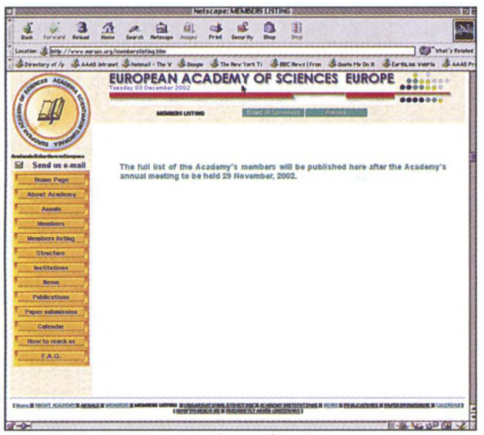
are put together in different ways as they are expressed. "This is a very important point," says project leader Yoshihide Hayashizaki.

While the mouse genome sequencers celebrate their accomplishments, the U.S. team sequencing the rat genome also has cause to cheer. Last week, Richard Gibbs, director of the genome center at Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, and his colleagues announced that they had completed a high-quality draft of the rat genome. "Mouse and man are fairly far apart," Artzt explains. Having two rodent genomes "will be particularly useful" in interpreting sequences from all three mammalian species—another gift waiting to be pulled out of its box. **–ELIZABETH PENNISI**

EUROPEAN RESEARCH

Mystery Academy Holds First Powwow in Private

BRUSSELS—The headquarters of science academies often are ornate structures and their annual meetings grand affairs involving hundreds of luminaries. Not so the European Academy of Sciences (EAS). Its humble address here is a mailbox on the fifth floor of a drab office building. And its first annual meeting, held on 29 November in a room borrowed from the European Commission (EC), drew 14 people who met behind closed doors.



Stay tuned. As *Science* went to press, EAS had not yet posted its full member roll.

CREDITS: (TOP TO BOTTOM) PALLAVA BAGLA; WWW.EURASC.ORG

The newest academy on the block is not off to an auspicious start. On 31 October, the U.K.'s Royal Society issued a statement warning scientists "to exercise due caution before making financial commitments" to EAS, which began earlier this year as a dues-paying organization but now bestows memberships free of charge. The scientists behind the organization admit that they stumbled out of the starting gate. "We made a few mistakes … that obviously led to misunderstandings," says Philip Carrion, scientific adviser to EAS.

The academy is an attempt to transform a pilot project on technology transfer into a broader forum on research commercialization. Earlier this year, Carrion, a materials scientist at the University of Udine, Italy, and 30 colleagues completed an EC-sponsored project in Krakow, Poland, that helped obtain loans for small businesses by providing them with advanced technology from Western Europe. "We now want to expand" that model through EAS, Carrion says. A society of scholars, he explains, is "very important to assure the industrial partners of our academy that the technology is really state-of-the-art."

A few individuals tapped for membership felt the honor warranted telling the world. For instance, the Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles put out a press release in August announcing neurosurgeon Keith Black's selection to the body. Wolfgang Sigmund, a materials scientist at the University of Florida, Gainesville, says that EAS "described my field of research more accurately than I ever did," and he presumed the organization was legitimate partly because he was the only person at his university offered membership. Others are less charitable. Guenter Albrecht-Buehler, a biologist at Northwestern University School of Medicine in Chicago, says that although he was delighted when the academy nominated him in September, he now has misgivings. He told *Science* that as a precaution he has canceled the credit card he used to make the dues payment of $115.

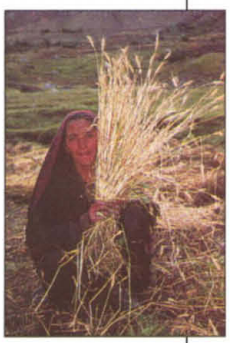
The academy has sought to legitimize itself by applying for membership in the All European Academy, an umbrella organization for national academies from 38 European countries. However, a spokesperson for the All European Academy says that EAS's application was rejected because it is not a national organization. EAS also invited the Royal Society to send an observer to its annual meeting. The society did so; that person was unavailable for an interview before *Science* went to press.

EAS officials barred a reporter from *Science* from attending the meeting. According to participants interviewed after they emerged from the 3-hour event, discussions centered on fundamental issues such as the academy's structure and funding. Apparently, the body has decided to begin publishing annals early next year and intends to hold a nanotechnology meeting in Paris in May 2003.

A total of four of the academy's claimed 250 members attended the gathering, one of whom was Carrion. A second, computer scientist Boris Verkhovsky of the New Jersey Institute of Technology in Newark, told *Science* that he's convinced that "this academy will succeed." Another member present and accounted for, geophysicist Enders Robinson of Columbia University in New York City, says that "there is no such organization in Europe with a similar approach." Few would debate that point. **–PHILIPP WEIS**

ScienceScope

Indian Biodiversity After years of debate, India is close to adopting a biodiversity protection law that regulates foreign access to, and use of, the nation's biological wealth and indigenous knowledge. This week, the lower house of parliament approved a bill requiring overseas collaborators to get permits before conducting research or commercializing discoveries. Some researchers worry that the rules, intended to clarify complex issues, might also add to bureaucratic red tape.



The new rules would require any foreign entity to get permits from India's environment ministry before working with biological resources. The ministry would also assign ownership rights to any related intellectual property. Indian citizens must obtain permission to transfer materials or knowledge to foreign partners.

The new law should bolster collaborations, says Kamaljit Bawa, a biologist at the University of Massachusetts, Boston, and a trustee of the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment in Bangalore, but it could also delay studies. Researchers in India, he says, already "face far too many hurdles even without regulation." Observers predict that the bill will soon sail through Parliament's upper house.

Drug Abuse Chief? Nora Volkow, a psychiatrist who now heads life sciences at Brookhaven National Lab in Upton, New York, has been offered the top job at the National Institute on Drug Abuse—but she hasn't yet decided if she'll take it. The institute, which will have a budget of $970 million in 2003, has lacked a director since Alan Leshner stepped down last year to head AAAS (publisher of *Science*).

Volkow, 46, trained in her native Mexico and uses brain imaging to study the neurobiology of addiction. She has shown that drug addicts tend to have fewer than normal dopamine receptors. She has also found that dopamine signaling could be linked to obesity. "She's a hot-shot researcher who has quite a vision and is not afraid to express it," says Alan Kraut, director of the American Psychological Society.

Volkow's appointment would also fit with the growing emphasis on linking basic and clinical research, says neuroscientist Eric Nestler of the University of Texas, Dallas. "Nora embodies translational research," he says. Volkow expects to make a decision by 1 January.