

European Medical Research Councils (EMRC)

Editorial

A year ago in March 2009, EMRC published our Forward Look 'Investigator-Driven Clinical Trials' where a series of five workshops issued 25 recommendations of which five were chosen as top priorities at the Strasbourg Consensus Conference in October 2008. One of these top recommendations called for the adoption of a 'risk-based' approach to the regulation of IDCT.

An implementation workshop held in June 2009 in Paris facilitated collaboration between Germany, Spain, OECD and EMRC resulting in an OECD Global Science Forum (GSF) proposal about this important subject. A scoping group including EMRC was then formed with interested member states (Finland, France, Germany, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, United States and the European Commission) and the group met at the OECD in Paris on 5 March 2010 to precise the original proposal now entitled 'Establish a Working Group to Facilitate International Cooperation in Non-Commercial Clinical Trials'. The proposal was approved by the April GSF meeting and it will be launched with a first enlarged GSF working group meeting under the Spanish EU presidency in Madrid on 26-27 May 2010. EMRC has been invited to participate given its historical involvement, the impact of the IDCT Forward Look and the expertise it will bring. We look forward to this important task.

The EMRC will soon benefit from the expertise of Dr Kirsten Steinhausen who was instrumental in the GSF proposal from the Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung (BMBF, DE) as she will join our medical sciences unit in Strasbourg on 1 June 2010. I would like to take this opportunity to welcome Dr. Steinhausen – we are looking forward very much to having you on board.

The EMRC position paper on the proposal for a Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes has also led to positive results. Following its publication in March 2009, all recommendations were endorsed by the EU Parliament during a large majority vote on 5 May 2009. We have since closely monitored the progress made by the draft Directive. Professor Roger Lemon, chair of this activity, provided an update during the EMRC plenary meeting on 22 April. Briefly, intense negotiations have taken place in a trilogue between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the member states (under the Swedish and Spanish presidencies). A political agreement exists today and will hopefully result in a final vote and adoption of the Directive by the EU Parliament in September 2010. EMRC, ESF Member Organisations and the European academic community at large were successful in advocating their positions and the latest draft Directive even if not completely satisfactory represents a good consensus. The challenge of this Directive to European biomedical research was highly significant but it demonstrated fruitful coordination of the academic sector across Europe. A continued effort will be needed to provide a similar or better response to



Core group visit to the Reichstag

future challenges and Professor Lemon believes EMRC can and should play a key part, as even after adoption of the Directive, there will be further policy initiatives continuing at the European level. Professor Lemon and the EMRC decided to publish a new position paper to provide a detailed update and anticipate future issues linked with the Directive's implementation.

The EMRC Core Group meeting this winter in Bruges in Belgium organised so very nicely by Professor Roger Bouillon and FWO was an important strategic meeting. We decided that an update of our EMRC White Paper is needed to update the 2007 White Paper analysis and recommendations on the status and future strategy for medical research in Europe. The White Paper II should be published in spring 2011, coinciding with EMRC's 40th anniversary.

Finally, we recently held our EMRC plenary meeting in Berlin on 22-23 April skilfully hosted by DFG and our EMRC Core Group member Professor Martin Röhlhoff and Dr Georg Munz. In spite of the problems with the Iceland volcano ash cloud causing many airports to close, we held a very fine and productive meeting, as can be seen from the minutes of the core group, plenary meeting and status report. I would like to take this opportunity to express a warm thank-you to DFG for hosting us, to Martin and Georg for all the effort, and to all participants and speakers for being there and being so active. A special big thank you to our EMRC Unit, with our Unit Head Dr. Stephane Berghmans and our Unit Coordinator Mrs. Janet Latzel for preparing it so well, as already expressed by those present at the meeting.

I am so sorry that you could not all make it. We have tried to rapidly produce the minutes, and they are now available. In a while the ash cloud will be forgotten, and if we had not held the meeting many of our activities would have been delayed until we all meet again in October.

So I hope you all endorse that we held the Berlin meeting to continue strengthening medical research in Europe.

Lotte

Professor Liselotte Højgaard, MD DMSc, EMRC Chair

Highlights

Science Policy

Management of Medical Risk in European Society, a Case Study: the H1N1 Flu Pandemic

The global flu pandemic offers an excellent opportunity to study the perception and management of medical risk in European society. This ESF strategic colloquium activity aims to evaluate how cross-disciplinary research can guide the management of medical risks such as the H1N1 flu pandemic. This initiative originated from all five ESF standing committee chairs and Dr Marc Heppener (ESF Director of Science and Strategy Development) who first discussed it at the September 2009 chairs' meeting. Science units provided names for the scientific organising committee and support has been provided by the medical sciences unit and the conference unit.

A scoping meeting with the scientific organising committee was held in Frankfurt (Germany) on 11 December 2009. An interdisciplinary colloquium took place in Barcelona (Spain) on 12-13 April 2010 with researchers from a wide range of scientific areas and an array of societal actors like politicians, journalists, civil servants, etc. This colloquium will first result in the publication of a science policy briefing and will probably be followed by a conference or series of conferences.

Exploratory Workshops

Promoting Normality in Childbirth across Europe

On 22-25 March 2010, in Dublin (Ireland), a group of social and health care professionals gathered to discuss opportunities of developing European funded projects on maternity care and childbirth.

Participants from each part of Europe joined with ten different countries represented. Health care professionals (nurses, midwives, clinicians) were present but also social care workers (epidemiologist, psychologists) and representatives of mother associations. An unusual gender imbalance appeared: with more women than men.

This workshop presented the benefit of gathering professionals who shared their experience on childbirth practices under different settings, traditions, cultures, and in different countries. It serves the European medical community to draw a general picture of childbirth and motherhood practices, training of nurses/midwives, status and roles of nurses/midwives in public and private sectors, hospital and health insurance policies across the European Union. Participants agreed on the need for reducing unnecessary intervention in maternity care and for promoting mother choices and normality.

Consequently, they are now writing, as one research group, an FP7 proposal for the European Commission on 'Well-being and Happiness in Maternity Care'.

More information: <http://www.esf.org/activities/exploratory-workshops/medical-sciences-emrc/workshops-detail.html?ew=9290>

Research Networking Programmes

Frontiers of Functional Genomics (FFG)

Developments in functional genomics technologies together with the expanding concept of systems biology have led to

exciting possibilities for the understanding of disease mechanisms. The 4th ESF Conference on Functional Genomics and Disease, (14-17 April 2010, Dresden, Germany) brought together world scientific leaders in the field to discuss the challenges ahead and the technologies that will lead to novel solutions. In addition, a workshop, a training course and a conference recently took place.

More information: www.esf.org/ffg and www.FunctionalGenomics.org.uk

European Child Cohort Network (EUCCONET)

Within the frame of the European Child Cohort Network, a workshop on the 'Role of Fathers in Cohort studies' was held on 24 February 2010 in Vienna (Austria). The main aim was to examine how so far mostly mothers have been engaged primarily in cohorts questionnaires; while fathers could become more involved, though the range of response would not be straightforward and predictable.

More information: www.esf.org/euconet and <http://euconet.site.ined.fr/>

The Identification of Novel Genes and Biomarkers for Systemic Lupus Erythematosus (BIOLUPUS)

Systemic lupus erythematosus accurate recording of activity, damage, demographic details, drug exposures and laboratory data is critical for analysing potential genetic and other biomarkers associated with predisposition to lupus and for predicting outcome. A first training meeting held on 30 March 2010 in Birmingham (United Kingdom) was organised by Professor Caroline Gordon. The course reviewed the methodology for recording this multisystem autoimmune disease activity and damage. It trained participants to use internet based database known as iBLIPS for capturing such data in multicentre studies. Short Term and Exchange Visit Grants schemes have also been initiated and are now open for applications.

More information: www.esf.org/biolupus

EUROCORES

ECT (Pan-European Clinical Trials) / EURAMOS-1

On 15-16 March 2010, London (UK), an International Conference entitled 'Future Clinical Trials for Adjuvant Treatment of Osteosarcoma - Prioritising the Questions' took place at the Wellcome Collection. The goal was to reflect on recent considerations, review pertinent questions and consider how best to work to address outstanding clinical questions. Nearly 50 participants (of which 30% of women) from 14 European countries, Japan, United States and Australia were present including the EURAMOS Project Leader, Professor Stefan Bielack. The audience was a good mix between clinicians, trialists, statisticians, basic researchers, patients, ESF, EORTC and ECRIN officers, and representatives of osteosarcoma research groups from all over the world. Discussions focused on potential new therapies of osteosarcoma, design of the future EURAMOS-2 clinical trial, and possibilities of funding investigator-driven clinical trials in Europe.

More information: www.esf.org/ECT and www.ctu.mrc.ac.uk/euramos/bone_planning_meeting.asp

Events 2010

- **Fourth Conference on Functional Genomics and Disease**
RNP FFG
14-17 April 2010, Dresden, Germany
- **B Cells and Protection: Back to Basics**
ESF-EMBO Symposium
18-23 April 2010, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain
- **EMRC Core Group & 56th Plenary Meetings**
21-23 April 2010, Berlin, Germany
- **Working group meeting on 'Development of web-based interlinked adrenal tumours Databases'**
RNP ESF-ENS@T
27 April 2010, Praha, Czech Republic
- **First Review Panel meeting (sifting meeting)**
EUROCORES EuroEPINOMICS
27-28 April 2010, Strasbourg, France
- **Workshop on the Role of Insular Cortex**
RNP ERNI-HSF
29 April-2 May 2010, Granada, Spain
- **Workshop on the Neurocognitive Mechanisms of Hallucinations**
RNP ERNI-HSF
2 May 2010, Granada, Spain
- **Oral presentation at EMSOS**
EUROCORES ECT/EURAMOS
5-7 May 2010, Birmingham, United Kingdom
- **Symposium 'Early life events, early brain behavior development and later cognition, emotion and health'**
EUROCORES EuroSTRESS
10 May 2010, Tilburg, The Netherlands
- **Strategic Workshops**
Forward Looks, 'Implementation of Medical Research into Clinical Practice'
17-18 May 2010, Frankfurt, Germany
- **Manipulation of Biomaterials Surface By Plasma Processing**
ESF Exploratory Workshop – PESC – EMRC
26-30 May 2010, Iasi, Romania
- **First Steering Committee meeting**
RNP EUMYONET
27 May 2010, Strasbourg, France
- **Antiviral Applications of RNA Interference**
ESF-EMBO Symposium
30 May-4 June 2010, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain
- **First Steering Committee meeting**
RNP ENGIHR
31 May 2010, Strasbourg, France
- **Oral presentation at 2010 ASCO Annual Meeting**
EUROCORES ECT/EURAMOS
4-8 June 2010, Chicago, US
- **Pharmacogenetics and Pharmacogenomics: Practical Applications in Routine Medical Practice**
ESF-UB Conference in Biomedicine
6-11 June 2010, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain
- **Scoping meeting**
Forward Looks 'Personalised Medicine for European Patients'
1 July 2010, Brussels, Belgium
- **Workshop on Tracking sample members in longitudinal studies**
RNP EUCCONET
1-2 July 2010, London, United Kingdom
- **Third Steering Committee meeting**
RNP REMEDIC
12 July 2010, Vienna, Austria
- **Seventh World Congress on Stress and EuroSTRESS Scientific Committee meeting**
EUROCORES EuroSTRESS
25-27 August 2010, Leiden, The Netherlands
- **Bacterial Networks 2010**
ESF Research Conferences
4-9 September 2010, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain
- **Conference on Bone Morphogenetic Proteins**
RNP REMEDIC (co-sponsor)
15-18 September 2010, Leuven, Belgium
- **Prevention and Treatment of Vitamin D Deficiency in Europe: Rationale and Design of a Randomized Controlled Trial with Moderate and High Doses of Vitamin D3 and Multiple Outcomes**
ESF Exploratory Workshop – EMRC
16-17 September 2010, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- **International Conference on the Parietal Lobe Function**
RNP ERNI-HSF
20-21 September 2010, Amsterdam, The Netherlands
- **Third Steering Committee meeting and Inaugural Conference of the Society for Longitudinal and Lifecourse Studies**
RNP EUCCONET
22-24 September 2010, Cambridge, United Kingdom
- **Emergent Properties of the Cytoskeleton: Molecules to Cells**
ESF-EMBO Symposium
3-8 October 2010, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain

- **Third Scientific Workshop on 'Cell Biology and Biochemistry'**
RNP FUMINOMICS
7-8 October 2010, Paris, France
- **EMRC Core Group & 57th Plenary Meetings**
11-13 October 2010, Strasbourg, France
- **Strategic Workshops**
Forward Looks, 'Implementation of Medical Research into Clinical Practice'
17-18 May 2010, Frankfurt, Germany
- **Consensus Conference**
Forward Looks, 'Implementation of Medical Research into Clinical Practice'
14 October 2010, Strasbourg, France
- **Functional Neurobiology in Minibrains: From Flies to Robots and Back Again**
ESF-EMBO Symposium
17-22 October 2010, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain
- **Strategic Workshops**
Forward Looks 'Gene Environment Interaction in Chronic Disease'
19-22 October 2010, Barcelona, Spain
- **Second Steering Committee meeting**
RNP BIOLUPUS
22 October 2010, Strasbourg, France
- **Nanomedicine: Reality now and soon**
ESF-UB Conference in Biomedicine
23-28 October 2010, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain
- **Second Review Panel meeting (ranking meeting)**
EUROCORES EuroEPINOMICS
25 October 2010, Strasbourg, France
- **Multidisciplinary consortium for the development of effective, but non-toxic drugs against MDRTB and XDR-TB**
ESF Exploratory Workshop
10-12 November 2010, Lisbon, Portugal
- **Third Steering Committee meeting and 9th Annual Meeting of the European Network for the Study of Adrenal Tumours (ENS@T)**
RNP ESF-ENS@T
24-27 November 2010, Torino, Italy
- **Molecular Perspectives on Protein-Protein Interactions**
ESF- EMBO Symposium
21-26 November 2010, Sant Feliu de Guixols, Spain

ESF

The European Science Foundation (ESF) is an independent, non-governmental organisation, the members of which are 79 national funding agencies, research performing agencies, academies and learned societies from 30 countries.

The strength of ESF lies in the influential membership and in its ability to bring together the different domains of European science in order to meet the challenges of the future.

Since its establishment in 1974, ESF, which has its headquarters in Strasbourg with offices in Brussels and Ostend, has assembled a host of organisations that span all disciplines of science, to create a common platform for cross-border cooperation in Europe.

ESF is dedicated to promoting collaboration in scientific research, funding of research and science policy across Europe. Through its activities and instruments ESF has made major contributions to science in a global context. The ESF covers the following scientific domains: Humanities; Life, Earth and Environmental Sciences; Medical Sciences; Physical and Engineering Sciences; Social Sciences; Marine Sciences; Materials Science and Engineering; Nuclear Physics; Polar Sciences; Radio Astronomy; Space Sciences.

EMRC

The European Medical Research Councils (EMRC) is the membership organisation for all the medical research councils in Europe under the auspices of the ESF. EMRC's mission is to promote innovative medical research and its clinical application towards improving human health. EMRC offers authoritative strategic advice for policy making, research management, ethics and better health services. In its activities, EMRC serves as the voice of its Member Organisations within the European scientific community. EMRC disseminates knowledge and promotes the socio-economic value of medical research to the general public and decision makers.

Contributors to the EMRC Newsletter

EMRC Chair

- Professor Liselotte Højgaard, EMRC Chair and Director, Professor Clinical Physiology, Nuclear Medicine & PET, Rigshospitalet, University of Copenhagen and Technical University of Denmark (DK)

Medical Sciences Unit

- Stephane Berghmans, Head of Unit
- Maria Manuela Nogueira, Science Officer
- Nathalie Spielowoy, Junior Science Officer
- Elena Martin-Bautista, Visiting Junior Science Officer
- Janet Latzel, Unit Coordinator
- Blanche Facchini-Schaller, Administrator
- Camelia Steinmetz, Administrator

Life, Earth and Environmental Sciences Unit

- Paul Beckers, Science Officer
- Lars Kristiansen, Science Officer