

Scientific report of Advanced PhD workshop on: “Structure and Function of mRNP” at Aarhus University August 4-8, 2008.

The week long workshop included the following sessions:

- Aug. 4 morning: Nuclear mRNA decay (**Bertrand Seraphin, Gif sur Yvette**)
- Aug. 4 afternoon: mRNA 3'end formation (**Claire Moore, Boston**)
- Aug. 5: morning: mRNA processing in live cells (**Maria Carmo-Fonseca, Lissabon**)
- Aug. 5 afternoon: mRNP formation (**Neus Visa, Stockholm**)
- Aug. 6 morning: mRNP Quality Control (**Torben Heick Jensen, Aarhus**)
- Aug. 6 afternoon: mRNA localization (**Michael Kiebler, Vienna**)
- Aug. 7 morning and afternoon: Structure of mRNP- and mRNA decay-complexes (**Gregers Rom Andersen, Ditlev Brodersen, both Aarhus**)
- Aug. 8 morning: RNA helicases (**Eckhard Jankowsky, Ohio**)

It was attended by app 30 people – a good mix of experienced PhD students and post docs – all from top class RNA/RNP laboratories in Europe, Australia and Russia. The workshop concept was based on discussion; i.e. the lecturers of the day would give a introductory presentation of the session topic after which a lively discussion would start. All students had previously received original papers and reviews on the respective topics, and to secure a decent level of discussion students were told to prepare at least 5 questions per lecture. This “precaution” proved absolutely unnecessary and after only few minutes of lecturing all teachers engaged in lively and high quality conversations with the student “audience”, and it was a clear impression that both parties enjoyed the straightforward and frank exchange of ideas/information. Some lectures were methodologically based (Seraphin, Carmo-Fonseca, Kiebler, Andersen, Brodersen) and others rooted in scientific concepts (Moore, Visa, Jensen, Jankowsky). It appeared that both versions were well-received by the student participants.

To end every day, the two lecturers would give an afternoon talk on a timely project from their laboratory. Here the activity level was also very high and usually these talks would extend into the early evening due to discussion.

To further the level of interaction, all participants (students and teachers) would have both lunch and dinner together at a dedicated location at the Campus site of Aarhus University. Moreover, a nightly poster session with student presentations was arranged with beer and pizza. Finally, the workshop concluded with a nice dinner downtown Aarhus Friday the 8th of August where most participants were able to join.

On the last day, the workshop was evaluated in plenum, and it was my impression that the majority of the participants had had a very pleasant scientific experience with the ability to “become close” with some of the researchers they’d previously only met through the literature. My own assessment is also entirely positive and we will certainly engage in this kind of event on a yearly/bi-yearly basis in the future.