

naturejobs

**THE CAREERS
MAGAZINE FOR
SCIENTISTS**

Next month a group of students will launch their bid to set up a national association for postdocs in Britain (see page 546). A worthy plan — although it does raise the question of why this hasn't been done before. The most likely reason is that starting a postdoc organization means taking time away from work. It isn't easy trying to run an organization to improve your working conditions and prospects when the time it takes can have a detrimental effect on the very things you're trying to make better. Fortunately, creating such an organization need not be difficult, especially as both the European Union and the United States have established models in the shape of EURODOC and the US National Postdoctoral Association (NPA).

Why are these organizations so important? Because without them, myriad postdoc complaints — such as low stipends, a lack of benefits and a dearth of career advice — go, if not unheard, then largely ignored. Having a national presence gives a voice and a face to these concerns.

But the key to better treatment for UK postdocs lies not just with the fledgling national organization — it also rests in the hands of smaller organizations at each of the country's research institutions. As part of its success, the NPA has encouraged the foundation of local postdoc organizations and offices (see *Nature* **441**, 249; 2006). The fledgling UK association would do well to follow this model. National organizations provide a unified voice and can spearhead drives to collect data on salaries, benefits and long-term career prospects. But it is the local organizations that can address specific problems at individual institutions and help individual postdocs feel less isolated.

Yes, establishing these local organizations takes time. But thanks to the NPA and EURODOC, fellows in Britain or any other country don't need to reinvent the wheel. Rising to the challenge will prove to be more than worthwhile — especially if it means that students have better postdoc experiences and find it easier to make the transition to permanent employment.

Paul Smaglik, *Naturejobs* editor

CONTACTS

Publisher: Ben Crowe
Editor: Paul Smaglik
Assistant Editor: Gene Russo

US Head Office, New York
75 Varick Street, 9th Floor,
New York, NY 10013-1917
Tel: +1 800 989 7718
Fax: +1 800 989 7103
e-mail: naturejobs@natureny.com

US Sales Manager/Corporations:
Peter Bless
Classified Sales Representatives
Tel: +1 800 989 7718
East USA/Canada: Andrew Bennie
**NIH/Maryland/New York/
Pennsylvania:** Shelley Cohen

San Francisco Office
Classified Sales Representative:

Michaela Bjorkman
West USA/West Corp. Canada
225 Bush Street, Suite 1453
San Francisco, CA 94104
Tel: +1 415 781 3803
Fax: +1 415 781 3805
e-mail: m.bjorkman@naturesf.com

European Head Office, London
The Macmillan Building,
4 Crinan Street, London N1 9XW, UK
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4961
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4996
e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com

European Sales Manager:
Andy Douglas (4975)
Advertising Production Manager:
Stephen Russell
To send materials use London
address above.
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7843 4816

Fax: +44 (0) 20 7843 4996
e-mail: naturejobs@nature.com
Naturejobs web development:
Tom Hancock
Naturejobs online production:
Catherine Alexander

European Satellite Office
Patrick Phelan
e-mail: p.phelan@nature.com

Japan Head Office, Tokyo
Chiyoda Building,
2-37 Ichigayatamachi,
Shinjuku-ku,
Tokyo 162-0843
Tel: +81 3 3267 8751
Fax: +81 3 3267 8746

Asia-Pacific Sales Manager:
Ayako Watanabe
e-mail: a.watanabe@natureasia.com