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Object: NENS STIPENDS for Training Stays

In the 2010 edition of NENS Stipends for training stays, NENS Office has granted me for my study visit in another European laboratory. I really want to thanks NENS board for my grant and its support for my visit project. I am a PhD student in a French Neuroscience PhD program registered at NENS member school program. My study visit in Portugal took place during my first PhD year. During my training stay, I had the opportunity to gain international experience and to learn a new technique developed and used by Uchida and Mainen (2003) in a famous neuroscience center. I have been in Mainen's lab from March 30th to May 1st.

The method that I learned consists in an operant conditioning, a two alternative choice odor discrimination. This olfactory discrimination task is used in rats. I have been familiarized with the setup and I practiced myself with two rats. During my training stay, I learned the different steps necessary to bring naive rats to learn the task. I was really surprised to see how rats learn quickly. I also encountered the major points to take into consideration during a behavioural experiment. I would like now to implement this method in my lab.

This study visit was not only the opportunity to me to learn a new methodological technique but also an opportunity to meet brilliant scientists. Scientists in the laboratory are smart but also really nice. Atmosphere is excellent which contributes to strong interaction in the group. All people in the lab integrated me, helped me and gave me a lot of advices during the behavioral experiments. Thanks to them I acquired new methodology and knowledge. Members of Mainen's lab also gave me the opportunity to discuss and think about my work. It was also really interesting to see another lab functioning. Different fields of neuroscience are studied in the institute and it is really cosmopolitan. This diversity allowed me to share different scientific experiences and to progress in English.

I really enjoyed my visit. It was not only an interesting and enriching scientific experience but also a fulfilling life and social experience. This visit was very constructive for me. I really want to thanks NENS Office for its generous support.

Best regards,

Emmanuelle COURTIOL