

HCERES

High Council for the Evaluation of Research
and Higher Education

Research units

HCERES report on research unit:

International Center for Infectiology Research

CIRI

Under the supervision of
the following institutions
and research bodies:

Université Claude Bernard - Lyon 1

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique - CNRS

Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche

Médicale – INSERM

Ecole Normale Supérieure de Lyon - ENS

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In the name of HCERES,¹

Didier HOUSSIN, president

In the name of the experts committee,²

Jean-Marc REICHHART, chairman of the
committee

Under the decree N^o2014-1365 dated 14 november 2014,

¹ The president of HCERES "countersigns the evaluation reports set up by the experts committees and signed by their chairman." (Article 8, paragraph 5)

² The evaluation reports "are signed by the chairman of the expert committee". (Article 11, paragraph 2)

Evaluation report

This report is the result of the evaluation by the experts committee, the composition of which is specified below. The assessments contained herein are the expression of an independent and collegial deliberation of the committee.

Unit name:	International Center for Infectiology Research
Unit acronym:	CIRI
Label requested:	INSERM, CNRS, ENS, University Lyon 1
Present no.:	INSERM U1111 - CNRS UMR5308 - ENS Lyon - UCB Lyon 1
Name of Director (2013-2015):	Mr François-Loïc COSSET
Name of Project Leader (2016-2020):	Mr François-Loïc COSSET

Expert committee members

Chair:	Mr Jean-Marc REICHART, University of Strasbourg
Experts:	Ms Sophie CAILLAT-ZUCMAN, INSERM Paris
	Mr Cecil CZERKINSKY, Nice University
	Mr Henri-Jacques DELECLUSE, DKFZ, Heidelberg, Germany
	Mr Dominique GARCIN, University of Geneva, Switzerland
	Mr Yves GAUDIN, CNRS, Paris (representative of INSERM CSS)
	Mr Mathias HERRMANN, Saarland University, Homburg, Germany
	Mr Roger HEWSON, Public Health England, Salisbury, UK
	Mr Sylvain LATOUR, INSERM, Paris (representative of the CoNRS)
	Mr Christian MUNZ, University of Zürich, Switzerland
	Mr Vladimir PELICIC, Imperial College London, UK
	Mr Philippe PIERRE, INSERM Marseille
	Ms Ana SOUSA, University of Lisbon, Portugal

Scientific delegate representing the HCERES:

Mr Joost VAN MEERWIJK

Representatives of the unit's supervising institutions and bodies:

Mr Fabrice CORDEY (representative of the Doctoral school 341)

Mr Hubert ENDTZ, Fondation Mérieux

Mr Germain GILLET, University Claude Bernard Lyon 1

Mr Frank LAFFONT, CNRS

Ms Monique LAFON, Institut Pasteur

Ms Françoise MONEGER (representative of the Doctoral school 340)

Ms Stéphanie POMMIER, INSERM

Mr Yanick RICARD, ENS Lyon

Mr François TEILLARD, Lyon Hospitals (HCL)

1 • Introduction

History and geographical location of the unit

The International Center for Research on Infectious diseases (Centre International de Recherche en Infectiologie) or CIRI was created in 2013, with the goal of regrouping the teams working on infectious diseases from the Lyon area. The fairies that leaned over the crib were INSERM, CNRS, ENS Lyon and University Claude Bernard Lyon 1 (UCBL) together with the Pasteur Institute, and the Hospices Civils de Lyon. The CIRI, which is a joint research unit (U1111 INSERM-UMR CNRS 5308-ENS Lyon-UCBL) merged from two core-founding bodies: the former Human Virology (U758 INSERM-ENS Lyon, director Mr François-Loïc COSSET) and Immunity, Infection, Vaccination (I2V; U851 INSERM-UCBL, director Ms Jacqueline MARVEL) units. Three other teams, the “Legionella pathogenesis” (from CNRS), the “Biology of Emerging viral Infections” (UBIVE from Pasteur Institute) and the “Emerging Pathogen Laboratory (Fondation Mérieux) joined this core of 17 teams and the CIRI represents now 20 teams and more than 300 researchers, technicians and graduate students.

As for now, 18 teams of the CIRI have been relocated on the Lyon Gerland Campus, however not yet in the same building, while one team is still located at the La Doua Campus, another at Campus Laennec and a third partly at Campus Lyon-Sud.

Management team

The CIRI was created in 2013 for a two-year period with Mr François-Loïc COSSET as head. For the new five-year contract, Mr François-Loïc COSSET will be the director, assisted by Mr François VANDENESCH as deputy director, an executive Board (the director, the deputy director, the general administrator who assists the director in administrative duties, and four delegate directors, Mr Andrea CIMARELLI, Mr Mathias FAURE, Mr Renaud MAHIEUX, and Ms Jacqueline MARVEL, elected from the team leaders) and a board of team leaders (23 team leaders total in the new geometry of the CIRI) for the strategic decisions.

HCERES nomenclature

SVE1_LS6 Immunology, microbiology, virology, parasitology

Unit workforce

Unit workforce	Number as at 30/06/2014	Number as at 01/01/2016
N1: Permanent professors and similar positions	35	45
N2: Permanent researchers from Institutions and similar positions	39	37
N3: Other permanent staff (without research duties)	65	75
N4: Other professors (Emeritus Professor, on-contract Professor, etc.)	9	6
N5: Other researchers (Emeritus Research Director, Postdoctoral students, visitors, etc.)	24	18
N6: Other contractual staff (without research duties)	34	21
TOTAL N1 to N6	206	202

Unit workforce	Number as at 30/06/2014	Number as at 01/01/2016
Doctoral students	55	
Theses defended	75	
Postdoctoral students having spent at least 12 months in the unit	17*	
Number of Research Supervisor Qualifications (HDR) taken	7	
Qualified research supervisors (with an HDR) or similar positions	42	47

* As defined by INSERM up to 3 years after the PhD. Three years after their PhD, they are categorized as “researcher on non permanent position”

2 • Overall assessment of the unit

Global assessment of the unit

The International Centre for Research on Infectious diseases (Centre International de Recherche en Infectiologie) or CIRI, created in 2013 under the supervision of INSERM, CNRS, ENS Lyon, UCBL, the Pasteur Institute and the Hospices Civils de Lyon, gathers 20 teams from the Lyon area working on infectious diseases. The committee felt that the grouping of these teams in a single unit was a very pertinent initiative, giving rise to a highly productive centre where the respective competences of the different founding teams are fully integrated into a cross-fertilized research on infectious diseases. By many aspects, the CIRI is a high-achieving centre, fully integrated in the industrial and clinical landscape of the Lyon area, which publishes in high quality journals and has secured impressive founding from private, national or international agencies (e.g. four ERCs). A guarantee for the future and the positive development of the CIRI is that the founding teams have been able to attract and/or develop quite an impressive number of high profile junior researchers, three of which have developed their own group and are proposed to integrate the CIRI for the next period.

Strengths and opportunities in relation to the context

The publication record of the founding teams has been excellent and, since its creation, the collaborative intra-CIRI publications have improved in terms of quality and impact.

The close and very effective collaboration between the immunology and microbiology or virology teams, which was central in the creation of the CIRI, is an added value.

Given the attractiveness of the research environment, the centre has been able to attract and/or develop very promising young researchers as assessed by the fact that their projects have been supported by competitive funding sources (such as two ERC “starting grants”). These young PI’s have integrated or will now integrate the CIRI as new teams for the next period.

The rich environment of the Lyon region in terms of common facilities, public (SFR Biosciences, the BioSafety Level 4 (BSL4) facility, which is unique in France) or private (BioAster Technology Research Institute (TRI)), guarantees the development of the proposed research and projects.

The close interaction with the clinical centres in the hospitals is a major strength in terms of development of clinical translational programs. The committee has noticed a well-balanced development of the research between fundamental and translational.

The strong interaction with the Lyon academic life (Master-programs and PhD schools), providing a reservoir of young students and researchers to the CIRI.

Almost all the teams have secured an impressive amount of funds for the next period, again guarantee for the development of the proposed projects.

Weaknesses and threats related to the context

The main weakness that the committee has noticed is the still dispersed localisation of some of the CIRI teams, which is a threat to the scientific life of the centre.

Whereas research of some of the CIRI-teams depends heavily on the BSL4 laboratory, the local access to this facility appears difficult.

The committee has also seen a weakness in the possible future inequality of funding between different teams, which are competing for the same, more and more limited, resources.

Recommendations

The committee recommends that the direction of the CIRI put major efforts in securing as quickly as possible the funds and the space in order to relocate as many teams as possible on the same site in Lyon Gerland.

The access to the BSL4 laboratory, which is essential for the research of the CIRI, should be optimised and secured and a priority access should even be negotiated if possible.

Since its creation, the quality of the work conducted in the CIRI continues to grow in terms of basic and translational research, academic reputation and teaching. The unit organisation and life is excellent as judged by the satisfaction of the staff and students to work at CIRI and the final recommendation of the committee is to keep going and growing.