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Central European Scientists Awarded EMBO/HHMI Startup Grants

The Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) and the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) have singled out six outstanding Central European scientists to receive the EMBO/HHMI Startup Grants. These awards will help the scientists establish their first independent laboratories in the Czech Republic, Estonia, and Hungary. Selection for the grants is a mark of the highest scientific excellence.

Each scientist will receive \$75,000 U.S. a year for three years. HHMI will contribute \$50,000 per scientist, and EMBO and participating member countries will provide the additional \$25,000. EMBO, the leading life sciences organization in Europe, will oversee the grants as part of its Young Investigator Programme, which has been identifying and supporting young scientists in Europe since 2000. The competition for the Startup Grants was extremely selective and applications were subject to the same rigorous scientific criteria as the EMBO Young Investigators.

"Fresh new ideas often come from fresh new scientists."

— Peter J. Bruns

"HHMI already has an ongoing program in support of established science in Central Europe, but we recognize that for science to flourish, fresh new ideas often come from fresh new scientists," said Peter J. Bruns, HHMI vice president for grants and special programs. "This new program aims to help promising new scientists get established with resources, space and time in the early years of their independent careers."

The new joint initiative will help scientists start independent careers in Central Europe with the resources to be competitive in contemporary world science. In addition to helping establish labs, a key element of the EMBO/HHMI Startup Grants is a guarantee of ongoing support. The institutions where the scientists are establishing their labs have made a commitment to continue to fund these researchers when the Startup Grants run out.

Said Frank Gannon, executive director of EMBO, "This new initiative is very timely. In an expanded Europe, where the focus is increasingly on excellent

research, the need to strengthen science in Central European countries is clear. EMBO has a strong commitment to high quality research but also to improving standards throughout Europe. We hope that this initial joint action with HHMI will be a precursor to further stimulatory programs in this region."

EMBO promotes biosciences in Europe through a number of targeted initiatives such as research fellowships, the funding of practical courses and workshops, and activities highlighting young independent researchers of high quality. 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 global scientific excellence. Through its international program, the Institute supports outstanding non-U.S. scientists in 28 countries around the world.

The new awards build on HHMI/EMBO grants awarded between 2002 and 2004 to support promising scientists in Central Europe early in their careers. That program helped strengthen the scientific pipeline in EMBO member countries where HHMI supports some of its international research scholars

The EMBO/HHMI Startup Grant recipients are:

Krisztina Káldi Department of Physiology, Semmelweis University, Budapest, Hungary *Molecular bases of the regulation of circadian rhythms* Dr. Káldi's lab page **Mihaly Kovacs** Department of Biochemistry, Eötvös University, Budapest, Hungary *Diversity of molecular motor mechanisms* **Lumir Krejci** National Centre for Biomolecular Research, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic *Srs2 protein and its multifunctional role in recombination/repair processes* Dr. Krejci's lab page **Mart Loog** Institute of Technology, University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia *Protein kinase signaling networks in the eukaryotic cell cycle* Dr. Loog's lab page **Richard Stefl** National Centre for Biomolecular Research, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic *Structural studies of protein-RNA complexes involved in RNA quality control* **Ervin Welker** Biological Research Center of the Hungarian Academy, Szeged, Hungary *Studies on the conformational transition of the prion protein*