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Reports

Crystallization Course CC2001

I am glad to inform you about The First Protein Crystallization Course CC2001 held in the Academic and University Center (AUC) in Nové Hradky during the second week of October (5 - 12).

In order to achieve its high level, qualified crystallographers from Germany (Prof. R. Hilgenfeld, Dr. J. Mesters, Dr. T. Klupsch of IMB Jena), Spain (Prof. J.M. Garcia-Ruiz of Instituto Andaluz de Ciencias de la Tierra, Granada) and the Czech Republic were invited to give the lectures as well as organize practices for undergraduate and postgraduate students. The CC2001 was sponsored by Photosynthetic Research Center [CR], PragoLab [CR], JenaBioScience GmbH [Germany], Molecular Dimension Ltd. [UK] and CSCA [CR]. Without their financial and/or material support the course could not be organized.

The official language of the course was English. During the morning lectures students were acquainted with standardized as well as the latest methods of protein isolation, purification and crystallization. Freshly obtained knowledge was trained during afternoon practices, which took place in the newly established Laboratory of Crystallogenesis that is unique in the Czech Republic.

Using different crystallization methods such as hanging drop and sitting drop vapour diffusion methods, crystallization in a gel, etc., students grew their own crystals of lysozyme, glucose isomerase and Concanavalin A while learning how to operate a robot for protein crystallization (lent by IMB Jena). They also learnt the ways of crystal seeding and freezing as well as the work with the commercially available solution sets.

During the second part of the course students visited the Institute of Molecular Genetics in Prague, where a protein diffractometer was introduced and diffraction data of freshly produced crystals were measured. The data were later used for teaching students of solving the protein structure. These lessons took place in a new computer lab in Nové Hradky provided with all the necessary hardware and software.

The organizing committee also arranged programme for free time of all participants – such as concerts, film presentations and sightseeing.

In conclusion, I would like to address some of remaining factors that have contributed to such successful outcome. Among those, sufficient financial support and qualified scientific staff of AUC played the major role.

Considering the answers participants gave in questionnaire before leaving, I am delighted to call the first year of crystallization course very fruitful and I am looking forward to similar activities scheduled for 2002.

Ivana Kutá Smatanová