

## **Annual HERO Scientific Evaluation and future plans VRI**

On March 22, a meeting was held between the Expert Panel for Scientific Evaluation operating within the Virtual Research Institute [WIB] and the [Research Team](#) conducting the Research Task entitled 'Horizon for Excellence in messenger RNA applications in immunoOncology [HERO].'

The HERO project was launched in 2022 with nearly PLN 70 million in funding from the Polish Science Fund. The project is being conducted by scientists from a consortium of four leading research units in Poland: International Institute of Molecular and Cellular Biology in Warsaw, the University in Warsaw, Warsaw Medical University Institute of Physical Chemistry of the Polish Academy of Sciences. The Research Team is headed by Prof. Andrzej Dziembowski PhD, winner of an ERC Advanced grant in 2023. Other members of the team's key personnel include Prof. Marcin Nowotny PhD - who specializes in the structures and relationships of proteins that process DNA and RNA nucleic acids, Prof. Jacek Jemielity PhD - a prominent scientist in the area of mRNA, Prof Jakub Gołęb PhD and Prof. Dr Dominika Nowis PhD - experts in immune-oncology, and Prof. Robert Hołyst PhD - who supports the team in the physical aspects of the technology under development.

According to the rules of the WIB Programme, the work of the Research Team is subject to annual evaluation, as a result of which Managing Entity - Łukasiewicz Research Network PORT Polish Center for Technology Development decides on further research funding. This year's evaluation was attended by experts specializing in fields of immune-oncology and mRNA technology, as well as representatives of international entities representing investment funds interested in funding innovative biotechnology solutions. The evaluation meeting began with the Research Team presentation of achievements and results of the research conducted in 2023, followed by a discussion of research work plans for the coming year. In the second part of the meeting, the team and experts discussed specific aspects of the research conducted so far and its further development prospects in relation to the current conditions of high competition prevailing in science and business in the field of mRNA technology, which has been characterized by high growth rates in recent years.

Simultaneously with the annual scientific evaluation, activities related to the protection and commercialization of intellectual property developed by Research Team are being implemented. In accordance with the WIB Programme, the Managing Entity is responsible for the successful conduct of these processes, including the final commercialisation of research results.

Additionally, the Managing Entity is currently evaluating applications for funding submitted under the third WIB call - the final stage of evaluation is underway. We will soon find out what further projects will be among the funded and developed research tasks within the Virtual Research Institute.

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