



## : editorial

### Dear Readers,

WE CAN LOOK BACK ON AN EVENTFUL FEW MONTHS...

The focus of our activities in the first half of 2005 centred on the Best of Biotech (BOB) business plan competition. This was the third time the competition had been run; it challenges scientists to tackle the issues of how to translate research results into commercial success and how to go about organising a start-up. Please see the BOB report which follows for details of the competition and the winning projects.

LISA Vienna Region was represented at BIO 2005 in Philadelphia again this year, together with a number of companies from the region. Participants used the opportunity to strengthen existing contacts and discuss possible new joint ventures. Negotiations by cancer immuno-therapy specialists Austrianova concerning exclusive distribution rights for their Novacaps product moved a major step closer to completion.

We have observed increased interest in life sciences start-ups in the Vienna Region, and we are currently advising on more projects than ever before.

WE STILL HAVE A LOT PLANNED FOR 2005...

Bioinformatics will be at the heart of things over the coming months. Arndt Peter von Hae-seler from Max F. Perutz Laboratories GesmbH and David Kreil of the University of Natural Resources and Applied Life Sciences, Vienna have started work as new group leaders in bioinformatics. Funding from the Vienna Science, Research and Technology Fund (WWTF) has paved the way for the two scientists to set up various working groups. We are interested in new scientific discoveries and potential applications in this area, and are supporting a Life Science Circle discussion on 14th November 2005 with the title "Bytes and Genes - Bioinformatics in Vienna".



And finally we would like to inform you of our next international appearances: Biotechnica in Hanover, 18-20 October 2005, and Ausbio-tech in Perth, 20-23 November 2005.

We look forward to seeing you there!

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ProtAffin (left to right):  
Michel Canavaggio (Baxter BioScience), Jason Slingsby (ProtAffin),  
Martin Spatz and Sonja Hammerschmid (LISA Vienna Region)

## BOB - BEST OF BIOTECH: FIRST PRIZE FOR NEW THERAPY AGAINST INFLAMMATORY DISEASES

*The international business plan competition for life sciences was brought to a highly successful close with a gala celebration in the hall of Vienna's "Society of Physicians". BOB - Best of Biotech has attracted some outstanding entries from the field of medical biotechnology and has led to the creation of many new businesses.*

The First Prize of EUR 18,000 sponsored by Baxter AG for the best business plan went to Professor Andreas Kungl and his colleague Dr. Jason Slingsby of the University of Graz. The Second Prize of EUR 9,000 sponsored by VWR International was won by Munich's Professor Wassermann and his team.

### ➤ First Prize for the fight against inflammatory diseases

Professor Andreas Kungl and his team are developing a proprietary technology platform for the manufacture of dominant-negative protein mutants. These novel proteins promise safer and more

effective treatment of inflammatory diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis than the biologicals currently being marketed - for example, the monoclonal antibodies used against TNF- $\alpha$ . Unlike these molecules, Kungl's engineered proteins intervene in the inflammatory process at a much earlier stage and show enhanced local specificity in preventing the migration into tissue of the leucocytes that cause the inflammation - the problem is attacked much closer to its root. With the support of Austria Wirtschaftsservice GmbH, the winning team has already set up its business, ProtAffin Biotechnologies AG.



UroVesica (left to right):  
Martin Spatz (LISA Vienna Region),  
Brigitte Niebler (VWR International),  
Wolfgang Mayer (UroVesica),  
Helmut Wassermann (UroVesica) and  
Sonja Hammerschmid (LISA Vienna Region)

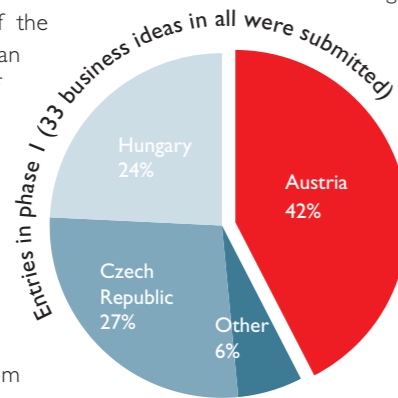
# BEST OF BIOTECH - HISTORY OF SUCCESS

► **The Second Prize** was awarded to Professor Helmut Wassermann and his team from the Munich Fachhochschule for their "UroVesica" project. Professor Wassermann is developing an alloplastic artificial bladder as a replacement for non-functioning bladders. Artificial openings through the abdominal wall would thus become a thing of the past. The artificial organ permits elimination of urine to function almost normally again, a major increase in quality of life for patients whose bladder has had to be removed surgically.

Nine projects were submitted by teams from Vienna, two of them are among the ten finalists: "RepVec" by Mathias Renner is a novel treatment for the therapy of malignant brain tumors. "onepharm" by Bernhard Kueenburg develops small molecules for the treatment of viral infections. With the support of Austria Wirtschaftsservice GmbH Dr. Kueenburg already set up his business.

► **Best of Biotech - history of success**  
BOB was launched in 2001 with the slogan "Best of Biotech - Ideas for Life", and the competition has been run successfully twice since then. Counting this year's event

in as well, the competition has seen 154 projects submitted and 17 businesses started, including such well-known names as Green Hills Biotech, Oridis Biomed and Biovertis. Further evidence of the competition's success - compared with many similar events - is that almost all the winning businesses have subsequently been able to attract private risk capital.



► **The competition this year** was again in two stages: the business ideas submitted by the teams in the first phase were then developed into full-scale business plans in the second phase. To simplify the work of the aspiring entrepreneurs, there were specially organised workshops dealing with the key issues of preparing business plans. There were also industry experts available as coaches throughout the course of the competition. Ten of the 17 entries for the second phase of the competition were nominated for presentation before a jury of international experts. Proposals ranged from treatment of cardiac dysrhythmia and diabetes to diagnosis of schizophrenia. The bulk of the Austrian business ideas (69%) submitted in

the first phase came from the medical field or from medical technology, demonstrating once again Austria's traditional strengths in these areas.

► **The goal of Best of Biotech** is to encourage academic researchers to move in the direction of commercial implementation, so as to increase the number of new life sciences firms. Sonja Hammerschmid, head of LISA Vienna Region, is proud of the outcome: "Best of Biotech has once again allowed Austria to demonstrate what a promising future the life sciences can look forward to here." For Hammerschmid, the fact that 19 of the 33 entries came from neighbouring countries is evidence of the excellent reputation Austria enjoys beyond its borders as a meeting point and training centre for the life sciences. The city of Vienna also actively supports co operations between businesses from Vienna and the new EU members. One recent example was the call "Co Operate enlarged - Vienna 2005" which was launched by Vienna's Center for Innovation and Technology.

Best of Biotech is a joint initiative of Austria Wirtschaftsservice Gesellschaft mbH and Life Science Austria - Vienna Region, supported by the generous sponsorship of the Austrian Ministry of Economy and Labour, the City of Vienna, Baxter AG and VWR International, together with a variety of public and private partners in Austria and abroad.

## That was BOB - get your business started!

- :: 33 entries from 5 countries in Phase I
- :: 17 entries from 4 countries in Phase 2
- :: Therapeutics development heads the list
- :: High quality of business plans
- :: Two start-ups in Austria already
- :: More new businesses in the pipeline

► [www.bestofbiotech.com](http://www.bestofbiotech.com)



## BARRY DICKSON - THE NEW SCIENTIFIC DIRECTOR OF THE IMP

*When Barry Dickson talks about fruit flies, his eyes light up and his voice becomes soft. Quite obviously, there is some emotional connection between him and Drosophila melanogaster. After all, Barry Dickson has been working with flies for most of his life as a scientist.*

Born in 1962 in Melbourne, Australia, Dickson had originally studied Mathematics at the University of Melbourne. But then, one book changed the course of his career. After reading "The Eighth Day of Creation" by Horace F. Judson, he swapped mathematics for biology. He moved to Zurich and in 1992 obtained his PhD in the group of Ernst Hafen. Even back then, he worked with Drosophila, studying the development of the eye. During a postdoctoral stay with Corey Goodman in Berkeley, he came in touch with neurobiology. His research focus shifted to the developing central nervous system, his model stayed the same: Drosophila.

Barry Dickson returned to Zurich, for the first time leading an independent research group. In 1998 he accepted a position as Group Leader at the Institute of Molecular Pathology (IMP) in Vienna. He and his wife Krystyna quickly settled down, enjoying the quality of life in Vienna. At the IMP, Dickson set up an international team of young scientists and established the fruit fly as one of the most important (and most numerous) model organisms of the institute. He published a series of key-papers and became one of the world's leading developmental neurobiologists. In 2003, Barry Dickson was appointed Senior Scientist at the newly established

Institute of Molecular Biotechnology (IMBA) of the Austrian Academy of Sciences. He did not have to move far: the two institutes are neighbours and Dickson's office and lab are still located at the IMP while IMBA is nearing completion. Rather than his lab, Barry Dickson moved his research focus and embarked on a very ambitious project. The task he chose was to explain the origins of complex innate behaviours (or instincts), and ultimately to understand how these behaviours are modified by experience.

A breakthrough came in June 2005, when the journal Cell published a paper whose contents were so exciting that they even made it to the front page of the New York Times. In short, Dickson's team was able to show that the mating ritual of Drosophila - a good example for complex innate behaviour - is orchestrated by the activity of a single "master-gene". They did so by engineering female flies into carrying the male version of the respective gene fruitless, which prompted them to behave like males and court other female flies.

Another challenging project to which Dickson is devoting his attention relates to the generation of a set of about 15,000 transgenic fly strains which will enable sophisticated experiments to examine the function of each individual gene. A new "Ludwig Boltzmann Institute of Functional Genomics" is being established around this so-called RNAi library, and will bring 3 new research groups to the Campus Vienna Biocenter.

Barry Dickson's successful career did not go unnoticed and, in July 2005, he was awarded the Wittgenstein Prize by the Austrian government for his scientific achievements. This prestigious award is worth 1.3 Million Euro and will probably go into a new interdisciplinary research unit that will serve to tackle ever more challenging questions.

Very likely, though, the biggest challenge for Barry Dickson is yet to come. In January 2006, he will assume the position of Scientific Director of the IMP, following in the footsteps of Max Birnstiel and Kim Nasmyth. It is an exciting move and the expectations are high, but with his scientific expertise, ambitious ideas and calm manner, Barry Dickson seems ideally equipped for the job.

► By Heidemarie Hurlt

## WHO IS WHO?

**LIFE SCIENCE AUSTRIA (LISA)  
VIENNA REGION –  
your partner for life sciences**

LISA VR is the Vienna Region's central consultancy and coordination office for researchers and companies in the life sciences.

### *The LISA VR team offers*

- Help in setting up businesses and preparing business plans
- Pre-seed and seed financing for new ventures
- Access to investors through our international venture capital network
- Access to regional and federal funding
- Financing for patents and patent marketing

In addition to these core services, LISA VR focuses on developing linkages between key figures in the Austrian life sciences scene, on strengthening international contacts, cluster management and on educational and public awareness issues.

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[office@vienna.lifescienceaustria.at](mailto:office@vienna.lifescienceaustria.at)

## NEW TECHNOLOGY CENTRE T<sup>ZT</sup> TO OPEN SOON IN TULLN!



***This September marks the completion of the new Technologiezentrum Tulln (T<sup>ZT</sup>) near the interuniversity Department for Agrobiotechnology and the Fachhochschule site.***

This purpose-built four-storey facility comprises office and laboratory space for scientific research and business activities in green and white biotechnologies. One of the new centre's major advantages is its flexible construction, which allows rooms to be used interchangeably as laboratories, offices or meeting rooms. Units with separate access to the stairwell can be created on each floor; to give companies their own individual space.

The T<sup>ZT</sup> is the perfect location for biotech spin-offs and start-ups, and some 40% of the total 3,000 m<sup>2</sup> floor space has already been snapped up. One of the first companies to move in is Romer Labs® subsidiary Biopure, which will start mycotoxin research activities at the T<sup>ZT</sup> on 1 October

2005. In addition to purified mycotoxins produced to the highest standards, Biopure also supplies mycotoxins in the precise purities and concentrations required by biotech and animal researchers for use in detoxification and feedstuffs experiments.

Close cooperation between science, research, education and business at Technopole Tulln generates valuable synergies which can give large and small businesses alike access to state-of-the-art technologies. Currently there are some 150 researches working in Tulln. The 60,000 m<sup>2</sup> Technopark Tulln still has space available for more Austrian or international businesses working in plant and animal husbandry, environmental biotechnology and natural materials technology.