

# HEC-16 Meeting Report

by

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From September 26-28, 2013 the HEC community gathered once again for their annual meeting. The term HEC stands for **H**ear-of-**E**urope Bio-**C**ystallography meeting, a conference series, which was initiated in 1998 in order to bring the bio-crystallography research groups in central Europe together and to foster the academic exchange in this area. The meeting has always had a special character because unlike in a regular conference, the PIs of the participating groups are meant to leave the stage to their young PhD students and postdocs and are not allowed to speak themselves. This time round in 2013, the 16<sup>th</sup> HEC meeting was organized by the Kristina Djinovic-Carugo and her team from the Department of Structural and Computational Biology at the Max F. Perutz Laboratories, a joint venture of the University of Vienna and the Medical University of Vienna, and it took place in the picturesque Austrian village of Hipping near the Attersee, the largest lake of the Salzkammergut area, located somewhere between the Austrian towns Salzburg and Linz.

This year's meeting attracted a total of 114 participants from 26 research groups. As is tradition in the HEC meetings, one outside lecturer is always invited to present the HEC-lecture on some current hot topic. This time, the HEC-lecture was given by Peter Tompa, a Hungary-born chemist, now working at the Free University Brussels on the topic of "*Intrinsically Disordered Proteins*". This topic may make many crystallographers shiver, because disorder and crystallization are two things that are not going together very well, but nevertheless many people in the field now realize that large parts of gene products function because they do not assume a defined structure in solution. They may do so in a complex with a binding partner, but also this can not be generalized. Therefore, it is of paramount importance even for crystallographers to learn about the current state-of-the-art in this important research field.

In addition to the HEC lecture, the scientific program was rather ambitious with 35 exciting short presentations distributed over 6 sessions (See also: <http://www.mfpl.ac.at/research/research-networks/hec16/home.html>), plus a few commercial presentations by the sponsors of the meeting. Nevertheless, because most everybody stuck to their allotted time slots very well, there were no big delays or cuts into the meal time or into the bar time in the evenings. On the usually free Friday afternoon the meeting attendees enjoyed a lovely but rainy boat ride on the Attersee.

One of the highlights of these meetings is always the bestowal of the prize for the best student lecture. This year, the prize was really special. The IUCr was very generous and donated an invitation to the official opening of the International Year of Crystallography 2014 in January 2014 in Paris. The prize comprises a ticket to the opening ceremony as well as some travel support. The lucky awardee of this once-in-a-lifetime-experience prize was Jana Pisackova from the group of Pavlina Rezacova from the Institute of Molecular Genetics in Prague. Jana's excellent talk was titled "*How Pre-Crystallization Analysis Can Save Your Project*". And needless to say, she is a very worthy recipient.

Another important landmark event that accompanied the meeting was a short talk on "*15 Years of Heart of Europe bio-Crystallography Meetings*" by Mariusz Jaskolski and the presentation of a publication with the same title, edited by Mariusz Jaskolski and Michal M. Sikorski (Institute of Bioorganic Chemistry of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Poznan, Poland). This book summarizes information about all previous meetings including posters, programs, reminiscences of organizers and numerous photographs and documents how well the HEC community has flourished over the last one and a half decade.

In summary, the 16<sup>th</sup> HEC meeting was another very successful meeting in this series which is so much loved by its participants.

The next HEC meeting, scheduled for September 25-27, 2014 will be organized by Uwe Mueller and Manfred S. Weiss from the Macromolecular Crystallography group of the Helmholtz-Zentrum Berlin and it will take place – guess where – in Berlin. Stay tuned.



**Figure 1:** Participants of the 16<sup>th</sup> Heart of Europe Bio-Crystallography Meeting (Foto taken by Jae-Geun Song)



**Figure 2:** Kristina Djinovic-Carugo (right) presenting the HEC prize (capital prize) for the best lecture to Jana Pisackova (Foto taken by Alexej Charnagalov).