

PD Dr. Carsten Schultz

Interdisciplinary Chemistry Group

Short report, ESF-funded workshop 'Probes for lipid systems biology'

Dear Ms. Stirnberg,

First, I would like to thank the ESF for making again possible a fantastic workshop on 'Probes for lipid systems biology' with 24 participants. The following lines serve as a report on the details and the success of the workshop.

Most funded PIs of the TraPPs consortium (except Dorus Gadella and Harald Stenmark) plus the associated Christoffer Lagerholm from Odense attended the workshop. Each consortium group sent a number of graduate students and postdocs to the meeting. Unfortunately, Volker Hauke from the 'Synapse' consortium and Philippe Bastiaens had to cancel last minute. However, Walter Nickel from the EUROMembrane 'Unconventional Protein Secretion (UPS) consortium' participated in person. All consortia were invited to attend and three of the EuroMembrane consortia were well represented. In addition, we had with Britta Bruegger a participant from the German Transregio83 'Molecular architecture and cellular functions of lipid-protein assemblies' and with Howard Riezman from the newly installed Interdisciplinary Training Network of the EU 'Sphingonet'. All participants presented their current work in lectures, in case of the students in short talks. Especially for the students, the performance and very lively discussions in front of a keen and critical audience was a memorable experience with an enormous training effect. It should be mentioned that the fact, that all participants presented, made the student feel appreciated at the same level as the PIs. Experiences like this are necessary to boost the interest of young investigators to pursue independent careers.

We were able to attract a number of very high ranking speakers including Takanari Inoue from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, a specialist in lipid and protein probes, Kazuya Kikuchi from Osaka University, Japan, best known for various fluorescent probes, and Peter Varnai from Budapest, a specialist in cellular lipid detecting techniques. The lively discussions ended frequently in useful suggestions and the implementation of new collaborations. For instance, we are now developing novel fluorescent probes with the Kikuchi lab and Volker Hauke's and Kai Simon's group produced excellent results with our membrane-permeant lipid derivatives.

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The workshop was held at a historic villa located at the West shore of lake Como. Additional accommodation was available at a next door albergo. The villa provided full board for all participants. The total amount spent for accommodation, food and on-site services by the albergo owner such as airport/train transfer was 13,043 Euros. The end-of-workshop dinner at a local restaurant was mostly sponsored by Avanti Polar Lipids. Travel expenses were very much kept at bay due to the discipline of all participants. Total travel expenses were 4,360 Euros, leaving about 6,100 Euros of unused funds that will be relocated to the ESF. This excess of money reflects the slightly lower than intended number of participants. The per capita expenses were 725 Euros (700 for the course in 2010).

In the light of the enormous success of the workshop, we would like to propose repeating the event at the same location in the fall of 2012 again. We think that the scientific advance produced by the workshop and the training effect for the students justifies the expense. Apart from maintaining the very high scientific level, goals for the next workshop are the participation of all EuroMembrane-funded consortia. Is this at all possible?

Best wishes

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Selected collaborations beyond TraPPs initiated through the workshop

Schultz – Hauke: use of synthetic phosphoinositides to study neuronal activity

Zhang – Schultz: development of fluorescent phosphatase probes

Meyer – Schultz: caged lipids sent to Stanford

Schultz – Bastiaens: caged lipids to study signaling networks

Jalink – Bastiaens: fluorescent screen of chloride channels

Wymann – Jalink: SNAP/Halotag as labels for STORM imaging

Schultz – Jalink: EGF receptor internalization induced by artificial lipids

Jalink – Oliver: application of V-controlled lipid turnover in migration studies