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EMBO, HHMI Join Forces to Promote Brain Gain

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute and the European Molecular Biology Organization want to attract some of the world's most promising scientists to Central Europe. To help them establish their first independent laboratories there, the organizations are launching the EMBO/HHMI Startup Grants—three-year awards of \$75,000 U.S. annually.

The new grants spring from a joint initiative of HHMI and EMBO involving Central European member countries: Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, and Slovenia. EMBO is the leading life sciences organization in Europe, supporting scientists through high quality initiatives such as fellowships, courses, workshops, and its Young Investigator Programme. One of the largest philanthropies in the world, HHMI has supported outstanding scientists in Central and Eastern Europe, Russia and Ukraine since 1995, reflecting the Institute's commitment to scientific excellence as a global enterprise.

“HHMI believes it is essential that fresh new scientists with fresh new ideas start independent careers with sufficient resources to become competitive in the global world of contemporary science,” said Peter J. Bruns, Institute vice president for grants and special programs. “By resources, we mean more than money; we mean equipment, supplies, personnel, space, and time. This partnership among HHMI, EMBO, member countries, and local institutions, with each recognizing the special needs and each contributing unique resources, should make a significant difference.”

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HHMI will contribute \$50,000 a year for three years for up to six grants. Another \$25,000 a year per grant will come from the participating member countries and EMBO. EMBO will oversee the EMBO/HHMI Startup Grants

as part of its Young Investigator Programme, which has been identifying and supporting exceptional young scientists in Europe since 2000.

In addition to financial support, a key element of the EMBO/HHMI Startup Grants is a guarantee of continuing career opportunities for grant recipients. Applicant institutions are being asked to make a commitment to ongoing support of the scientists who receive the awards.

“By offering young independent scientists the resources they need to get started and the assurance of local support in the long-term, EMBO and HHMI hope to help strengthen science in Central Europe,” said Frank Gannon, executive director of EMBO. “EMBO's involvement in this initiative represents our continued commitment to supporting countries throughout Europe that wish to develop and enhance their science bases.”

The new initiative builds on HHMI/EMBO grants awarded between 2002 and 2004 to help scientists in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland early in their independent careers. That program was designed to strengthen the scientific pipeline in EMBO member countries

where HHMI funds international research scholars. Through its international scholars program, HHMI supports outstanding non-U.S. scientists in 29 countries around the world.

A competition for the EMBO/HHMI Startup Grants opens this week. Scientists will apply jointly with research institutes in the countries where they intend to establish labs. The application deadline is August 1, 2005.