

■ Press Release

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Two ERC Synergy Grants for Göttingen neuroscientists

Two Göttingen researchers receive highly regarded Synergy Grant funding from the European Research Council. More than six million euros of European funding will go to the Göttingen Campus.

(mbexc/umg/mpiem) Professors Silvio Rizzoli, Director of the Institute of Neuro- and Sensory Physiology at the University Medical Center Göttingen (UMG), and Nils Brose, Director of the Department of Molecular Neurobiology at the Max Planck Institute of Experimental Medicine (MPI-EM), both members of the Cluster of Excellence Multiscale Bioimaging (MBExC), are among the recipients of highly competitive ERC grants this year. Both will be supported by the EU funding programme ERC Synergy Grants from 2021. In total, more than six million euros will flow to the Göttingen Campus until 2026.

The European Research Council (ERC) is the leading European funding organisation for basic research and awards Synergy Grants to research teams for groundbreaking, high-risk research programmes that cannot be managed by individual laboratories. This year only 33 out of 441 applications from all over Europe were selected for funding.

Prof. Dr. Silvio Rizzoli, together with the biophysicist Prof. Dr. Markus Sauer from the Biocentre of the University of Würzburg and the neuroscientist Prof. Dr. Ed Boyden from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, USA, have made a total of 11 million euros available for their 'ULTRARESOLUTION' project. Together the scientists want to develop new high-resolution microscopy methods to analyse the structure of nerve cells. To do so, they combine so-called super-resolution microscopy techniques with a new method for uniform physical expansion of the samples under investigation. "Our goal is to map cell structures that cannot be resolved with current methods," says Silvio Rizzoli.

Prof. Dr. Nils Brose, the neuroscientist Prof. Dr. Anne Schäfer from Mount Sinai Hospital in New York and the neurobiologists Prof. Dr. Thomas Oertner from the Institute of Synaptic Physiology at the University of Hamburg and Prof. Dr. Antoine Triller from the Institute of Biology at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris will be funded with a total of 10 million euros. Their research project 'MICRO-COPS' focuses on microglia cells, immune cells known for their role as 'rubbish collectors' in the brain. Brose and his colleagues want to investigate the previously unexplored function of these cells in the control of nerve cell circuits.



6 million euros of the ERC funding goes to two Göttingen neuroscientists (from left): Prof. Dr. Silvio Rizzoli (Director of the Institute of Neuro- and Sensory Physiology at the UMG), Prof. Dr. Nils Brose (Director of the Department of Molecular Neurobiology at the MPI of Experimental Medicine).
Photo: Ben Cooper



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"The fact that there are only 33 Synergy Grants in Europe, two of which were initiated in Göttingen, is a fantastic distinction for our neurobiological science location," says Nils Brose. "These funds give us the opportunity to open up completely new subject areas."

"Nils Brose and I have been cooperating for years and together we run the DFG's Quantitative Synaptology Collaborative Research Center (CRC 1286), in which we are studying the biology of synapses through which nerve cells communicate with each other. The two Synergy Grants are proof of the high international reputation of neuroscience at the Göttingen research location," says Silvio Rizzoli.

ABOUT THE AWARDEES

Prof. Dr. Silvio Rizzoli, Director of the Institute of Neuro- and Sensory Physiology at the University Medical Center Göttingen, has already received his third ERC grant. Rizzoli is also spokesperson of the CRC 1286 'Quantitative Synaptology' and spokesperson of the 'Center for Biostructural Imaging of Neurodegeneration' (BIN) of the UMG. Prior to the current award of the ERC Synergy Grant, he has already received two further highly endowed grants from the European Research Council, an ERC Starting Independent Researcher Grant in 2008 and an ERC Consolidator Grant in 2013.

Prof. Dr. Nils Brose, Director of the Department of Molecular Neurobiology at the Max Planck Institute of Experimental Medicine, Göttingen, is also the deputy spokesperson of the CRC 1286 'Quantitative Synaptology'. Prior to the current ERC Synergy Grant, he has already received funding through an ERC Advanced Grant from the European Research Council in 2015.

FURTHER INFORMATION:

About the Brose lab: <https://www.em.mpg.de/1816367/brose>

About the Rizzoli lab: <https://www.neuro-physiol.med.uni-goettingen.de/word-press/research/>

About the MBExC: www.mbexc.de

About the ERC synergy grant: <https://erc.europa.eu/news/erc-2020-synergy-grants-results>

University Medical Center Göttingen, Georg-August University
Press and public relations
Stefan Weller
Von-Siebold-Straße 3, 37075 Göttingen



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phone +49 (0)551 / 39-61020

E-mail: presse.medizin@med.uni-goettingen.de

Max Planck Institute of Experimental Medicine

Speaker of the Executive Director/PR

Viola Dettmer

Hermann-Rein-Straße 3, 37075 Göttingen

phone +49 (0)551 /3899-231

E-mail: dettmer@em.mpg.de