



NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2010



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EDITORIAL

On March 15, this year's Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prizes were awarded to one woman and nine men by the DFG German Research Foundation. These awards have been presented annually since 1986 to scientists in various disciplines working in Germany. The prize garnered by Dresden biophysicist Prof. Petra Schwille is the most lucrative science award anywhere in the world and the foremost of its kind in Germany.

Petra Schwille earned a degree in physics and philosophy, worked under Nobel Prize Laureate in chemistry Manfred Eigen in Göttingen, and took her doctorate in Brunswick before taking up post-doc positions in first Göttingen and then at Cornell University. On returning to Germany, she set up her own first junior research group at the Max Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry in Göttingen. In 2002 she was offered the Biophysics Chair at the Biotechnology Centre at Dresden University of Technology. Biosaxony recently spoke to Prof. Schwille.

biosaxony: What is it about biophysics that you find particularly exciting?

Prof. Schwille: Measuring the interactions and dynamics of biomolecules is the key to understanding living systems. That's why I work on developing new methods to enable measurements of this nature in the organism. And as a result we recently managed to answer fundamental questions in connection with the polarization and differentiation of cells and tissue in conjunction with our colleagues from development biology.

What do you like about Dresden and the rest of Saxony as a center of science?

I find the fantastic research environment here very uplifting and truly inspirational. But Dresden's also a great place to live. For example, I believe that Dresden's one of the best cities in Germany when it comes to childcare – the preschool facilities here are outstanding.

How did you feel when you found out you were one of the ten winners of the Leibniz Prize?

Actually, the research and the findings achieved and which are so exciting are more important than prizes. But of course, receiving an award for your work is very nice as well!

What's so special about the funding that goes with the Leibniz Prize?

I can use it over a period of seven years flexibly as and when I need it. My future projects deal with research which is still very uncertain as we've hardly done any preliminary work. The flexibility of the funding makes projects possible which otherwise might never have got off the ground. I look forward to using this money over the next seven years for new flashes of inspiration – but also to continue our previous work.

Professor Schwille, thank you for talking to us. We wish you every success!

To find out what else has been happening in Saxony, read on!

The biosaxony team

INDUSTRY

TECHNOLOGY FUND INVESTS IN RIBOXX GMBH

RiboxX GmbH, a spin-off from the Institute of Virology at Dresden University of Technology's Faculty of Medicine, has received backing from the Saxon TGFS technology fund. CEO Dr. Jaques Rohayem plans to take on 15 members of staff by the end of the year and hone RiboxX's patented technology for making RNA interference molecules. The start-up also sells lab kits enabling scientists to produce their own small quantities of RNAi for research purposes.

The promise of venture capital from TGFS opens up another chapter in the success story of Dr. Rohayem's team of researchers. In 2007 they won the Go-Bio competition, followed a year later by winning the prize for the best business idea in the Saxon business plan competition futureSAX. Says Thomas Schäfer from innovation and investment company SIB, TGFS spokesman for the Dresden area: "By investing in RiboxX GmbH we are underlining the importance of spin-offs from scientific institutions. This is an area which still harbors enormous potential and we hope to encourage other researchers to get closer to industry."

[More details](#)

VITA 34 BACK IN THE BLACK

VITA 34 International AG returned to profitability last year. After originally forecasting that it would break even, in the end earnings before interest and taxes totaled around €200,000 – a great improvement on the previous year's loss of €2.3 million. In 2009, the VITA 34 Group recorded an even healthier profit of some €600,000 mainly due to its good financial results, up from 2008's net loss of €1.7 million. Turnover also rose slightly from €15.0 million in 2008 to €15.1 million in 2009.

The number of umbilical cord blood preparations stored in 2009 totaled 10,816, slightly down on 11,020 the year before. In 2009, preparations from Germany and Spain stored at VITA 34 were for the first time joined by umbilical cord blood from Slovenia and Italy.

[More details](#)

RETINOGEN TEAM FROM DRESDEN VICTORIOUS IN THURINGIA

In February, the Thuringian Academy of Entrepreneurs staged the 6th Thuringian Elevator Pitch at the Köstritzer black-beer brewery. Fourteen start-ups and six growth firms tried to drum up support for their business models from over 200 businesses, investors and other spectators. The winner was the Retinogen Project headed by Dierk Wittig, a doctor from Dresden University of Technology. Retinogen is developing a regenerative cell therapy based on mesenchymal stem cells from bone marrow for patients with degenerative diseases of the retina. The team had previously already won Phase I of the 2010 futureSAX competition. BiancoScience (Jena) came second in the Thuringian Elevator Pitch followed by TecGla GmbH (Freiberg) and Nanometis (Dresden). The winners of the growth category were pluriSelect GmbH (Leipzig) and Luxsoli (Gera).

[More details](#)

GERMAN-ISRAELI SEARCH ENGINE FOR BIOMEDICINE RESEARCH PARTNERS

The Israeli Ministry of Health has devised a website where researchers from Israel and Saxony as well as biomedical companies can enter their profile. The aim is to encourage cooperation in scientific projects and student exchanges. To register on the website, log on [here](#).

[More details](#)

BIOTECH INDUSTRY RESPONDS TO NEW HEALTH COMMISSION

Following the appointment of a government commission on the health reform, the biotech industry has called for the aim of its work to be redefined as ensuring efficiency rather than capping expenditure. In a discussion paper, the Biotechnology Industry Association and BIO Deutschland (Biotechnology Industry Organization) appealed for a health policy in the drugs sector geared to maximizing the social benefit in relation to costs. The commission has been tasked to develop instruments of stimulation mainly for small and medium-sized biotech firms. This will enable the government to underpin the importance attached to biotechnology as a key pillar of Germany's industrial and scientific sectors enshrined in the coalition agreement – and hence bolster the country's international competitiveness.

[More details](#)

CULTIVATION OF GM CROPS GROWS WORLDWIDE

Although more and more farmers throughout the world are leveraging the advantages of genetically modified crops, according to a recent report by NGO International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications, development in this field is declining in the EU.

The ISAAA found that in 2009 the volume of farmland in the world used for transgenic plants rose by over 7% to 134 million hectares – almost the same as the total farmland in Western Europe. In 2009, GM seeds were used by more than 14 million farmers in 25 countries. For example, almost one in two cotton fibers is genetically modified.

Genetic modification is used in Germany, too. After completing a lengthy appraisal, the European Commission has given the go-ahead for the cultivation of Amflora – a GM potato developed by chemical giant BASF.

[More details](#)

SITUATIONS VACANT

DRESDEN

Labor Diagnostik GmbH Leipzig is seeking a biology laboratory technician (VMTA/BTA/MTA) for manufacturing and quality control at its Dresden site.

[More details](#)

LEIPZIG

EuroGene GmbH is seeking to appoint the following:

- A lecturer for adaptation training in biotechnology, molecular genetics, cytogenetics and medicine (prevention, regeneration)
- A self-employed or freelance recruitment specialist
- A cytogenetics technician

[More details](#)

Labor Diagnostik GmbH Leipzig is seeking a technician for the development of molecular biology test systems (veterinary medicine) and technical customer service.

[More details](#)

RADEBERG

ABX GmbH Radeberg is seeking the following:

- Chemist in quality control
- Chemist or radiochemist
- A production worker
- A bilingual secretary

[More details](#)

RADEBEUL

AWD.pharma GmbH & Co. KG is seeking a:

- Junior typescript editor

and is offering the following traineeships starting in 2010:

- Industrial clerk
- IT officer

[More details](#)

Arevipharma GmbH is offering the following traineeships starting in 2010:

- Chemistry laboratory technician
- Chemical technician

[More details](#)

SCIENCE AND EDUCATION

NEW CRTD GROUP LEADER STUDIES DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION OF RETINA

The arrival of Dr. Mike O. Karl at the Center for Regenerative Therapies in Dresden at the start of the year marks the acquisition of an outstanding researcher in the field of retinal regeneration. His research group will focus on retinal development and regeneration, retinal diseases and retinal repair. At CRTD, Dr. Karl intends to glean findings from regenerative mechanisms to develop strategies for the protection and repair of the retina. He observes retinal cells throughout their life cycle – from embryonic stem cells and retinal progenitors to developing and mature retinal cells. Dr. Karl is especially interested in the regeneration of nerve cells in adult mammalian retina.

[More details](#)

DRESDEN SCIENTISTS CRACK THE DEVELOPMENT OF PARKINSON'S DISEASE CAUSED BY PESTICIDE

Francisco Pan-Montojo, a member of Prof. Richard Funk's laboratory at the Institute of Anatomy (Carl Gustav Carus Faculty of Medicine, Dresden), has highlighted in animal models the mechanisms leading to the various phases of Parkinson's disease as a result of the pesticide rotenone. Previously, most researchers assumed that the harmful substances unleashed their effect on the brain after entering via the bloodstream. Francisco Pan-Montojo's research was conducted together with a group of scientists including Parkinson's disease expert Prof. Heinz Reichmann, who is in charge of the Department of Neurology at Carl Gustav Carus University Hospital.

[More details](#)

SAXON CHAMBER OF VETS AWARDS ORDER OF MERIT TO PROF. FEHLHABER

Prof. Karsten Fehlhäber, the Director of the Institute of Food Hygiene at the University of Leipzig's Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, has been awarded the Order of Merit by the Saxon Chamber of Veterinarians "for his exemplary work and far-reaching services to science, teaching, research and further training for veterinarians."

[More details](#)

HIGH-SPEED ANALYSIS UNIT FOR CENTRAL LAB

The central medical laboratory at the University of Leipzig recently took delivery of one of the fastest and most advanced blood analysis instruments in the world. Built in Japan and Switzerland, it is currently being trialed at just three locations: Poole in the UK, Leuven in Belgium – and Leipzig. The device combines chemical and immunological analysis modules. Disease markers, enzymes or drugs can all be tested in a single assay. Up to 8,400 assays per hour and around 20 different groups of disease markers can be analyzed – making the instrument invaluable for diagnosis and treatment decisions in for example the central emergency room.

[More details](#)

WORLD'S BIGGEST STUDY FINDS GENE BEHIND TYPE 2 DIABETES

Prof. Stefan Bornstein and his team at Medical Clinic III at Carl Gustav Carus University Hospital in Dresden are part of a diabetes research consortium made up of more than 300 research centers on all five continents. Six thousand patients from Dresden University Hospital were included in the world's biggest diabetes study. As a result, a new gene has been identified which is responsible for type 2 diabetes.

[More details](#)

NANOPORES FROM CHEMNITZ HELP COMBAT DISEASE

An interdisciplinary research team from Chemnitz University of Technology is developing new types of filter media with pores in the micrometer and nanometer range in order to isolate blood cells with minimum mechanical stress. The pioneering project entitled MikroHips (the German acronym for 'Microsystems with Hierarchical Polymer Structures') is being carried out by the Department of Physical Chemistry headed by Prof. Werner A. Goedel, the Department of Digital Printing Technologies and Imaging Technology under Prof. Reinhard Baumann, and the Center for Microtechnologies directed by Prof. Thomas Gessner. The project is being funded by the German Ministry of Education and Research until the end of 2011 to the tune of €1.2 million under the program 'Research for the Market in Teams' (ForMaT).

[More details](#)

SUCCESS AGAINST PATHOGENS CAUSING STOMACH ULCERS AND CANCER

An international team of researchers headed by Jörg Vogel from the Max Planck Institute for Infection Biology in Berlin has achieved a breakthrough in decoding the gene regulation of *Helicobacter pylori*. Using a new method, in the bacterium's genome they found for the first time hundreds of small ribonucleic acids – small RNA particles that regulate the pathogen's genes. These findings will help scientists develop new vaccines. What's more, this success achieved in collaboration with researchers from Leipzig and France could also speed up the development of a vaccine against the pathogen.

[More details](#)

PREHISTORY AWARD WON BY GENETICIST FOR FIRST TIME

The Institute of Pre- and Protohistory and Medieval Archaeology at the University of Tübingen recently presented the Tübingen Award for Ancient Prehistory and Quaternary Ecology for the twelfth time. It was won by Dr. Johannes Krause from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology for his 2008 thesis. This is the first time the award, which comes with a check for €5,000 and is endowed by Eiszeit-Quell, has gone to a geneticist.

[More details](#)

FUNDING

GERMAN MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND RESEARCH

- GUIDELINES FOR FUNDING CONTINUED GERMAN PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL CANCER GENOME CONSORTIUM IN THE FRAMEWORK PROGRAM 'BIOTECHNOLOGY – USING AND SHAPING ITS OPPORTUNITIES'

Funding is available for an interdisciplinary research network to analyze a tumor type or subtype within the International Cancer Genome Consortium in line with its guidelines, hence continuing German participation in the ICGC. Details regarding the specific goals of the ICGC, the scientific and structural requirements, and other conditions for cooperation in this international consortium are posted on www.icgc.org. Prospective applicants are urged to familiarize themselves with the thematic and organizational conditions before applying. Also, check with the ICGC coordinators beforehand to make sure your topic will be accepted.

Applications are invited from state and non-state universities and colleges, non-university research centers, and businesses in the private sector with their own R&D facilities (including small and medium enterprises). In the first stage, informal project outlines should be submitted in writing to the organizers at the DLR German Aerospace Center by May 7, 2010 by post.

[More details](#)

- GUIDELINES FOR FUNDING SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION WITH ARGENTINA

Cooperation between Germany and Argentina in scientific research and technological development is funded by means of support for the exchange of scientific personnel working on joint research projects. Preference is given to practical projects and projects involving industry or SMEs in the following spheres: environmental research and technology (including renewable energies as well as marine and polar research), medicine, biotechnology, materials research, nanotechnologies, physical and chemical technologies, information and communication sciences, and the social sciences.

Applications are invited from German research institutes, colleges and universities, small and medium enterprises, and research centers whose basic funding comes from regional and national government. Project funding can only be approved for additional expenditure under certain circumstances. Project proposals must be received by the International Office by 6pm on July 1, 2010.

[More details](#)

EVENTS, TRADE SHOWS, CONFERENCES AND CONGRESSES

IN SAXONY (APRIL 2010)

Since February 25, Dresden: CRTD Exhibition in the Neurology department of the Dresden University Hospital – “Science is beautiful” – [Details](#)

April 8-10, Dresden: 6th World Conference for prevention on Diabetes – [Details](#)

April 14-17, Dresden: 4th ESF Conference on Functional Genomics and Disease – [Details](#)

April 21-24, Leipzig: 48th annual meeting of German Association Nuclear Medicine – [Details](#)

April 22-24, Leipzig: 15th Leipzig Workshop – [Details](#)

April 29, Leipzig: Joint Science Day – [Details](#)

IN GERMANY AND WORLDWIDE (APRIL 2010)

April 10-13, Vienna, Austria: European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases – [Mehr Informationen](#)

April 12, Oxford, UK: BioTrinity – [Details](#)

April 13, Zurich, Switzerland: Swiss Equity Biotech Day – [Details](#)

April 15, London, UK: Anglonordic Biotech Conference – [Details](#)

April 20, Munich, Germany: BioVaria – [Details](#)

April 21-22, Berlin, Germany: German Biotechnology Days

The German Biotechnology Days are continued by BIO Deutschland e.V. in 2010. Biotech companies, as well as partners from politics, research and administration are invited to Berlin. Prior BIO International Convention and other international branch conferences a national forum for the whole German biotech branch will discuss actual themes and give basic impulses for new strategies. Theranostics will be the main focus of the 2 day conference with collateral workshops discussing structural themes. Further focuses will be inventories, perspectives as well as presentation of best practice examples – [Details](#)

April 22-23, Ljubljana, Slovenia: 13th Annual Conference of the European BioSafety Association – [Details](#)

April 27-29, Geneva, Switzerland: Logipharma Europe – [Details](#)

April 27, Nuremberg, Germany: TechnoPharm – [Details](#)

PREVIEW (MAY - AUGUST 2010)

May 3-6, Chicago, USA: BIO International Convention – [Details](#)

May 3-7, Lyon, France – 18th European Biomass Conference and Exhibition – [Details](#)

May 3-5, Heidelberg, Germany: The Sixth Annual BioMalPar Conference on the Biology and Pathology of the Malaria Parasite – [Details](#)

May 4-5, Leipzig, Germany: IBC Leipzig – [Details](#)

May 5-7– Hamburg, Germany: EMBO Conference on Catalytic Mechanisms by Biological Systems: At the Interface between Chemistry and Biology – [Details](#)

May 8-12, Washington, USA: CYTO – [Details](#)

May 10-15, Leipzig, Germany: ISPO World Congress and world's leading trade fair orthopedics + rehab-techniques – [Details](#)

May 11-14– Dresden, Germany: 113th German Medical Assembly – [Details](#)

May 11-13, London, UK: World Stem Cells and Regenerative Medicine Congress – [Details](#)

May 19-20, Zurich, Switzerland: 11th Annual BioEquity Europe – [Details](#)

May 19-20, Lodz, Poland: BioForum – [Details](#)

May 26-29, Halle (Saale), Germany: PSP – International Meeting on Proline-Specific Cleavage and Oxoprolinyl Formation – Functions and Therapeutic Strategies – [Details](#)

June 1-2, Leipzig, Germany: EuroMedtech – [Details](#)

June 2-5, Heidelberg, Germany: EMBO Conference Series Microtubules Structure, Regulation and Functions – [Details](#)

June 7-9, Dusseldorf, Germany: 6th International Conference on Renewable Resources & Biorefineries (RRB6) – [Details](#)

June 8-9, Berlin, Germany: 3rd Annual Cancer Proteomics Conference / Advances in Antibody and Peptide Therapeutics – [Details](#)

June 13-17, Freiburg, Germany: EMBO Conference on Replication and Segregation of Chromosomes – [Details](#)

June 13-18, Les Diablerets, Switzerland: Gordon Research Conference: Salt & Water Stress in Plants – [Details](#)

June 13-18, Monte Verita, Switzerland: Trends in Enzymology (TinE): Bridging the Biology and Chemistry Interface – [Details](#)

June 14-15, Berlin, Germany: EuroPLX43 – Collaborative Agreements in Generics (incl. Bio-generics and Biosimilars), OTC Drugs, and Nutraceuticals - Development, Licensing, Marketing and Distribution – [Details](#)

June 14-15, Munich, Germany: 4th European Business Development Conference – [Details](#)

June 15-17, Munster, Germany: NanoBio Europe – [Details](#)

June 17-20, Heidelberg, Germany: EMBO Conference on C. Elegans: Development and Gene Expression – [Details](#)

June 19-23, Berlin, Germany: 20th Meeting of the European Neurological Society – [Details](#)

June 20-23, Heidelberg, Germany: EMBO / EMBL Symposia: Human Variation – [Details](#)

June 20-25, Les Diablerets, Switzerland: Gordon Research Conference: Combinatorial Chemistry – [Details](#)

June 23, Suzhou, China: ChinaBio® Partnering Forum – [Details](#)

June 25-27, Wolfgangsee, Austria: 1st Meeting of the new Section of the German Biophysical Association – [Details](#)

June 27-30, Washington DC, USA: World Congress on Industrial Biotechnology and Bioprocessing – [Details](#)

June 29 - July 2, Reutlingen, Germany: MEA Meeting: 7th International Meeting on Substrate-Integrated Micro Electrode Arrays – [Details](#)

July 5-9, Heidelberg, Germany: EMBL Course on Following MIQE Recommendations – [Details](#)

July 6-7, Dresden, Germany: Nanofair – [Details](#)

July 11, Dresden, Germany: 3rd international Congress on Stem Cells and Tissue Formation – [Details](#)

August 1-6, Leipzig, Germany: 9th World Congress on Genetics applied to Livestock Production (WCGALP) – [Details](#)

For more events click [here](#).

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