after the grant has been awarded?

Support from the researcher's institution can take many forms, including start-up funds for basic equipment, arranging suitable levels of teaching and administrative duties, mentoring from more senior researchers in research group management and communication skills, guidance in finding possible sources of research funding, and assistance in writing grant proposals. Clearly, the future of the biosciences depends on these

young researchers and so all of those involved in supporting them (senior colleagues, heads of department, their institutions, the learned societies and the funding agencies) must all play their part. Investing time and money in these researchers now will ensure that the biosciences have a bright future.

Francesco Lescai, University College London, United Kingdom

Chris St Pourçain, Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council, United Kingdom

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Upcoming events in Life Sciences

The EMBO Meeting, September 10th–13th in Vienna, Austria

This annual conference features an impressive line-up of more than 120 world-class scientific speakers, including: Richard Axel, Susan Lindquist, Eric Wieschaus



and Giacomo Rizzolatti. It brings together around 1,400 scientists working in the life sciences. Three plenary lecture sessions devoted to microbiology of infection, genome evolution and neuroscience and 21 concurrent sessions will explore classical fields of research and new frontiers in molecular biology. Daily *Meet the Speaker Lunches* give access to leading researchers, and poster sessions extend the scientific programme. But *The EMBO Meeting* is not just about hard-core science. The *Career Day* offers training for PhD students and post-docs on diverse topics, such as presentation skills,

applications or the peer review process. Adriana Gonzales, a PhD student at CeMM in Vienna who attended last year's conference explains: "Attending the Career Day was useful. I found out about different career paths open to scientists. This has opened my eyes to new possibilities and helped me to decide what to do after my PhD."

Registration and more info at www.the-embo-meeting.org

Katja Linssen