agence d'évaluation de la recherche
et de l'enseignement supérieur

Section des Unités de recherche

AERES report on the federative structure

Biology Institute of Valrose

From

University of Nice Sophia-Antipolis

January 2011

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Le Président de l'AERES

Didier Houssin

Section des unités de recherche

Le Directeur

Pierre Glorieux

January 2011

Federative structure

Nom de la fédération : Institut de Biologie de Valrose

Label demandé : FR

N° si renouvellement :

Nom du directeur : M. Stéphane NOSELLI

Members of the review committee

The project of a federative structure has been evaluated by the review committees of unit U636 "Genetics of normal and pathological development "(Director M. RASSOULZADEGAN) and Institute of Developmental Biology and Cancer (Director S. NOSELLI)

Committee 1 : Institute of Developmental Biology and Cancer (Director S. NOSELLI)

Committee chairman

Mr. Olivier POURQUIE, IGBMC, Illkirch, France

Other committee members

Mr. Markus AFFOLTER, Biozentrum, Switzerland

Mr. James BRISCOE, NIMR, London, Great-Britain

Mr. Pascal DOLLE, IGBMC, Illkirch, France

Mr. Andreas FAISSNER, Ruhr-University, Bochum, Germany

Ms. Laura JOHNSTON, College of Physicians & Surgeons, Columbia University, New-YorK, USA

Mr. François SCHWEISGUTH, Pasteur Institute, Paris, France

Mr. Serge ROCHE, CNRS, Center for research in Macromolecular Biochemistry, Montpellier, France

Mr. Jean-Marc REICHHART, CNU, IBMC, Strasbourg, France

Committee 2: U636 ”Genetics of normal and pathological development “(Director M. RASSOULZADEGAN)

Committee chairman

Ms. Margaret BUCKINGHAM, Pasteur Institute, Paris, France

Other committee members

Ms. Paola BOVOLENTA, CSIC, Madrid, Spain

Ms. Blanche CAPEL, Duke university, Durham, USA

Mr. Pascal DOLLE, Université de Strasbourg, Illkirch, France

Ms. Anna-Katerina HADJANTONAKIS, Sloan-Kettering Institute, New York, USA

Mr. Tristan RODRIGUEZ, MRC, London, Great-Britain

Mr. Patrick BLADER, Université Paul Sabatier, Toulouse , France

Observers

AERES scientific advisor

Mr. Jean-Antoine LEPESANT

University, School and Research Organization representatives

Ms. Catherine LABBE-JULLIE INSERM

Mr. Stanislas TOMAVO, INSB-CNRS

Mr. Jean-Marc LARDEAUX, University of Nice Sophia-Antipolis

Report

1 • Introduction

- Date and execution of the visit

1. The visit of the Institute of Developmental Biology and Cancer was conducted on January 17 and 18, 2011 and essentially took place in Nice at the Valrose center in the Centre de Biochimie where most of the IDBC teams are located. The overall organization of the visit was excellent. The committee listened first to a general presentation of the director and then all the group leaders presented their recent work and future projects in 20 minutes, followed by a 20 minutes discussion. Whereas the lab members of the presenting team leader attended the presentation, the committee requested the 20 minutes question period to be spent only in the presence of the group leader. The committee attended all the 18 presentations, followed by a short presentation and discussion with the University of Nice and CNRS representatives and then splitted in three groups for independent discussions with the technicians, the Statutory personnel (CR and MCUs) and the students and post-docs. Finally the committee had a discussion about the future federation between IDBC and the INSERM U636, with the current directors of the two units, S. Noselli and A. Schedl. The visit closed with a discussion with the future director S. Noselli and a closed doors discussion between committee members. The document prepared and presented to each member of the committee was found to be excellent in its presentation and content.

2. The visit of the AERES committee evaluating the INSERM UMR636 took place on the 25th January 2011, in the Centre de Biochimie where the INSERM UMR636 is located. After a meeting between the AERES scientific advisor (J.-A. Lepesant) and the committee, all the members of the UMR636 participated in a brief explanation of the evaluation procedure, followed by the presentations of the current and future directors of the Unit. The committee then heard presentations by the five team leaders which took place, together with questions and discussion, in the presence of the members of the team concerned. Later in the afternoon the committee met with scientific researchers (permanent scientists, post-docs and PhD/Master students) followed by a meeting with technical staff. They then received Jean-Marc Ladeaux, Vice-President of the University of Nice, in charge of research, followed by Stéphane Noselli, director of the CNRS UMR6543, which is also mainly located in the Centre de Biochimie, in the presence of the future director of the INSERM Unit. In these two interviews the proposal to form a Federative structure was presented and discussed. There was further discussion with the future Director alone before a concluding closed door meeting of the AERES committee.

- History and geographical localization of the research unit, and brief presentation of its field and scientific activities

1. Institute of Developmental Biology and Cancer

The IDBC was created in 2008 as a joint CNRS and UNS Unit originating from a complex series of fusions and reorganisations of the local scientific landscape. It currently contains teams located on the Valrose and Pasteur Campus but due to the retirement of J. Pouyssegur and the decision of the Centre Antoine Lacassagne (CAL) to discontinue its relationship with IDBC, most of its groups will join the Valrose Campus where they will be located in the Centre de Biochimie and the Sciences Naturelles building. Renovation of research floors in the Centre de Biochimie and in the Sciences Naturelles building have begun but much remains to be done. Only the group of Christian Dani will remain in the Pasteur campus in the tour Pasteur. Two other groups, currently occupying 700 square meters in the CAL, will be relocated in the Sciences Naturelles building where most IDBC teams should be regrouped after renovation of the building. Since 2008 a zebrafish facility (the first one in Nice) has been constructed and a high performance Ibisa imaging platform (PRISM) has been established. The IDBC currently counts 18 teams for a total of 184 staff. Since 2008, two teams (Borgese, Delaunay) have been integrated from the FRE3094 CNRS/UNS, and five young group leaders have been recruited (2 ATIPE, 1 ATIPE/Avenir, 1 professor UNS and 1 chaire d'excellence (CNRS/UNS). Four groups will not be renewed in the IDBC. The activities of the IDBC are essentially related to developmental and cell biology and signaling and cancer studies with however a significant component interested in physiology.

2. Genetics of normal and pathological development

At the time of the last review, four years ago, the INSERM Unit consisted of three teams namely team 1 (RNA mediated epigenetic heredity in development) and 2 (kidney organogenesis) and a third team working on PPAR signalling and muscle physiology which left the Unit in 2008 to join the Faculty of Medicine INSERM U907, which the team leader now directs. This re-location was appropriate for the more metabolic re-orientation of their research. The departure of this team permitted the emergence of research team 3, directed by a senior member of team 2 who had driven the excellent work on sex determination in this group, a theme now pursued by team 3. In 2009, the Unit succeeded in recruiting a young team leader who had previously done outstanding work on the transcriptional regulation of pancreas development as a PhD student and post-doc in the Max Planck Institute in Göttingen, Germany. He obtained an INSERM Avenir start-up grant, together with other awards, and now directs a research group (Team 4) focussing on the regulation of endocrine cell specification and re-programming in the pancreas, in the context of diabetes. In 2009, the Unit recruited a 5th team leader, a senior researcher in the Telethon Institute of Genetics and Medicine (TIGEM) in Naples, Italy, with a strong reputation for work on neural development and brain patterning. Her installation in the UMR636 has been facilitated by an ANR chair of excellence award. All five teams use the mouse as an experimental model. As the new title of the Unit states, the focus is on developmental genetics and cellular reprogramming. The teams work on different tissues and organs, but share common interests in genetic regulation and cell behaviour which make this a coherent ensemble.

The Unit is housed on the first two floors of the Centre de Biochimie on the Parc Valrose campus of the University of Nice. The mouse animal house is located at level -2 in the same building, and has been under the supervision of members of the Unit which provides the majority of the manpower. Furthermore the Unit has now established a platform for generating transgenic mice. A histology laboratory is also installed at this level. Other facilities shared with the CNRS UMR6543, include a washing-up service on floor 2 and a microscopy platform housed by the CNRS Unit which occupies floors 3-5 of the building.

- Management team: Stéphane NOSELLI, Andreas SCHEDL

These two excellent young scientists clearly have the necessary qualities to assume the direction of a Federative structure while assuring the direction of the CNRS and INSERM Units respectively.

- Staff members (on the basis of the application file submitted to the AERES)

  - **Full time researchers**

    1 DR2 INSERM, 1 DR2 CNRS, 2 CR1 CNRS

  - **Engineers, Technicians and Administrative staff**

    2IR CNRS, 1 IR INSERM, 1 IE CNRS,1 AI INSERM, 1 ASI Université Nice, 5 TCH CNRS, 1 TS INSERM, 1ADT Université Nice, 1 ATP INSERM, 3 AJT CNRS, 1 AJTE INSERM, 6 CDD

2 • Overall appreciation on the federative structure

- Summary:

During the last four years the INSERM Unit has been very productive, with some outstanding scientific contributions. They have succeeded in recruiting two excellent new team leaders at junior and more senior levels. The scientific projects build on this strength and are ambitious while remaining realistic.

Research at IDBC was overall judged excellent and highly visible at the international level for a fair number of groups. The grouping of the teams on a single site and the future federation with the nearby INSERM unit U636 was perceived as a very positive move which should both increase the visibility of IDBC research and optimize access to resources for IDBC scientists. CNRS and UNS need to make sure that appropriate space and support is provided for this key reorganisation.

Closer collaboration and sharing of resources between these two excellent INSERM and CNRS Units in a Federative structure is viewed by both AERES committees as very positive.

- Strengths and opportunities

Scientifically the strong mouse genetics of the INSERM Unit complements the excellent cell biology of the CNRS Unit so that closer collaboration should be beneficial to both Units which share a common interest in developmental biology. From an operational and economic point of view it makes sense to share resources and equipment. This happens to some extent already, but will be facilitated in a Federative structure. Furthermore the formation of this structure will enhance the image of the University of Nice in the area of biological research.

- Weaknesses and threats

It is important that the particular needs of groups in both Units are respected. In the case of the INSERM Unit guaranteed support from the funding bodies for the mouse animal house is a priority.

- Recommendations

The creation of a Federative structure is strongly encouraged.

3 • Specific comments

It is too soon to comment on results, management, mutualisation and valorisation of research since the structure has not yet been created.

- Impact of scientific strategy, complementarity/relation with other federative structures on the same site.

The creation of this new federation, which receives strong support from the University of Nice, will enhance the image and organisation of Biology on the campus. It will allow for increased sharing of technical platforms and facilities, with joint applications for future equipments and research funding on the national and international levels. Most importantly the sharing of scientific expertise and exchange of ideas, represents a major biological potential. The attractibility for recruitment of new group leaders as well as postdocs and students will be enhanced. Furthermore the increased visibility of biological research on the campus should facilitate the consolidation of interdisciplinary projects. Both from the written document and discussions with S. NOSELLI and A. SCHEDL, the AERES committees are confident that these goals will be met. In the longer term the creation of a new Institute of Biology receives full support from the AERES committees.

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N/REF : AM/ED/MB 2011-2336

Nice, le 26 août 2011

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Monsieur le Directeur,

Faisant suite au travail effectué par le Comité de visite de l'AERES et du rapport d'évaluation émis sur l'Unité de Recherche « Institut de Biologie de Valrose » portée par l'Université Nice Sophia Antipolis, nous ne désirons apporter aucun commentaire ni correction à ce rapport car ce dernier porte sur le projet de création d'une fédération englobant l'actuel IBDC et U636 qui n'est plus à l'ordre du jour.

En effet, une nouvelle UMR, l'institut de Biologie Valrose (iBV) regroupant les deux structures, sera créé au 1er janvier 2012.

Nous tenons néanmoins à souligner la qualité du travail effectué par le Comité de visite et le caractère constructif de ses recommandations.

Vous remerciant par avance de bien vouloir tenir compte de cette évolution,
Je vous prie de croire, Monsieur le Directeur, en l'expression de mes sentiments distingués

UNIVERSITE DE NICE - SOPHIA ANTIPOLIS
1.1.1996

Pr Albert MAROUANI

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