A young Ophthalmologist meets famous Nobel laureates in Lindau

Ms Eleni Papageorgiou, a young MD and ophthalmologist from Greece is working since nearly 3 years as Early Stage researcher at the University Eye Hospital in Tuebingen under the supervision of Prof. U. Schiefer. Her stay is supported by the European Union within the project PERACT (Perception and Action in Space; MEST-CT-2004-504321). Ms. Papageorgiou was invited by the European Union to attend the high-ranked Annual Meeting of the Nobel Laureates in Lindau, Germany.

SWM: Ms Papageorgiou, you was invited to attend the 57th Meeting of the Nobel Laureates on Physiology and Medicine in Lindau at the beginning of July 2007. How did you manage to get the information and the respective possibility to attend this meeting?

Papageorgiou: The information about the nomination process and participation in the Meeting was provided by the co-ordinator of the Marie Curie Programme for Early Stage Training in Tuebingen, Dr. Thomas Wheeler-Schilling. In collaboration with my scientific supervisor Prof. U. Schiefer they motivated and supported me in order to take part in the evaluation process by the Review Panel of the Lindau Council. I would like to sincerely thank both of them for giving me this unique opportunity.

SWM: What were your first impressions to meet all this famous scientists?

Papageorgiou: I was very excited to meet so many Nobel Laureates and impressed deeply by their passion, intense curiosity and interest for science. From many excellent talks I learned a lot about recent advances in different fields of physiology and medicine. The interdisciplinary panel talks between the Laureates encouraged us, as young researchers, to keep in touch and facilitated follow up of personal contacts also after the end of the Meeting.

SWM: Could you tell us something on the atmosphere and interaction with the Nobel Laureates and the other participants?

Papageorgiou: One of the greatest aspects of the Meeting was discovering who the Laureates were as people. The informal atmosphere did not only enable but also encouraged the extensive exchange of ideas without forgetting the social and cultural challenges research is facing. I also really enjoyed the communication with other young researchers from all around the world, regardless of geographic borders. I found out that science is global; it grows without horizon and boundary. With different cultures, beliefs and levels of education, all participants and Laureates could sit together and talk on whatever issue, from the most specific ones to the most general, like the ethical or social aspects of science and technology. The beauty of Lindau and the social and cultural events also contributed to the unique atmosphere.

SWM: Was there a specific support by the European Commission during the meeting?

Papageorgiou: Twenty-five participants of the Meeting were Marie Curie Fellows from different countries. Except for the financial support for participation in the meeting and all the useful information provided during the preparation phase, the representatives of the European Commission in Lindau organised several social and bringing together events in order to bring us in touch. There was also a special press conference, where we had the opportunity to talk individually about the Marie Curie Action we are participating in. In this way we all had the feeling that we are a part of this international network of science.

The Interview: Eleni Papageorgiou

PERACT

The PERACT project is concerned with developing our understanding of the brain mechanisms, which subserve our ability to plan and control action in space. Specifically, it focuses on the sensorimotor processes, which underlie the integration of sensory information and the translation of sensory signals into motor commands. This is not only an interesting and central issue within systems neuroscience but also is likely to yield much in terms of novel therapies to alleviate the consequences of brain damage or disease following head-injury. www.peract.net
WM: From the perspective of an ophthalmologist could you get a special motivation from the meeting?

Papageorgiou: As a clinical researcher, I was fascinated by the discoveries in the field of molecular medicine and biochemistry, which have led to the understanding of the basic mechanisms of the cell. I found it extremely interesting to see the ways of introducing these developments in clinical practice, why not in Ophthalmology? The talk of Prof. Aaron Ciechanover, Laureate in Chemistry 2004, „On the dynamics of our proteins: from basic mechanisms onto the patient bed”, was inspiring for many clinical researchers.

WM: Taken together-how would you summarise your take home message?

Papageorgiou: The enthusiasm of the Laureates as well as of the participants for their science motivates me as a young researcher to proceed and develop my research “rigorously”. This year’s meeting is an experience I feel honored to have been a part of it and I will not forget it. I really hope that many other young researchers will get the chance to come to Lindau to enjoy and take home this special atmosphere.

WM: Ms. Papageorgiou we may thank you for this interview and wish you all the best for your future career.

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SWM

In the course of a more and more national as well as international networking of science and research, requirements on the organisation of university research establishments are also changing. In order to ensure the competitiveness and the quality of the research, the scientists urgently need efficient relief and support by means of the introduction and development of an innovative and science adequate management structure e.g. the SWM / Unit for Research Management (URM). The SWM / URM's objective is not only to ensure the competitiveness of the University Eye Hospital (UEH) but also to improve it. Only through the support of a management structure like the SWM / URM, the UEH can meet in a next future the challenge of the EU FP7 and its aim to create an European Research Area (ERA).

During the period of the FP5 and FP6 of the EU, the URM, under the leadership of Mr. Dr. Wheeler-Schilling, initiated and coordinated a total of more 30 applications. In comparison with similar European institutions the UEH is through the introduction of the SWM / URM absolutely cutting edge. Moreover the quotas for projects successfully founded by the EU are far above-average. Due to this early and strategic positioning we are actually able to develop the organisational and technological advantage in regard to the applications within the FP 7.