Hungary joins ELIXIR, the most extensive European infrastructure for life-science information

Hungary has become member of another outstanding European research infrastructure, upon the signing of the ELIXIR Consortium Agreement by József Pálinkás, President of the National Research, Development and Innovation Office in Hungary.

As the 21st member to join the ELIXIR (European Life-sciences Infrastructure for biological Information) Programme, Hungary now offers an excellent opportunity for domestic researchers to draw biologically important conclusions from their research findings using the most suitable tools in many fields, such as brain research, immunology, protein biochemistry, protein structure prediction, network biology, or in the agricultural fields of farm animal and crop genomics.

The ELIXIR Programme, co-financed by the European Commission and the member states, enables European life-science research centres to store and share their research data in an integrated and managed network which is easily accessible by the scientific community. Big data generated by high throughput methods plays an increasingly important role in life sciences, including biomedicine and agriculture. Among other things, this makes it necessary to increase and internationalise the capacities for bioinformatic data processing.

ELIXIR aims at building a sustainable European infrastructure for the data bases where such biological information is stored, promoting life sciences research and the practical utilisation of research findings.

The ELIXIR Node in Hungary, which is currently under development, will be led by the Research Centre for Natural Sciences of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences and coordinated by Professor László Patthy of the Institute of Enzymology within the same research centre. The focus of the Hungarian Node will be on novel tools, services and databases in the field of protein sequence and structure investigation, DNA sequence analysis and translational medicine.

"Our membership in ELIXIR will help us sustain and safeguard our domestic investments in life sciences by linking our research community and resources to the ELIXIR infrastructure," said Professor László Patthy. In turn, Europe and existing ELIXIR Nodes will benefit from Hungarian expertise and resources in systems and computational biology. Previous and ongoing Hungarian research projects have already resulted in methods and online bioinformatics services (e.g. in relation to the prediction of transmembrane protein structures or disordered protein research) which will now help the work of the ELIXIR international researcher community.

Dr. Niklas Blomberg, ELIXIR Director said: "In just three years since its launch in December 2013, ELIXIR membership has skyrocketed from the six founding members to the current 21. I am delighted to welcome our Hungarian colleagues to ELIXIR and look forward to our collaboration. Hungarian Membership of ELIXIR will open up opportunities for new collaborations and will benefit both the Hungarian as well as European life-science and bioinformatics community."

The ELIXIR membership is another milestone of the process in which the National Research Infrastructure Committee proposes joining to an international research infrastructure after assessing the scientific community's needs and considering the benefits of membership in the given infrastructure. The NRDI Office annually evaluates the balance of participating in such infrastructures from an RDI perspective in the given fields of science, and presents the public benefit of paying the membership fees to the stakeholders and also to the wider researcher community, society and decision makers responsible for science funding.