

REPORT ON THE RESEARCH UNIT:
Villefranche-sur-mer Developmental Biology
Laboratory (LBDV)

UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF THE
FOLLOWING INSTITUTIONS AND
RESEARCH BODIES:

Université Pierre et Marie Curie

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique -
CNRS

ÉVALUATION CAMPAIGN 2017-2018
GROUP D



In the name of Hcéres¹:

Michel Cosnard, President

In the name of the expert committee²:

Daniel Chourrout, Chairman of the
committee

Under the decree No.2014-1365 dated 14 November 2014,

¹ The president of Hcéres "countersigns the evaluation reports set up by the expert committees and signed by their chairman." (Article 8, paragraph 5);

² The evaluation reports "are signed by the chairman of the expert committee". (Article 11, paragraph 2).

This report is the sole result of the unit's evaluation by the expert committee, the composition of which is specified below. The assessments contained herein are the expression of an independent and collegial reviewing by the committee.

UNIT PRESENTATION

Unit name:	Villefranche-sur-mer Developmental Biology Laboratory
Unit acronym:	LBDV
Requested label:	UMR
Application type:	Renewal
Current number:	UMR 7009
Head of the unit (2017-2018):	Ms Evelyn HOULISTON
Project leader (2019-2023):	Mr Alex MC DOUGALL
Number of teams:	7

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Chair:	Mr Daniel CHOURROUT, Sars International Centre for Marine Molecular Biology, University of Bergen, Norway
Experts:	Mr Patrick BLADER, Université Paul Sabatier, Toulouse (representative of CoNRS) Mr Abderrahman KHILA, Université Claude Bernard, Lyon Mr Bernard MIGNOTTE, Université de Versailles (representative of CNU) Ms Violette MORALES, Université Paul Sabatier, Toulouse (supporting personnel) Ms Nancy PAPALOPULU, University of Manchester, United Kingdom Mr Manfred SCHARTL, Universität Würzburg, Germany
HCERES scientific officer:	Mr Pierre COUBLE
Representatives of supervising institutions and bodies:	Mr Hervé MOREAU, CNRS Mr Bertrand MEYER, Sorbonne Université

INTRODUCTION

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION OF THE UNIT

The UMR 7009 «Laboratoire de Biologie du Développement de Villefranche-sur-Mer» (LBDV) is located in Villefranche-sur-Mer and part of a Marine Station named "Observatoire Océanologique de Villefranche-sur-Mer" (OOV), currently restructured into a Fédération de Recherche. The other part of OOV is the "Laboratoire d'Océanographie de Villefranche-sur-Mer" (LOV – UMR 7093). Both units have a double affiliation to CNRS and UPMC (Université Pierre et Marie Curie, regrouped from 2018 into the new Sorbonne Universités). The LBDV pre-existed the current period of evaluation and its research area has not significantly changed during the evaluated period.

MANAGEMENT TEAM

During the evaluated period, the head of LBDV was Ms Evelyn Houliston with Mr Alex McDougall serving as deputy head. Both of them had research groups established before the evaluated period. For the next period, Mr Alex McDougall is going to be the head of LBDV and Ms Evelyn Houliston will not act as deputy head.

HCERES NOMENCLATURE

SVE2_2; SVE2_3.

SCIENTIFIC DOMAIN

The Unit and its research groups aim to use favorable or specific characteristics of marine vertebrates to answer fundamental questions in developmental and cell biology. The topics are diverse, as are the organisms used by the different groups. Most research groups address developmental biology questions (including regeneration). Two groups are mainly using cell biology approaches during embryogenesis. One group is analyzing the genomes of various metazoans, with emphasis on cnidarians. The main animals studied at LBDV are chordates (tunicates and cephalochordates), echinoderms and cnidarians, and a broader diversity of marine organisms is explored in a few projects. While some groups deliberately privilege one species for a model system approach, others are interested in multi-organism comparisons to gain insight into evolutionary processes.

UNIT WORKFORCE

Unit workforce	Number 30/06/2017	Number 01/01/2019
Permanent staff		
Full professors and similar positions	1	1
Assistant professors and similar positions	1	1
Full time research directors (Directeurs de recherche) and similar positions	5	5
Full time research associates (Chargés de recherche) and similar positions	9	9
Other scientists ("Conservateurs, cadres scientifiques des EPIC, fondations, industries, etc.")	0	0
High school teachers	0	0

Supporting personnel (ITAs, BIATSSs and others, notably of EPICs)	14	13
TOTAL permanent staff	30	29
Non-permanent staff		
Non-permanent professors and associate professors, including emeritus	0	
Non-permanent full time scientists, including emeritus, post-docs	3	
Non-permanent supporting personnel	4	
PhD Students	7	
TOTAL non-permanent staff	14	
TOTAL unit		
	44	

GLOBAL ASSESSMENT OF THE UNIT

The scientific output of LBDV groups is highly visible and its quality is remarkable, allowing the laboratory to maintain its high level international reputation. Most groups succeeded to publish their findings a few times in top tiers journals. Most groups also obtained research grants that are highly competitive within broad research fields. LBDV received a large number of visiting scientists. Its group leaders are often invited to give talks, at international conferences and to give external seminars.

Although LBDV is principally operating basic research, its scientists have taken multiple initiatives of public outreach, a domain in which the lab has a strong tradition. Some of them are also involved in more applied research and/or in projects aimed at commercializing knowledge based innovations.

LBDV research groups show high motivation and ability to successfully educate and train students and post-docs. This activity could be enhanced, though they are currently limited by financial constraints and insufficient laboratory and office space. The recent recruitment of faculty members by the University should have positive consequences for the attraction of talented students.

LBDV is organized in independent groups, and the communication between groups appears satisfactory. LBDV is well engaged in functional studies of developmental genes and, through various investments, has continued an in house tradition of high quality imaging. The main concern is about the renovation and upgrading of lab space, facility and offices, which is financially possible but was considerably delayed, with no clear short-term solution.

There has been an important turnover at LBDV, after the retirement and departure of several prominent group leaders. Four new groups were established during the last five years and it naturally takes time for these to attain an optimal production. However, the committee did not find all projects equally clear or strategically sound. The committee felt that LBDV could benefit from the establishment of an external scientific committee, which would provide the LBDV management with independent advices.

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