

PRESS RELEASE

B.S.R.C. Alexander Fleming is appointed Coordinator of the MUGEN Network of Excellence

Athens, 19 May 2005 – The Institute of Immunology at Biomedical Sciences Research Centre Alexander Fleming in Greece was recently appointed by the E.C., **Coordinator** of a **Network of Excellence** consisting of 24 leading European research organizations. Over a period of five years (2005-2009), the Network will investigate the complexity of human immunological disease, through the application of functional genomics in animal models. The Network (acronym "MUGEN"), which will be funded with 11 million euros by the European Union Sixth Framework Programme (FP6), aims to structure and shape a world-class cooperation of European scientific and technological excellence in the field of "functional genomics in mutant mouse models as tools to investigate the complexity of human immunological disease."

Leading Research Institutes (*Biomedical Sciences Research Centre "Al. Fleming", Institut Pasteur, Centre D' Immunology de Marseille – Luminy, Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum, Gesellschaft für Biotechnologische Forschung, The Netherlands Cancer Institute, the European Bioinformatics Institute, the European Molecular Biology Laboratory, the Weatherall Institute of Molecular Medicine, the National Institute for Medical Research – MRC, the Institute for Research in Biomedicine, Istituto di Ricerche Farmacologiche Mario Negri, Deutsches Rheuma-Forschungszentrum Berlin, Istituto di Biologia Cellulare, the Centre for Blood Research in the Harvard Medical School and the Genopolis Consortium*), **major European Universities** (*University of Milano – Bicocca, University of Zurich, Heinrich-Heine University of Düsseldorf, University of Lausanne, University of Lund*), and **Biotechnology SMEs** (*Biovista, Innate pharma, Cytos Biotechnology, Arexis and the BankInvest group*) have come together, under the coordination of the Institute of Immunology at the BSRC Al. Fleming, to deliver a competitive advantage in the aforementioned thematic areas.

As a Network of Excellence, MUGEN falls under the instruments established by the European Union Sixth Framework Programme for supporting Research and Technological Development, whereby "excellent" research centers / institutes work together towards the achievement of a common research goal. MUGEN is actually operating as a "**virtual research centre**", where the 24 participants from Greece, France, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Denmark and the US function as research labs / teams, exchanging information, developing common research projects and technological platforms, training new scientists and delivering innovative knowledge and products to the European Union.

Through its Joint Programme of Activities (JPA), MUGEN aims to:

1. Systematically study animal models for immune diseases and processes through the application of functional genomic platforms (transgenesis, targeted and random mutagenesis, expression profiling and bioinformatics). Amongst the diseases studied are multiple sclerosis, systemic lupus, rheumatoid arthritis and cancer.
2. Integrate the outstanding research experience and capacities of each network participant to allow the efficient application of post-genomic approaches to generate new knowledge in immunological diseases and processes. Such knowledge is expected to lead to novel diagnostic and therapeutic tools.
3. Ensure spreading of excellence, optimal use and dissemination of the knowledge generated through the network beyond the boundaries of MUGEN, by integrating competencies to train researchers, to encourage knowledge transfer, to address innovation related aspects of research and to raise the public awareness of scientific research issues.

As the Project Coordinator, Dr. George Kollias from the Institute of Immunology at Biomedical Sciences Research Centre "Al. Fleming", underlined: "*post-genomic biology offers us an unprecedented opportunity as well as the necessary tools to study the complexity of the immune system and understand the molecular and cellular basis of the human disease. The research teams integrated in the MUGEN Network have proven records of excellence in the network's various research sectors and activities. We are confident that through the participants' joint efforts over the next five years, the network will deliver both on new knowledge and, most crucially, on its application for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes.*"

MUGEN List of Participants

The MUGEN Network comprises 15 Research Institutes from 7 EU member states (EL, F, D, UK, I, DK, S), 3 Research Institutes from associated countries (CH), 1 Research Institute from the US and 5 Biotechnology SMEs.

Participant	Country	Short Name	Leading Participating Scientist
Biomedical Sciences Research Center "Al. Fleming"	EL	FLEMING	Dr. George Kollias
Inserm EMI -0101- Institut Pasteur	F	IP	Dr. James Di Santo
Deutsches Krebsforschungszentrum	D	DKFZ	Dr. Bernard Malissen
Centre d' Immunology de Marseille – Luminy	F	CNRS	Prof. Guenter Haemmerling
University of Milano – Bicocca	I	UNIMIB	Prof. Paola Ricciardi – Castagnoli
Inst. Of Experimental Immunology, University of Zurich	CH	EXPIMMZH	Dr. Maries van den Broek
Gesellschaft für Biotechnologische Forschung mbH	D	GBF	Dr. Werner Muller
The Netherlands Cancer Institute	NL	NL	Prof. Anton Berns
EMBL	D	ENBL	Dr. Alvis Brazma Dr. Manolis Pasparakis
Medical Research Council	UK	MRC-HIU+NIMR	Prof. Lars Fugger Dr. Dimitris Kioussis
Medical Inflammation Research, University of Lund	S	ULUND	Prof. Rikard Holmdahl
Genopolis Functional Genomics Consortium	I	Genopolis	Prof. Paola Ricciardi – Castagnoli
Institute for Research in Biomedicine	CH	IRB	Dr. Antonio Lanzavecchia
Institute di Ricerche Farmacologiche Mario Negri	I	MARIO NEGRI	Prof. Alberto Mantovani
Heinrich-Heine-Universität Düsseldorf	D	Uni Düsseldorf	Prof. Klaus Pfeffer
Deutsches Rheuma – Forschungszentrum	D	DRFZ	Prof. Andreas Radbruch
Instituto di Biologia Cellulare	I	CNR-IBC	Prof. Glauco Tocchini – Valentini
University of Lausanne	CH	UNIL	Prof. Jurg Tschopp
Center for Blood Research	US	CBR Institute	Prof. Klaus Rajewsky
Biovista	EL	Biovista	Dr. Andreas Persidis
Innate Pharma	F	IPH	Dr. Francois Romagne
Cytos Biotechnology AG	CH	Cytos	Dr. Martin Bachmann
Arexis AB	S	Arexis	Dr. Bjorn Lowenadler
Bank Invest- group	DK	BI venture	Prof. Jesper Zeuthen