

# **EUROLIFE Report 2014-2015**

**10 May 2016**

Eurolife is an experienced network with a successful track record. The partnership gives us the opportunity to engage collaboration in cutting edge research and also in research driven educational programmes. We can say that we aspire to have a common voice in health sciences if we work together with a broad perspective.

Health sciences is one of the research fields with the highest significant societal impact. For this reason, it involves interdisciplinary investigation, *i.e.* bioengineering, big data, bioethics and science communication can work hand in hand to increase innovation on health and care. Eurolife consists of 8 European universities with world-wide research excellence reputation. Their medical research communities have strong funding capacity and provide unique opportunities for leading collaborative research and training.

Regarding internationalisation of academics, we have an important role as a stable platform to support transnational elements in learning programmes. A consolidated experience from successful student exchanges contributes to facilitate research interactions. There is no doubt that Eurolife must continue to support initiatives to boost student and staff mobility.

Eurolife activities and results of 2014 and 2015 are summarized in this report. These records can help us to know where we are and what we want to strive towards. There is little doubt that universities represent an essential mechanism to support our society to face present and future challenges. It is in our hands to make an effort to provide adequate tools and skills.

Professor Dr Jordi Alberch  
Vice-Rector for Research, Innovation and Transfer, University of Barcelona.  
Chairman of Eurolife.

Barcelona, 29th January 2016.

## Contents

<b>1) Introduction. Objectives, governance and management</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2) Activities</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>a. Eurolife Education Alliance (EEA)</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>i. Mobility programmes</b>	<b>7</b>
1. <i>JPTM</i>	7
2. <i>Eurolife Scholarship for Early Career Researchers</i>	7
<b>ii. Summer Schools grants</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>iii. Bilateral cotutelles</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>iv. European Joint Doctorate (EJD)</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>v. Cross Assessment of Master's thesis</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>b. Eurolife Distinguished Lecture Series</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>c. Research</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>d. Communication</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>3) Facts and Figures</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>a. Student exchanges</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>b. EDLS</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>c. European research projects</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>d. ERC grants</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>e. Eurolife meetings</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>4) Future Challenges</b>	<b>14</b>

## 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 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 Goettingen (UMG), Germany
- Medizinische Universität Innsbruck (MUI), Austria
- Leiden University Medical Center (LUMC), The Netherlands
- Karolinska Institutet (KI), Sweden
- Université de Strasbourg (UNISTRA), France

## 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 this period, the handover of the Eurolife chair from LUMC (2013-2015 Chairmanship) to Universitat de Barcelona (2015-2017 Chairmanship) has taken place. Professor Dr. Pancras C. W. Hogendoorn (Dean of the LUMC) was the Chairman during 2014. Professor Dr. Albert Tauler (Coordinator of Biomedicine Postgraduate Programme of the UB) was the Chairman from January to September 2015 and Prof. Dr.

Jordi Alberch (Vice-Rector for Research, Innovation and Transfer of the UB) is the Chairman since October 2015.

A reorganisation of Eurolife representatives of Universitat de Barcelona was implemented during autumn 2015. Since then, the vice-rector's for research, innovation and transfer office coordinates Eurolife, and other European networks (EIT Health, LERU, etc.).

During 2015, the consortium agreement was reviewed and adopted. The 5<sup>th</sup> Collaboration Agreement, valid for the period 2015-2017, will be signed at the beginning of 2016.

## **Administrators**

The administrators support the overall Eurolife tasks such as the promotion of trans-national 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.

## **Changes on the Administrators Committee**

New representatives are appointed:

- UMG: Annika Merk, Project Manager at the Department for Internacional Relations / EU-Liaison Office (from December 2015, in substitution of Laura Hoffmann).
- LUMC: Pieter de Koning, Advisor EU research grants (from December 2015, in substitution of Jaqueline Ton).
- UB: Maria del Mont Llosas (from December 2014 to September 2015, in substitution of Sandra Macé). Subsequently, Amanda Fillat, Technical Assistant in R+D at the Vice-Rector' for research office (from October 2015, in substitution of Maria del Mont Llosas).

## **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. For example, in 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 these two years.

- Cell therapy platform. Professor Josep Maria Canals, Department of Cell Biology, Immunology and Neuroscience at UB.  
*Steering Committee meeting*. Barcelona, September 2014.

- Barcelona Patient Cancer Platform Initiative. Dr. George Thomas, Laboratory of Metabolism and Cancer of the Institute of Bellvitge Biomedical Research (IDIBELL).  
*Steering Committee meeting*. Barcelona, September 2014.

- LUMC Medical Research Profiles. Overview of the LUMC profile areas, with special attention to areas of particular interest to Eurolife Institutions like immuno-monitoring and next generation sequencing. Dr Wim Fibbe, Professor of Haematology at LUMC.  
*Steering Committee meeting*. Leiden, April 2015.

- Master Program of Molecular Medicine. Professor Peter Loidl, Vice-chancellor for teaching at the MUI.  
*Eurolife Education Alliance Meeting*. Innsbruck, May 2015.

- Undergraduate and Postgraduate studies in the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Barcelona. Professor Francesc Cardellach, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at UB.  
*Eurolife Education Alliance Meeting*. Barcelona, October 2015.

- Experience sharing by a holder of two EJD projects. Professor Marta Cascante. Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at UB.  
*Eurolife Education Alliance Meeting*. Barcelona, October 2015.

- EIT Health Education. How it fits with Eurolife? Dr. Montse Cruz, Assistant Manager at vice-rector's for Reseach, Innovation and Transfer office at UB.  
*Eurolife Education Alliance Meeting*. Barcelona, October 2015.

- SciLifeLab. A national center for molecular biosciences with focus on health and environmental research. Professor Karin Dahlman-Wright, Deputy Dean for Infrastructure at KI and former KI Scientific Director at SciLifeLab.  
*Steering Committee Meeting*. Stockholm, December 2015.

### a. Eurolife Education Alliance (EEA)

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

Dr. Joern Pütz (Université de Strasbourg) was the EEA Chair during 2014. At the beginning of 2015, Dr. Albert Tauler was temporary Chairman (until October 2015). No candidates are stood during the meetings, so a new Chair of EEA should be appointed during 2016.

There is a new Eurolife Education Alliance representative from University of Barcelona since October 2015, Dr. Amparo Cortés, whose duties at UB are the institutional representation for Doctoral matters at the International Networks.

## **i. Mobility programmes**

### *1. JPTEM*

The Joint Programme in Translational and Experimental Medicine was originally designed to promote the European mobility of biomedical scientists within individual educational and training programmes of the Eurolife network. It fosters master and PhD students of the partner universities to perform part of their studies in another Eurolife institution. The students undertake a period of research of 3-6 months at the Host Institution, in a project that is discussed in advance between the students, the Mentor at the Home University and the Mentor at the Host University, so that it is tailored to a particular research area and requirements, while building a research network. A maximum of 3 students per institution are selected per year for internal scholarships for stays at one Eurolife partner institution that have agreed to host the candidates. Student travel, accommodation and bench fees are covered by the sending institution.

During 2015, the Agreement of Academic Co-operation between Eurolife Partners (Joint Programme in Translational and experimental Medicine) has been reviewed and updated. The Medical University of Innsbruck and the Université de Strasbourg have been included. Other minor amendments have been carried out. The new version is adopted by all partners. It will be signed at the beginning of 2016.

**2013-2014.** Thirty-three (33) master students participated in the mobility programme JPTEM.

**2014-2015.** Thirty-one (31) master students participated in the mobility programme JPTEM.

Not all the universities are equally contributing to student mobility.

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

In September 2009, the Eurolife partners established the Scholarship Programme for Early Career Researchers. This programme facilitates research stays in laboratories of other Eurolife partner institutions.

Nowadays, this scholarship programme is not working properly due to the lack of promotion. No successful exchanges have yet derived from the programme. For this reason, the Eurolife Scholarship for Early Career researchers is redesigned.

Medizinische Universität Innsbruck and Université de Strasbourg have been included as partners. Furthermore, the scope has been broadened so that the action is focused but not restricted to PhD students. The amended MoU between Eurolife partners for the Exchange of Early Career Researchers will be signed at the beginning of 2016.

At 2016-2017, the Eurolife Scholarship Programme for Early Career Researchers will be evaluated for its continuance.

## **ii. Summer Schools grants**

The organisation of the Eurolife Summer School is a priority to all partners. This matter has been widely discussed throughout these years. One important point is to select/decide the topic.

At the beginning of 2015, it was decided that 4,000 EUR from the surplus budget would be used to finance 10 grants for Eurolife students (400 EUR per student) for attending two Summer Schools organised by Eurolife institutions. A call was prepared and circulated among the members. The selected Summer Schools were:

- Immunity, Infection and Tolerance, organised by Leiden University Medical Center on July 6-31, 2015
- School Emotions in Motion – Interdisciplinary Approaches to Study Emotions, organised by the Medical University of Innsbruck on September 15-17, 2015.

Finally, only 8 students attended the courses: 6 from UB (with 18 applications), 1 from MUI (1 application), 1 from TCD (1 application) and 2 from KI (3 applications).

## **iii. Bilateral cotutelles**

The EEA has orientated towards joint PhD programmes and looked at opportunities for joint and/or double degrees. Local and national rules and regulations make the implementation of joint and/or double degrees very difficult or even almost impossible. However, some of the Eurolife parties have good experiences with cotutelle agreements.

## **iv. European Joint Doctorates (EJD)**

European Joint Doctorates (EJD) have the objective of promoting international, intersectoral and multi/inter-disciplinary collaboration in doctoral-level training in Europe through the creation of joint doctoral programmes, leading to the delivery of joint, double or multiple doctoral degrees.

To promote the setting up of a consortium for an EJD between Eurolife researchers, a Eurolife Call for partners for an EJD proposal was sent to all biomedical research groups. 110 applications were received. These proposals have been organized around different topics:

- Aging

- Cancer
- Colorectal Cancer
- Diabetes
- Immunity, infection and tolerance
- Neuroscience
- Stem cells
- Off-topic

It was decided to share all the applications *via* Dropbox with all Eurolife members.

#### **v. Cross Assessment of Master theses**

Research projects from Master students are assessed in a variety of ways by Eurolife institutions: from written reports to oral defence or ongoing assessments throughout the year. Having additional external examiners contributes to an international dimension of Master studies and to increase the quality of the education. In that respect, Eurolife is encouraging this experience among its partners.

Regarding this matter, Prof Ross McManus (TCD) was invited to act as an external examiner at the MSc in Biomedicine of UB (17 July 2015).

#### **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.

A list of ERC Grant Holders as Candidates for Eurolife Distinguished Lecture Series has been prepared. It is available on the Eurolife Dropbox.

In 2014 and 2015 two EDLS were held. An overview of the lectures is given in the table below.

**"Parasites and Immunity – Evolutionary Insights into the Diseases of Modernity"**  
Prof. Dr. Rick Maizels, Institute of Immunology and Infection Research, University of Edinburgh, United Kingdom.

Host: *Leiden University Medical Center*,  
The Netherlands.

Date: 28 October 2014

This EDLS was included in a Minisymposium:  
"At the intersection of major health challenges: from communicable to non-communicable diseases"

Minisymposium:  
**"At the intersection of major health challenges: from communicable to non-communicable diseases"**  
28th of October 2014 – LUMC Building 1 Lecture room 4

13:00 – David van Bodegom (LAVA/LUMC)  
The epidemiologic transition

13:45 – Tari Haahela (Helsinki University Hospital)  
The biodiversity hypothesis

14:30 – Maria Yazdanbakhsh (LUMC)  
Changing immune responses along the rural-urban gradient

Tea/Coffee break

15:00 – Bruno Guigas (LUMC)  
Helminth infections and metabolic disorders

15:45 – Rick Maizels (Edinburgh University)  
Parasites and Immunity – Evolutionary Insights into the Diseases of Modernity

16:30 – Pancras Hogendoorn (LUMC)  
Eurolife Medal

17:00 – Drinks

Information: Maria Yazdanbakhsh & Bruno Guigas  
m.yazdanbakhsh@lumc.nl , b.guigas@lumc.nl

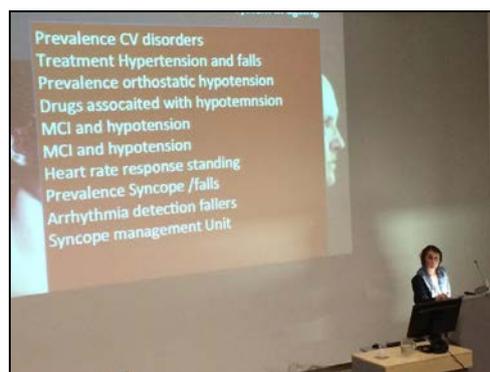
**"Reflections on the Cardiovascular System in Ageing"**

Prof. Dr. Rose Anne Kenny, Director of the Ageing Research Centre. Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland.

Host: *Leiden University Medical Center*,  
The Netherlands.

Date: 16 April 2015

This EDLS was held during an SC meeting.



**c. Research**

Possible research collaboration strategies have been discussed. Eurolife should support researchers to obtain funding for research projects. At the end of 2015 it was suggested that a draft call to promote participation of the researchers in international projects within the frame of the H2020 programme should be prepared.

#### d. Communication

The Eurolife report 2012 – 2013 is finalised and presented during 2014.

During 2015, the new website was redesigned and discussed. It was decided to simplify the content and eliminate the information that is difficult to maintain updated. The new website will be launched at the beginning of 2016.

A Eurolife Dropbox has been created to share important documents between Eurolife representatives.

### 3) Facts and Figures

#### a. Student exchanges

JPTM	2013/2014	2014/2015
Exchange of master students	33	31

		TO							
2013/2014		UoE	TCD	LUMC	KI	UMG	MUI	UNISTRA	UB
FROM	UoE	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
	TCD	1	-	2	2	-	-	-	-
	LUMC	3	-	-	13	-	-	1	1
	KI	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	UMG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	MUI	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-
	UNISTRA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	UB	1	1	2	1	-	-	-	-
TOTAL: 33									

		TO							
2014/2015		UoE	TCD	LUMC	KI	UMG	MUI	UNISTRA	UB
FROM	UoE	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	TCD	-	-	3	-	-	-	-	2
	LUMC	1	-	-	14	-	-	1	1
	KI	1	-	4	-	-	-	-	2
	UMG	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	MUI	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	UNISTRA	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	UB	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL: 31									

**b. EDLS**

<b>Eurolife Distinguished Lectures</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>
	1	1

**c. European research projects**

In total there are 52 active projects (38 in FP7 and 14 in H2020) with at least two Eurolife participants. These projects are not necessarily facilitated by the Eurolife network.

Some of the 2014 and 2015 projects which include a collaboration of a minimum of 3 researchers located at the Eurolife partners are:

- **EuroStemCell.** European Consortium for Communicating Stem Cell Research. H2020-Adhoc-2014-20, Start date: 01-01-2015; End Date: 04-04-2018  
UoE- LUMC- KI
- **Center-TBI.** Collaborative European NeuroTrauma Effectiveness Research in TBI. FP7-HEALTH-2013-INNOVATION-1. Start date: 01-10-2013; End date: 31/03/2020  
LUMC-UMG-KI

The table below represents the collaboration between Eurolife partners in FP7 (active in 2014 and/or 2015) projects:

	<b>UoE</b>	<b>TCD</b>	<b>LUMC</b>	<b>KI</b>	<b>UMG</b>	<b>MUI</b>	<b>UNISTRA</b>	<b>UB</b>
<b>UoE</b>		-	5	11	1	2	-	1
<b>TCD</b>	-		-	3	-	-	2	1
<b>LUMC</b>	5	-		12	2	3	-	2
<b>KI</b>	11	3	12		3	2	2	7
<b>UMG</b>	1	-	2	3		1	-	1
<b>MUI</b>	2	-	3	2	1		-	2
<b>UNISTRA</b>	-	2	-	2	-	-		2
<b>UB</b>	1	1	2	7	1	2	2	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20 (16)</b>	<b>6 (4)</b>	<b>24 (19)</b>	<b>40 (31)</b>	<b>8 (6)</b>	<b>10 (6)</b>	<b>6 (4)</b>	<b>16 (9)</b>

The table below represents the collaboration between Eurolife partners in H2020 projects (active in 2015):

	<b>UoE</b>	<b>TCD</b>	<b>LUMC</b>	<b>KI</b>	<b>UMG</b>	<b>MUI</b>	<b>UNISTRA</b>	<b>UB</b>
<b>UoE</b>		-	2	4	-	1	-	2
<b>TCD</b>	-		-	2	-	-	1	-
<b>LUMC</b>	2	-		5	1	1	-	2
<b>KI</b>	4	2	5		1	2	1	2
<b>UMG</b>	-	-	1	1		-	-	-

<b>MUI</b>	1	-	1	2	-	-	-	1
<b>UNISTRA</b>	-	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
<b>UB</b>	2	-	2	2	-	1	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>9 (5)</b>	<b>3 (2)</b>	<b>11 (7)</b>	<b>17 (12)</b>	<b>2 (2)</b>	<b>5 (2)</b>	<b>2 (1)</b>	<b>7 (4)</b>

#### d. ERC grants

The table below represents the number of ERC Grants (biomedical research) active in 2014:

	<b>UoE</b>	<b>TCD</b>	<b>LUMC</b>	<b>KI</b>	<b>UMG</b>	<b>MUI</b>	<b>UNISTRA</b>	<b>UB</b>
<b>StG</b>	3	2	3	15	3	-	-	2
<b>CoG</b>	-	-	1	3	1	-	-	-
<b>AdG</b>	3	2	2	12	2	1	-	1
<b>PoC</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4</b>

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

The table below represents the number of ERC Grants (biomedical research) active in 2015:

	<b>UoE</b>	<b>TCD</b>	<b>LUMC</b>	<b>KI</b>	<b>UMG</b>	<b>MUI</b>	<b>UNISTRA</b>	<b>UB</b>
<b>StG</b>	3	4	2	16	3	-	-	2
<b>CoG</b>	-	-	1	4	1	-	-	-
<b>AdG</b>	4	2	3	9	3	1	-	1
<b>PoC</b>	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>4</b>

#### e. Eurolife meetings

- Steering Committee meetings
  - 30 September 2014, Barcelona
  - 16 April 2015, Leiden
  - 1 December 2015, Stockholm
- Administrators meetings
  - 19 May 2014, Dublin
  - 2 December 2014, Stockholm
  - 2 December 2015, Stockholm
- Eurolife Education Alliance (EEA) meetings
  - 20 May 2014 Dublin
  - 3 December 2014, Stockholm

- 29 May 2015, Innsbruck
- 16 October 2015, Barcelona

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

During the last 2 years, Eurolife as a network has experienced an important transition. 2016 will be the year to focus on an increase of Eurolife visibility. Communication tools, like the website, have to come available.

The challenge is still to use these tools in an effective and coherent manner with the ongoing activities and active promotion from within the organizations.

The challenges for the Eurolife representatives are:

- Communication and marketing of Eurolife: to better facilitate the research and education at scientific communities within our organizations
- Exchange of knowledge and experience of European programmes
- Facilitate collaborations between researchers
- Monitoring of changes in the European research landscape and spot opportunities for Eurolife
- Develop new coordinated initiatives for Eurolife students: promoting exchanges, internships and education cooperation.