

PRESS RELEASE



Structural biologist recognized for research on molecular motor structure and function

Anne Houdusse to receive 2009 FEBS/EMBO Women in Science Award

Heidelberg, 17 February 2009

The European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) and the Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS) announced Anne Houdusse, head of the Structural Motility Team, CNRS/Institute Curie, Paris, France, as the winner of the FEBS/EMBO Women in Science Award for 2009. The selection committee honoured Anne Houdusse's outstanding contributions to the field of structural biology and the understanding of the molecular mechanism of action of myosins.

The FEBS/EMBO Women in Science Award, now in its second year, recognizes and rewards the exceptional achievements of a female scientist in life sciences research over the previous five years. Winners of the award are role models who inspire future generations of women in science.

Anne Houdusse has established and clarified the molecular structure and function of myosins – a family of motor proteins vital for muscle contraction and motility processes such as cell division or transport of organelles within cells. She has transferred details seen in atomic

resolution structures into functional insight and co-developed a theory that describes the movement of the molecular motors during muscle contraction.

The committee praised Anne's originality and research creativity as well as her courage to tackle difficult areas of science and persistence to achieve results.

"We are fortunate to work on a very puzzling and interesting question: how motor proteins convert chemical energy to produce force," said Anne Houdusse. "My laboratory's contribution is just one piece of this incredibly complex and important puzzle, and the current picture is the fruit of the research lead by many brilliant scientists. By trying to understand how to inhibit the activity of specific motors responsible for metastasis or cell proliferation we hope to develop therapeutic strategies against cancer."

The award winner credits the support of the Institute Curie and the dynamic collaboration with several researchers to contribute to the understanding of this fundamental problem in biology.

As group leader at the French National Research for Scientific Research (CNRS) Institute Curie in Paris, Anne Houdusse studies the structure and function of biological macromolecules, using biophysical techniques, particularly X-ray crystallography. She was a post-doctoral fellow at the Brandeis University in Massachusetts, USA (1992-1998) where, with Carolyn Cohen and Andrew Szent Györgyi, she laid the foundation for her challenging work on structures of conventional myosins. At CNRS, she works closely with the US-American biologist Lee Sweeney.

The 2009 FEBS/EMBO Women in Science Award of 10,000 euro will be presented to Anne Houdusse on 5 July 2009 at the 34th FEBS Congress in Prague, Czech Republic, where she will present a special lecture.

Nominations for the 2010 FEBS/EMBO Women in Science Award close on 1 September. For more information, please visit: www.embo.org/gender/award.html or www.febs.org/women-award/

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About EMBO

The European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) promotes excellence in molecular life sciences in Europe by recognizing and fostering talented scientists. Since 1964, leading scientists are elected annually to become EMBO Members based on proven excellence in research. Members number more than 1300 today. Forty-eight scientists from the EMBO membership have received the Nobel Prize.

Leading peer-reviewed journals – *The EMBO Journal*, *EMBO reports* and *Molecular Systems Biology* – span a broad spectrum of topics of molecular biology and reflect how science is shaping the world. A new journal from April 2009, *EMBO Molecular Medicine*, will publish original research offering molecular insight into the cellular and systemic processes underlying human disease.

EMBO funding, training and networking activities impact thousands of scientists every year, promoting collaboration in all areas of molecular biology – within its 27 member states, in Europe and neighboring countries, and worldwide.

For more information: www.embo.org

About FEBS

The Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS) is a leading European organization of the life sciences. Its constituent societies, whose membership exceeds 40,000 in Europe and adjoining countries, extend from Ireland and Iceland in the west, to Armenia in the east.

FEBS promotes research and the teaching of biochemistry, molecular cell biology and molecular biophysics, by supporting an annual congress, a rich program of advanced practical and theoretical courses, workshops and special lectures. These activities are complemented by an extensive fellowships program, enabling mobility of young and senior scientists across the European continent.

FEBS has pioneered the creation of scientific publication forums for European life scientists by its two leading journals, *FEBS Journal* and *FEBS Letters*.

Being concerned about Europe's scientific future, FEBS has been involved in the establishment of the European Life Science Forum (ELSF) and the Initiative for Science in Europe (ISE), both active in developing new channels and means for advancing science.

For more information about FEBS: www.febs.org