Dear all,

First of all, a big big thank you to all of you who filled in our questionnaire!

In this issue we would like to invite you to join our team to organise the next big YEBN event on careers in 2012!

On the next page you can read how one of our national members – btS – helps you to kick off your career and about the story of a former YEBN member, about his time within YEBN and how it shaped his current career. Get to know the Austrian Institutional Member of YEBN on pages 3–4 and read about upcoming events and Kary Mullis’s breakthrough in life sciences on the last pages.

Have a great summer!

Annika Hohendahl, Marie Müller

YEBN newsletter editors
newsletter[at]yebn.org

Be part of the project team of a YEBN event on careers! – Shape the project, share your experience and inspiration

Interested in getting involved in YEBN? Even if you are not an old-timer within your national organisation, this is your chance to actively participate in YEBN’s international activities. As agreed during the last General Assembly in Wroclaw in 2010, we are creating a project group to define, design and organise a Europe-wide YEBN event with the topic Careers in 2012. YEBN has a strong background in this field and we would like to exploit and profit from the collected knowledge as well as to get new ideas from you!

The new project group will be an international team open to new and fresh ideas. Participants will experience the international working environment. You will get the chance to learn more about fund raising, practise your communication skills (in English) and present your organising abilities. The project group will be supported by already existing task and project groups and the YEBN Executive Board.

Become a member of this new project group and test and develop your skills, maybe even as a project group leader. Express your interest or ask questions without any commitment via sending us an email to eb[at]yebn.org.

We are looking forward to working with you!

Annika Hohendahl and Irina Epstein, on behalf of the YEBN Executive Board
Event Report

Kick-off for your career – 2nd btS BIO.NRW Student Convention

On July 10th and 11th, students, trainers and representatives of companies met at the btS BIO.NRW (PhD) Student Convention for the second time. At the exceptional venue, the BayArena football stadium in Leverkusen (Germany), students had the opportunity to learn how to complete their CV with soft skills like project management and self-promotion to shape a successful career.

The event was opened with talks by public figures of the life sciences sector on Friday. Among them was keynote speaker and extreme athlete Joey Kelly who illustrated how to continuously work on success. Starting from his first triathlon, driven by a bet with his sister, he began to train for more and more extreme goals such as the accomplishment of all eight ironman competitions of one year and desert runs.

The inspiring talk by Joey Kelly showed that purposefulness and staying power are the keys to achieve goals. The evening event with dinner, guided tours in the stadium and music gave the participants the opportunity to chat with potential employers and ask questions to company representatives.

The second day was dedicated to workshops and trainings specifically for young scientists. In three sessions, the participants deepened their knowledge of business etiquette and job interviews and had a training course on convincing communication.

Annette Angenendt, responsible for marketing & PR at BIO.NRW and organiser of the event, is pleased: “The ambiance is unique, all the students are highly motivated!” and Sebastian Bühren, member of the federal board of btS, agrees “This event is terrific! I’m learning a lot plus it’s so much fun!”

With 110 participants not only from North Rhine-Westphalia but from all over Germany, the event became a lot larger than last year’s Student Convention. Hopefully, there will be a 3rd btS BIO.NRW Student Convention in 2012.

Judith Mönch-Tegeder

Credits: www.yansfotos.de

YEBN scientist focus

After completing his studies of Molecular Biotechnology at Heidelberg University, Peter Kaiser performed his PhD at the Max Planck Institute for Intelligent Systems. Today, Peter is both sales and support specialist for Visitron Systems GmbH in Munich and a MSc student in optical and electrical engineering at the distant teaching University of Hagen.

Having been member of the executive boards of YEBN and btS, Peter shaped the mission of these networks. In this interview, he will share his experience with us.

Peter, you have been in the executive board of btS for several years before you switched to the YEBN executive board in 2008. How did you become excited about YEBN?

The first time I heard about YEBN was right after its founding in 2002. Other members of btS Heidelberg joined the first meeting and were enthused about the idea of supporting and connecting young people involved in life sciences and biotechnology through a European network.

I stayed active in btS till 2008 to support our growing national network. During the preparations for the YEBN Annual Meeting 2008, I was asked to apply for the YEBN board as a representative for btS – a new challenge that turned out to be a great life experience.
**You have gained plenty of experience in both a national and an international network. What is the difference between working in both?**

It is very interesting to see how individuals from all over Europe approach problems. Specific member interests result from individual education and unique career perspectives in each nation. These divergences have to be balanced, which is only possible by clear and extensive communication among and with all members. In a sense, this is similar to btS work, but on an international scale.

**How did the experiences in YEBN and btS shape your personal and professional development? How do they help you in doing your daily job?**

My experiences in btS taught me that it is very important to have motivated people who support you and work independently. It is important to encourage these people and give them the opportunity to face new challenges. The YEBN showed me how important it is to have clear communication between different parties and that it is important to approach your partners in an open and transparent way.

You took part in the organisation of several YEBN Projects, among others the Youth Conference on European Life Science Careers in 2009. Which YEBN event did you like most?

Personally, I liked the European life science fair EuroBio 2009 in Paris most. YEBN delegates were able to discuss the future of biotechnology, eye to eye with stakeholders and politicians. Our delegates were thrilled by these interactions with policy makers, who were in turn impressed by the quality of the young scientists’ contribution.

**What would you recommend to young scientists?**

I would recommend to young scientists to get an overview about the immense opportunities they have as early as possible, to test some of them, to quickly find a particular topic or field they take great interest in and, as soon as they have found it, to follow their chosen way.

Interview by Christine Weckenmann

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**Institutional Member focus: Club Biotech**

*Interview with Valentin Friedrich, Club Biotech Chairman*

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

Club Biotech was founded in December 2000 by Andreas Bergthaler and Andreas Pichlmaier, two students of veterinary medicine. They wanted fellow veterinary students to get interested in scientific research as an alternative to a classic veterinarian career. The first events took place at the University of Veterinary Sciences in Vienna and focused on the research work of PhD students. Shortly thereafter, the club invited various renowned scientists (such as Adriano Aguzzi or Josef Penninger) to give lectures, and organised excursions to biotech companies such as Boehringer-Ingelheim and Intercell. An interdisciplinary network of students from various universities and educational backgrounds expanded ranging from microbiology to human medicine.

**Why did you join the YEBN?**

The YEBN membership of Club Biotech has enabled its members to become part of an international network of young life scientists, resulting in an exchange of ideas and best practices. In the last years, members of Club Biotech have been part of YEBN projects focusing on career development of young scientists in Europe.

**Who are your members?**

At the moment, the active members are a group of around 10 motivated students mostly affiliated to the Vienna University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU), who organise events and steer the activities of Club Biotech. Regarding our members, we are very flexible. Whoever has an idea and wants to contribute is welcome to join one of our monthly meetings.
How do you keep your members connected?
Apart from a monthly newsletter that provides information about upcoming events, there is a mailing list for all active members. Most importantly, we meet every month at a café to welcome new members, plan new activities, chat and discuss current issues.

Which activities characterise your network?
Our major focus is to provide a platform for students and professionals from all fields of life sciences. This is achieved by organising public lectures, school workshops, field trips to R&D-driven companies and informal meetings. During these events we want to address the hot topics in the respective field and give students the opportunity to network. Some activities are purely scientific while others, such as our so-called "Science & Beer" events, are designed to deal with more mainstream, popular science issues in a relaxed and fun framework.

Do you have any big projects coming up?
At the moment, Club Biotech is planning a series of excursions to biotech companies in and around Vienna. Furthermore, we are cooperating with the Austrian Association of Molecular Life Sciences and Biotechnology to develop a mentoring programme at the Vienna University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences. The idea is to find leading scientists and PIs to take PhD students as their protégés and help them develop their career in science. In turn, these PhD students are required to pass on their experience to master students. To realise this project, there is still a lot of work to be done, but we really hope to make it happen and, eventually, to extend it to other universities in Vienna.

What would be the best way to get in touch with you as a young Austrian biotechnologist?
Easy! Visit www.clubbiotech.at, join our Facebook group, follow us on Twitter or send us an email to office[at]clubbiotech.at. We are looking forward to hearing from you!

Interview by Joanna Kud

Upcoming events in Life Sciences

**Biotech 2011**, October 5th–7th, 2011 in Milan, Italy

Biotechjob.it 2.0, the new version of the Italian job placement platform (see IM focus in YEBN Newsletter June 2011) will be presented by ANBI during *Biotech 2011*, an international fair and conference on biotechnology from October 5th to 7th in Milan. The event will be held together with Nuce International, a nutraceutical trade exhibition, and *Algae Europe*, an exposition on technologies for algae culture. To facilitate networking among participants, a Partnering Program to arrange one-to-one meetings is available. The *Biotech Start up Challenge* will further offer a great opportunity to introduce your early stage business to a panel of experts. You can enter all the three events free of charge by pre-registering online until 3rd of October. More info at www.biotechexpo.eu

Antonio Del Casale
Kary Mullis and his Nobel Prize for PCR

Kary Mullis is a Nobel Prize winner who was born in the United States in 1944. When reading about his life it is easy to believe in his clever and enthusiastic mind: When he was a child he had been designing rockets with his friends. Moreover, at high school, he was allowed free and unsupervised access to the chemistry laboratory and spent many afternoons tinkering there. Mullis studied chemistry at Georgia University; during summer he built an organic synthesis laboratory where he produced research chemicals for sale.

By the time he left Georgia Institute of Technology for graduate studies in biochemistry at Berkeley University of California, Mullis was excited by molecules but DNA. In his Nobel lecture in 1993, Mullis said: “Six years in the biochemistry department didn’t change my mind about DNA, but six years of Berkeley changed my mind about almost everything else.”

After receiving his PhD, the multifaceted mind left science to write fiction. Finally, Mullis returned to science encouraged by some colleagues. He worked as a DNA chemist at the biotechnology company Cetus for 7 years. This was where Mullis invented the polymerase chain reaction method in 1983. However, shocking to him, none of his friends or colleagues was excited about the potential of such a process.

Today PCR technology has grown into a several billion dollar industry. For his work, he received the Japan Prize and the Nobel Prize for chemistry, both in 1993. Since winning the Nobel Prize, Mullis has been criticised for promoting ideas in areas in which he has no expertise. He has promoted AIDS denialism, climate change denial and his belief in astrology. In 1998, PCR was inducted into the National Inventors Hall of Fame, for revolutionising DNA technology!

Nowadays, Mullis serves on the board of scientific advisors of several companies, provides expert advice in legal matters involving DNA, and is a frequent lecturer at college campuses, corporations and academic meetings around the world.

Adrià Muñoz Pallerola

References
www.karymullis.com
www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/chemistry/
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Our Network connects independent national organisations active in Europe in the areas of biotechnology and life sciences.

The organization members defined Institutional Members (IMs) are composed of young professionals, undergraduate and postgraduate students.

Individuals can also participate to YEBN activities as Individual Members (InMs) upon registering on our website.