

SUCCESS STORY

BRAVISSIMO/BRAssinosteroid Venture Increasing Students' International Mobility

Research area: FP7 – People / Marie Curie Action

Number of partners: 8 among which the University of Lausanne (UNIL)

Start date – End date: 2008-09-01 to 2012-08-31

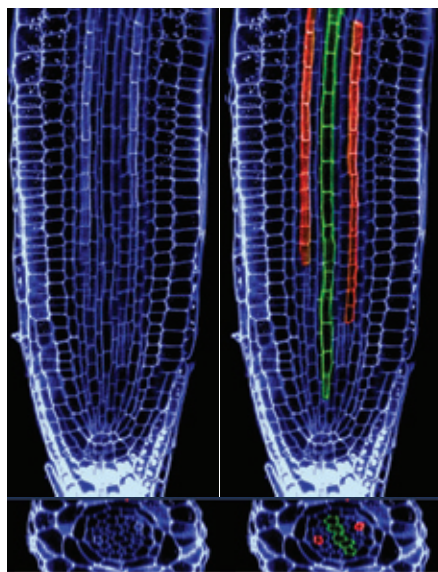
Duration: 48 months

Funding: € 1 950 000 / UNIL: € 230 418

Type of contract: Initial Training Network (ITN)



CHRISTIAN HARDTKE



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“A skilled researcher must also be a craftsman.”

UNDERSTANDING HOW PLANTS GROW

Professor Christian Hardtke, head of the UNIL's Department of Plant Molecular Biology, is participating in four projects that have received European grants. One of these is BRAVISSIMO, a venture of the Marie Curie Initial Training Network (ITN), looking into brassinosteroids, which are the growth-promoting hormones in plants.

What are brassinosteroids and how do they work?

Plants are subject to constant changes in their environments, of which they are prisoners. However, they can also trigger complex processes that, for example, will safeguard them against harmful conditions. Information relating to danger is detected through the action of plant hormones, of which brassinosteroids are one type. These are actual steroids, which structurally resemble some animal hormones. Their cellular activity strengthens the influence of another hormone, auxin, which is vital to a plant's survival and fosters growth.

What is the aim of the BRAVISSIMO project?

Auxin and brassinosteroids act interdependently through a complex network of retroactive pathways. The aim of BRAVISSIMO is to understand how these work.

In which ways are research networks useful?

The cutting-edge technical and scientific knowledge acquired through these Initial Training Networks (ITN), for researchers who are just starting out, facilitates the interchange between fundamental and applied research. In my opinion, Switzerland is one of the best places for fundamental research. It has a culture of excellence and provides genuine support to the world of research. Its whole education system is also very strong.



ABOUT THE PROJECT

The BRAVISSIMO project, which has received a grant of about € 2 million, runned until August 2012. One of the challenges facing the European farming industry in the future is meeting rising demand for food. Understanding plant-growth mechanisms will eventually make it possible to boost crop yields while reducing the amount of fertilizers and pesticides used. Plant growth is regulated by processes that can be modified by the environment acting through molecules,

such as plant hormones – which include brassinosteroids, the focus of Christian Hardtke's research. BRAVISSIMO brings together universities all over Europe, including Germany, Hungary, Spain and the Netherlands.

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