

PRESS RELEASE

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A large research institute can be established with a small “start-up” fund – an experience from Portugal

ZAGREB – A large research institute in a small country like Portugal or Croatia can be established with a relatively meager „start-up“ fund, said the director of the Institute of Molecular Pathology and Immunology of the University of Porto (IPATIMUP) in an interview published in the May issue of *Croatian Medical Journal*.

Prof. Manuel Sobrinho-Simões shared the experience of his institution, which this year celebrates 15 years of existence. According to Sobrinho-Simões, IPATIMUP gets one third of funds from the Government and the University, one third from services and contracts, and one third from research projects and philanthropy. This model of financing proved successful, and it can be an example for establishing research institutions in small scientific communities, such as Mediterranean Institute for Life Sciences (MedILS) in Split, Croatia.

IPATIMUP is today one of the most prominent scientific institutes in Portugal and an internationally recognized research center in the field of pathology. It was founded with small funds earned through organizing European Congress of Pathology in 1989. In collaboration with the University of Porto, the foundations for the new building were laid, and further financial help was get from the European Union Developmental Programme. The laboratories

were equipped with the donations from several private and public institutions. The 2004 budget of IPATIMUP was about 3,400,000 €, out of which 43% was spent on human resources. More than half of the staff who hold doctoral degrees work in the Institute without pay. The salaries of these professors are paid by their respective Faculties. „To dispel misunderstandings, this actually means two jobs and just one salary!“, Sobrinho-Simões pointed out.

The results of such a devoted work are visible in the scientific productivity of the Institute and the Porto Medical School Department of Pathology. This Department, which represent only 3% of the total faculty, produces 30% of all publications of the Porto Medical Faculty in international peer reviewed journals. These results are just one of the indicators of successful cooperation model between IPATIMUP and University of Porto.

At the end of the interview, Sobrinho-Simões explains what he thinks to be the basis of IPATIMUP's success, and gives an advice to scientists and doctors in small scientific communities: „Science requires team-work, contacts, and support groups. Science cannot exist in a vacuum. Science has no borders. Good science must be recognized internationally as such by your peers and that's why I think that it is important to introduce external, independent evaluations at every level. It has helped us a lot and I am sure that it will give credibility to your efforts as well“.

The interview was conducted by prof. Ivan Damjanov from the University of Kansas School of Medicine, Kansas City, USA.

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