

Report on fellowship activities at Collegium Budapest

Personal information:

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Institution: Konkoly Observatory of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences

Academic year: 2009-2010

Length of stay: 2 months

Summary of research activities

Working on my project I completed several versions of a new scale (called the „London scale”) to quantify the importance and risk of any discovery-claim of extraterrestrial life. The method is based on the same principles as in the case of earlier scales: several parameters are suggested – characterizing the class of phenomenon (based on both its similarity to, or difference from terrestrial life forms and its character), the type of discovery, the distance to the phenomenon in question and the reliability of the claim – and combined into one simple London Scale Index from 0 to 10. After efficient discussions of my ideas within the focus group „Mars Express, Dark Dune Spots and the astrobiological potential of Mars” (ESA2) I have presented the scale at a fellow-seminar on 19th November.

With the support of the Collegium I could participate at the 9th EANA conference in October in Brussels, where I had the opportunity to discuss my ideas also with some foreign experts in astrobiology.

I have some newly established working contacts abroad, with Margaret Race of the Carl Sagan Center for the Study of Life in the Universe (US) in particular. During my stay at the Collegium I worked on an invited paper for “Philosophical Transactions A” to summarize the results of an assessment by scales of the importance of a putative discovery of extraterrestrial life or intelligence (the London Scale and the Rio Scale respectively). It will be presented in January 2010 in London during a Scientific Discussion Meeting of the Royal Society.

During my stay in the Collegium I had an invited lecture at the Péter Pázmány University on the same topic.

Sincere thanks to the Collegium and its first-class staff for making my stay at the Institute both productive and pleasant.