

The BioLux Network

After only one year, the “BioLux Network” has steadily gained its place within the landscape of Life Science organizations throughout Luxembourg. The BioLux Network currently counts more than 65 participants and is supported by the Fonds National de la Recherche (FNR). Members of the Network are hosted by all research institutions in the field of life sciences, including PhD students (doctoral candidates) and Postdocs (young researchers with recent PhD degree) from the different public research centres (CRP) in Luxembourg: CRP-Santé, CRP-Henri Tudor and CRP-Gabriel Lippmann as well as members from the University of Luxembourg. Participants highly profit from a diversity of activities to facilitate the scientific exchange through enhanced communication between and within institutions fostered by the Network.

The idea to establish the BioLux Network evolved during the networking meeting of AFR (Aides à la Formation-Recherche) beneficiaries organized by the FNR in December 2009. One month later, Julia Kessler and Nancy Gerloff, at this time, both PhD students at CRP-Santé founded the BioLux Network in cooperation with the FNR. The main objective was to serve as a platform for PhD students and Postdocs to facilitate scientific exchange and enhance the communication between the different research institutions of the Life Sciences domains in Luxembourg.

So far, BioLux Network meetings took place every last Thursday of the month at 6.30 pm and have so far been organized at different locations including the CRP-Santé (www.crp-sante.lu), the University of Luxembourg (www.uni.lu) in Luxembourg, the CRP-Lippmann in Belval (www.lippmann.lu) and the CRP Henri-Tudor in Esch-sur-Alzette (www.tudor.lu). Topics of the last reunions were not only focused on research, but dealt also with career development in different scientific fields, a PhD thesis defense and future BioLux Network projects. With great interest the Networkers interviewed guests from pharmaceutical companies, public administrations, and senior researchers to learn more about possible career opportunities following their doctoral studies.

One of the highlights in 2010 was the 4th BioLux Network meeting hosted by the University of Luxembourg with guest speakers Prof. Rudi Balling, the Director of the Luxembourg Centre for Systems Biomedicine (www.lcsb.lu), Dr. Jean-Claude Schmit (Chief Executive Officer) and Daniel Cardao (Administrative and Financial Manager), both from the CRP-Santé. The objective of this active round-table discussion was “The bottlenecks of your PhD in Luxembourg”. The PhD students had the unique chance to interview their “bosses” face-to-face and to participate actively in the discussion. The round-table discussion was followed by the local radio station 100 Komma 7 (www.100komma7.lu), which was then broadcasted in a 20-minutes special about the BioLux Network on July 16, 2010.

The three guest speakers and the BioLux Networkers discussed possibilities to further enhance communication within the institutions as well as between them, especially at the different CRP’s and the University of Luxembourg. As an example, the initiation of

national annual meetings was suggested and will be elaborated in the future. One outcome of this meeting was the PhD Day on September 16 in the University of Luxembourg. PhD students in Bioscience from CRP Santé and University of Luxembourg were invited to present their data orally and in addition a poster session was organized.

The other important outcome was to form an association, and give the Network a legal entity. To further increase the chances to achieve its purpose the BioLux Network has joined efforts with the Luxembourg Bioinformatics Network (Lucilinx) to create the Luxembourg Life Science Association (L.I.S.A.) a.s.b.l. in the end of August 2010. Aligned with the core mission statements of the BioLux Network, L.I.S.A. aims, within the domain of Life Sciences, to 1) facilitate exchange and meetings between researchers, 2) establish national and international collaborations, 3) integrate technological innovation, 4) organize events, conferences, symposia and workshops and 5) develop and promote life sciences within Luxembourg's institutions. L.I.S.A. has been created as an association that covers both Networks as thematic groups. Each Network is self-organized and retain a large degree of independence while obtaining the benefits from the legal and management framework supported by the association status. Most important, L.I.S.A. is entitled as a non-profit legal entity to submit projects, request grants and obtain resources from members, partners and mentors. This allows the BioLux Network to further develop their own mission goals.

Following the great success of the round-table discussion in May, BioLux further hosted very interesting meetings with various guest speakers such as Dr. L. Hoffmann (supported by PhD students from the CRP-Gabriel Lippmann), Dr. G. Colling from the Museum of Natural History in Luxembourg, and Prof. Dr. R. Wennig from the National Health Laboratory. All meetings organized by the BioLux Network offered unique chances to actively discuss and profit from the outstanding knowledge and experience from nationally and internationally recognized guest speakers presenting various aspects of the Life Science Research in Luxembourg. Further meetings are planned on a monthly basis in 2011, as well as the first Luxembourgish Life Science PhD symposium organized in collaboration with the University of Luxembourg.

If we look back we can easily say that the BioLux network has become one of the most important networks for young researchers in Luxembourg. The great success is not only reflected by the large number of participants, but also by the ample support provided by the National Research Fund and all big (and smaller) research institutions in Luxembourg.

In the past 12 month the network developed from the simple idea and the urge for a better communication into one of the two working groups of L.I.S.A. In the future, the BioLux Network is open to everyone interested in the field of Life Sciences, especially young researchers in Luxembourg and welcomes new members to join the "LISA" a.s.b.l. For further information or subscription to the email-newsletter, please contact: "biolux.networking@gmail.com".

The BioLux Networking Team