



## Systems biologist finds novel solutions to fundamental biological problems

Naama Barkai awarded 2008 FEBS/EMBO Women in Science Award

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The European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) and the Federation of European Biochemical Societies (FEBS) announced Naama Barkai of the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel as the first-ever winner of the FEBS/EMBO Women in Science Award. Naama Barkai receives the 2008 award for her outstanding contributions to the field of systems biology and the mathematical modelling of biological systems.

Each year, the FEBS/EMBO Women in Science Award 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.

Naama Barkai's deep understanding of the relevant biology and physics allows her to combine experiments and theory to develop novel solutions to fundamental biological problems such as chemotaxis, embryonic development and the organisation of the cellular transcription programmes.

Professor Uri Alon, a colleague of Barkai for the past eight years at the Weizmann Institute of Science commented: "Naama's work is consistently inspiring. She has, in my opinion, identified some of the most fundamental problems in systems biology and proposed elegant and powerful answers."

The selection committee credits Barkai's originality and creative research as not only revolutionising the field of systems biology but also significantly changing the way scientists think about complex biological processes.

An associate professor at the departments of Molecular Genetics and Physics of Complex Systems at the Weizmann Institute of Science in Rehovot, Israel, Naama Barkai utilizes mathematical modelling to unravel the principles that govern the design and function of biological networks. She was visiting professor at

Harvard University (2005-2006) and a Robert H. Dicke Fellow at Princeton University where she worked with Stanislas Leibler on the theoretical analysis of biochemical networks. She received her PhD in Physics at the Hebrew University (1995) for research on statistical mechanisms of learning.

The 2008 FEBS/EMBO Women in Science Award of 10,000 euro will be presented to Naama Barkai on 2 July 2008 at the 33rd FEBS Congress and 11th IUBMB Conference in Athens, Greece where she will present a special plenary lecture.

"I am honoured that FEBS and EMBO have recognized my work," said Naama Barkai. "Women are under-represented in academia and this award helps to raise awareness of the opportunities for female scientists to further their research careers."

In 2007, Naama Barkai was elected an EMBO Member and she was an EMBO Young Investigator (2001-2004). She has received several prestigious awards including the Helen and Martin Kimmel Award for Innovative Investigation (2007), the Teva Prize for Research in Systems Biology (2005), the Morris L. Levinson Biology Prize from the Weizmann Institute of Science (2004) and the Michael Bruno Memorial Award (2004).

Nominations for the 2009 FEBS/EMBO Women in Science Award close on 15 August. For more information, please visit <http://www.embo.org/gender/award.html> or <http://www.febs.org/women-award>



Naama Barkai  
winner 2008

FEBS/EMBO Women in Science Award

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#### About EMBO

The European Molecular Biology Organization (EMBO) promotes excellence in molecular life sciences in Europe. Since 1964, leading scientists are elected annually to become EMBO Members based on proven excellence in research. Members number more than 1300 today with a further 80 associate members worldwide. Forty-five scientists from the EMBO membership have received the Nobel Prize. EMBO Members have the opportunity to influence the direction of European life sciences and more than half are involved in guiding the execution of the many EMBO initiatives offered to life scientists.

Leading peer-reviewed journals – *The EMBO Journal*, *EMBO reports* and *Molecular Systems Biology* – span all aspects of molecular biology and reflect how science is shaping the world. EMBO-sponsored training and networking activities impact thousands of scientists every year, promoting collaboration in all areas of molecular biology – within Europe and worldwide.

For more information: [www.embo.org](http://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: [www.febs.org](http://www.febs.org)