

2nd International Symposium SRUK/CERU and Annual General Meeting 2014

The society of Spanish Researchers in the United Kingdom (SRUK/CERU) celebrated its 3rd annual general meeting and 2nd International Symposium last 5th July at the NH Harrington Hall Hotel (London). The day started with the SRUK/CERU annual general meeting, where Dr Lorenzo Melchor concluded his presidency by encouraging members to pursue their objectives by following SRUK soul: “anything you want to achieve is doable; you just need to work hard and believe in it”. Dr María Hernández-Fuentes, Senior lecturer at King’s College London was appointed as the new President, one year after her election by the Society members. Dr Hernández-Fuentes congratulated and thanked Dr Melchor for the intensive last three years: “SRUK/CERU would not be where it is without such a committed president that has always pursued a very high status for the society”. SRUK/CERU approved the creation of a new director position, the Press Officer to liaise with members of the mass media. The former Director of the on-line Department, Dr Andrea Alenda, was appointed for the role of Press Officer while the actual direction of this department was opened for election. Dr Beatriz Lorente and Dr María Jiménez were elected as new Director of the Department of On-line Communications and Roving Director respectively. The general assembly also elected Dr Eduardo Oliver, former director of the London constituency, as President for 2015/16, who will act as Vice-president of SRUK/CERU during this year.



Dr María Hernández-Fuentes, President of SRUK/CERU 2014-2015

During the 2nd International Symposium SRUK/CERU, we presented our recent achievements and future initiatives, serving as a forum for our members to talk about their work, experiences and scientific careers in the UK. The keynote speaker of this one-day event was Prof Yannis Pitsiladis, Professor of Sport and Exercise Science at The Brighton Centre for Regenerative Medicine (BCRM) who presented “*How to produce a Spanish Usain Bolt? A Jamaican model for the world*”. Professor Pitsiladis has a long standing research career into the importance of lifestyle and genetics for human health and performance. His research has been funded by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and he has worked

with two WADA committees and as well as the International Olympic Committee (IOC). During his talk, he presented the current theories that explain why Jamaica has been so successful on producing elite sprinters. From all his research experience obtained while working closely with elite athletes in Jamaica and Kenya, it seemed clear to him, that in order to produce a Spanish sprinter more work is necessary at the junior level.



The keynote speaker Prof Yannis Pitsiladis

A roundtable on the topic of Horizon 2020 served as the framework to discuss how international collaborations can help science progress and how researchers should be better prepared for this interactive scientific world we face. Together with prof. Yannis Pitsiladis, the invited speakers Dr Octavio Pernas, from the Technology Strategy Board and National Contact Point for health, demographic change and wellbeing; Iñigo Atxutegi, manager for Ikerbasque (the Basque Foundation for Science), and Daniel Walker, from the EU grants office in King's College London discussed the process of applying for EU grants from "both sides of the fence". From the applicant side, Pitsiladis recommended "finding strategic partners that would guarantee funding". Pernas, from the insider perspective, told us to "show the science, but also show the impact of the project", and Atxutegi concluded that "in the end, choosing the right partner helps a lot".



Horizon2020 Round-table

The programme included short presentations from selected abstracts from our members that were then invited to present their work. The morning session focused on DNA and mRNA sequencing; as well as on educating cells to produce mRNA to protect our hearts: "The Yen 1 protein is like a cleaning crew, they wait until 6am in the next morning and cleans all the damage" said Miguel González from Clare Hall Laboratories. Speakers explained how neurons die and described "methods" to slow down this process. Also, they showed how to build a synthetic box out of DNA – the DNA origami techniques – "In nanotechnology we want to design non-natural molecules and devices that perform a biological function" affirmed Ibón Santiago from University of Oxford. In the afternoon the attendees learnt about how ancient Romans are helping to discover dark matter, and how to concentrate solar energy in visible particles. They were also taught how to sell it to the world with the best marketing lecture by Dr José Luis Ruiz de Alba from University of Malaga in Spain. He told the audience that "The protagonist is not the professional businessman or even the students, it is the methodology... and all of us, including lecturers, learn from the experience". A glimmer of hope for the future of Spain's energy was introduced by Pablo García-Triñanes from the University of Surrey: "In Spain we are leaders in producing solar energy, but we still need to learn how to store it". Speakers also showed how *Pseudomona*, a bacterial human pathogen, is teaching scientists to kill the rest of their "sister" bacteria. The session finished with a talk on the use of artificial intelligence to help localisation issues.



Attendees of the 2nd International Symposium SRUK/CERU

At last, former president Lorenzo Melchor, and the Minister-Counsellor Mr Fidel López Álvarez, from the Office of Cultural and Scientific Affairs (OCSA) of the Embassy of Spain in the UK, presented the awardees for the first edition of the SRUK-OCSA travel grants 2014. These travel awards are co-funded by OCSA and SRUK/CERU to support scientists to present their research in conferences to be held in Spain during 2014/15.



Awardees of the 1st SRUK-OCSA travel grants (Alex González-Agüero, Miguel González-Blanco, and Miguel Sánchez-Alvarez) with Mr Fidel Lopez-Alvarez.

The eight awardees were: Alex González de Agüero, Javier Herrera, José Sabater, María Eugenia Herva, Meritxell Nus, Miguel González Blanco, Miguel Sánchez Álvarez and Natividad Garrido Mesa.



Mr Fidel Lopez-Alvarez shows his gratitude to Dr Lorenzo Melchor, former president, for the hard work during the three years that served to create and consolidate SRUK/CERU.

By the end of the day, both the attendees and the speakers got together for the closing dinner at the venue and enjoyed a great networking session. That was a great end for a great CERU's day.