



Press Release - VIB – K.U.Leuven

VIB receives high score from European Research Council (ERC)

Two young top researchers awarded €1.5 million research grants!

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Leuven - VIB landed two research grants worth 1.5 million euros each. The prestigious grants are courtesy of the European Research Council (ERC) and are aimed at giving talented young scientists the opportunity to develop their own research team. The honor fell to Adrian Liston and Patrik Verstreken, both recently transferred to VIB-K.U.Leuven from abroad.

The European Research Council

ERC was created to encourage excellent research in Europe. ERC starting grants give young talented researchers the opportunity to develop a research group. At present, there are still too few opportunities in Europe for young scientists to initiate and lead their own research, which is extremely unfortunate as it results in top researchers leaving the region to develop their careers elsewhere.

Adrian Liston studies autoimmune diseases

The immune system is our body's defense system and allows it to fight off foreign substances and micro-organisms. In people with an autoimmune disease, the immune system has gone awry: it can no longer distinguish between the body's own and foreign substances and ends up attacking vital tissues and organs.

Adrian Liston studies immune system cells (T cells) that are responsible for this malfunction. With his ERC research grant, he plans to bridge the gap between his research on mice models and humans. This may be a first step in the development of new therapies for autoimmune diseases.

Patrik Verstreken explores the communication between brain cells.

Brain disorders take a major toll on society. Many brain diseases are caused by the disruption of communication between brain cells. Finding a solution depends on understanding this communication in the smallest detail. **Patrik Verstreken** uses the fruit fly as his model organism for studying genes involved in the communication between brain cells. The ERC research grant gives him the opportunity to expand his research to more complex neural communication networks that control behavior. This step is crucial if we are to understand neurological disorders such as Parkinson's disease.

Media contacts

1. More Information

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Adrian Liston leads the VIB Laboratory for Autoimmune Genetics, K.U.Leuven.

More info at: <http://www.vib.be/Research/EN/Research+Departments/Autoimmune+Genetics/>

Patrik Verstreken leads a research group at the VIB Department of Developmental and Molecular Genetics, K.U.Leuven, under the direction of Bart De Strooper.

More info at:

<http://www.vib.be/Research/EN/Research+Departments/Department+of+Molecular+and+Developmental+Genetics/Patrik+Verstreken/>



2. Mention of VIB and university

Please always mention VIB as well as the university in question when reporting about this research/event.

3.

VIB is a non-profit research institute in the life sciences in Flanders, Belgium. About 1200 scientists conduct strategic basic research on the molecular mechanisms that are responsible for the functioning of the human body, plants, and micro-organisms. Through a partnership with four Flemish universities – Ghent University, the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, the University of Antwerp, and the Vrije Universiteit Brussel – and a solid funding program, VIB unites the forces of 72 research groups in a single institute. Through its technology transfer activities, VIB strives to convert the research results into products for the benefit of consumers and patients. VIB develops and disseminates a wide range of scientifically substantiated information about all aspects of biotechnology. www.vib.be.

K.U.Leuven

The University of Leuven is Belgium's largest university and one of the oldest universities in Europe, founded in 1425. It is a comprehensive university with 14 faculties, with a long tradition of high-quality interdisciplinary research and teaching. The University of Leuven has over 33,000 students (12 percent international) and over 17,000 staff members (8,600 in the various university departments and 8,700 at UZ Leuven, the university hospital). More info at: www.kuleuven.be