

Peptide Science in Austria

Between the late 40s and early 60s, peptide science “Made in Austria” was amongst the world’s best and one of its leading figures at the time was Hans Tuppy. During the early years of his career he joined Frederick Sanger’s laboratory at Cambridge (UK) where he worked on the amino acid sequence of bovine insulin (Sanger was awarded the Nobel Prize for Chemistry in 1958 for sequencing insulin). Later on he became the first Professor for Biochemistry in Austria and continued to work on neuropeptides, including oxytocin. Despite this former glory, the Austrian peptide community was hibernating for some time and lacked regular meetings for scientific exchange. However, the steep increase in interest in peptides by the pharmaceutical industry as well as by academia for highly diverse research areas, such as material sciences, biotechnology as well as cell biology and protein synthesis, has changed this situation dramatically. The high quality of research in peptide science and the increased level of interest allowed the successful start of the Austrian Peptide Symposium in 2011. Partially encouraged by such an attractive event as well as by the renewed interest in peptides a significant increase in the number of EPS members in Austria (6 in 2009 to 42 in 2012) has occurred. The future prospects are even better with more groups integrating peptide chemistry into their activities again and universities as well as other academic institutions recognizing the importance to include peptide science in their scientific repertoire. Currently groups engaged in peptide chemistry or peptide biology are located at the Universities of Innsbruck, Salzburg and Vienna, the Technical Universities of Graz and Vienna, the Medical University of Vienna, the Max F. Perutz Laboratory Vienna, the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna and TU Wien and the Austrian Institute of Technology. Besides an increasing academic interest in peptide science, there are numerous Austrian-based biotech companies that are engaged with peptide drug discovery and development, e.g., Apeptico R&D GmbH (Vienna), Baxter Innovations GmbH (Orth), Boehringer Ingelheim RCV GmbH & Co KG (Vienna), DSM Fine Chemicals Austria NFG GmbH & Co KG (Linz), Fibrex Medical (Vienna), Inte:Ligand (Vienna), PDC Biotech (Vienna), piCHEM (Graz) to name only a few.

By taking advantage of the thriving peptide chemistry the Austrian peptide community is expected to grow and to significantly contribute to the field of peptide chemistry in the future. Not only by holding an annual symposium that provides a national and international meeting point for scientific exchange but also by contributing to the EPS and by further strengthening peptide chemistry in general.

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