



Dear Postdocs and Colleagues,

Welcome to our brand new edition of the Postdoc Network Newsletter. We hope this year will be totally different from the last one, and that we can soon have in-person meetings.

This edition contains a lot of new stuff, like a section on Practical tips and advice from postdocs, including a short guide to find funding, and also a recommendation section, where you can follow our interests in books and visual content.

In addition, we give you a spoiler alert about how our Postdoc retreat is going to be and we talk about the new DKFZ Sustainability group.

Finally, we would like to invite you to contribute to our community by joining our PDN Slack channel and our biweekly meetings, where we discuss all the activities the committee is carrying out. Have fun reading our newsletter!!!

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PostdoCaRe Europe: The European Network for Postdocs in Cancer Research

By Susanne Lux and Rajbir Batra

On behalf of the PostdoCaRe Europe orga team

PostdoCaRe Europe was founded by Postdocs for Postdocs in an attempt to provide a platform for both scientific and personal exchange across the different Cancer-researching Institutes in Europe. In addition to organizing our own seminar, workshop and networking event series, we also aim to more easily share general advice and experience, job offers, and invitations to events organized by our respective institutes.

The initiative was founded in February 2021 by Postdocs working at the DKFZ in Heidelberg, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) in Lyon, the Netherlands Cancer Institute (NKI) in Amsterdam, the FIRC Institute for Molecular Oncology (IFOM) in Milan and the CRUK Beatson Institute (CRUK BI) in Glasgow. Since then, it has been steadily growing, with currently more than 100 members and our goal is to include Postdocs from all over Europe.

To actively participate and stay tuned about upcoming events, please [join our Slack channel](#) using your institutional login:

[PostdoCaReEurope.slack.com](https://postdocareeurope.slack.com)

Several channels were already established for you to participate:

[#invitations](#) To **share invitations to seminars, workshops, conferences**, other events

[#job_offers](#) To see job offers

[#grants](#) To learn about grant opportunities

[#must-read_publications](#) To share links to the latest highlights of cancer research

[#help_computational](#) Help with experiments involving bioinformatics and coding

[#help_wet_lab](#) Help with protocols and troubleshooting for wet lab experiments

[#coffee_break](#) To chat and talk about everything you want to share

[#family_channel](#) To talk about family matters

If you have questions, or problems joining the Slack channel, we are happy to help. You can reach us via postdocare.europe@gmail.com. We are looking forward to meeting you!

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#PostdoCaRe #PostdoCaReEurope

P.S.: We are currently looking for someone who could help us design a logo. If you would be able and willing to help us there, please drop us a message!!

Tips and advice for your career

By Santiago Cerrizuela

How to survive the struggle of landing a Postdoc position in a foreign country.

Obtaining a postdoc position is a really difficult task. Even more so when you are trying to go to another continent, in particular across the Atlantic. I did my PhD in Developmental Biology from 2013 to 2018 at the National University of Tucumán in Argentina. Since I started my scientific career I have always wanted to do science in a developed country. So, when it came the time to finish my PhD I started looking for possibilities in Europe. The chosen country was Germany because of its open mindset, technological development and outstanding science. But enough of my life story. In this article I want to give you some tips regarding how to successfully land a postdoc position abroad.

My first advice to you is try to learn as much English as you can. Being from a Spanish-speaking country we usually do not realize that English is the universal language, which is a fact no one can deny. Therefore, whenever you get the chance, and especially if you decide to become a scientist, start taking English courses. In my case, I was fortunate because my family sponsored me during my high-school years in learning English. Another important thing is publications. Try to publish as many papers as possible, because this will be your presentation card throughout all the postulations for a postdoc position and fellowships.

The target-lab's research interest is another interesting point to consider. The issue of the similarity between your current work and the target lab work is a very complicated one. If the research area is too similar to your background, then you will have better odds to secure the position. However, you will never get the chance of experiencing something new. There is also the possibility that you are tired of your field of research and you want to search for another research area. In this case, if the work performed by the target lab is too different from your own, your chances will decrease, as they will most likely look for students with a profile that matches what they are looking for. Therefore, my advice is try to find an equilibrium in the difference between both research areas. An ideal situation would be to find a lab that does research that you find interesting and that it is looking for a student with at least one skill that you have developed during your career.

Since we are talking about skills, it is important to develop the ones that would be beneficial in a possible target lab. To this end you will need early on to have in mind which specific scientific field you want to work on.

Another important step in the application to a postdoc position is the letter of recommendation. Your first choice should be your PhD supervisor, which is the one who scientifically knows you the best. For the remaining letters, try to look for professors that have interacted with you for more than 6 months, for example someone whom you had close contact with during your bachelor formation. In my particular case, I first sought for renowned scientists whom I met during an international two-week course. They told me they didn't get to know me very well during those two weeks and that it was better for me to ask a more closely-related professor from my University. Therefore, I would advise to look for professors who are close to you rather than seeking for world-renowned scientists who have only shared with you a short amount of time.

After you have chosen the lab you want to work on, the first thing you should do is to read most of their papers, at least the ones from the past 5 years. During this process, try to look for the final sentences in each discussion paragraph. In most cases, these sentences

tell the reader the future research directions of the lab. Therefore, by reading these sentences, you can elucidate what you can do for them based on the skillset you have gained during your PhD. This step is of vital importance when you have few papers of your own, as it was my case. Therefore try to put as many hours and dedication as you can in the elaboration of your research proposal.

After you have gained a rough idea on what you can bring to the table, go online and read all the tips available for writing a cover letter, a research interest letter and a research proposal. Additionally, look for online advice on how to organize your curriculum vitae. This step is of critical importance, since these 4 documents will be your entry card to the target lab. That is why it is so important to write them carefully, without any typing errors, and tailor-made to the target lab. Additionally, once it is done, look for a colleague to get feedback about your letters. This will enrich the quality of your presentation.

After overcoming the email phase, you will get the chance to do a Skype interview with your possible future PI. This phase is really important as it is an opportunity to show yourself and your ideas. Here you must prove that you have learned all about what they do in the lab and you should also describe what you can do for them (based on the skillset you gain during your PhD). It is important that you don't flatter yourself very much and you don't fall victim of self-indulgency, because this will produce a certain feeling of rejection by the PI. Try to show humbleness and motivation to work in science, and especially in their lab. They do not want a student who will generate problems and conflicting situations. Additionally, ask them any questions you have gathered regarding their papers, as this will show your interest and curiosity and a keen mind in the reading of scientific articles.

As an important advice here, try to find out whether you will be postulating to a scholarship with them or if they have their own funding to pay your salary. This is important, because if they want you to postulate to a scholarship, your chances of getting it are not 100%. Therefore, I think you should ask them what you are going to do if you don't get the scholarship (the so-called Plan B).

Finally, as a last word of advice and from my personal experience, if you are rejected either from the PI or from the scholarship institution, do not crumble and keep trying. Perseverance is the most important personal quality that you will need to have in order to land a postdoc position in another country. It is a difficult task, but always keep in mind that your work will eventually be rewarded. Moreover, try to surround yourself with positive-minded people who will encourage you to keep trying and to never give up. Also, to alleviate the shock of a negative decision it is important to postulate to 3 or more labs simultaneously until you get an official positive decision. This strategy will help you to recover after a rejection.

So this is my personal advice about landing a position in a foreign lab. Thankfully, I have managed to follow some of these advices to get a postdoc position in Heidelberg at the German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ, for its German acronym). I am really happy to be here and I want to share my way to a postdoc position with all of you. I hope this will help many students from developing countries to get the position of their dreams. In case you have any further questions, do not hesitate to send me a mail to s.cerrizuela@dkfz.de or to santicerri@gmail.com.

Funding opportunities for postdocs

With this section we want to give you an overview of some current funding options for postdocs.

Emily Noether Programme

This funding program is provided by the German Research Foundation (DFG). Outstanding junior researchers can rapidly qualify for leading positions in science and research or for a university teaching career by heading an independent junior research group and assuming relevant teaching duties. More information on:

<https://www.research-in-germany.org/en/research-funding/funding-programmes/dfg-emmy-noether-programme.html>

Freigeist Fellowships

This initiative is funded by the Volkswagen Foundation. It supports outstanding researchers who would like to conduct exceptional, high-risk research between established fields of research. They will assume the leadership of their own junior research group and receive the very broadest academic freedom for a clear time frame.

<https://www.research-in-germany.org/en/research-funding/funding-programmes/volkswagen-foundation-freigeist-fellowships.html>

Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups

This funding program is provided by the Helmholtz Association. It offers junior researchers early independence and the opportunity to set up and lead their own research group under excellent conditions at a Helmholtz center, like the DKFZ. Leaders of Helmholtz Young Investigator Groups are offered a long-term career perspective and tailored leadership training.

<https://www.research-in-germany.org/en/research-funding/funding-programmes/helmholtz-young-investigators-groups.html>

Leibniz Junior Research Groups

Funded by the Leibniz Association, it offers talented and promising researchers an opportunity to conduct independent research, employ their own staff and work with excellent equipment and infrastructures.

<https://www.research-in-germany.org/en/research-funding/funding-programmes/leibniz-leibniz-junior-research-groups.html>

Lise Meitner Excellence Programme

This program, which is funded by the Max Planck Society, enables female junior scientists from all over the world with outstanding qualifications to establish their own research group at one of the renowned Max Planck Institutes. A tenure-track option offers long-term employment security and clear career prospects.

<https://www.research-in-germany.org/en/research-funding/funding-programmes/max-planck-lise-meitner-excellence-programme.html>

Max Planck Grants for Advanced Postdoctoral Training

Another program funded by the Max Planck Society, which helps junior researchers to gain additional knowledge and skills at a Max Planck Institute on the basis of their prior professional qualifications.

<https://www.research-in-germany.org/en/research-funding/funding-programmes/Max-Planck-Grants-for-Advanced-Postdoctoral-Training.html>

Research Grants

The DFG funds with this initiative junior and senior researchers to enable them to realise a research project on a defined subject within a limited period of time. The programme provides support in modular form for direct project costs, project specific staff and equipment required to carry out the project.

<https://www.research-in-germany.org/en/research-funding/funding-programmes/dfg-research-grants.html>

The DKFZ Sustainability Group

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The recently founded **DKFZ Sustainability Group** is a group of DKFZ employees highly motivated to promote sustainability at DKFZ. We aim to raise awareness for the importance of sustainability at our workplace.

Our mission is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015. We identify with and want to contribute actively to the following Sustainable Development Goals:



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Research in life science institutes such as the DKFZ is extremely energy intensive, generates a lot of waste through the use of single use plastics and chemicals and uses large amounts of water:

- An average scientist generates 1000 kg of plastic waste per year, compared to 175 kg by an average German^[1]
- A biosafety cabinet can consume as much energy as an average household (15 kW/day)¹
- It takes 3 L of normal water to produce 1 L of deionized water¹

It is therefore imperative that we address our resource consumption and waste management and switch to greener alternatives. The Helmholtz Association has already committed itself to the sustainable development of its centres during the general HGF Assembly in September 2020.²

As an employee initiative, we want to see the DKFZ to be at the forefront of the fight against the ecological crises. DKFZ is a premier scientific institute and we need to set an example for the public in line with other institutes, such as those of the Helmholtz Association, the University of Heidelberg, and EMBL.

It is our aim to support DKFZ in fulfilling this commitment by raising awareness and communicating the advantages of a sustainable DKFZ.

Amongst others, we plan to organize

- **Lecture Series** on sustainability related topics (e.g. health and climate change)
- **Sustainability Campaigns** (e.g. saving energy, choosing stairs over elevators or bike over car)
- **Connect** with other sustainability groups (e.g. at other Helmholtz centres and the EMBL)

Would you like to know more about the group or join us and contribute with new ideas?

- Meet Noemi and Birgitta at the “[Sustainability in Research](#)” round table.
- Subscribe to the DKFZ Sustainability Group mailing list:
<https://listhost.inet.dkfz-heidelberg.de/mailman/listinfo/sustainability.group>.
- Join us in our regular online meetings on Mondays at 1 pm. For login details, please contact Noemi: n.bender@dkfz.de



From left to right: Mona Blatter, Catarina da Silva Pechincha, Noemi Bender, Reinhard Liebers (not in the picture: Aoife Gahlawat, Amir Kalali, Birgitta Michels, Petra Fiesel)

[1] Dr. Rachel Relph, Chief sustainability officer, My Green Lab

² https://www.helmholtz.de/fileadmin/user_upload/03_ueber_uns/Bekanntnis_zur_nachhaltigen_Entwicklung.pdf

Postdoc Retreat - This year in a virtual format

Dear fellow PostDocs,

we haven't seen each other for a very long time – some of you only joined DKFZ during the past year and unfortunately, due to the pandemic, we had to cancel our 2020 PDN Retreat.

We didn't get the chance to get to know you all and we would like to change that! So we are very happy to be able to invite you today to our [first virtual DKFZ PostDoc Retreat](#).

When: **Thursday 29.4.2021 13:00 – 18:00/open end & Friday 30.4.2021 09:00-13:00**

Extended registration via Indico: <https://indico.dkfz.de/event/233/overview>

You are required to enter an abstract that will be part of the abstract book, however the abstracts for the postdoc session have already been selected.

We have put together a great program and also left room for your own contribution, so that you get the chance to [discuss your work](#) with your peers and get feedback from outside your own department. Moreover, you will also get the opportunity to share your favorite [scientific lifehack](#) with your peers in the *Sharing is Caring* session. There will be interesting [keynotes](#), you can choose from 2 amazing [workshops](#) and attend one of the [6 round tables](#). We will also have a virtual [networking session](#) that you have never experienced like this before.

In addition to the PostDocs from DKFZ & the many DKFZ partner sites, for the first time we will also have [PostDoc friends joining](#) from the Heidelberg Institute for Theoretical Studies ([HITS](#)) and from the International Agency for Research on Cancer ([IARC](#)) in Lyon.

About the sessions:

- DKFZ-internal session with selected oral presentations by Postdocs
- *Sharing is Caring Session* (suggestions still possible via Email pdn-retreat@dkfz.de)
 - o In this session and by submitting a short abstract you will have the chance to share with your peers something that you have always wanted to tell them about. This could be for example a **useful program, tool, database, homepage**, or any other **lifehack** that you consider useful for your Postdoc life/your project and that you think could be useful for fellow Postdocs as well. All your suggestions will be collected in the abstract booklet and we will choose 8 to be presented orally in the *Sharing is Caring* Session.

“An example: **Database** <http://www.lincsproject.org/>

A Library of Integrated Network-based Cellular Signatures (NIH LINCS)

This dataset consists of gene expression signatures and protein binding, cellular phenotypic, and phosphoproteomic profiles due to chemical or genetic perturbation. Specifically, it contains expression profiles of ~1,000

landmark genes (L1000) of 59 cancer cell lines in response to > 20,000 compounds. Moreover, the expression of an additional 20,000 genes were inferred computationally according to the expression of the 1,000 landmark genes.”

- Workshops
 - o **"Scientific Storytelling"** with **Jonathan Talbott**, TIP (Talbott International Presentations)
 - o **"Close and Far Future. Do You Know Where You Want To Go?"** with **PD Dr. Daniel Mertens**, Schiller & Mertens, Scientists need More!; Department of Internal Medicine III, Ulm University, Ulm, Germany; Cooperation Unit "Mechanisms of Leukemogenesis", German Cancer Research Center (DKFZ), Heidelberg, Germany.
- Keynotes
 - o **Prof. Dr. Maria Colomé-Tatché** on **"Single-cell computational epigenomics"**; Institute of Computational Biology, Helmholtz Center Munich, German Research Center for Environmental Health, Neuherberg, Germany; TUM School of Life Sciences Weihenstephan, Technical University of Munich, Freising, Germany
 - o **Prof. Serge Hercberg**, on **"Nutri-Score: a summary, graded, colours-coded Front-of-Pack nutrition label, simple, consumers-friendly and understandable by all, and supported by a strong scientific background"**; Nutritional Epidemiology Research Team (EREN); National Institute of Health and Medical Research, Université Sorbonne Paris-Nord/Hôpital Avicenne; Centre of Research in Epidemiology and Statistics Sorbonne Paris Cité (CRESS), Paris, France.
- Round Tables
 - o Sustainability in Research *featuring Noemi Bender and the DKFZ Sustainability group*
 - o Mental Health and Stress Management *featuring Lorenza d'Alessandro*
 - o The Importance of Networking *featuring Barbara Janssens, Rajbir Batra as a representative of PostdoCaRe Europe*
 - o [Gender] Equality in Science *featuring Silke Uhrig-Schmidt and Carol Bacchus-Wermke*
 - o Nutrition and Cancer Prevention *featuring Tilman Kühn*
 - o Skills to develop to pursue an academic career *featuring Lena Kutscher and Maiwen Caudron-Herger*

We have also managed to organize some **conference goodie bags** for you that will be waiting for you to be picked up at the front desk in Heidelberg before and during the

retreat to make up for the virtual format and make sure to have some conference feeling also in front of your computer. We are happy to be able to collaborate with a local café for this, and will offer you treats from Café NOMAD that have been selected for you. The goodie bags will be reserved for the first 50 registrations for the [virtual DKFZ PostDoc Retreat](#).

REGISTER NOW!

The Recommender section: What to read and watch in corona times.

With this new section we would like to recommend to you different movies, books or podcasts that we find interesting. Below every title we have created a short summary of its content. If you have recommendations for our next newsletter, do not hesitate to contact us.

Daniel Kahnemann: Thinking fast and slow

In his book “Thinking fast and slow”, Daniel Kahnemann describes the way we think, how our mind works, and how we make decisions.

Eva Benito, Daniel Mertens: The imPerfect Scientist

In their podcast, Eva and Daniel describe how to discover your strengths and improve your soft skills to find your path as a scientist.

https://open.spotify.com/show/5aoorwaeTxVmq8rgZo6jBk?si=2Z_n0qe8S2qwavQOAB2chg&nd=1

Picture a Scientist

This documentary by Ian Cheney and Sharon Shattuck describes the struggle and fights of female scientists for equality.

Kurzgesagt – In a Nutshell

They create beautiful and simple animations to share knowledge and raise awareness about various topics including science.

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsXVk37bltHxD1rDPwtNM8Q>

The immortal life of Henrietta Lacks- Rebecca Skloot

The story behind the first human cancer cell line HeLa. The book highlights the role of ethics and race in medical discovery and emphasizes that doctors and scientists must

never let their passion for science overshadow their recognition of the humanity of their patients and research subjects.

Bad Blood: Secrets and Lies in a Silicon Valley Startup- John Carreyrou.
The story of Elizabeth Holmes and Theranos.

Rosalind Franklin: the dark lady of DNA- Brenda Maddox
Biography of Rosalind Franklin, a scientist whose work helped discover the structure of DNA.

Future Events Organized by the PDN

Upcoming:

Virtual PDN Retreat for postdocs from DKFZ and IARC - April 29th 13:00-18:00 and April 30th 9:00-13:00, registration via <https://indico.dkfz.de/event/233/overview>

About the PDN

The PDN was formed from Postdocs for Postdocs to represent the Postdocs' interest within DKFZ. Together with the International Postdoc Program we aim to support your career development and increase social and scientific networking among the Postdocs at the DKFZ and beyond. We would really like to get to know you better and introduce you to the activities that are regularly organized by the PDN and in which you are invited to participate during your time at the DKFZ.

The scopes of the PDN are the following:

- Improve communication and spread information between PostDocs.
- Participate in the organization of events and seminars.
- Take over responsibilities to promote the PostDoc Network.
- Welcome the newcomers by providing them with relevant information concerning their work at the DKFZ and their life in Heidelberg.
- Share and discuss career-related issues.
- Provide and share information concerning grant applications and funding opportunities.

PDN Committee Meetings

Join the PDN committee today by subscribing to the PDN committee mailing list and our slack channel by sending an email to PDN-committee@dkfz.de, which is used to pass on information to all active members of the PDN, and attending the biweekly virtual committee meetings.

Our next meeting will be on the 22nd of April. We are happy to welcome many new members!



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GERMAN
CANCER RESEARCH CENTER
IN THE HELMHOLTZ ASSOCIATION

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Research for a Life without Cancer

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