

Report from VIII Parnas Conference

VIII Parnas Conference, organized for the first time jointly by Polish Biochemical Society, Ukrainian Biochemical Society and Israel Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, was held in Warsaw from August 27 to August 31, 2011. The Nencki Institute was the major financial supporter of the Conference (within the FP7 BIO-IMAGINE Project).

The Parnas Conference was established in 1996 by Polish and Ukrainian biochemists to commemorate the distinguished Polish biochemist Jakub Karol Parnas, a professor of physiological chemistry at the University in Lviv. Before the 2nd World War young Polish, Ukrainian and Jewish scientists studied glucose metabolism in his laboratory.

Recently, the Conference has been opened for participation of Israeli biochemists.

The 2011 Conference was held under the honorary patronage of Mr. Radosław Sikorski, the Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs, and Prof. Barbara Kudrycka, the Polish Minister of Science and Higher Education. The Honorary Conference Committee consisted of the Ambassadors of Israel and Ukraine in Poland and the Polish Ambassadors in Israel and Ukraine, as well as the President of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Prof. Michał Kleiber, the Secretary General of the Federation of European Biochemical Societies, Prof. Israel Pecht, the Director of UNESCO Division of Basic and Engineering Sciences, Prof. Maciej J. Nałęcz, the Mayor of Warsaw, Dr. Hanna Gronkiewicz-Waltz and the former Presidents of the Polish Biochemical Society, Prof. Lech Wojtczak and Prof. Jolanta Barańska.

Two Nobel Prize Laureates, Professors Ada Yonath and Aaron Ciechanover, and Dr. Aleksander Włodawer, a world known crystallographer of Polish origin, were the Key Speakers.

The Scientific Committee, chaired by Prof. Andrzej Dżugaj, the President of the Polish Biochemical Society and the father of the idea of this tripartite Conference, consisted of three representatives from each of the organizing Societies. Poland was represented by Prof. Leszek Kaczmarek, Prof. Jacek Kuźnicki (both from the Nencki Institute), and Prof. Maciej Żylicz; Ukraine - by Prof. Serhiy Komisarenko, the President of Ukrainian Society, Prof. Serhiy Kosterin and Prof. Ganna Elska, and Israel by Prof. Michael Eisenbach, the President of Israeli Society, Prof. Orna Elroy-Stein and Prof. Shimon Schuldiner.

The Organizing Committee was headed by Prof. Maria Jolanta Rędownicz from the Nencki Institute. Seven other scientists from the Nencki Institute assisted in the works of the Committee, while several Nencki PhD students volunteered to provide organizational support during the event.

The following topics were addressed during the Conference: post-transcriptional regulation, bioinformatics in gene expression, gene expression and brain diseases, cell guidance, transporters in adaptation to hostile environment, protein structure and function, and calcium in signaling.

Nearly 290 participants, predominantly from Poland, Ukraine and Israel, took part in the event. There were 27 lectures (apart from the Key Lectures) in nine sessions presented by outstanding experienced researchers mainly with the Polish, Ukrainian and Israeli roots. Also, 18 young researchers, selected by the chairmen based on the submitted abstracts, had oral presentations (two in each session). There were 134 posters presented in three poster sessions. Ms. Kavita Ramji, a PhD student from the Nencki Institute, received the award for the best poster presentation.

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Prof. Maria Jolanta Rędownicz
Head of the Organizing Committee