

Message from EMBL Director General for NIBB's 30th anniversary

Director General
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It is a pleasure for me to write to you today to congratulate you on the 30th anniversary of NIBB. The NIBB is one of the leading research institutes in Japan and we are proud to have started a very fruitful collaboration with your institute. It was Prof. Shimura who pointed out to us that there are many complementary areas in the research activities of the NIBB and EMBL. Prof. Shimura and myself signed an agreement on academic exchange in July 2005 with the aim of promoting joint research activities, to invite faculty members and researchers to exchange visits between NIBB and EMBL for lectures, workshops, conferences and other academic activities, to exchange graduate students for collaborative projects and visits and to exchange information in fields of interest to both organisation.

Even though we have only had a formal agreement for over a year now, we have already been able to organise a series of four joint symposia in the areas of developmental biology, light microscopy imaging, mouse biology and structural biology. Many scientists have visited NIBB from EMBL and vice versa, most of them have been supported generously by the Shimura award. We are also transferring technology that has been developed at EMBL to a new core facility at the NIBB. I would like to thank Prof. Naoto Ueno for the support and effort he has contributed to all of these activities and I am sure that we will be able to continue what has started with so much success.

EMBL is a European international organisation funded by 19 member states (Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom). It was established more than 30 years ago as the European flagship institute for basic research in molecular biology. In addition to molecular biology research EMBL provides important services, runs an advanced training programme and engages in development of instrumentation and technology as well as technology transfer. The laboratory has 1400 staff from over 60 nations that are working at five different sites across Europe: the headquarter laboratory in Heidelberg, the European Bioinformatics Institute in the United Kingdom, two structural biology Outstations in France and Germany and the Mouse Biology Unit in Italy.

Research at EMBL is conducted by more than 80 independent research groups organised into eight scientific units that are supported by central core facilities. EMBL welcomes over 3000 visitors

every year from all over the world. Its unique staff turns over system, which limits the employment of researchers to a maximum of nine years, enables EMBL to produce a constant stream of highly qualified researchers, many of whom take up leading academic and industrial positions upon leaving EMBL.

The EMBL International Centre for Advanced Training (EICAT) coordinates all training activities at EMBL, including the renowned PhD Programme with 180 students. EMBL has had the right to award its own PhD since 1997 and has formed collaborations with 25 universities in 18 countries to train young scientists.

The future scientific direction of EMBL will build on its strength in basic molecular biology and functional genomics and move towards systems biology by integrating quantitative research and computational biology.

On a European level EMBL is involved in many EU-funded network projects and is today coordinating more than 15 of them. We actively support the implementation of the European Research Area and are a member of EIRO forum, a partnership of the seven leading European international research organisations. EMBL has more than 3500 alumni that are distributed across the world, with approximately 80% leaving EMBL to one of the EMBL member states.

EMBL is open to all, and international collaborations are supported by EMBL Council. We have links to several research organisations outside of Europe. A new scheme of Associate membership, which was approved by EMBL Council in 2003, offers countries outside of Europe the opportunity to take up membership of EMBL. The EMBL partnership scheme, which is also available to associate members offers the possibility to form strong links between EMBL and national research organisations in EMBL member states. We hope that the collaboration with NIBB may be the beginning of a long and eventually more formal collaboration between EMBL and Japan.

We wish you and the NIBB all the best for your anniversary. When EMBL reached 30 in 2004 it was the occasion for several memorable events, including meetings with many of the people who had worked with European governments to set up EMBL and chances to catch up with many of our alumni. These events are now happy memories for me and I trust that your 30th birthday will be just as enjoyable and will provide you and all your staff with great satisfaction as you look back on the past successes of NIBB and forward to playing an important role in the life science research of the future.