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Publisher *Taylor & Francis*

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Liquid Crystals Today

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713681230>

European Science Foundation Exploratory Workshop on 'Frontiers in European Research on Liquid Crystalline Soft Matter', 26-29 May 2009, Bandol, France

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Online publication date: 15 June 2010

To cite this Article Mitov, Michel(2010) 'European Science Foundation Exploratory Workshop on 'Frontiers in European Research on Liquid Crystalline Soft Matter', 26-29 May 2009, Bandol, France', *Liquid Crystals Today*, 19: 1, 20

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/13583140903396127

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13583140903396127>

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CONFERENCE REPORT

European Science Foundation Exploratory Workshop on 'Frontiers in European Research on Liquid Crystalline Soft Matter', 26–29 May 2009, Bandol, France

What are the hottest topics related to the formation processes and properties of the liquid crystal state? What are the latest developments in innovative and interdisciplinary themes such as biotechnology, colloids or photovoltaics where liquid crystallinity plays a major role? These are examples of questions which were at the core of the discussions at the European Science Foundation (ESF) Exploratory Workshop on 'Frontiers in European Research on Liquid Crystalline Soft Matter' which was held in Bandol (France) in May 2009. The meeting was organised by Jan Lagerwall (Martin-Luther-Universität Halle-Wittenberg, Germany) and Sven Lagerwall (LC Lab, Bandol) and made possible with funding from the ESF, and additional financial support from the International Liquid Crystal Society (ILCS) and the journal *Soft Matter*. The agenda of 25 scientists from eight European countries (France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Slovenia, Sweden, UK) comprised three components: research presentations, network discussions (identifying topics which would benefit from collaborations) and strategic discussions. On the latter, a restricted number of subjects were defined at the end of the week, with the objective to plan specific follow-up research activities and collaborative actions within the framework of the ESF or for submission to the EU 7th Framework Programme, for example. A senior editor from *Nature Materials* – as an observer – and an ESF representative also participated during the workshop.

Five sessions were focused on liquid crystals: in living matter; as drops, tubes, foams or thin films; as organised fluids for solid objects; as functional materials; in optic/electro-optic devices. As a consequence, most of the presentations and discussions dealt with self-assembly processes underlying the formation of liquid crystalline phases, advanced materials templated from liquid crystals (aiming at the *in situ* organisation of mesogenic monomers, micro- and nanoparticles, and carbon nanotubes), organic electronic and/or photoconductive components, actuators, sensors, photonic crystals and controlled-release drug systems.

The workshop venue, the LC Lab, is located on the ground floor of a very pleasant *provençal* type villa,



Workshop participants: Giusy Scalia, Jan Lagerwall, Françoise Livolant, Helen Gleeson, Victoria Cleave (senior editor of *Nature Materials*), Katarina Edwards, Claudio Zannoni, Paul van der Schoot, Yves Bouligand, Christophe Blanc, Ingo Dierking, David Quere, Michel Mitov, Owe Orwar, Ulf Olsson, Sven Lagerwall, Mary O'Neill, Mark Warner, Carsten Tschierske, Ralf Stannarius, Tommaso Bellini, Per Rudquist, Gert Jan Vroege, Frank Giesselmann, Robert Holyst and Igor Musevic.

reconstructed and equipped for scientific research activities and meetings in the 1980s by Sven Lagerwall. The very warm hospitality of the Lagerwall family greatly contributed to create a friendly and relaxing atmosphere suitable for enthusiastic debates and stimulating discussions around the future directions for the field.

Finally, the participants left the workshop with one single regret: not to have almost seen a beetle exhibiting its cholesteric colours in the Mediterranean garden of the LC Lab.

A full description of the attendees, the programme and the abstracts can be found at www.workshop.lcsoftmatter.com.

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