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Young European Biotech Network

Newsletter | March 2015

Dear all,
Welcome to the first Newsletter of 2015. To start the new edition, please have a look at the first page at the last contribution to our exciting competition: "Your embarrassing lab mistake". Thank you very much for your participation. Page 2 is all about YEBN with a presentation of the new Executive Board and a review of the last YEBN annual meeting in Lausanne. During this meeting we welcomed a new institutional member Club Biotech. You will find an introduction of the Austrian organization on page 3. Interested in obtaining an internship? Then feel free to read the article by the YEBN internship task group from pages 3 - 4 and

also have a look at the YEBN website. Our staff writer Ed wrote again an interesting personal opinion on Fluoride water (check it out on pages 4 - 5 and last but not least we present another fascinating career path on the last page.

Enjoy your reading!

PS: Do not forget to subscribe to the next YEBN Annual Meeting, which will already take place this May

Carmen Aguirre Hernández, Natascha Sattler, Edward Randviir and Thomas Gaßler

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Competition: Your embarrassing lab mistake

A colleague at a private institute told me that when they first moved there, they had a lot of problems with their PCR assays. For half a year, nothing seemed to work, even after exchanging all the buffers, all NTP's and the polymerases. By accident, they finally realised that many of the primer sequences were faulty. The sequences looked different from what they had actually ordered, and thus did not bind correctly to the template. Yet why did they not receive the primer sequences they had ordered? They found out that the error lay in the institute's finance department, which processed all orders. In the finance department, incoming orders were printed on paper, and then entered into the supplier's order forms by hand. So when the office worker who typed the sequence of A's, T's, U's and G's, he made mistakes here and then. Not being a life scientist, he didn't know what the significance of these letters was. Instead, he thought they were catalogue numbers, and was furious that they could not come up with shorter, easier-to-type-in product codes. From this day on, the researchers were allowed to order primers directly, and finally everyone was happy.

Robert

Our competition is finally coming to an end and you will find the last embarrassing lab

mistake story in this issue. Thank you so much for your participation! Your stories put many smiles not only on our faces but also hopefully on the faces of many of our readers

The new YEBN Executive Board

At the recent Annual Meeting, which took place in Lausanne from the 5th to 7th of December 2014 (see article below), YEBN and its IM elected the new EB, who will lead YEBN during 2015. Find out a bit more about them and their ideas for young European scientists!

Katharina - Chairwoman

“ I believe YEBN can be the ideal platform to connect young students and professionals in the field of biological sciences all over Europe! ”



Kamila - Vice-Chairwoman

“ I strongly believe that YEBN through its expansion and improvement can be a perfect European wide platform for all young scientists out there! ”



Carmen - Treasurer

“ YEBN helps broadening students and young professional minds’ and informs them of all the opportunities they have and even creating new ones! ”



Mathilde - Secretary

“ Join the young European platform to share your experience and build up your career! ”



Natascha - Communication Officer

“ YEBN is a fantastic information platform for biotechnology students to learn about career opportunities and to meet like minded people! ”



Event Report

YEBN Annual Meeting 2014

After relocating The YEBN Annual Meeting 2014 took place in the beautiful city of Lausanne (Switzerland) on the weekend of December 6th and 7th. Executive Board assembly, future strategy planning and connecting all different members makes the Annual Meeting the most important intern YEBN gathering of each year. Since there are a lot of organizational changes projected for the next year, the Annual Meeting 2014 represented a turning point for the YEBN and its course of action. Major changes include the move of YEBN’s legal seat to Germany and the modulation of the membership policy.

Marie Müller, the local organization host and former YEBN board member, accommodated around 15 young scientists at EPFL for the General Assembly and the interactive workshop on “Building Your Community”. Within in the course of the General Assembly, previous decisions of the Executive Board were officially ratified and further changes, including the move of YEBN’s legal seat and the new institutional membership of Club Biotech, were proposed and accepted. Furthermore, all current institutional members were shortly introduced

by their representatives providing a brief outlook about their plans and activities in 2015. For a quick introduction of the newly elected YEBN Executive Board please see above.

With his workshop on “Building Your Community” Robert Schwamborn, former Chairman of the Executive Board, together with all attendees interactively revealed what it takes to organize, motivate and to sustain your organization. He gave valuable hints about how your organization’s activities can be presented to the broad public more effectively and pushed the participants to reflect about their own motivation in fruitful discussions. As an experienced trainer, Robert succeeded in guiding a very enjoyable and motivating workshop.

We are very thankful to the organizing committee as well as all participants for making the YEBN Annual Meeting 2014 such a great success. Moreover, we are convinced that the enthusiastic ambitions of all institutional members will contribute to a prosperous year 2015 for YEBN and we are looking forward to the next meeting in Poland.

Thomas Gäbler

Interview with Tom Gaßler, President of the Austrian Club Biotech

Please give a short introduction of Club Biotech

The club was refounded in June 2013 by students from BOKU after its breakup two years before. By the end of the summer of 2013, we could already motivate about ten people to join Club Biotech actively. On the 10th of October 2013, we launched our first official event, led by Bettina Thorbal as guest speaker, called "New trends in biotechnology". Today we count 25 active members, who constantly offer new and exciting events to broaden the interest in biotechnology as well as to provide more interesting possibilities for students to participate in public discussions about latest trends, concerns and perspectives in life sciences.

What kind of events do you organize?

We host several kinds of events. From scientific to career talks (often including interactions with the speakers) and field trips to companies. We also try to provide a rich knowledge and networking platform for students. Additionally, we try to attract pupils to the life sciences and biotechnology in particular. For example, we go to schools and talk about all different fields of Life Sciences, job opportunities etc. But that is not all: We have also invited school classes to come to the university and show them the laboratories. By the way, we also publish a newsletter about our events.

That sounds super interesting. So what is the aim of your association?

Well, we do not only organize events but also try to serve as a platform for biotech students. They can meet new like-minded people in a friendly environment and find out more about biotechnology. Learning from each other and having fun together while doing something useful is maybe not written down in our statutes as aims we try to achieve, but is definitely part of being an active member.

Why did Club Biotech become a member of YEBN?

We heard from former Club Biotech members that they really enjoyed working with YEBN during different workshops and other activities, and so we gave it try and went for the application. We are looking forward to working together with you!

What is your position within the organization?

Currently, I am president. My main task is to oversee the activities and to motivate the members. The year before I was vice president.

Interviewee: Tom Gaßler

Interviewer: Natascha Sattler

Career Section

Want to know how to get and internship? Keep reading!

Gaining some working experience before leaving university will definitely enhance your CV and boost your chances when job-hunttting. Furthermore, it will help you realise, which is the role and field you want to work in.

The Young European Biotech Network (YEBN) promotes industry experience among students of Life Sciences. Internships can establish close ties between a budding researcher and a industrial company. Building up trust and sympathy is very important for future success in initiating and maintaining collaborations and employment.

An international survey performed by the YEBN's Careers in Life Sciences Team (CiLS) indicates these positive effects: Scientists who had performed internships in companies said that this positively (45%) or very positively (48%) influenced their interest in the company's work. In return, 37 % of the companies offered interns a full position^{1,2}.

The YEBN internship task group has prepared a hugely useful article that will solve most of your doubts on why and how to find your perfect internship. What are you waiting for? You can read it here : <http://www.yebn.eu/internships/>

How do you find a company? It is always a good idea to speak with your professors at university if you have the chance, they may know any vacancies or might introduce you to someone who does. In addition, don't miss any job fairs organized by your university, you'll have the chance to meet companies recruiters, and if so, keep their contact details! If you rather looking for companies online, the internship task group article will also tell you how.

So you've found your dream internship but you don't know how prepare your CV? Are you worried about your first interview? The internship task group has also thought about that. The web is full of tips and they have gathered the best ones.

Authors:

Original article: YEBN internship task group

Summarizing and editing: Carmen Aguirre

1 Challenges of Life Science-based Innovation in Europe A position paper by the Young European Biotech Network, Young European Biotech Network, 2013

2 Careers in the Life Sciences Survey , unpublished, Young European Biotech Network

Personal opinion

Fluoride Water: Mass Medication Linked to Weight Gain or Depression?

There is no doubt that the subject of mass medication divides opinion among the UK population, and in particular the subject of artificial fluoride levels in local water supplies. On the one hand, fluoride is proven to provide a line of defence against bacteria that cause oral infections and cavities, yet the loud opposition to fluoride insertion argue that fluoride can cause dental fluorosis, which is a nasty condition that essentially attacks and weakens tooth enamel, leading to oral discomfort and observable damage to teeth. Indeed, excessive levels of fluoride are shown to cause fluorosis; yet the origin of the fluoride is a matter of conjecture. Some argue that areas in the UK that have high fluoride levels (such as the Midlands) are responsible for fluorosis cases, particularly in children. The pro-fluoride camps say that the 3% of fluorosis cases are mitigated by the damage that the lack of fluoride would do. Then there are the in-betweeners who would rather be given the choice.

Irrespective of the opinion, one should consider the facts. One authoritative review from the University of York (UK) showed that the presence of fluoride in water significantly reduced tooth decay, and many studies across the world have shown this to be the case. The obvious health benefits are consistently ignored by some, and the loud voices keep shouting; as I write this a national newspaper has reported a study conducted at the University of Kent (UK) that suggests fluoride could cause weight gain and even depression. Is this study a speculative effort for the loud minority to be heard more, or does it actually have some substance?

The basis of the reported study builds on the idea that increased fluoride levels cause changes in thyroid gland activity. The thyroid is instrumental in hormone regulation, energy release, and protein synthesis. The gland requires iodine to function properly, yet studies suggest fluoride meddles with iodine concentrations in

the blood, leading to potentially a decrease in thyroid activity. In fact, in areas with higher fluoride levels in water, the frequency of underactive thyroid glands was 30% higher than in areas that did not introduce fluoride into their water systems. The lead scientist, Professor Stephen Peckham, suggests that fluoridation should be reconsidered and that there are safer ways to keep teeth clean. As an author opinion, I would challenge him to get the entire population of children to brush and floss their teeth correctly twice a day! An underactive thyroid gland can lead to depression and weight gain; this gives the tabloids (and YEBN!) a lovely headline.

The critics have already hit back by suggesting population samples are biased, and their methods significantly flawed, and yet further reports in the BBC state that Public Health England have given the go-ahead to step up its mass fluoridation programme.

As a scientific writer and researcher by trade, I prefer to have the choice. Water filters are available for those who wish not to be medicated. I personally feel it is a good thing, however.

Edward Randviir

@RandviirScience

Original research article: <http://jech.bmj.com/content/early/2015/02/09/jech-2014-204971>

Open position

Would you like to become a journalist or editor? Collect and broadcast information that matters to young scientists? Design online and print layout? Get this extra point on your CV that makes you stand out from the crowd?

YEBN is currently looking for people for its **Communication and Newsletter Task group** – we are looking for young, enthusiastic scientists who want to gain experience on an international level. Prior experience is not a prerequisite. If you are interested, please contact Natascha Sattler: natascha.sattler@yebn.eu

Natascha Sattler

Careers after studying

Clinical Data Manager

In this issue of our section "Careers after studying?" we are chatting with Natascha Sattler, Head of Clinical Datamanagement of a small CRO (Contract Research Organisation) in the field of clinical studies.

Please describe your education and professional career

I studied biology/genetics at the University of Vienna in Austria. After finishing my Master thesis in the field of basic cancer research, I changed topics and did a PhD in the field of immunology/cellular biology at the University of Geneva, Switzerland.

After finishing my thesis, I worked for two years as a Clinical Data Manager in a company performing clinical studies for breast cancer medication. Now I am establishing the Clinical Data Management branch for a CRO (Contract Research Organisation) in the field of clinical studies.

Why did you choose this career/field?

I knew that I did not want to stay in academic science after my PhD. One of the many reasons was the fact that it is very difficult to obtain a stable job in Academia. Therefore, I decided to go into the Industry and see what else is out there for me.

How did you find your current job?

I checked various job platforms on the Internet, but I also wrote a lot of speculative applications. In the end I found this job via a former colleague. Therefore, I can advise everyone to keep his/her eyes open and to talk to several people about your search for work. Vitamin B always helps.

What do you like most about your job?

Knowing that I am at least a small part in the fight against diseases such as cancer or multiple sclerosis even though I am now working anymore in a laboratory. Otherwise I like the necessity to coordinate the work among different people and to communicate with people from different settings.

What are the most difficult parts in this job?

Trying to keep our customers and our partners happy at the same time. On the one hand customers often want the tasks to be performed asap and on the other

hand I need to coordinate the performance of these tasks with colleagues and partners.

Did any special qualifications help you to find this job?

It is important to have a background in natural sciences and to be very interested in medical issues. Otherwise it is really helpful to have some experience in programming and databases.

Any advice you can give to students?

If you are not sure whether you want to stay in Science, try to do also some internships outside of academia. Unfortunately, academic experience almost never counts as work experience in the private sector.

What did you want to become when you were little?

When I was really little I wanted to become a vet, and afterwards I wanted to be a scientist. Now, I am really happy that I found a job outside of Academia but in the field of Science.

Interviewee: Natascha Sattler

Interviewer: Carmen Aguirre

Check also our
all new website on:
yebn.eu

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.

follow us on www.yebn.eu

