



Research Institute of Molecular Pathology

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Institut für Molekulare Pathologie GmbH  
Dr. Bohr-Gasse 7, 1030 Vienna, Austria  
Tel: ++43-1-797 30/DW  
Fax: ++43-1-798 71-53  
[www.imp.univie.ac.at](http://www.imp.univie.ac.at)

## ERC Advanced Grant for Meinrad Busslinger

*Meinrad Busslinger, Senior Scientist at the Research Institute of Molecular Pathology (IMP) in Vienna, has been selected to receive an Advanced Investigator Grant by the European Research Council ERC. The grant is worth just under 2.5 Million Euro and will be paid out over a period of five years. It will fund the project "LymphoControl" that investigates the development of immune cells.*

ERC Advanced Grants allow exceptional established research leaders to pursue ground-breaking, high-risk projects that open new directions in their respective research fields or other domains. They have been awarded for the fourth time this year. 2284 applications were submitted following the last call.

**Contact:**  
Dr. Heidemarie Hurlt, Communications  
Tel. +43 1 797 30 – 3625  
Mobile: +43 (0)664 8247910  
[hurlt@imp.ac.at](mailto:hurlt@imp.ac.at)

**Scientific Contact**  
Prof. Meinrad Busslinger  
[busslinger@imp.ac.at](mailto:busslinger@imp.ac.at)

### Transcription Factors Control Cell Fate

The grant will fund a project entitled „Transcriptional networks controlling lymphocyte development“, or “LymphoControl” in short. The aim of the project is to elucidate how transcription factors regulate the development of B- and T-lymphocytes. These white blood cells are the main players in the body’s adaptive immune system. They are derived from stem cells in the bone marrow and undergo several stages of differentiation before becoming fully functional, mature lymphocytes of the B- or T-cell lineage. Transcription factors are regulatory proteins encoded in the genome that control key stages in this process. Deregulation of the transcriptional control can severely disrupt the programmed cell fate and cause certain types of blood cancer.

### Deregulation Causes Leukemia

Meinrad Busslinger has a long record in immunological research. He was the first to identify a critical factor, named Pax-5, which activates a B cell specific program in the precursor cells and suppresses alternative pathways. Pax-5 is also involved in the development of acute lymphoblastic leukemia in humans. The project “LymphoControl” will build on previous research efforts, such as the creation of transgenic mice that carry molecular “tags” at the ends of transcription factors.

Busslinger is excited about the European commitment to basic research: “The ERC grant will allow us to carry out a project which requires massive human and technical resources. We have already established the required know-how and infrastructure, owing to the Austrian Science Fund and our sponsor Boehringer Ingelheim. Now we can really take full advantage of the exceptional facilities at the IMP.” The grant will also open career-paths for young researchers. Six additional scientists will be employed under the ERC-funded project.



## About Meinrad Busslinger

Meinrad Busslinger was born in Switzerland in 1952. He studied Biochemistry at the ETH Zurich and obtained a doctorate in molecular biology from the University of Zurich. Following postdoctoral studies at the MRC Institute Mill Hill, London, he became a group leader at the University of Zurich. In 1987, he followed Max Birnstiel to the newly founded Research Institute of Molecular Pathology (IMP) in Vienna.

Busslinger is a Senior Scientist and Director of Academic Affairs at the IMP, Professor at the University of Vienna and a full member of the Austrian Academy of Sciences and of the European Molecular Biology Organisation EMBO. He has published over 130 papers in peer-reviewed journals and serves on the editorial boards of several scientific journals. Busslinger was awarded the Wittgenstein prize of the Austrian government in 2001 and the Virchow Medal by the University of Würzburg in 2010.

## Six ERC Grants for the IMP

The recent allocation raises the number of ERC Grants awarded to IMP faculty to six: Barry Dickson succeeded in securing an advanced grant in the first round of evaluations in 2008. Stefan Westermann, Alexander Stark, Andrew Straw and Manuel Zimmer received ERC Starting Grants.

The Research Institute for Molecular Pathology carries out basic biomedical research in Vienna, Austria. Its main sponsor is Boehringer Ingelheim. Some 200 researchers from over 30 countries study life at molecular and cellular levels, information processing and storage in neural circuits, mechanisms of development and disease and interdisciplinary topics. The aim is a thorough understanding of complex biological processes that could lead to the development of new therapeutic concepts.

*For a portrait-photo of Meinrad Busslinger, please access the IMP Website at <http://www.imp.ac.at/contact/communications-department/press-releases/>*

### Contact:

IMP – Research Institute of Molecular Pathology  
Dr. Heidemarie Hurlt, Communications  
Tel. +43 1 797 30 – 3625  
Mobile: +43 (0)664 8247910  
hurlt@imp.ac.at

### Scientific Contact

Prof. Meinrad Busslinger  
busslinger@imp.ac.at



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