

## European Medical Research Councils (EMRC)

### Editorial

A first big victory has been secured following the publication in June 2010 of our position paper on the implications of the EMF Directive 2004/40/EC for European biomedical magnetic resonance (MR) research. At a meeting convened by the 'Alliance for MRI' at the European Parliament in Brussels on 29 September, László Andor, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, announced that MR would be exempt from any limit values in the Directive that the European Commission will be submitting to the European Parliament and Council in 2011. This is exactly in line with the EMRC's position as the exemption was seen as the only acceptable and responsible solution for the research and clinical use of MR. As was successfully done for the Directive on the protection of animals used for scientific purposes for which an update letter is to be published in January 2011, EMRC will now monitor the parliamentary process as the EMF Directive is presented to the Members of the European Parliament (MEPs). For this purpose we will closely collaborate with the 'Alliance for MRI' and we will rely on our Member Organisations to help identify the relevant MEPs and national governmental representatives that could support us.

October saw the EMRC 57<sup>th</sup> plenary meeting of the Standing Committee take place at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. In this world renowned location and granted with beautiful weather that pleased all participants, we hosted international guests for a high-level mini-symposium on medical research in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. Dr Susan Shurin (Acting Director, National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, NIH), Dr Alain Beaudet (President, Canadian Institutes of Health Research), Dr Robin Olds (Chief Executive, Health Research Council of New Zealand) and Dr Clive Morris (Deputy Head, National Health and Medical Research Council) provided us with interesting updates on their organisations as well as medical research in their respective countries. They also honoured us with very useful insight as they participated in the discussions during the plenary meeting. We would like to take this opportunity to thank each of them for honouring us with their presence. At the plenary meeting, EMRC also received a much welcomed and instructive update by ESF Chief Executive Professor Marja Makarow, on the current progress of the ESF-EUROHORCs discussions.

On the day after the plenary meeting and in the same location, we held the consensus conference for the Forward Look on 'Implementation of Medical Research in Clinical Practice'. The lively and enriching debate that took place was captured and will feed into the writing of the final report that will be published in 2011.

Still in October but this time in Barcelona, three highly motivating Scientific Future Conferences took place as part of the Forward Look on Gene Environment Interaction in Chronic Disease (GENESIS) chaired by Professor Harald Renz (Philipps-University Marburg) and Professor Dirk Haller (Technical University Munich, DE). Draft recommendations will next be debated during the consensus conference to be held in March 2011 in Berlin at the Harnack House.



In November, the second meeting of the OECD Global Science Forum on the facilitation of international cooperation in non-commercial clinical trials was hosted by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) in their historical Stone House in Bethesda, Maryland. Three workshops examined the issues related to international clinical research and drafted recommendations for 'Regulatory Process and Harmonisation', 'Education, Training and Infrastructure' and 'Risk-Based Approach'. A report will be finalised at a final meeting in Berlin in May 2011 with publication planned for the summer.

Following the contacts established during the EMRC plenary, the Medical Sciences Unit (Dr Stephane Berghmans and Dr Kirsten Steinhausen) was invited to pay a visit to both the NIH and CIHR to discuss possible synergies. In Bethesda, the visit began with a meeting with Dr Jeremy Berg (Director, National Institute of General Medicine Sciences) to discuss the Forward Look initiative on personalised medicine. The NIH Fogarty International Centre kindly hosted EMRC at their meeting of the NIH International Representatives and facilitated additional meetings with NIH representatives from the National Cancer Institute, the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute, and the National Human Genome Research Institute. In Ottawa, Dr Berghmans was warmly welcomed by Dr Christian Sylvain (Director, CIHR Strategic Policy and External Relations) and his colleagues who also arranged for a meeting with Dr Pierre Charest (Director General, Science Policy Directorate) and his team from Health Canada. New collaborations will undoubtedly emerge from these initial contacts.

Thank-you to all of you who were involved with the EMRC this year, Core Group, Standing Committee, Experts, Advisors, Medical Sciences Unit, and ESF. Our very Best Wishes for a Happy New Year 2011 with health and happiness for you and your families and professional achievements for the benefit of science and society!

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# Highlights

## Research Networking Programmes

### REMEDIC

#### Highlights from the BMP2010 Conference

Leuven (BE), 15-18 September 2010

On 15-18 September 2010 the 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Bone Morphogenetic Proteins (BMPs) organised in Leuven (BE) by Professors Danny Huylebroeck and Frank P. Luyten, presented a multidisciplinary scientific programme ranging from control mechanisms in BMP signalling and BMPs in developmental biology to clinical applications – not only in orthopaedics (bone tissue engineering) but also in chronic kidney injury. 246 registrants including 62 speakers came from 26 countries, 73% from Europe, 17% from the US and another 10% from other countries (including South Africa). In addition, 34 young scientists were offered travel grants to attend this conference thanks to the Research Networking Programme REMEDIC (Regenerative Medicine), chaired by Professor Yrjö Konttinen.

More information available from:

<http://www.bmpconference2010.org> and  
<http://www.esf.org/activities/research-networking-programmes/medical-sciences-emrc/current-esf-research-networking-programmes/regenerative-medicine-remedic/scientific-activities.html>

## Forward Looks

### RNA World

#### A New Frontier in Biomedical Research

The Final Report has been published and is now available on the ESF website: [www.esf.org/publications.html](http://www.esf.org/publications.html).

On 13-16 October 2010, the chair, Professor Jorg Vögel presented the report at the EMBO/EMBL symposium entitled, 'The Non-Coding Genome' in Heidelberg (DE). The ESF Communications Unit sent out a press release entitled 'Virtual research institute needed to unlock RNA's promise, say scientists' to over fifty journalists and on the newswires Alphagalileo (European science and news) and Eurekalert (US and international science). An article is now being prepared for submission to the journal 'Laboratory News'.



### Gene Environment Interaction in Chronic Disease (GENESIS)

On 19-22 October 2010 in Barcelona, three Scientific Future Conferences gathered 56 influential international scientists to discuss the 'Extrinsic Mechanisms in Chronic Diseases', 'Intrinsic Mechanisms in Chronic Diseases' and 'Therapy and Prevention – Emerging Concepts'. In preparation for these workshops, the participants had been sent a state-of-the-art summary, three foresight questions to address the expected outcomes from the workshops. Constructive discussions and debate enabled the drawing up of draft recommendations and grand challenges. A report was written following each workshop and these are currently being reviewed by all participants for comments and amendments. The final consensus conference is now being organised and will take place on 15-16 March 2011 at the Harnack Haus in Berlin (DE).

## EUROCORES

### Pan-European Clinical Trials (ECT)

Osteosarcoma is the most common bone cancer in children, adolescents and young adults but is still a rare disease with an annual incidence of 2-3 million cases per year. The rarity of osteosarcoma makes it essential for investigators to come together in research efforts: therefore, the EURAMOS group (EUROpean and AMERICAN Osteosarcoma Study group) was developed. It has brought together four of the major research groups interested in this area: Children's Oncology (COG) (North America), COSS (Central Europe), EOI (North-West Europe) and SSG (Scandinavia).

**EURAMOS I** is a randomised clinical trial designed to optimise treatment strategies for patients with resectable osteosarcoma based on histological response to pre-operative chemotherapy. It is performed as part of the **Pan-European Clinical Trials (ECT) EUROCORES**. Since 2005, almost 2000 patients have been recruited; **EURAMOS I** is soon reaching its accrual goals and will close at the end of 2010, making it by far the largest study ever performed in this rare disease. As such, **EURAMOS I** has served as a model for multinational trials.

Two dissemination travel grants were allocated to Professor Stefan Bielack, Project Leader of ECT/EURAMOS (DE) and Professor Jeremy Whelan, Principal Investigator (UK), to attend the **COG Fall Meeting**, 21-24 September 2010, Dallas, USA. COG aims to improve children's outcome with cancer by performing controlled clinical trials. The COG bone tumor committee was very interested in maintaining the momentum of this successful initiative and valued Professor Bielack's and Professor Whelan's input with the aim of rapidly enrolling osteosarcoma patients into clinical trials. Future collaboration between European and North American groups was discussed in considerable detail and the concept for a new common transatlantic phase III osteosarcoma protocol was finalised.

# Events 2010-2011

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- **EUMYONET: Meeting for the Myositis Workpackage in Autocure and for the European Myositis Network**  
RNP EUMYONET  
14-15 December 2010, Prague (CZ)
- **Second scoping workshop**  
Forward Looks, 'Personalised Medicine'  
13-14 January 2011, Luxembourg (LU)
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Steering Committee meeting**  
RNP ESF-ELN  
1 February 2011, Mannheim (DE)
- **Co-sponsorship of the 8th Annual Symposium of the 'European LeukemiaNet' & 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Symposium of the German Competence Network, @Acute and chronic Leukemias'.**  
RNP ESF-ELN  
1-2 February 2011, Mannheim (DE)
- **EMRC Core Group meeting**  
2-3 February 2011, Madrid (ES)
- **EMRC Strategic Core Group meeting (white paper II)**  
3-4 February 2011, Madrid (ES)
- **Workshop – Scenario building with Fraunhofer ISI and GENESIS Scientific Committee**  
Forward Looks – Gene Environment Interaction in Chronic Diseases (GENESIS)  
14 February 2011, Frankfurt (DE)
- **1<sup>st</sup> Workshop on Current Challenges in Gastrointestinal Health Research**  
RNP ENGIHR  
15-16 February 2011, Braga (PT)
- **2<sup>nd</sup> Steering Committee meeting**  
RNP ENGIHR  
16 February 2011, Braga (PT)
- **International Adrenal Cancer Conference**  
RNP ESF-ENS@T  
17-19 February 2011, Würzburg (DE)
- **Symposium on, '(Early) Life Stress, Brain Development and Ageing: the use of different methods in measuring cognition and brain function throughout life'**  
EUROCORES EuroSTRESS  
End February – early March 2011, Tilburg (NL)
- **Consensus Conference**  
Forward Looks – Gene Environment Interaction in Chronic Diseases (GENESIS)  
15-16 March 2011, Berlin (DE)
- **Genomewide Sequencing Workshop**  
RNP EUCCONET  
16-17 March 2011, Bristol (UK)
- **Multimodal Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS) in the Study of Brain and Cognition**  
RNP ERNI-HSF  
24-25 March 2011, Helsinki (FI)
- **EMRC Core Group meeting**  
28 April 2011, Amsterdam (NL)
- **EMRC 58<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee meeting**  
29 April 2011, teleconference
- **Sixth Scientific Workshop on 'Combining Brain Imaging Techniques'**  
RNP ERNI-HSF  
29 April – 2 May 2011, Garway (IE)
- **Conference on Progress in Primary Aldosteronism 2**  
RNP ESF-ENS@T  
6-7 May 2011, München (DE)
- **Symposium on, 'Mismatch Hypothesis of Psychiatric Disease'**  
EUROCORES EuroSTRESS  
11-13 May 2011, Groningen (NL)
- **Conference, 'Genomics of Complex Diseases: New Challenges'**  
RNP BIOLUPUS  
12-14 May 2011, Granada (ES)
- **European Musculo-Skeletal Oncology Society (EMSOS) Meeting**  
18-20 May 2011, Ghent (BE)
- **1<sup>st</sup> Scientific Committee meeting**  
EUROCORES EuroEPINOMICS  
June 2011, Strasbourg (FR) (tbc)
- **Symposium on, 'Stress and Mental Health'**  
EUROCORES EuroSTRESS  
20-23 June 2011, Umea (SE)
- **Summer School in Biomaterials and Regenerative Medicine (provisional title)**  
RNP REMEDIC  
July 2011, Santander (ES) (tbc)
- **3<sup>rd</sup> International Symposium on Pheochromocytomas and Paragangliomas (ISP3)**  
RNP ESF-ENS@T  
14-17 September 2011, Marne-la-Vallée (FR)
- **5<sup>th</sup> UHMWPE International Meeting**  
RNP REMEDIC  
23-24 September 2011, Drexel University, Philadelphia (USA)
- **EMRC Core Group and 59<sup>th</sup> Standing Committee meeting**  
28-30 September 2011, Strasbourg (FR)
- **4<sup>th</sup> Annual meeting**  
RNP FUMINOMICS  
3-5 October 2011, Valencia (ES)
- **International Society for Pediatric Oncology (SIOP) Meeting**  
26-30 October 2011, Auckland (NZ)
- **Combined Connective Tissue Oncology Society (CTOS) / Musculo-Skeletal Oncology Society Meeting**  
27-29 October 2011, Chicago (USA)
- **School on Conceptual Issues in Stress Research**  
EUROCORES EuroSTRESS  
1-6 November 2011, Erice (IT)
- **10<sup>th</sup> Scientific Meeting of the European Network for the Study of Adrenal Tumours (ENS@T)**  
RNP ENS@T  
25-26 November 2011, Nijmegen (NL)

## 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.

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