

## **EUROLIFE Annual Report 2012-2013**

**15 May 2014**

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## Foreword

What is EUROLIFE? Our mission states: to promote trans-national scientific and educational interactions at a European level. Our main focus is to facilitate research collaboration and student and staff mobility. R&D&I collaborations are more important than ever in Europe as well as student and staff mobility, though when we look back 5 to 10 years we all see that the world has changed rapidly. More rapidly than we had imagined.

Internationalization of education is important for students as well as for the higher educational organisations and their staff. The introduction of MOOCs has added a new dimension. It gives student mobility a different dimension as it makes travel unnecessarily to follow courses at several universities. It is hard to predict what the effect in 5 to 10 years will be when looking at the introduction of MOOCs and other potential innovative changes. What challenges do we face? Can and should EUROLIFE play an active role in these changes?

European collaboration is also changing. There is a clear shift towards more transdisciplinarity and public-private partnerships. The EUROLIFE administrators can exchange experiences and learn from each other and implement valuable knowledge in each of the EUROLIFE institutions. A clear added value. Existing and possibly new EUROLIFE collaborations can be facilitated and give a new dimension to the EUROLIFE network.

This two-annual report shows activities and results of EUROLIFE in 2012 and 2013. All partners had a share in the activities and the opportunity to give input. This document could be a starting point for a Steering committee discussion on Future Strategic directions. What are the trends and developments for the next 5 to 10 years? Which of those should and can EUROLIFE transform into a activities with new added value for the network? I challenge you all.

Professor dr P.C.W. (Pancras) Hogendoorn  
Dean and member of the Executive Board of LUMC

## 2) 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 and health sciences.

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

- the University of Edinburgh
- the University of Dublin – Trinity College
- Leiden University Medical Center
- Karolinska Institutet
- Universitätsmedizin Göttingen
- Medizinische Universität Innsbruck
- Universitat de Barcelona
- Université Louis Pasteur Strasbourg

### ***Mission and Vision***

The Eurolife objectives are:

- To promote trans-national scientific and educational interactions at a European level.
- To ensure that the activities of academic institutions have a European dimension.
- To foster coherence of research and training activities in different member states.
- To achieve, through combining resources, a greater effectiveness of research and training activities than could be achieved by the individual universities operating alone.

Eurolife tries to achieve these objectives through for example:

#### ***Research Collaborations***

- co-operative research initiatives within the European Commission's FP-7 programme and its new H2020 programme
- (post-doctoral) training fellowships

#### ***Teaching Collaborations***

- new postgraduate programmes including the Eurolife Joint Programme in Translational and Experimental Medicine (JPTM)
- intercalated degrees
- specialist training and professional development
- development of common standards for postgraduate training up to and including doctoral degrees

#### ***Student Mobility***

- provision of postgraduate and undergraduate study fellowships
- short-term research placements

#### ***Staff Mobility***

- sabbatical exchanges
- exchange of academic and research staff

## ***Governance and management***

The Steering Committee is the governance board of the Eurolife network. The members are nominated individuals of each institution (usually at a dean or vice dean level or a person in regular contact with the dean). The Steering Committee decides on the strategic direction of Eurolife and its activities, the extension of the network with new partners and practical issues like the membership fee.

The administrators are nominated individuals of each institution (usually based at the research office or a similar structure). The administrator is the Eurolife contact person for their organization. It is among their tasks to prepare the Steering Committee meeting, to facilitate contacts and collaborations between the institutions and to support the development of grant proposals. This also includes organizing support for new initiatives from the network.

The Eurolife chair is responsible for employing an administrator, who is the central Eurolife contact for the whole of Eurolife and who, together with the Eurolife chair organization, is responsible for facilitating the Eurolife network. Among these tasks are: to develop and maintain the Eurolife website, to arrange together with the host institution all meetings, to chair the administrators' meetings, to keep accounts of the Eurolife finances etc.

For other activities, like the EEA , separate committees and sub-committees can be established.

### *Shifts in activities*

The objective of Eurolife has remained the same during its existence. However the focus of some of the activities has shifted. Initially the focus was on building consortia for collaborative research projects in the European Commission's Framework Programmes. However the need for consortium building diminished and more focus was directed to exchange programmes for education and training. As a result Eurolife broadened its scope to other funding programmes beside the Framework Programme, such as Erasmus Mundus.

### *Philosophy of joint activities*

The Eurolife institutions undertake joint activities, preferably involving all parties. However some institutions may choose not to participate in an activity or participate only to a small degree. 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 full 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.

### 3) Eurolife activities in 2012 and 2013

#### **General**

2012 and 2013 were marked by transitions.

Many of the deans in the Eurolife network changed positions, including the Eurolife chairman (mid 2012). As a consequence the composition of the Eurolife Steering Committee changed. The new steering committee members have not set radical changes. However new ideas and inspiration how to benefit from the Eurolife network were suggested and immediately translated into actions plans for:

- Communication and marketing
- Annual report 2011
- Transfer of the website

In 2012 and especially 2013 the contours of the future European research, innovation and education landscape have become more visible.

The EC aims to better connect Research and Innovation. The focus on ‘Addressing the societal challenges’ implies that for European projects multi-stakeholder and trans-disciplinary approaches have to be adopted.

Also interconnections between Research & Innovation and Education have to become stronger and focused on the societal needs.

In view of these changes in the European Research, Innovation and Education landscape, it is important that the Eurolife Steering Committee pays attention to Eurolife’s (re)positioning in the European and international setting (LERU, Coimbra, other European networks).

#### ***Eurolife Education Alliance (EEA) formerly the Joint Programme in Translational and Experimental Medicine (JPTEM)***

Recognizing the need for increased collaboration and mobility of postgraduate students within Europe, the Network of European Universities in Life Sciences (Eurolife) has established the Joint Programme in Translational and Experimental Medicine. This programme originally was designed to promote the European mobility of biomedical scientists within individual educational and training programmes of the Eurolife network. It will permit Masters students to perform part of their studies in another Eurolife institution. In 2013 the scope of the programme has broadened with Medicine.

The benefits for the student are significant and include the following:

- Increased choice of research topics and taught material (masters programmes in participating Eurolife institutions)
- Access to technology or expertise that may be a particular strength in partner institutions
- Increased exposure to research methods with an international dimension with the attendant benefits of increased networking opportunities and enhanced professional and personal experience.

- The potential to benefit from the Eurolife brand which we aim to develop as the pre-eminent standard for education and research in Europe.
- The Eurolife Education Standard will develop as an identifiable and well-known standard, allowing portability of qualifications.

The EEA has orientated on joint PhD programmes and looked at opportunities for joint and/or double degrees. The group also oriented on the Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates. 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 the co-tutelle agreement. In 2013 a standard Eurolife co-tutelle agreement has been finalized. This co-tutelle agreement is a framework that addresses all essential issues. It can be used as a guidance and can be extended in a flexible manner with requirements and regulations from the institutions that participate.

### ***The Eurolife International Health Alliance (EIHA)***

In 2010 the Eurolife Network of Universities in Life Sciences established the Eurolife International Health Alliance (EIHA) to unite our common interest in addressing these problems and combine our expertise, commitment and capacities in International health to form a powerful alliance dedicated to working together and with our partners in the developing world. Our Network partners collaborate closely with institutions in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The Mission statement of the EIHA is to combine its complimentary expertise in International Health to deliver innovative trans-national, interdisciplinary education and research programmes in health, health care policy and care delivery that best serve the needs of the developing world. EIHA will utilize its resources to champion International Health as a key priority for improving the health of the human population and will actively engage with policy makers to ensure the realization of this vision.”

The EIHA’s objectives in education are to develop an alliance that will promulgate innovative inter-institutional programmes of education and training between Eurolife institutions and partner institutions in the developing world, underpinning capacity building within the developing world. We have Masters and PhD programmes in International health and areas which have a relevant component in International Health or poverty related diseases.

In 2011 the University Medical center Gottingen hosted the International Health Workshop. During the workshop the Gottingen International Health Network (GIHN) was launched.

In 2012 a meeting was organized at Frankfurt airport. There it was indicated that bringing together scientists from the universities on specific topics is important. An idea was to have a central meeting on global health to connect scientists on various

topics in the field of global health. The Eurolife chair and administrator offered to spark the EIHA with some organisational power and Eurolife seed funding for organising a meeting. However the challenges the EHA came across were: to find some common topics and to find a member as coordinating expert. Since then the EIHA has found a different *modus operandi*. As soon as an opportunity arises, the members contact each other for an initiative.

In 2013 researchers from TCD initiated a EuropAid application that has been submitted in March 2014

### ***Administrators***

The administrators support the overall Eurolife objectives such as the promotion of trans-national scientific and educational interactions at a European level. They ensure that the activities of academic institutions have a European dimension. By combining resources, this achieves a greater effectiveness of research and training activities than could be achieved by the individual institutions operating alone.

The administrators actively facilitate joint initiatives when researchers from our respective institutes collaborate or would like to collaborate. Support and advice are given on various issues such as opportunities for funding, the content of the proposal, the composition of the consortium, the legal and financial streamlining of the funding applications, and the grant agreements.

Most administrators are based at similar structures within each of the Eurolife institutions (i.e. grants offices). Therefore there is useful and frequent information exchange amongst the administrators on:

- Seventh Framework Programme: new draft work programmes, experiences in legal and financial issues, EraNet calls.
- Joint programming on Neurodegenerative Diseases: new call and results
- Innovative Medicines Initiative: calls, results and experiences
- National and international research legislation
- International funding schemes like NIH
- Horizon2020: updates and discussions on the development of Europe's new strategic framework on research and innovation.

For 2012 and 2013 all points mentioned were applicable. All of the Eurolife institutions indirectly profit from this knowledge exchange.

An example: Innsbruck gave a presentation on the Human Brain project funded under the FP7-FET scheme. After having seen this presentation, the LUMC administrators have promoted the HBP and its call for partners. The LUMC has now joined the Human Brain projects as partner institution.

Other specific admin activities and achievements in 2012-2013:

- Eraslus Staff Exchange UB-LUMC: In April 2013 Mireia Marti Yus visited the LUMC.

### ***Eurolife Distinguished Lectures Series***

The objective of the EDLS is to increase awareness of Eurolife in each of the Universities, promote a unified vision of the aims of the network and to stimulate interaction between researchers and students at our various institutions.

The concept of an EDLS lecture is as follows. A Eurolife institution invites a specialist speaker from another Eurolife partner university to present a lecture to their faculty. The visit usually comprises a widely promoted late afternoon/early evening lecture. It is followed by a networking dinner attended by relevant PIs and post-docs. The next morning (PhD) students and other researchers meet the speaker (for example during a master class or a site visit).

In 2012 and 2013 3 EDLS were held. An overview of the lectures is given in the table below.

"The good, the bad and the ugly rectal cancer" by Prof. Dr. Bengt Glimelius, Department of Oncology Karolinska Institutet and Uppsala University  
Host: Leiden University Medical Center  
Date: November 22nd, 2012



"Genomics technology bridging common and rare diseases" by Prof. Dr. Gert-Jan B. Van Ommen, Departement of Human Genetics, Center for Medical Systems Biology, Leiden University Medical Center

Host: Innsbruck Medical University

Date Mai 17th, 2013



"Activation Signals for Humoral Immunity" by Prof. Dr. Jürgen Wienands, Cellular and Molecular Immunology, University of Göttingen

Host: Medical University Göttingen

Date: January 14th, 2013



### ***Eurolife Scholarship Programme for Early Career Researchers***

In September 2009 the Eurolife partners established the scholarship programme for early career researchers. The scholarship facilitates research stays in laboratories of other Eurolife partner institutions. This initiative aims to increase:

- collaborative research projects
- researcher mobility within the consortium
- awareness of the opportunities for interaction in research and education.

Applications are welcome from researchers from Eurolife institutions, who hold: 1) a PhD degree, or 2) have a medical degree with 4-years research experience.

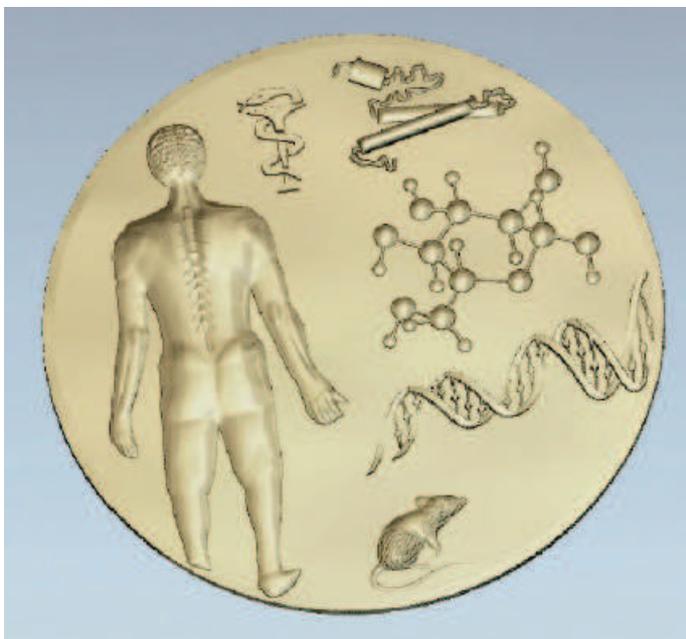
Exchanges will be funded for a period of three to six months. The scholarship includes return airfare and a contribution to living expenses. Details can be provided by the local administrator because every Eurolife institution has its own procedure and regulations.

The first calls were published at the end of 2009. Subsequent calls were published in 2010 and 2011. In 2012 the calls were open continuously. The general response to the calls is still limited. No successful exchanges have yet derived from the programme.

The general feeling was that the Scholarship Programme is potentially a good instrument. Eurolife partners agreed to promote the programme in conjunction with other Eurolife activities. In 2014 the Eurolife Scholarship Programme for Early Career Researchers will be evaluated for its continuance.

### ***Communication & Marketing***

- Communication plan
- Development of communication tools
  - Website
  - Newsletter
- EDLS Medal – new design and ordering procedure



#### 4) Facts and Figures 2012-2013

##### ***JPTeM student exchanges***

	2012	2013
Exchange of master students:	9	21

##### ***Distinguished lectures***

2012	2013
1	2

##### ***Collaborations between researchers of Eurolife organizations***

In total there are at least 32 projects (10 in FP5+FP6 and at least 22 in FP7) with at least two Eurolife participants. These projects are not necessarily facilitated by the Eurolife network.

Some of the 2012 and 2013 projects which include a collaboration of at least 2 researchers located at the Eurolife partners are:

- HUMAN – Health and the understanding of Metabolism, Ageing and Nutrition
- GANNET53 – A drug strategy targeting stabilized mutant p53 to fight metastatic platinum-resistant ovarian cancer.
- NeuroStemcell Repair – European Stemcell Replacement Reprogramming and Functional Brain Replacement

This table below represents the collaboration between Eurolife partners in FP7 projects (source: <http://kp7.eglwiki.nl/>)

	UE	TCD	LUMC	KI	UMG	MUI	US*	UB**
UE		5	5	18	2	3	3	8
TCD	5		1	4		1		
LUMC	5	1		19	3	3		1
KI	18	4	19		6	5	2	2
UMG	2		3	6		1		1
MUI	3	1	3	5	1			1
US	3			2				
UB	8		1	2	1	1		

\* University de Strasbourg has a somewhat complicated research structure with integrated CNRS and INSERM units. The numbers only reflect the data of the university de Strasbourg in the FP7 wiki database.

\*\* The University of Barcelona a joint public research centers such as IDIBAPS, which might not be reflected in these data.

## **Meetings**

- Steering Committee meetings
  - o 10 May 2012, Strasbourg
  - o 23-24 November 2012, Leiden
  - o 29 May 2013, Dublin
  - o 14 November 2013, Edinburgh
  
- Administrators meeting
  - o 6 March 2012, Barcelona
  - o 11 October 2012, Leiden
  - o 8 March 2013, Innsbruck
  
- EEA
  - o 5 March 2012, Barcelona
  - o 12 October 2012, Leiden
  - o 17 June 2013, Strasbourg
  
- EIHA
  - o 25 September 2012, Frankfurt

## **5) Future Challenges**

2012 and 2013 were marked by transitions. 2014 will be the year to focus on an increase of Eurolife's visibility. Communication tools like the website and the Newsletter have come available.

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

In 2013 the new European research, innovation and education landscape has become visible. It is important that Eurolife (re)positions itself in the European and international setting (LERU, Coimbra, other European networks).

The challenges for the Eurolife Administrators are:

- Communication and marketing of Eurolife: to better facilitate the research and education communities within our organizations
- Exchange of knowledge and experience on European programmes (legal and financial issues, on specific programmes, and rules for participation)
- Facilitate collaborations between researchers
- Monitoring of changes in the European research landscape and spot opportunities for Eurolife.