

Spirit of collaboration

EMBL further strengthened links with scientific organisations in Russia on 26 April, signing a Memorandum of Understanding with the Skolkovo Foundation to develop collaborations in key areas of research.

Iain Mattaj, EMBL Director General, and Igor Goryanin, Director of the Biomedical Cluster, Skolkovo, formalised the framework agreement at a meeting of the board of trustees of the Skolkovo Foundation, chaired by Russian President Dmitry Medvedev.

The Foundation is a non-profit organisation that, on behalf of the Russian Federation, is dedicated to the development and com-



Igor Goryanin signing the agreement with Iain Mattaj

mercialisation of new innovations and the creation of a new 'science and technology city' in the Moscow suburb of Skolkovo.

As envisaged by the collaboration, EMBL and the Skolkovo Foundation will work together on mutual goals, such as the development of scientific exchanges, collaborations,

and joint projects between EMBL and laboratories and research organisations in Russia.

The agreement was followed by a visit to EMBL Heidelberg by Chris Janssen, Director of science and education at the Skolkovo Foundation on 8 June. Chris met with directors and senior managers from EMBL and its sister organisation EMBO, discussing issues such as the potentialities of the MoU and future opportunities for further collaboration.

In December last year EMBL signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Russian Foundation of Basic Research, expressing significant interest in Russia becoming an EMBL member state. Close links are already established through collaborations in the Lamzin, Svergun, Schultz and Arendt groups.

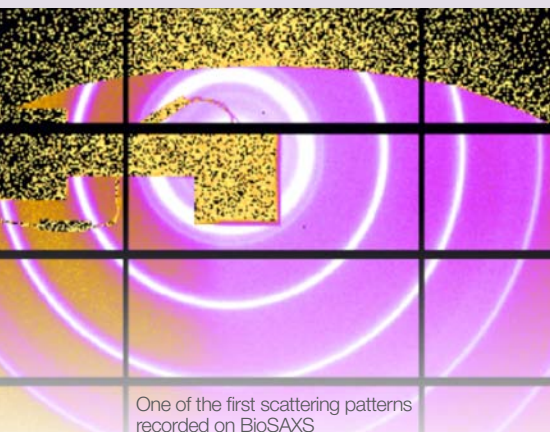
Brilliant result

EMBL Hamburg celebrated yet another milestone on the PETRA III high-brilliance synchrotron radiation source last month, taking them one step away from performing first experiments on protein solutions.

On 27 May, the first scattering patterns were recorded on the small angle X-ray scattering synchrotron beamline, BioSAXS. Using the SAXS standard calibrant, silver behenate, they achieved good quality results, despite the beamline not yet being fully optimised.

"The absence of prominent higher harmonic scattering at this stage where we have not yet installed X-ray mirrors is a promising signal for solution scattering experiments now under preparation," explains project leader, Manfred Roessle. "I'm grateful to all colleagues who helped achieve this milestone."

Over the coming weeks, the team will integrate the sample changer (designed and constructed in a trilateral collaboration between EMBL Grenoble, ESRF and EMBL Hamburg) and the automated data analysis pipeline, developed by the EMBL Hamburg SAXS group.



One of the first scattering patterns recorded on BioSAXS

Grand tours of EMBL

VIPs have been welcomed to EMBL sites thick and fast in recent weeks to discuss opportunities such as partnerships and new scientific developments, meet senior scientists and see EMBL's scientific facilities. Distinguished guests have included Sir John Savill, Chief Executive of the UK's Medical Research Council; Edwina McGlenn and Peter Currie from EMBL Australia; Atsushi Fukumoto, Michio Oka and Kenji Tanaka from the Sony Corporation; Jan Grapentin, German delegate to the EMBL Council; and Graham Woodrow of the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO).



Left to right: Director of International Relations, Silke Schumacher; EMBL Heidelberg group leader Marcus Heisler; Director of Health Technologies Strategy at CSIRO, Graham Woodrow; Director of Core Facilities and Services, Christian Boulin

From patient to bench and back

The Molecular Medicine Partnership Unit (MMPU) held an open research day on 7 June at Heidelberg University's Centre for Molecular Biology (ZMBH), giving scientists an opportunity to share the latest progress in translational medicine.

Representatives from the international research teams that form the partnership, as well as six invited guest speakers, presented recent findings on such diverse topics as chronic pain, HIV, iron homeostasis, aging, balanced chromosome rearrangements, blood coagulation and cystic fibrosis.

A joint collaboration between EMBL and the Medical Faculty of Heidelberg University, the MMPU has produced valuable insights into the mechanisms underlying human

diseases. Each of its five teams is co-headed by an expert from both institutions.

Set up in 2002 by EMBL's Matthias Hentze and Heidelberg University's Andreas Kulozik, the unit promotes the establishment of links between research groups, with the aim of transferring ideas from patient to bench and back.

EMBL Heidelberg group leader Anne-Claude Gavin, one of the guest speakers, has recently entered into a collaboration with the Medical Faculty's Anthony Ho to study the early warning signals of aging in human stem cells. She said: "The collaboration allows both institutions to mutually benefit from outstanding expertise and technology. It will enable us to direct the research in our lab towards medically relevant questions."