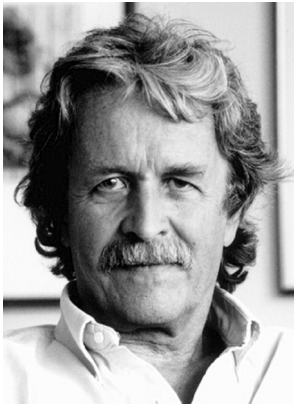




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EMBO welcomes Hermann Bujard Executive Director of EMBO



Hermann Bujard
EMBO Executive Director

In July 2007, *Hermann Bujard* was appointed Executive Director of the European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO). Hermann is only the fourth Executive Director of EMBO since 1965 and he follows the former Executive Director, *Frank Gannon*, who has moved to the Science Foundation Ireland (SFI). The German-born molecular biologist is no stranger to EMBO. A member since 1976 and EMBO Council member from 1989–1995, he has long-standing links to the organisation.

Hermann's first association with EMBO dates back even earlier than his election to the membership. In 1970, after hearing that EMBO was moving to Germany, he got together with two colleagues, the late *Peter von Sengbusch* and EMBO Member *Ken Holmes*, to put together an application for EMBO to come to Heidelberg. At the time, Munich seemed the most likely choice for EMBO due to a growing research scene and Heidelberg was a long shot. However, thanks to the group's persuasive arguments, the support of local physicists, the engagement of Heidelberg's mayor, and a number of other factors in the city's favour, Heidelberg won out in the end.

The physics connection was an important factor in this decision, explains Hermann. "There were very strong links between biology and physics in those days. Heidelberg-based physicists like *Wolfgang Gentner* and Nobel Laureate *Hans Jensen* had the vision to see the opportunities that biology presented and were determined to bring a base for modern biology to Heidelberg." In the early seventies, Hermann also served on the EMBO Laboratory Committee, laying the foundations for the establishment of the European Molecular Biology Laboratory (EMBL), one of the founding goals of EMBO. He also co-organised some of the early EMBO scientific meetings.

In addition to an obvious affection for EMBO and a belief in its role in European science, Hermann brings a rich tapestry of experience

to the organisation – not only in research but also in industry and politics. Currently he runs a research laboratory at Heidelberg University's Center for Molecular Biology (ZMBH), which he helped to establish in the mid-eighties as its first Director. At that time, Hermann's research focused largely on the mechanisms of gene regulation. A well-known by-product was the tetracycline-dependent transcription control system, widely used in the study of gene function today.

Since then Hermann's research has taken a different direction, now focusing on developing and testing vaccines against malaria. He first became interested in the disease as Deputy Director and Head of Biological Research at F. Hoffmann La Roche Ltd. in Basel, Switzerland, where he worked from 1982–1986. A "basic researcher born and bred" before this appointment, his time at Roche gave him the opportunity to apply a more disease-oriented approach. While working on diseases such as cancer and neurodegenerative conditions, he set up the company's first research programme towards the development of a malaria vaccine.

This early ambition continues today. With a determination borne of a strong biological and humanitarian interest in the disease, it is clear that Hermann feels a long-term commitment to malaria research. While working at EMBO, he will maintain his laboratory at the ZMBH, where his group continues to investigate a vaccine against *P. falciparum* infections. For the future, he has set his sights further afield. He hopes to return to Africa to continue his research in the countries most affected by the disease.

Closer to home, Hermann has had a significant impact on German research, particularly in Heidelberg. At the ZMBH, he and his colleagues developed programmes to support and train young independent scientists early in their careers. These programmes are →→

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still influential today and reflect another long-term commitment in Hermann's career, namely teaching, something which he believes is integral to every scientist's responsibilities. The institutional structure and culture he introduced at the ZMBH is also close to his heart. Still thriving today, its flat hierarchy and flexible tenure track remains unique in German science.

Hermann has a strong interest in the politics behind research. He has often expressed his opinion on the development of German science policy and, post-reunification, was involved in the establishment of various

institutes in the new German states. On an academic level, he has published over 140 peer-reviewed articles and holds 25 international patents. Amongst a string of honours, including of course his EMBO membership, he is a member of the Max Planck Institute for Medical Research and holds an honorary doctorate from the University of Würzburg. The Karl Heinz Beckurts Prize, the Curie Institute's Yvette Mayent Prize for Cancer Research and the 2005 Medal of Merit from the German state of Baden-Württemberg represent some of the awards he has received in his still active career. ■

About EMBO

The European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) recognises and promotes excellence in molecular life sciences in Europe. Since 1964, leading scientists have been elected annually to join their peers as members of EMBO based on proven excellence in research. Members number more than 1200 today, with 45 Nobel laureates amongst them, and a further 100 associate members worldwide. EMBO Members have the opportunity to influence the direction of European life sciences and more than half are involved in guiding the execution of the many EMBO initiatives offered to life scientists.

Leading peer-reviewed journals – *The EMBO Journal*, *EMBO reports* and *Molecular Systems Biology* – span all aspects of molecular biology and reflect how science is shaping the world. EMBO-sponsored training and networking activities impact thousands of scientists every year, promoting collaboration in all areas of molecular biology – within Europe and internationally.

EMBO is renowned for the quality and funding of these programmes and activities that include *EMBO Courses & Workshops*, *EMBO Long- and Short-term Fellowships*, the *EMBO Young Investigator Programme*, the *EMBO Science & Society Programme*, *EMBO Installation Grants* and *EMBO Women in Science*.

Annual awards, such as the *EMBO Gold Medal*, and the *EMBO Award for Communication in the Life Sciences*, recognise significant contributions of European researchers to the advancement of science.

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For more information: www.embo.org/about_embo/index.html