

## Physical methods for the structural investigation of new materials

### Foreword

In 1999 the International Research Training Group “GRK532” was founded as a pilot project for cross-border European post-graduate education along the German/French/Luxembourg borders. The project consisted of an interdisciplinary research program on the synthesis, isolation and characterisation of new materials, and was accompanied by an ambitious education program for PhD students and post-doctoral scientists, involving research groups from diverse areas of chemistry, pharmacy, physics, biochemistry, materials science and analytical chemistry.

Much effort is currently under way to strengthen the European Education and Research Area. In this context, cross-border training plays a crucial role. France and Germany have started bi- and trilateral programs in recent years, which aim at taking advantage of the different training cultures and strengthening collaborative cross-border research. “Bottom-up” collaborations between an initially smaller number of partners allow scientists and funding organisations to gain more experience on the harmonisation of European higher education and the specificity of each funding system and they represent logical steps before further extensions are being sought.

The geographical vicinity of the partner laboratories from the Saarland in Germany, Lorraine and Alsace in France and Luxembourg provided GRK532 with the role of a unique and most efficient nucleus for joint post-graduate education programs in natural sciences. In addition to the scientists from the participating institutions, the Université Louis-Pasteur, Strasbourg (now Université de Strasbourg), the Université de Metz and the École Nationale Supérieure des Industries Chimiques (ENSIC-INPL) in Nancy (France), the Universität des Saarlandes, Saarbrücken (Germany) and the Centre de recherche publique Henry-Tudor (Luxembourg), a number of students and post-docs from other countries and continents have benefited from this initiative. GRK532 was one of

the first such initiatives supported by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (Bonn), the Ministère de la recherche and the CNRS (Paris) and the Franco-German University and the first Franco-German one in natural sciences. Its success has been monitored through international evaluation and unanimously acclaimed.

Numerous events and activities have provided opportunities to disseminate its achievements, which go much beyond pure science and training. Such bilateral actions increase students mobility both geographically and psychologically and provide a broader cultural basis. It is particularly rewarding to note that the PhD students and post-docs who participated in this initiative have been very successful in finding jobs either in academia or in industry.

This thematic issue of the *Comptes Rendus Chimie* contains publications from various research groups and illustrate the multidisciplinary of the collaborations that resulted from this initiative. We hope that the success of the GRK532 will pave the way for further developments and stimulate more scientific and personal contacts within the European research area.

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