

# **EUROLIFE Report 2016**

**30 May 2017**

It is a pleasure to present the 2016 edition of the Eurolife Report, which offers an overview of the activities and results obtained by our network during this year. Since Eurolife works to promote and give support to research and education collaborations, this document shows the main achievements in the issues that contribute to improve the global impact of our institutions.

The in-depth experience accumulated over the years in biomedicine and medicine has placed Eurolife in a prominent position on the European scene. More than 10,000 researchers, technicians and research assistants are working within the 8 European student-oriented research universities in which Eurolife consists. The first-class and highly motivated research teams and higher education courses with international recognition are the hallmark of Eurolife.

Eurolife believes that universities are an essential partner to build a better society through knowledge. International cooperation in training by means of students, researchers, and staff exchanges and promotion of an all-round education enhances the impact of this commitment. Moreover, we consider that our overriding mission is to make scientific research an engine of social, economic and cultural change, to awaken vocations in the younger generations, and ultimately, to help forge a more trained, responsive and accountable community to face the challenges of a globalized world.

The University of Barcelona is in the halfway point of the Eurolife coordination. Until this point, some new initiatives have been designed and executed. Furthermore, we have made an effort to give an impetus to increase Eurolife visibility: the new website, an important communication tool, has come available and is regularly updated.

I encourage you, therefore, to read this report and to consider it a modest introduction to the exciting research and education activities in which the researchers and students of Eurolife are engaged.

Professor Dr Jordi Alberch  
Chair of Eurolife

Barcelona, 9th January 2017.

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## 1) Introduction

The Network of European Universities in Life Sciences (Eurolife) is a consortium of research-driven European universities sharing a similar philosophy. The universities are committed to the highest standard of research and education in the life sciences (medicine and biomedicine).

Eurolife is composed of eight universities located in eight different EU member states:

- Universitat de Barcelona (UB), Spain
- Trinity College Dublin (TCD), Ireland
- University of Edinburgh (UoE), United Kingdom
- University Medical Center Göttingen (UMG), Germany
- Medizinische Universität Innsbruck (MUI), Austria
- Leiden University Medical Center (LUMC), The Netherlands
- Karolinska Institutet (KI), Sweden
- Université de Strasbourg (UNISTRA), France

At the Eurolife meeting held in Göttingen on November 9, 2016, the Eurolife Steering Committee unanimously agreed incorporating Semmelweis University (Hungary) to Eurolife as a full membership. This means that, after the signature of an Annex to the Fifth Eurolife Collaboration Agreement, and after the payment of the membership fee for 2017, the University of Semmelweis will be considered full member of Eurolife.

### Objectives

The Eurolife objectives are:

- To promote trans-national scientific and educational interactions at a European level.
- To ensure a favourable framework to develop collaborative academic and research activities.
- To foster members' cooperation.
- To achieve, through combining resources, a greater effectiveness of research and training activities than could be achieved by the individual universities operating alone.

Eurolife aims to achieve its objectives through:

- Research and Teaching Collaborations
- Student and Staff Mobility

## **Governance and management**

During 2016, the University of Barcelona has continued as a coordinating institution. Thus, Prof Dr Jordi Alberch (Vice-Rector for Research, Innovation and Transfer of the UB until September 30, and Interim Rector from September 30, 2016) has been the Chair of the network.

The 5<sup>th</sup> Eurolife Collaboration Agreement, valid for the period 2015-2017, has been signed at the beginning of 2016.

### *Chairs*

1999-2001	Rotating
2002-2004	University of Edinburgh
2005-2007	Karolinska Institutet
2008-2010	Trinity College Dublin
2012-2014	Leiden University Medical Center
2015-2017	University of Barcelona

### *Changes on the Steering Committee*

New Eurolife representatives have been appointed during 2016: Prof Dr Steven Johnsen (Professor for Translational Cancer) from University Medical Center Göttingen and Dr Catherine Schuster (Deputy Head of the Doctoral School of Life and Health Sciences) from the University of Strasbourg.

### *Administrators*

The Administrators support the overall Eurolife tasks such as the promotion of transnational scientific and educational interactions. They ensure that the activities of academic institutions have a European dimension. By combining resources, EUROLIFE achieves a greater effectiveness of research and training activities than could not be reached by the individual institutions operating alone.

## **2) Activities**

### **Philosophy of joint activities**

The Eurolife institutions undertake joint activities, preferably involving all parties. However, institutions may choose not to participate or participate only to a small degree at the different proposed activities. This can be the case where the joint activity is not in line with the strategy of the institution, when finances for the activity cannot be arranged, or when the institution is subject to rules that prevent it from complete participation. This is the case of the Eurolife scholarship for early career researchers, where not all institutions have funding available to provide the scholarship, but all institutions are in principle willing to receive candidates.

## General

Eurolife representatives have had the chance to listen to several speakers from the different Eurolife institutions in the meetings that have been organised during the year.

- Research in the College of Medicine & Veterinary. Professor Brian Walker, Dean of Research, College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine at UoE. *Steering Committee Meeting*. Edinburgh May 2016.
- Research and teaching at UMG. Professor Steven Johnsen, Professor for translational Cancer Research and UMG representative at the Eurolife Steering Committee and the Education Alliance. *Steering Committee Meeting*. Göttingen, November 2016.
- Introduction to Semmelweis – Research Topics and Education. Professor László Hunyady, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at Semmelweis University. *Steering Committee Meeting*. Göttingen, November 2016.

### a. Eurolife Education Alliance (EEA)

Recognising the need for increasing collaboration and mobility of undergraduates, and master students within Europe, Eurolife established the Eurolife Education Alliance (EEA). The EEA is working towards streamlining of educational policies.

During this year, a Six-step proposal to improve and expose EEA cooperation to boost student and academic staff mobility has been presented and considered.

Dr Amparo Cortés has coordinated the EEA 2016 meetings. Regarding the EEA Chair, no candidates are stood during these meetings, so a new Chair of EEA should be appointed during 2017.

#### *Changes on the Eurolife Education Alliance*

A new Eurolife representative has been appointed: Prof Dr Steven Johnsen from University Medical Center Göttingen. He also represents his institution at the Eurolife Steering Committee.

### i. Mobility programmes

A new version of the Agreement of Academic Co-operation between Eurolife partners (Joint Programme in Translational and Experimental Medicine) has been signed at the beginning of the year. The Medical University of Innsbruck and the University of Strasbourg have been included. This agreement became effective on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2016 and will be valid for a period of, at least, two years.

Furthermore, Eurolife institutions have been encouraged to update previous Erasmus+ agreements or to sign new. Then, these bilateral agreements have been signed or renewed by the following institutions: UB-UNISTRA, UB-TCD, UB-MUI, MUI-LUMC and MUI-TCD.

**2015-2016.** Forty-seven (47) bachelor and master students have participated in the mobility programme JPTEM.

Not all the universities are equally contributing to the intra network student mobility.

## **ii. Eurolife Summer School 2017**

During the last years, the EEA members have been considering the idea of developing a Eurolife Summer/Winter School. This School could help to build or consolidate new links between Eurolife members and to demonstrate that Eurolife members are top-level professionals in innovative practices in researchers' careers at early stages training. The organisation of this course is a priority for us all.

In order to select a suitable school, a guide has been prepared to construct a proposal to submit it to the Eurolife Steering Committee. In this guide, the scope, size and structure of the proposal are detailed.

Finally, only one proposal, presented by the University of Barcelona and the Institute of Global Health of Barcelona (ISGlobal), has been submitted. The topic of the First Eurolife Summer School is "**Antimicrobial drug resistance – Research and Innovation**" and will be probably held from 10 to 14 June 2017 at the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Barcelona. It is addressed to Master and PhD students; 3 students from each Eurolife university will participate supported by Eurolife. Eurolife will pay the inscription fees of these students. The inscription will include all course materials, accommodation and meals. Each institution will select the corresponding students to be granted.

## **b. Eurolife Distinguished Lecture Series**

The Eurolife Distinguished Lecture Series (EDLS) offer a platform for inviting distinguished researchers from other Eurolife Universities to present cutting-edge research at one host Eurolife University. The format of the Series allows an active dialogue between lecturers, researchers and students, and foster awareness and branding in partner institutions. The topics of the lectures cover Eurolife key research areas: neuroscience, imaging, cancer, cardiovascular diseases, inflammation, genetics of complex diseases, and international health.

In 2016, two EDLS have been held. An overview of the lectures is given in the table below.

**”Successful Regeneration of the Zebrafish Spinal Cord – Learning from the Pros”**

Prof Catherina Becker, Professor of Neural Development and Regeneration and Director of the Centre for Neuroregeneration. University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom.

Host: *University of Edinburgh*, United Kingdom.

Date: 9 May 2016

This EDLS was held during the Eurolife meeting (Edinburgh, May 2016).



**”Polycomb Group Proteins in Stem Cells and Cancer”**

Prof Adrian Bracken, Assistant Professor at The Smurfit Institute of Genetics, Trinity College Dublin, Ireland.

Host: *University Medical Centre Göttingen*, Germany.

Date: 8 November 2016

This EDLS was included in a **Eurolife Minisymposium on Epigenetics** organised by the *University Medical Centre Göttingen* and held during the Eurolife meeting (Göttingen, November 2016).



The minisymposium included the following talks:

- **“Epigenetic Inheritance of Memory”**

Prof Dr André Fischer, Department of Psychiatry and Psychotherapy, UMG, German Center for Neurodegenerative Disease (DZNE), Göttingen.

- **“Targeting DNA Methylation in Cardiac Fibrosis”**

Prof Elisabeth Zeisberg, Department of Cardiology and Pneumology, UMG, German Center for Cardiovascular Research (DZHK), Göttingen.

- **“Nuclear Complexes in Inflammation-induced Pancreatic Carcinogenesis”**

Prof Volker Ellenrieder, Department of Gastroenterology and Gastrointestinal Oncology, UMG, Göttingen Comprehensive Cancer Center (GCCC).

### **c. Research**

Possible research collaboration strategies have been discussed since Eurolife should support researchers to obtain funding for research projects.

Thus, two new initiatives are designed and launched during 2016. The scope of these proposals includes different levels at the Eurolife universities. The purpose is to promote actions for junior and senior research staff.

#### **i. Short-term research exchanges**

This initiative is addressed to junior scientists. The goal of the call “Short-term Eurolife research Exchanges. 1<sup>st</sup> round” is to facilitate further research collaboration between Eurolife member organisations. The grants support travel and living expenses for junior researchers (post-docs within the first 8 years of employment after having received their PhD) to work in another Eurolife laboratory and perform research for a period equal or longer than 2 weeks (10 working days) between 3 October 2016 and 31 October 2017. The number of grants is limited to 8 and the amount of the grant is 1,500€ per researcher. Each university conducts its own selection. The call was published at the end of June and the final decision was taken on 30 September 2016. Three (3) researchers have been granted: 1 from TCD, 1 from LUMC, and 1 from UB.

Dr Christine White, from the School of Medicine at Trinity College Dublin, has already performed the research exchange project entitled “*Launch of clinical evaluation of the chemokine biomarker panel using CERVIVA biobank*” in the HPV research group, under the guidance of Dr Kate Cuschieri, at the University of Edinburgh, between 7 November and 30 November 2016.

#### **ii. Eurolife kick-start grants**

A call to promote the participation of the researchers in European projects was open on 29 June 2016. The name of the action is “Kick-start grants to boost Eurolife members’ collaboration and participation in research projects within the frame of the Horizon 2020 programme”. A total of 40,000€ of the Eurolife funding are devoted to this call. The grant must be used for covering initial costs for preparing a grant application within H2020, which must include at least 3 Eurolife institutions. It is an open call without deadlines for proposal submission. Since no proposals have been submitted during 2016, the call will be kept open until the available funding is depleted.

#### **iii. Eurolife Scholarship for Early Career Researchers**

Due to the lack of success, the Eurolife Scholarship for Early Career researchers (a programme that facilitates research stays in laboratories of other Eurolife partner institutions) has been amended. Medizinische Universität Innsbruck and Université de Strasbourg have been included as partners, and the scope has been broadened, so the action is focused but not restricted to PhD students. Moreover, an additional sub-clause has been added in order to give each institution the chance to opt out of the scholarship scheme for a short period of time without having to terminate the MoU in its entirety. The

revised MoU between Eurolife partners for the Exchange of Early Career Researchers will be signed during 2017.

#### **d. Communication**

The Eurolife report 2014 – 2015 is finalised and presented at the beginning of 2016.

The new website has been launched in March 2016. After its presentation, some changes have been introduced in order to improve the accessibility and visibility of the contents.

The following news have been published on the Eurolife website throughout the year:

- Education for international students at LUMC. *February 9, 2016.*
- Successful Regeneration of the Zebrafish Spinal Cord – Learning from the Pros. *May 10, 2016.*
- University of Edinburgh. College of Medicine & Veterinary Medicine Hosts Eurolife Meeting. *May 13, 2016.*
- Summer schools from Eurolife institutions (2015-2016). *May 24, 2016.*
- Kick-start grants to boost Eurolife member collaboration and participation in research projects within the Horizon 2020 framework programme. *June 29, 2016.*
- Short-term Eurolife Research Exchanges. 1st round – 2016. *June 29, 2016.*
- Excellence initiative: The University of Strasbourg on track to achieve its ambitions. *July 11, 2016.*
- University of Strasbourg – Opening of Eucor The European Campus. *September 5, 2016.*
- Resolution. Short-term Eurolife Research Exchanges. 1st round. *September 30, 2016.*
- Leiden International (Bio)Medical Student Conference (LIMSC). *October 6, 2016.*
- Eurolife Epigenetics Minisymposium and Distinguished Lecture. *November 4, 2016.*
- Polycomb Group Proteins in Stem Cells and Cancer. *November 9, 2016.*
- Eurolife partners meet at University Medical Center Göttingen. *November 11, 2016.*

Moreover, the Eurolife Dropbox has been updated with new documents.

### **3) Facts and Figures**

#### **a. Student exchanges**

	2015/2016
Exchange of BSc and MSc	47

		TO							
2015/2016		UoE	TCD	LUMC	KI	UMG	MUI	UNISTRA	UB
FROM	UoE		-	1	-	-	-	-	-
	TCD	-		-	3	-	-	-	-
	LUMC	1	-		16	-	-	-	-
	KI	2	-	7		-	-	-	3
	UMG	-	3	-	1		-	-	-
	MUI	-	-	-	2	-		-	-
	UNISTRA	-	-	-	-	-	-		-
	UB	-	-	3	5	-	-	-	
TOTAL: 47									

#### b. EDLS

Eurolife Distinguished Lectures	2016
	2

#### c. European research projects

In total, there are 56 active projects (28 in FP7 and 28 in H2020) with at least two Eurolife participants. These projects are not necessarily facilitated by the Eurolife network.

Some of the 2016 projects which include a collaboration of a minimum of 3 researchers located at the Eurolife partners are:

- **EU-ToxRisk.** An Integrated European ‘Flagship’ Program Driving Mechanism-based Toxicity Testing and Risk Assessment for the 21st Century. H2020-PHC-2015-single-stage, Start date: 01-01-2016; End date: 31-12-2021  
LUMC – MUI – KI.
- **EU-CERT-ICD.** Comparative Effectiveness Research to Assess the Use of Primary Prophylactic Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillators in Europe. FP7-HEALTH-2013-INNOVATION-1. Start date: 01-10-2013; End date: 30-09-2017  
UMG (project coordinator) – KI – UB.

The table below represents the collaboration between Eurolife partners in FP7 (active in 2016) projects:

	UoE	TCD	LUMC	KI	UMG	MUI	UNISTRA	UB
UoE		-	5	5	1	2	-	1
TCD	-		-	2	-	-	2	1
LUMC	5	-		10	1	2	-	2
KI	5	2	10		3	2	1	4
UMG	1	-	1	3		1	-	1
MUI	2	-	2	2	1		-	2
UNISTRA	-	2	-	1	-	-		2
UB	1	1	2	4	1	2	2	
TOTAL	<b>14 (10)</b>	<b>5 (3)</b>	<b>20 (15)</b>	<b>27 (18)</b>	<b>7 (5)</b>	<b>9 (5)</b>	<b>5 (3)</b>	<b>13 (6)</b>

The table below represents the collaboration between Eurolife partners in H2020 projects (active in 2016):

	UoE	TCD	LUMC	KI	UMG	MUI	UNISTRA	UB
UoE		-	3	6	-	2	-	4
TCD	-		-	3	-	-	2	-
LUMC	3	-		9	1	3	-	4
KI	6	3	9		1	5	2	5
UMG	-	-	1	1		-	-	-
MUI	2	-	3	5	-		1	3
UNISTRA	-	2	-	2	-	1		1
UB	4	-	4	5	-	3	1	
TOTAL	<b>15 (8)</b>	<b>5 (3)</b>	<b>20 (12)</b>	<b>31 (19)</b>	<b>2 (2)</b>	<b>14 (5)</b>	<b>5 (4)</b>	<b>17 (9)</b>

#### d. ERC grants

The table below represents the number of ERC Grants (biomedical research) active in 2016:

	UoE	TCD	LUMC	KI	UMG	MUI	UNISTRA	UB
StG	4	3	3	12	3	-	9	2
CoG	1	-	1	5	1	-	5	-
AdG	4	2	5	7	3	-	4	-
PoC	-	-	1	2	-	-	-	1
TOTAL	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>3</b>

StG: ERC Starting Grants; CoG: ERC Consolidator Grants; AdG: ERC Advanced Grants; PoC: ERC Proof of concept.

#### e. Eurolife meetings

- Steering Committee meetings

- 10 May 2016, Edinburgh
- 9 November 2016, Göttingen
- Administrators and Eurolife Education Alliance (EEA) meetings
  - 9 May 2016, Edinburgh
  - 8 November 2016, Göttingen

#### **4) Future Challenges**

Eurolife institutions will need to address the following main challenges:

- Quality and academic excellence

All the institutions will need to work together in order to find ways to maintain academic excellence and deliver quality teaching and research. Eurolife initiatives and activities should contribute to add value by providing opportunities to students and staff that would not arise otherwise.

- Academic talent and workforce structure

Eurolife institutions will need to attract new talent to reinforce this workforce, and at the same time build a new workforce structure that can support new educational models. Eurolife activities will build on and strengthen existing relationships.

The challenges for the Eurolife representatives are:

- To consolidate the organisation of annual Eurolife Summer/Winter School focused on cutting-edge research.
- To strengthen the Eurolife initiatives that have been successfully launched during the last years.
- To support an effective and stable student exchange program.
- To increase the Eurolife visibility at the institutions and to permanently keep up to date the website with current information.
- To review the Eurolife General Agreement in order to successfully start a new coordination period (2018-2020).