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The European ERA Chair grant awaits a top academic

The Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, Poland, has recently received a European ERA Chair grant of 2.5 million euros. Soon, the grant will enable a world-class specialist in the field of biology, working where it meets with chemistry or physics, to be employed at the Institute.

In mid-2016 an outstanding academic will start work at the Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Polish Academy of Sciences (IPC PAS) in Warsaw, Poland, dealing with biology in the broad sense and where it meets with physics and chemistry. The employment of a scientist on world-class-standard financial terms will be possible thanks to the European ERA Chair grant of 2.5 million euros. The academic will be selected by means of a competition evaluated by a committee made up of scientists from Poland, Great Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands, including winners of the most prestigious grants awarded by the European Research Council (ERC).

“Physical chemistry keeps searching for new inspirations. We are convinced that biology can be a good source of these. For this reason, we would like a world-class specialist to build up an interdisciplinary department at our Institute, capable of taking on the most challenging scientific problems that are at the crossroads of modern chemistry, physics and biology,” says Prof. Robert Holyst, director of the IPC PAS.

In the field of chemistry, the Institute of Physical Chemistry of the PAS has for years occupied top positions in the rankings of the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education. The renovated and extended ranges of equipment, as well as the considerable freedom in the selection of research topics at the Institute, produce conditions for the creative development of research careers. The leaders of some research teams are already scientists from Colombia, Sweden, Spain, Portugal or Ukraine. The Institute's efforts were recently recognized by the European Commission, which granted the Institute the right to use the HR Excellence in Research logo.

“It is worth adding that for a really good scientist, who wants to develop ambitious research topics, Poland is currently an attractive destination due to the growing number of grant competitions in which the value of a three-year grant often exceeds one million euros,” emphasizes Prof. Holyst, adding that the growing position of the Institute also allows for effective competition for the best

European grants. Spectacular proof of this was the award in 2011 of the NOBLESSE grant to the IPC PAS, one of the largest grants awarded to a single scientific institution during the implementation of the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme.

ERA (European Research Area) Chair grants are awarded under Horizon 2020, the largest European funding programme for scientific research and innovation. The programme's budget for 2014-20 amounts to almost 80 billion euros. The main aim of ERA Chair grants is to attract the most eminent academics to scientific institutions operating in the recently adopted EU Member States. The long-term effect of the implementation of grants is to be the raising of the standard of science in new Member States and an increase in its competitiveness to a level enabling effective competition with leading research centres, both in Europe and in the world.

The problem of equalization of opportunities for research centres in international competition is particularly important in the case of Poland, which is often perceived as a country with little contribution to the development of science and technology. Whereas some people remember that the astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus "moved the Sun and stopped the Earth", and Maria Skłodowska-Curie laid the foundations for modern nuclear physics, few are aware that it was Ignacy Łukasiewicz who was a pioneer in the oil industry, Casimir Funk who discovered the first vitamin, Ludwik Hirszfeld blood groups, and Jan Czochralski who invented a method of the production of single crystals, without which today's electronics would not exist. Others who originated from territory that is today's Poland include Benoit Mandelbrot – the founder of fractal geometry, Wernher von Braun – the architect of the Saturn V moon rockets, and Nobel Prize winner Albert Michelson – co-founder of the experiment which led to the birth of the theory of relativity. It is also a little known fact that most of the women who were awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics or Chemistry had a greater or lesser association with Poland.

"In the natural sciences Poland has excellent, indeed outstanding, intellectual traditions. As a modern institute, specializing in physical chemistry, we want to allude to these ever more strongly. We have no doubt that the ERA Chair grant will help us in this," concludes Prof. Holyst.

The Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Polish Academy of Sciences (<http://www.ichf.edu.pl/>) was established in 1955 as one of the first chemical institutes of the PAS. The Institute's scientific profile is strongly related to the newest global trends in the development of physical chemistry and chemical physics. Scientific research is conducted in nine scientific departments. CHEMIPAN R&D Laboratories, operating as part of the Institute, implement, produce and commercialise specialist chemicals to be used, in particular, in agriculture and pharmaceutical industry. The Institute publishes approximately 200 original research papers annually.

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LINKS:

<http://www.ichf.edu.pl/>
The website of the Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

<http://www.ichf.edu.pl/press/>
Press releases of the Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Polish Academy of Sciences.

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In mid-2016 an outstanding academic will start work at the Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, Poland. The employment of a scientist will be possible thanks to the European ERA Chair grant of 2.5 million euros. (Source: IPC PAS, Grzegorz Krzyżewski)

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Logo of the Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Polish Academy of Sciences in Warsaw, Poland. (Source: IPC PAS)