

Press release

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Kick-off for an international academic career:

EU research network OSNIRO offers young scientists training in organic electronics

Munich/Wuppertal – Fixed-term employment contracts, unpaid overtime, competitive pressure and the never-ending question about what to do when they have finished their doctorate: PhD candidates have a hard time trying to gain a foothold in the scientific world. That makes an academic career unappealing to a lot of people. However, the EU benefits greatly from well-trained scientists whose specialist knowledge and innovative ideas help to safeguard Europe's future, strengthen its role as an industrial leader and allow its citizens to lead healthy lives. That is why the European Commission is supporting young research scientists via so-called Innovative Training Networks (ITN), for example. The networks enable them to improve their academic and social skills in an international environment, make important contacts in science and industry, and thus improve their future job prospects. The research network OSNIRO (Organic Semiconductors for NIR Optoelectronics) particularly sponsors doctorate candidates from the field of optoelectronics. From 9th to 11th April 2014, young research scientists from all over the world will be meeting up for the first joint advanced training session at the Bergische Universität Wuppertal, which is coordinating the project.

Since 1st October 2013, OSNIRO is being funded by the European Commission to the tune of 3.6 million Euros; from this sum, around 725,000 Euros are going to Bavaria with 1.4 million Euros going to Germany in total. The focus of the scientific work is on the development of new organic materials that absorb and emit light in the near infrared range. These have a huge potential regarding the development of a new generation of solar cells or light sensors for integration into multifunctional applications in healthcare, e.g. in imaging technology, or in telecommunications. The aim is also to implement these new components in the manufacture of large, flexible photovoltaic cells and sensors. OSNIRO thus offers participating doctorate students an interdisciplinary environment: not only chemists but also physicists and material scientists are involved in the research.

OSNIRO is coordinated at the Bergische Universität Wuppertal and also includes the German partners Friedrich-Alexander-Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg and SIEMENS AG. The consortium is completed by universities and companies based in France, Greece, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Sweden. The eight partners serve as host institutes for doctorate candidates from across the globe, who have applied for internationally-advertised positions within the scope of OSNIRO. Over the next four years, the 15 young scientists chosen will be carrying out research at their host institutions. In the process, each doctorate student will work on part of a project, with numerous links existing between the various sub-projects. This will enable the doctorate candidates to work together across the borders of countries and disciplines. Joint further training courses will reinforce this cooperation. The fact that industry is included ensures that the young scientists do not only learn about the academic world but also about working in the private sector.

Developing scientific competencies and soft skills

These days, a researcher not only has to excel in his field but also possess a multitude of soft skills; these are systematically taught as part of the OSNIRO project. As a result, from 9th to 11th April this year, the OSNIRO doctorate candidates will be meeting up at the Bergische Universität Wuppertal for their first seminar on the topic of “academic writing and presenting”. The training course covers the writing process as such as well as publication strategies. During presentation training, among other things the doctorate candidates will learn how to talk to a large audience and how to improve their public speaking skills. Even students who are not part of OSNIRO have the chance to attend the seminar if they pay a fee. Other soft skill subjects that will be offered as seminars during the course of the next three years include didactics, funding acquisition and public relations. In addition to these, continuing scientific education will play a key role – research-related presentations also form part of the concept. BayFOR has intensely supported the OSNIRO consortium in its efforts while applying for EU funding. In the current project, as an associated partner, it will be responsible for tasks concerning public relations.

About Initial Training Networks (ITN) for researchers

In its 7th Framework Programme (2007-2013), the European Commission funded the structured education of young scientists via Initial Training Networks (ITN). In its new Framework Programme Horizon 2020 (2014-2020), it will continue to support these networks under the name of “Innovative Training Networks”. Within the scope of ITN, young scientists will be given the opportunity to improve their scientific and general skills in an international context and to apply them in the private sector, as well as to make important contacts in science and industry. People counted as young scientists are researchers who have spent less than four years in full-time research since graduating and who do not hold a doctorate. Furthermore, at the time of recruitment, researchers may not have spent longer than 12 months or practiced his/her main activity in the country of the host institute within the last three years. The EU funds includes lump sums for staffing and project costs as well as management costs and overheads. Networks from all areas of research in the fields of humanities and natural science will receive funding. The next round of applications ends on 15th January 2015. For more information about **current ITN vacancies**, see under: www.euraxess.eu. Further information about the **ITN concept** is available under <http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/horizon2020>.

Bavarian Research Alliance GmbH

The Bavarian Research Alliance GmbH (BayFOR) is an organisation whose purpose is to promote Bavaria as a centre for science and innovation within the European Research Area. It supports and advises scientists from Bavaria and stakeholders from the private sector on European research, development and innovation funds. The focus is directed at the new Framework Programme for Research and Innovation “Horizon 2020”. To achieve this, BayFOR provides subject-specific information and offers strategic advice and active support for initiating projects, setting up international research consortia and submitting applications during the contract negotiations with the European Commission and for project management. As a partner in the network for SMEs “Enterprise Europe Network” (EEN), BayFOR provides specific advice for SMEs which are interested in EU research projects. BayFOR also coordinates the joint activities of the Bavarian Research Associations and supports their networking efforts on a European level. The Scientific Coordination Office Bavaria-Québec/Alberta/International within BayFOR provides support for bilateral and multilateral research projects from these regions. BayFOR is a partner institution in the Bavarian “Haus der Forschung” (www.hausderforschung.bayern.de/en). For further information please visit www.bayfor.org.

Contact:

Prof. Dr. Ullrich Scherf
Project coordinator OSNIRO
Bergische Universität Wuppertal
Phone: +49 (0)202 439-3871
E-mail: scherf@uni-wuppertal.de

Contact at BayFOR:

Dr.-Ing. Bohyun Katharina Lee
Scientific Officer/Deputy Head of Unit
Bavarian Research Alliance GmbH
Phone: +49 (0)89 9901888-132
E-mail: lee@bayfor.org