



Professor Igor F. Zhimulev
Director of IMCB, Novosibirsk

December 9, 2014

I am very happy to write a letter in support of the Institute of Molecular and Cellular Biology (IMCB) of Novosibirsk. I became aware of this new Institute in the summer of 2012, when I was invited to attend the "Chromosome 2012" international meeting organized by Igor F. Zhimulev. I am now working in the IMCB as a holder of a "Russian Megagrant" from the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation. I am thus very familiar with work done in the Institute, its structure and its organization.

The IMCB is brand new and very well equipped with a modern and complete instrumentation, fully comparable to that found in the best scientific Institutions of the US or Western Europe. The institute host several groups of excellent international standing. For example, among the senior scientists I would like to mention Igor F. Zhimulev, internationally considered as the major expert in the analysis of *Drosophila* polytene chromosomes and in the use of this system to understand the structure of the eukaryotic chromatin. The IMCB also hosts several very promising young group leaders, of whom I would like to mention Alexey Pindyurin and Stepan Belyakin. Alexey is studying the influence of the local chromatin context on gene regulation, and was directly involved in the development of the methodology named "Thousands of Reporters Integrated in Parallel" ("TRIP"), which represents a new and powerful approach to understand the regulatory properties of chromatin. Stepan is elucidating the mechanisms regulating of DNA replication in *Drosophila* and has also started an investigation on the role of the ultra-conserved DNA elements in different species. Both Alexey and Stepan, as well as other researchers in the IMCB, routinely use the most modern techniques of molecular genetics, which have been also acquired by the PhD students and postdoctoral fellows working with these investigators.

The high scientific standing of the IMCB is also testified by the assignment of a Russian Megagrant. It is indeed quite obvious that my grant proposal entitled "The mechanism of kinetochore-driven microtubule formation in *Drosophila*" was funded not only for the quality of the project but also for the quality of the hosting Institute. In starting this project I found the IMCB an ideal working environment. I was not only helped by the Director and the personnel of the Institute to solve the logistic problems associated with the creation of a new laboratory, but I also found a valuable collaborator in Alexey Pindyurin. In a few months, we managed to hire several new PhD students and postdoctoral fellows, who have rapidly learned problems and techniques and are now enthusiastically contributing to the project. I am convinced that thanks to these young researchers and the scientific environment of the IMCB, our project will be quite successful.

I have heard of the possibility that in the framework of a reform of the scientific Institutions in Russia, the IMCB might be merged with another bigger Institute. In my opinion, this would be a big mistake, because there is the risk that a dilution of the current competences and scientific needs of the IMCB would delay its fast scientific growth. In addition, any change in the structure of the IMCB is likely to interfere with the current friendly and collaborative atmosphere in the Institute. This atmosphere represents an important positive factor for PhD student training, and greatly facilitates scientific growth and successful pursuing of research objectives.

Yours sincerely,
Maurizio Gatti

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Maurizio Gatti'.

Professor Emeritus of Genetics
EMBO member; former President of the Italian Genetics Association