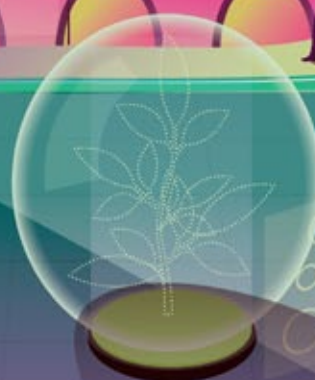
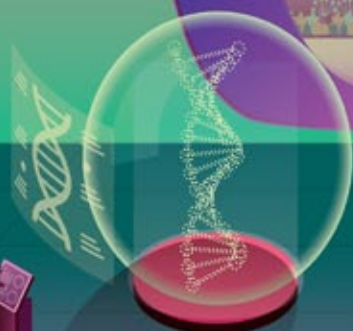




# Envisioning the research centres of the future



**EU-LIFE 10th Anniversary Conference Report**

6-7 June 2023, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon

SCAN ME TO WATCH  
RECORDINGS OF THE  
CONFERENCE



<https://bit.ly/YouTube-EULIFE-10y-conference>

December 2023

Cover image: Iris Joval  
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For further information please contact the EU-LIFE Office: [contact@eu-life.eu](mailto:contact@eu-life.eu)

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“ It was great to chair the conference and to welcome over 200 people from around the world to the internationally renowned Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. We provided space, time for reflection and diverse ideas about how research shall be made in the future, and I am particularly proud of the valuable contributions of early-career researchers in all panels, as well as the lively discussions stimulated by our amazing speakers.

This report sums up the highlights of the presentations and debates that took place at the conference. Research culture is a topic close to the heart of EU-LIFE, and we would like that this event and this document are the starting point to nucleate new initiatives to improve how science is done and how it relates to society.”

**Mónica Bettencourt-Dias**  
Chair of EU-LIFE & Director of IGC

“ The 10th anniversary of EU-LIFE marks the wonderful achievements of a community wanting to improve the research status and conditions of researchers in the life sciences. How to become better, more modern, inclusive, creative, accomplished? We thought of going beyond the conventional and reasonable boundaries and invite people to dream. Hence the concept of Utopia.

We can only make a better world if we are able to imagine it. Imagination needs to be trained, supported, shared and cherished. This is what we set out to do with the EU -LIFE/ Nature Utopia Essay Contest, in which hundreds of adventurous, free-spirited members of the community participated. EU-LIFE as the Utopian place where you can dream up a better research world.”

**Giulio Superti-Furga**  
Co-Chair of EU-LIFE & Director of CeMM



## Conference's Organising Committee

- Mónica Bettencourt-Dias, Chair of EU-LIFE & Director of IGC
- Giulio Superti-Furga, Co-Chair of EU-LIFE & Director of CeMM
- Anita Ender, CeMM's Main Representative at EU-LIFE
- Beatriz García Fernández, IGC's Main Representative at EU-LIFE
- Luis Valente, Executive Director of the Gulbenkian Collaborative Centre
- Regina Fernandes, Scientific Events Management at IGC
- Andreas Angermayr, Lab Manager at CeMM
- Marta Agostinho, EU-LIFE Executive Director
- Esther Dorado-Ladera, EU-LIFE Communications Officer
- Iris Uribealgo, EU-LIFE Policy Officer
- Marijn Huiskamp, EU-LIFE Community Officer
- Isabel Jurado, Operations Officer at CRG

## Acknowledgements

We are really grateful to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and their members of staff for being the most generous and welcoming hosts. We would also like to sincerely thank all the speakers for their valuable contributions and the conference's attendees for their participation.

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# 10 YEARS OF EU-LIFE

<https://bit.ly/10-years-EU-LIFE>

## The genesis of EU-LIFE

**Luis Serrano (CRG) & Jo Bury (VIB).** Founding chairs of EU-LIFE



Luis Serrano: "It is amazing what we have managed to achieve. Having people from different institutions talking to each other, **sharing practices and sharing data has been extremely useful for people working in the institutes**, including me as a director. I still think there is a long way to go, but looking at all of you around, speaking freely from different institutions and different countries, I think it is a huge achievement."

Jo Bury: "At the beginning, we had to build trust. Starting to share our indicators was difficult, but it ended up **building a community of trust and together we are strong**. [...] It is completely impossible for each individual institute to be informed about the European Commission activities. But joining forces and making sure there is a team to follow all that, brief us and get us involved when we are needed, that is such a blessing. So let's go on!"

## Joining forces for strong science in Europe

**Marta Agostinho.** Executive Director of EU-LIFE



"I got the easiest task of all: to summarize 10 years in 10 minutes. So to keep my maths simple, I will do it in 10 key words. [...]"

My second word is of course **collaboration**. The biggest challenge we had at the beginning is our biggest asset: the EU-LIFE spirit, which is basically a poetic way of highlighting our highly collaborative nature. [...]"

What we really do not want to lose as a mature organisation is our **authenticity & grassroots approach when it comes to science policy**. We did our impact assessment last year and several policymakers and colleagues from other advocacy organisations told us: When we hear EU-LIFE in a policy meeting, we hear the voice of researchers. [...]"

Today we officially launch the ideas and dreams from EU-LIFE institutes for the future. **Let's plant the future!**"

## EU-LIFE: stakeholder of the European Commission

**Manuel Aleixo.** Head of Unit for ERA, Spreading Excellence & Research Careers, European Commission



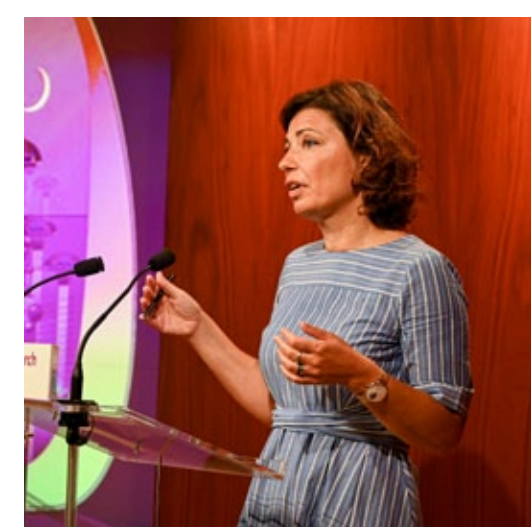
"We need to be creative and think about ways to develop new ideas at the European Research Area (ERA) Forum. EU-LIFE and Marta are **very present and active stakeholders in the ERA Forum**, which is very important for us. [...]"

In the current world we live in, can we convince the member states that they need to spend more on research at the EU level, let alone on the national level? We count on all of you to make this case to national governments and administrations, and to explain what is the importance of investing in research.

When reflecting on the future policies, budgets and framework programmes, do have a very active role and very active voice. I know there are many voices talking to the EC, we do our best to listen, but **EU-LIFE is certainly a voice that we hear and listen to very carefully.**"

## Looking into the future

**Mónica Bettencourt-Dias.** Chair of EU-LIFE & Director of IGC



"What do we have to do to build that ideal future that will integrate all the elements we have been discussing? We got some suggested solutions from PhD students and postdocs, but we don't have a very concrete path. One of the things that was clear, that we have given to ourselves in this meeting and is probably the most precious thing, is **time to be inspired**. We need to have time to think about what we want to have and to explore new solutions.

One of the most inspiring things that came from this meeting is that **whatever solution we want to find, it really needs to involve the young generations**. For me, as a director, the most gratifying thing is really having so many young people on stage. And it is so refreshing and pointing us into the future. I think there will be no scientific meeting from now onwards without having them on stage saying what the future will be."



# Essay Contest UTOPIA INSTITUTE OF RESEARCH

<https://bit.ly/YouTube-utopia-essay-contest>

## Utopia Institute of Research

Awardees and members of the jury of the EU-LIFE/Nature essay contest got together in a panel to discuss the awarded essays and the main conclusions of the contest. The panellists were:

- **Katherine Ember**, Research Associate at Polytechnique Montreal & author of the best essay
- **Miles Elliot Lizak**, Biochemist, Sustainability Educator & author of awarded essay
- **Evandro Ferrada**, Computational Biologist at CeMM & author of awarded essay
- **Jack Leeming**, Careers Editor at Nature & member of the essay contest jury
- **Frances Brodsky**, Novelist, Group Leader at University College London & member of the essay contest jury
- **Emmy Verschuren**, Group Leader & Strategic Research Coordinator at FiMM & member of the essay contest jury

**Carolina Mangana Monteiro**, Predoctoral Fellow at CeMM, poet & member of the essay contest jury, presented the prize to the awardees.



## Human/Nature

### Best essay by Katherine Ember

"The winning essay by Katherine Ember fast-forwards to 2053 and outlines a typical day for one scientist at the fictional Institute of Merged Sciences in Edinburgh, UK. Ember completed her PhD in Edinburgh and is now a radiologist at the Montreal Polytechnic in Canada. Her scientific utopia is one in which scientists are obliged to assist their local community."

Essay on Nature:

[www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-01855-8](http://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-01855-8)

### Scientific enlightenment in the Stupid Questions Office

#### Runner-up essay by Miles Elliot Lizak

"Runner-up Miles Lizak, a biochemist and writer based in Barcelona, Spain, combines religious imagery, magical realism and snappy dialogue to depict the 'Stupid Questions Office' at a research institute of the future."

Essay on Nature:

[www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-01856-7](http://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-01856-7)

### The Ecllosion Event

#### Runner-up essay by Evandro Ferrada

"Runner-up Evandro Ferrada explores a world with unlimited energy through an imagined interview transcript with research leader Alma Nur to mark the 50th anniversary of a mysterious 'Ecllosion Event'. Ferrada thinks deeply about his nouns: 'ecllosion' is the act of an insect hatching; *alma* means 'soul' in Spanish; and *nur* is the Arabic word for 'light'."

Essay on Nature:

[www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-01854-9](http://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-023-01854-9)



nature





# THE FUTURE OF SCIENCE

## Envisioning the research centres of the future

**Stefano Boeri.** Architect & Professor of Urban Planning, Politecnico di Milano



"Michel Foucault said that it is impossible to create a barrier between **the human sphere and the natural sphere**. Cities make up only 3% of the earth's surface, but produce 75% of its greenhouse emissions. Forests, on the other hand, cover 30% of the world's surface and absorb as much CO<sub>2</sub>. We thus need to find a new balance between cities and forests. [...]"

In Cancun, we have redesigned a mall including more than 7 million plants. In Milan, we will plant 3 million trees by 2030 in the *Forestami* project. This will help combat the increasing heat in the city. And in 2014, we finished the *Bosco verticale* project, a cohabitation between humans, plants, birds and insects housing 22.000 plants and more than 800 trees. This project has spread to other parts of the world, and made affordable for everybody. We are making cities the protagonists to **reverse climate change**."

<https://bit.ly/YouTube-10y-Stefano-Boeri>

## The future of discovery-driven research

**Maria Leptin.** President of the European Research Council (ERC)



"I do like the idea that better architecture helps, that **better spaces for being together** help. [...]"

We also have to remember a slightly painful truth, and that is that in fields such as the life sciences, with heavy, expensive and fast-evolving research infrastructures, we have to have different tiers of researchers [...]. We have to recognise that different kinds of science will need to be done in different places, and for that reason alone, **competition**, much as we would like to see it gone, cannot so easily disappear.

What can disappear, I think, are **hierarchies**. For them to go away, we do not need to be utopian. Give people more independence and less power. Less power of researchers over other researchers. [...] So, I think what we will have to do to create a better future is to define and **support all sorts of different ways to contribute to science**."

<https://bit.ly/YouTube-10y-Maria-Leptin>

## How can art inspire science?

**Alex Jordan.** Group Leader, Max Planck Institute of Animal Behaviour



"Science, at its core, is a creative pursuit. It is rigorous and disciplined, but at the same time, it has to be inspired by **creative questions**. [...]"

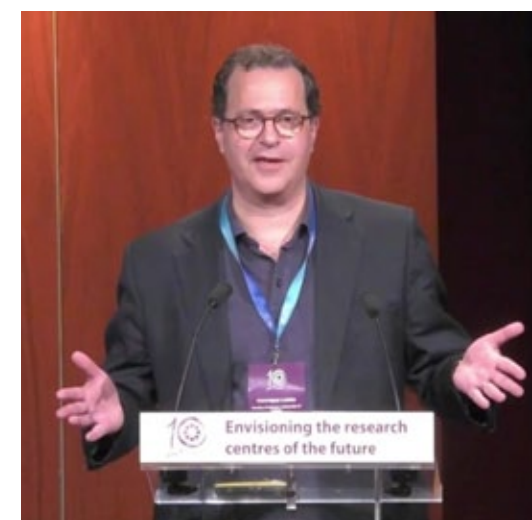
What I have come to learn from my collaborations with artists, is that although the artwork is fantastic, it is not the installations that make productive collaborations. It is when we try to install something and it doesn't work, when we disagree. It is those interstitial moments that give inspiration, that allow creativity to come to the fore and allow **cross-fertilization of disciplines**. It is truly a consequence of those discussions. [...]"

So, if I had an idea for future institutes, it would be places that don't put us in silos, ivory towers and echo chambers. The beauty of the **space between art and science** is not in the product, it is in those conversations and in the questions we ask of the world."

<https://bit.ly/YouTube-10y-Alex-Jordan>

## Collaboration & multidisciplinary in science

**Henrique Leitão.** Senior Researcher & Provost (Pro-Reitor), University of Lisbon



"I think that there are two ideas that we need to dispel. First, that **multidisciplinarity** can be some sort of antidote to specialization. This is simply not true. I do not believe that there is a golden place where you can do high level science without being very specialised. Multidisciplinarity is not about diminishing this demand of intense training and specialization in some sense. It is about making contact between different things. [...]"

The other idea that I would like to dispel is that multidisciplinary has to do with having data from different provenance or having methods from different disciplines. In a sense it is, but it is much deeper than that. Multidisciplinarity has to do with the ability or possibility of having in the same environment, people who **look at problems with different gazes**, so they see not exactly the same things. And that is very enriching."

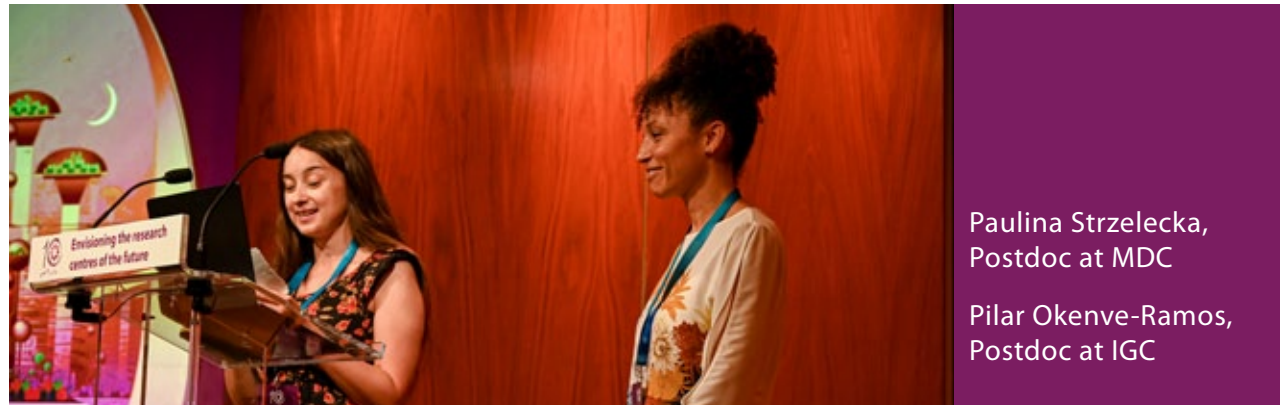
<https://bit.ly/YouTube-10y-Henrique-Leitao>



# SPARKS OF THE FUTURE

Recording of the poster session: <https://bit.ly/YouTube-poster-session>

## Summary from the poster session's rapporteurs



Paulina Strzelecka,  
Postdoc at MDC  
Pilar Okenve-Ramos,  
Postdoc at IGC

The conference's poster session provided a platform to showcase initiatives that are enhancing research organisations. In total, 43 abstracts were selected and attendees had the opportunity to exchange ideas with the authors of the posters. There was a wide range of participants, institutions and countries, which ensured a truly diverse vision of the future of science.

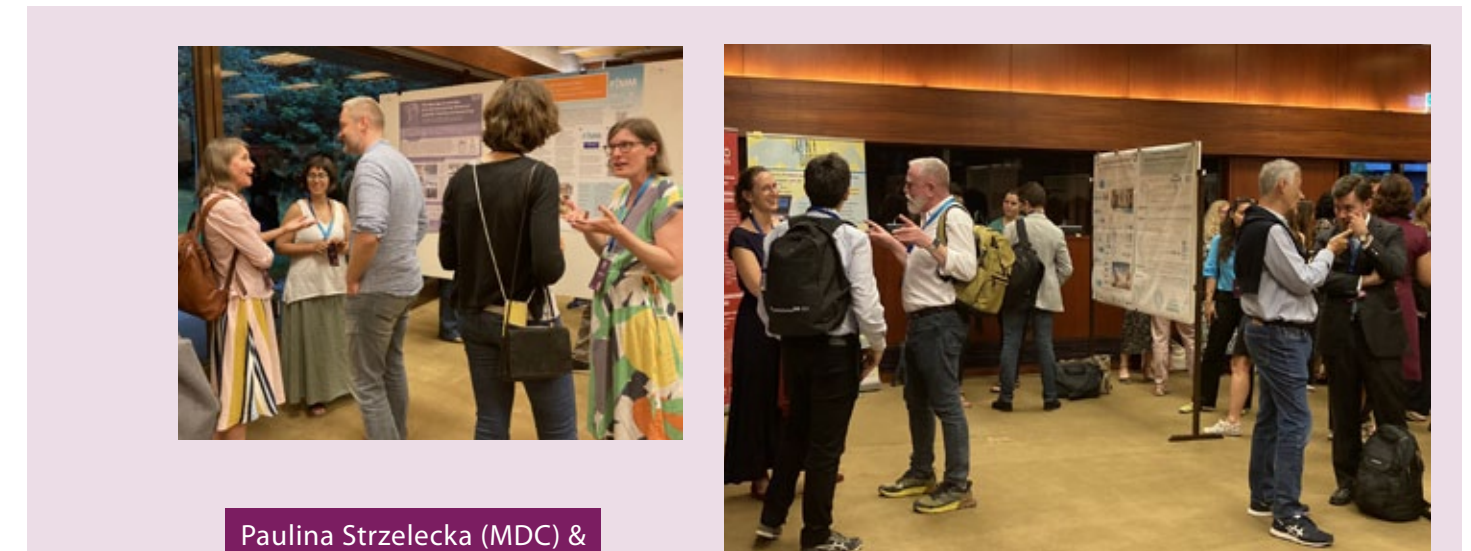
The inspiring ideas and unique projects showed a broad variety of topics of interest:

- For those who worry about mother nature there was a green science section, focused on increasing **sustainability** and reducing CO2 footprint in academic research.
- There was a **new technologies** section for those hungry for Sci-Fi with modern technology advancements.
- There were posters that explored how to promote citizenship and **public engagement**, which explored various ways of improving communication and outreach.
- Another topic found to be an important pillar to build the future of science was **diversity**, from nurturing future scientists from different backgrounds to retaining women in science.
- A **development** section, which touched upon personal, institutional and technological development.
- There were several posters for those who craved some **pure scientific experience**.
- There was also room for those passionate about bringing together the clinical field and academic research.

The engagement during the poster sessions was outstanding. The most voted-for poster was titled "**Snoopy, the mediation dog at Institut Curie**", a marvellous story about how a pet dog helped to improve both staff members' and patients' day-to-day life presented by Virginie Bel and Maxime Cheron. A special mention goes to the second and third place, which were for the posters "Science Fiction becomes (Virtual) Reality" (CRG) and "Metadata is all you need, CEMM's Effective data management strategy for Excellent Life Science Research Institutes".

If something was demonstrated in this session is that, **when diverse and together for a greater objective, we can all make a better future academic science.**

A selection of posters is available at [www.zenodo.org/communities/eu-life-10y-conference-posters](http://www.zenodo.org/communities/eu-life-10y-conference-posters)



Paulina Strzelecka (MDC) &  
Pilar Okenve-Ramos (IGC)  
present the award to the  
most voted-for poster





# CREATIVITY

In this session, chaired by Anders Lund, Director of BRIC, our panellists facilitated a debate with the audience about the role of creativity in science and how it shall be pursued in the future.

<https://bit.ly/YouTube-Creativity>

## A few thoughts from the session's rapporteurs



Małgorzata Figiel, Postdoc at IIMCB

It is a common conception that creativity is an attribute of **young people**, as it needs a touch of ignorance. It might be beneficial to invite young people to participate in scientific endeavors. However, age should not be considered a limiting factor.

Age and career progression bring more power and **ego** becomes an important factor. Does PI ego thwart team creativity? Should PIs take on the role of creativity facilitators in their teams?

**Community-driven creativity** benefits from diversity of background and experience, so multidisciplinary teams are essential. **Open science** and data can increase the creativity of the whole scientific community allowing us to avoid repeating the same cycles over and over.

To contribute to a creative discussion, one should **feel safe** enough to dare to speak out without fear of being judged. It should be OK to be wrong when creatively exploring new solutions.

On an individual level, the **creative process** benefits from constant reimagination of the situation, but also from lateral and associative thinking. Unfocusing the mind is only possible with some free time and without stress. It is much easier with **security** of funding and employment.



Simone Frascolla, PhD Student at IEO

Complex challenges require multiple experiences. **Group work** enhances problem-solving capabilities and encourages creativity through diversity of viewpoints and approaches.

**Interdisciplinary collaboration** enables researchers to tackle complex problems from various perspectives, drawing insights and methodologies from different fields.

Fantasy, nature and art are vital to generate creative ideas. The exploration of imaginative realms and exposure to aesthetic and natural stimuli broadens perspectives and ignites the spark of **inspiration**.

Allocating sufficient **time for reflection** and experimentation enables scientists to delve deeper their creativity and to expand their scientific knowledge.

Excessive ego can limit collaboration and creativity. By recognizing the importance of humility and **mutual respect**, researchers can feed fertile ground for creativity to flourish.

**Young researchers** need to be provided with freedom, independence and a supportive environment to explore unconventional ideas and drive scientific innovation forward.

Being wrong is not a setback but rather a step towards greatness and learning.

### Ewan Birney Deputy Director General, EMBL

"One of the features of EMBL which is really fostering creativity is our 9-year **turnover model**. This idea that scientists should move around, especially early on in their career, is really fundamental for EMBL. [...] We have very **independent early career group leaders** and quite strict rules that guarantee scientific freedom. [...] **Open science** is really important for creativity because it gives researchers the ability to go where their experiments, intuition or statistics take them and not have a barrier brought up by getting data access."

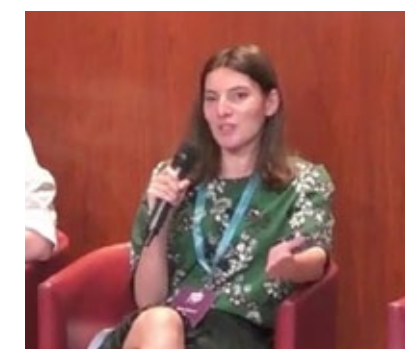


### Andrzej Dziembowski Head of Laboratory at IIMCB

"How do we make things creative in a very technically oriented field? Who is creative? I am not sure all PIs are, especially since creativity often deadlines with age. The single PI cannot bring together all the experience, so it is important for our research to give more space to PhD students and postdocs. We should really think **how to achieve community-driven creativity**. Creativity is not the creativity of an individual person. In highly developed fields we need to boost the creativity of everyone in the group."

### Alex Jordan Group Leader at the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior

"We should incentivize adventure in our thinking and in our expression of scientific ideas. We do need to identify and **recognize that hierarchies can limit the ability of creative thought** and can limit the discussions and confidence that especially junior people might have in expressing more adventurous ideas. [...] In a dream institute, I would **acknowledge the work that has been done before** so as to not repeat things under different gazes. I would **incentivize adventurous and creative ideas** to bubble through in formats that are not characterized by scoring points or doing what your seniors have done."



### Jona Shkurti Medical Doctor & PhD Student at NKI

"What would I trash and what would I plant for the future of creativity in science? I would **trash focusing too much on results** and not on the process, for example publication pressure. I would also **trash the reactions to being wrong**, which should not be crucifying and is not the end. And I would like to **plant a free, non-judgemental space** where researchers, especially young, early-stage ones, can freely express their ideas and brainstorm about the current scientific topics but also about future scientific endeavours."



# COLLABORATION & MULTIDISCIPLINARITY

In this session, chaired by Electra Gizeli, IMBB Deputy Director & Group Leader, our panellists facilitated a debate with the audience about the role of collaboration & multidisciplinary in science.

<https://bit.ly/YouTube-Collaboration>

## A few thoughts from the session's rapporteurs



Silke Vanderhaeghe, PhD Student at VIB

In Henrique Leitão's words: "Collaboration is combining knowledge and different views to find together creative and new solutions to very complex problems."

This approach has amazing potential for the challenges we face today in science, but we have a lot to improve. In particular, we need a stronger push for collaboration to find **grants and funding opportunities**. Nowadays, the bureaucratic burden in grant applications is a major hurdle for collaboration.

However, there are alternatives. My PhD, for example, is funded by a grant that stimulates **joint projects between academia and industry** in Belgium. I have personally experienced that there are considerable differences between academia and industry, particularly in fields such as communication.

Through this grant, I have managed to overcome these differences and have experienced the importance of learning from each other and speaking each other's language.



Francisco Paupério, PhD Student at IGC

The discussion on collaboration and multidisciplinary made me reflect on my formal **education**. I realized that these topics were almost completely absent; my exams were individual and consisted in memorizing information.

Does this mean we are set to fail from the beginning? We are facing a **systemic problem**, because we designed our education system and the science funding system without specifically stimulating collaboration and interdisciplinarity. Paradoxically, in order to overcome this design problem, we need more collaboration.

One solution for this, which is already applied in the EU, are the so-called '**mission-oriented projects**'. When the United States' government set the goal to go to the moon in the 1960s, the necessary technology and scientific knowledge had not yet been developed. The common goal, literally aiming for the moon, sparked collaboration between science, industry and government, and eventually led them to achieve their goal. Let's use this mission-oriented approach in science to foster collaboration and achieve our goals.

Tanja Florin  
Science Manager at MDC

"Reporting takes up a lot of time and is often not used in an efficient way. **How can we make these initiatives that are funded for a certain amount of years more sustainable?** Is a report really the thing that we want to take from it or should we not try a community and interactive approach, maybe a retreat, where you discuss with the members and funding bodies how to really make it sustainable, how to take the knowledge, the technologies and of course the community that we created in the last years to the next steps."



Wolf Reik  
Director, Cambridge Institute of Science, Altos Labs

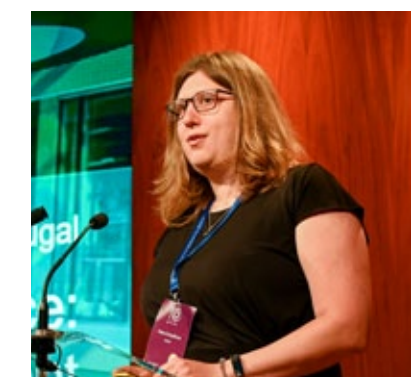
"How can we combine the best ingredients of successful science in industry and academia? We need:

- **Collaborative workspace** that includes everyone;
- **Hypercollaboration**, to empower scientists to collaborate freely;
- **Mission-driven research**;
- **Funding** that enables a long-term vision, with a fair rewards structure that recognises collaborative rigorous science focussed on a shared mission."

Jan Steyaert  
Scientific Director of VIB-VUB Center for Structural Biology & Founder of ConfoTerapeutics

"There are quite some issues and I think we need to work along four lines to empower collaborations. I will talk about the **administration burden**. We have to think about the **reward models and granting models**. And we need to build a **culture of trust**. [...].

I think it's mainly about **policy** and we have to work on our policies. That is the key to a better collaboration within Europe but also worldwide".



Hana Svozilova  
PhD Student at CEITEC

"What I would like to plant for the future is to motivate scientists to attend **soft skills and science communication** courses not only in their early career but throughout their whole scientific career to educate themselves all the time. I would also like to organize **skill swaps** where we would show what we can offer to others, and it would be nice if all scientist were motivated to attend, not just PhD students. I would like both of these things to be rewarded somehow so people can find time to attend them, as right now these kind of activities are very hard to prioritise."



# PROACTIVITY

In this session, chaired by Giorgia Guglielmi, Science Writer & Communications Manager at FMI, we panellists facilitated a debate with the audience about the role of proactivity in science.

<https://bit.ly/YouTube-Proactivity>

## A few thoughts from the session's rapporteurs



Joana Castro, PhD Student at BRIC

Every great project we see today was once a tiny seed of an idea. Yet, among the multitude of ideas that have graced our minds, only a fraction has blossomed into tangible projects. What, then, is the **catalyst** that propels these ideas towards their full potential?

During the proactivity session, we witnessed numerous **inspiring examples**, from changes in traditional career paths in science to the pursuit of sustainable and expansive research initiatives, or ways to create a safer and more attractive environment for researchers and their initiatives.

However, it became evident that this process encompasses numerous layers, which transcend mere inspiration and require concerted efforts beyond the realm of exceptionally motivated individuals.

We desperately need **political support and financial backing** that can promote and **sustain novel ideas** and enthralling new initiatives, as well as institutes and research groups that actively promote an environment that fosters these ideas. Last but not least, it is of the utmost importance that each of us, at both an individual and collective level, undertake proactive and tangible measures to cultivate and propel these novel projects, as the power to effect change also lies in every single one of us.



Lucrezia Ferme, PhD Student at IGC

While creativity and multidisciplinary are commonly considered as the backbone of scientific innovation, the relevance of a proactive behaviour in science and how it can be motivated is often unheard of. How can we engage more people to be proactive? These inspiring discussions provided a clue of what could be an effective formula to facilitate a proactive attitude in the utopian research institute of the future:

**Responsibility.** If leaders want to support creative ideas, their focus should not only be on taking more responsibility for this, but also on the importance of giving responsibility to other people.

**Funding.** If we want scientists and people in general to be more proactive, it is a responsibility of the institution to financially sustain those people who are trying to make a positive change for the community.

**Recognition.** Promoting different career trajectories can encourage scientists to step out of their comfort zone, out of a set career path.

**Environment.** In a utopian research institute of the future, scientists and staff should be given the space to socialize and the flexibility to devote part of their time to other projects, without sacrificing their spare time to achieve that.

### Amos Abolaji

Team Lead, *Drosophila Research & Training Centre, Nigeria*

"In our research activity in a resource-limited region, we are confronted with several challenges, but we never actually accept that situation as a condition not to take action. The future that is not envisioned may never be created. **Collective responsibility** at the national, institutional and individual level will go a long way to create a research centre of the future."



### Janusz Bujnicki

Project Leader at IIMCB

"Are we **effectively using science to shape our future**? The proactive science needs: first, diverse thinking to break through our intellectual bubbles; second, AI to cope with the information overload; and third, future visioning, storytelling and narratives to make the future."

### Caroline Giuglaris

PhD Student at Institut Curie

"As scientists, we hold a unique responsibility to lead by example in this **fight against climate change**. The public places their trust in us and looks up to us as experts. There is still an opportunity for you to lead the way. You can arise to the challenge and spearhead the construction of the research institutes of tomorrow. But to achieve this you must start the transformation today."



### Silvia Gómez-Recio

Secretary General Yerun

"As researchers, are you considering new ways to improve the research system? Are you taking an active approach to engage with those that are in the driving seat? We need **researchers that engage in policy and collaborate with those working on policy advocacy**. As researchers, it is important to actively communicate your problems, wishes and dreams for the future throughout your networks, such as EU-LIFE, who will transform them into policy recommendations."

### Navneet Vasistha

Assistant Professor at BRIC

"We need to rethink the **postdoc as being more than an employee** and do away with the idea of a postdoc being an end to itself. We need to make the scientific world more interesting to be in, from the flavour of coffee to the building, to the career choices a postdoc can make. We must personalise such trajectories and provide training opportunities to develop different skills."





# INPUT FROM AUDIENCE

Some ideas that our participants would like to see developed



- “We need to find a way to **balance stability and freedom** for early career researchers.”
- “The research system must evolve to allow **more creativity and less stress** for the research community.”
- “We need to help create the circumstances to **attract more people in research**, providing stability, security and equal development.”
- “We need **more engagement of institute heads** with creative ideas, dedicated time for undirected thinking and “stupid” questions. Communication is key in all aspects.”
- “For molecular medicine, we should be able to get **access to clinical data** with less barriers (GDPR, informed consent, biobank laws, clinical trial laws....)”
- “**Removing the hierarchy and individualism** from research groups by creating more diverse positions and rewarding proactivity and organizational activities.”
- “Creating a **great scientific institution** is a process that must be adjusted to changing environments, expectations and society needs.”

- “How can we use EU-LIFE’s combined progress to **share best practice** with other research organisations who are at an earlier stage to the EU-LIFE members, to help them advance the principles of good governance, good career support, strong infrastructure and equal opportunities?”

- “I would like to see developed the structuration of how research is performed. **Is there an alternative to a PI star system?**”

- “The only way of evolving our research centers is by changing our **reward systems** for everyone involved!”

- “We need to care and invest in **fundamental research** and it is important to reinforce advocacy to the highest level.”

- “**More dialogue between different types of research**, but also with people at different stages of their research career or who have moved outside of academic research.”

- “Consider **all career tracks for PhD equally valid** and important to society; value the role of research managers; better communicate with the **general public** about science and research.”

- “I would like to see **mental health** and **environmental impact of research** addressed as internal priorities by EU-LIFE Institutes.”



## **About EU-LIFE**

EU-LIFE is an alliance of research centres whose mission is to support and strengthen European research excellence. EU-LIFE members are leading research institutes in their countries and internationally renowned for producing excellent research, widely transferring knowledge and nurturing talent. Since its foundation in 2013, EU-LIFE is a stakeholder in European policy participating regularly in the EU policy dialogue. More at [www.eu-life.eu](http://www.eu-life.eu)

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