



Institute of Evolutionary Medicine (IEM)

Annual Report 2020 – Management Summary (English Version)

This reporting year is exceptional due to the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e. Institute-specific crisis management and safety concepts, mandatory home office periods, conversion of Institute events onto virtual platforms, postponement of travel, new research on the pandemic-related topics, etc.). From the internal anonymised staff evaluation, the Institute of Evolutionary Medicine (IEM) crisis management was rated as "very good". Top priority was given to taking care of the staff (e.g. daily information with updates from the directorate, recall actions, close virtual contacts).

In the year under review, the IEM further strengthened its position as an internationally unique institution with around forty employees. This was achieved specifically through numerous local and international research and teaching cooperations.

In 2020, over fifty scientific papers were published, for example in PNAS, Evolution, Medicine, and Public Health, Current Biology, BMC Biology, Scientific Reports, The Lancet, Blood, Nutrition Reviews, Nature Ecology and Evolution, and Nature Communications.

Third-party funding was again successfully obtained, and several SNF-funded projects were underway during the past year. Unfortunately, the support from the extremely generous Mäxi Foundation has terminated as per its planned term. In 2020, the number of qualification projects at the IEM increased. Highlights were, for example, the signing of a pioneering Memorandum of Understanding with the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities, the opening of a new state-of-the-art paleogenetics laboratory, or the various research activities that gain worldwide recognition (e.g. an IEM media release among the top ten of the entire UZH).

There are several important issues for the future development of the IEM, including a better allocation of essential lab and office space at the Irchel location, the desired continuation of the assistant professorships, and further acquisition of third-party funding.

With relation to our teaching responsibilities, the scope was maintained and teaching was again rated as "very good" by a majority of the students.

The medical object collection was further inventoried and continues to be available for research and teaching.

The promotion of women and junior scientists is an explicit goal at the IEM. Finally, the staff of the IEM were involved in numerous scientific and non-university committees and services, which promotes the positive outreach of the institute.