From bench to bedside

Scientists from EMBL and the Medical Faculty of the University of Heidelberg convened on 26 November for a special event as part of the 625-year celebrations of the University. 'Perspectives for Translational Medicine in Heidelberg' brought together scientists from the two institutions, which work closely in collaboration through the Molecular Medicine Partnership Unit (MMPU).

Scientists gave presentations across a broad spectrum of basic and clinical research areas, addressing themes such as stem cell research, cancer therapy and the development of influenza vaccines and antivirals. Participants were encouraged to seize opportunities to broaden the scope of the partnership.

MMPU comprises five international research teams jointly headed by experts from both institutions. The arrangement combines the complementary expertise of basic and clinical researchers to discover the molecular mechanisms that underlie common diseases.

The five teams will soon be brought together within the Otto-Meyerhof-Zentrum, provided by the University of Heidelberg. This common space includes lab and patient care facilities, enabling truly integrated molecular medicine research, from bench to bedside.

Claus Bartram, dean of the University's Medical Faculty hailed the success of the partnership in speeding the transformation of discoveries in biomedical sciences into applications. "We are proud of this unique operation, working together with one of the world's most foremost research institutes," he said. "The MMPU is a cross-disciplinary platform with remarkable potential to make real advances in finding treatments for disease."

Matthias Hentze, associate director of EMBL and co-director of MMPU said: "The partnership provides great opportunities for both medicine and basic science. Medicine will benefit by achieving a deep molecular understanding of diseases and basic science will gain important models to understand key biological processes."

Project advances understanding of genetics

4.9 trillion letters of DNA have been sequenced in the recently completed pilot phase of the 1000 Genomes Project, which seeks to uncover the millions of variations between genomes of different people. Project scientists will sequence the genomes of 2500 people by 2012, and have already found eight million previously unknown genetic variations among 800 people.

The 1000 Genomes Project is a major international collaboration that includes a team of researchers at EMBL-EBI led by Paul Flicek, as well as the Heidelberg group of scientists led by Jan Korbel. The insights it provides into human genetic variation are expected to have a big impact on studies of the genetics of disease and evolution.

The results of the pilot phase are published in *Nature* and are freely available online through EMBL-EBI and the US National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI).

Get the message

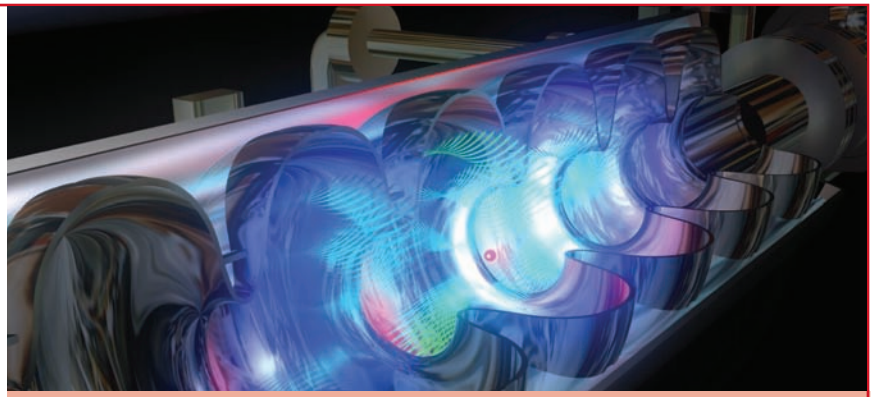
You have produced some good results, but as you come to present them rather than a standing ovation you are left with restless, uninspired and bewildered onlookers

An EIROforum training course, aimed at countering such scenarios, was delivered at EMBL Heidelberg on 19-20 October, bringing together scientists from the intergovernmental research organisations that comprise EIROforum.The 'Convincing Scientific Presentations' workshop gave experienced scientists and researchers from a broad range of disciplines the opportunity to reflect on how scientific ideas, models and results are communicated to people who might be outside their own areas of expertise.

The two-day seminar, instructed by communications experts Matthias Mayer and Meike Teubner, focused on developing skills in presenting to small, medium and large audiences, with a special focus on designing effective visuals.

Many of those who took part praised the course for the opportunity it provided to exchange ideas with colleagues from other fields of expertise and learn about effective methods of science communication.

More information avaliable at:
www.eiroforum.org



Here in a flash

The Directors General of the EIROforum have unanimously accepted the European X-Ray Free-Electron Laser Facility (European XFEL) to become its eighth member.

Located on the DESY site in Hamburg, the European XFEL is currently under construction. But from 2014 it will generate intense X-ray flashes at a brilliance one billion times higher than conventional X-ray radiation sources. Researchers from academia and industry worldwide will use the facility.

The European XFEL is one of the big research infrastructure projects Europe feels it needs to fulfil its scientific ambitions over the next two decades. It is expected the facility will enable scientists to achieve many new insights in physics, astrophysics and biology.

Francesco Romanelli, EFDA-Jet DG and the current Chairman of EIROforum, greeted the new addition: "We are pleased to welcome the European XFEL into the EIROforum and look forward to working with our new partner."

Who is EIROforum?

The mission of EIROforum is to support European science reach its full potential by facilitating interactions with the EC and European Union, national governments, industry, science teachers students and journalists. The eight members are: EMBL, CERN, ILL, ESA, ESO, ESRF, EFDA-JET and European XFEL.