

# GROUP OF EIGHT EUROPEAN FELLOWSHIPS ALUMNI



The Group of Eight (Go8) is a coalition of leading Australian universities, intensive in research and comprehensive in general and professional education.

Go8 universities can be distinguished in the following ways:

- they have nurtured every Nobel Prize winner educated at an Australian university;
- they account for 70 per cent of all research income in Australia's university system;
- they enrol over half of all higher degree by research students;
- three quarters of Australia's highly cited university researchers (top 0.5 per cent of all publishing authors in a given field) are from Go8 universities;
- they hold over 90 per cent of US patents for inventions and generate 80 per cent of spin-off companies created by Australian universities;
- they contribute over 70 per cent of the Fellows of the four Australian learned academies.



Global partnerships enable our universities to remain at the cutting edge of research and innovation.

With this in mind, the Go8 universities offer a number of fellowships to early career researchers in Europe each year to further research collaboration between Australia and Europe.

The fellowships are offered to citizens of Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Romania and Slovakia.

Go8 European Fellows receive funds to support travel and living costs to work at a Go8 member university for up to six months. It is expected that fellows will continue to receive a salary from their home university or research institute.

Each year applications open in late August and close in late October for fellowships to be commenced the following calendar year. Further details about the eligibility requirements and the application process are available from the Go8 website. [www.go8.edu.au](http://www.go8.edu.au)

Name	Home institution	Country	Go8 institution	Discipline
<b>2007</b>				
Dr Joanna Michalak	University of Lodz	Poland	The University of New South Wales	Management
Dr Dominik Rachoń	Medical University of Gdańsk	Poland	Monash University	Medicine, endocrinology
Dr Csaba Schneider	Computer and Automation Research Institute, Academy of Science	Hungary	The University of Western Australia	Mathematics and computation
Dr Gyulo Szabo	University of Szeged	Hungary	The University of Sydney	Astronomy: instrumentation and astrophysics
<b>2008</b>				
Dr Mária Bagyánszki	University of Szeged	Hungary	The University of Melbourne	Neurobiology
Dr Martina Horakova	Masaryk University	Czech Republic	The University of Queensland	Contemporary Australian literature and culture
Dr Matti Möttus	Tartu Observatory	Estonia	The University of Adelaide	Remote sensing
Dr Zoltán Petres	Computer and Automation Research Institute, Academy of Science	Hungary	The Australian National University	Computer science: artificial intelligence
<b>2009</b>				
Dr Martin Balog	Institute of Materials and Machine Mechanics, The Slovak Academy of Sciences	Slovak Republic	The University of Queensland	Materials research
Dr Klaudia Anna Borowiak	Poznan University of Life Science	Poland	The University of Melbourne	Ecology
Dr Zuzanna Bulat Silva	University of Wroclaw	Poland	The Australian National University	Lexical semantics
Dr Malgorzata Kotula-Balak	Jagiellonian University	Poland	The University of Adelaide	Reproductive physiology and endocrinology
Dr Monika Kusiak	Institute of Geological Sciences, Kraków Research Centre	Poland	The University of Western Australia	Geology
Dr Arkadiusz Lach	University of Nicolaus Copernicus in Torun	Poland	The Australian National University	Law
Dr Iva Strnadová	Charles University	Czech Republic	The University of Sydney	Special education
Dr Zofia Wodniecka	Jagiellonian University	Poland	The University of New South Wales	Psychology
Dr Katarzyna Zawalińska	Institute of Rural and Agricultural Development, Polish Academy of Sciences	Poland	Monash University	Economics

Name	Home institution	Country	Go8 institution	Discipline
<b>2010</b>				
Dr Réka Benczes	Eotvos Lorand University	Hungary	Monash University	Linguistics
Dr Jaroslav Miller	Palacky University	Czech Republic	The University of Western Australia	Urban history and sociology, demography, cultural anthropology
Dr Martin Kasny	Charles University	Czech Republic	The University of Queensland	Parasitology, proteomics, molecular biology
Dr Patrycja Ciosek	Warsaw University of Technology	Poland	The University of New South Wales	Analytical chemistry
Dr Anna Sankowska	Warsaw School of Economics	Poland	The University of Sydney	Management
Dr Krzysztof Bolejko	Polish Academy of Sciences	Poland	The Australian National University	Cosmology
Dr Magdalena Cuciureanu	Gr T Popa University of Medicine and Pharmacy	Romania	The University of Adelaide	Pathology, pharmacology, immunology
Dr Daiva Ribikauskiene	Institute of Animal Science, Lithuania Veterinary Academy	Lithuania	The University of Melbourne	Animal genetics and breeding
<b>2011</b>				
Dr Hrvoje Mihanovic	Hydrographic Institute	Croatia	The University of Western Australia	Physical oceanography
Dr Larisa Zoranic	University of Split	Croatia	The University of Queensland	Biophysics, biomedicine
Dr Jadranka Barešić	Ruder Boskovic Institute	Croatia	The Australian National University	Archaeology, geology, hydrology
Dr Branka Jelacic	Ruder Boskovic Institute	Croatia	Monash University	Molecular biology
Dr Kaire Torn	University of Tartu	Estonia	The University of New South Wales	Ecology
Dr Andras Szentkiralyi	Semmelweis University	Hungary	The University of Sydney	Sleep medicine
Dr Gintare Grigonyte	Vytautas Magnus University	Lithuania	The University of Melbourne	Computational linguistics
Dr Sona Garajová	Slovak Academy of Sciences	Slovak Republic	The University of Adelaide	Biochemistry

## Dr Dominik Rachoń

*Go8 European Fellow 2007*

**Monash University is a very long way from his home town of Gdańsk but this endocrinologist from Poland and Go8 Fellow says he feels a strong connection to Australia because its people are so open and friendly.**

Dr Dominik Rachoń arrived in Melbourne in late 2007 as one of four inaugural Go8 European Fellows who will spend up to six months working in a Go8 university. At the time he did not know anyone in Australia but in matters both professional and personal, he says he couldn't be happier. Within weeks of his arrival he was invited to spend Christmas with the family of a new colleague and to submit a review concerning postmenopausal hormone therapy for publication with his supervisor.

Dr Rachoń says he particularly appreciates the opportunity to work with one of Australia's leading researchers in women's health, Professor Helena Teede at the Monash Institute of Health Services Research, with whom he will jointly publish an article before he returns to Poland.

The Go8 European Fellowships recognise the importance of international contacts for early career researchers and aim to help establish those contacts in Australia for talented young researchers from emerging European economies.

It may be the women of Australia who will benefit most from Dr Rachoń's research given his particular interest and publication record on topics such as the risks and benefits of hormone replacement therapy (HRT). His article, soon to be published in *Climacteric: The Journal of the International Menopause Society*, is based on data revealing that while oral HRT medication seems to increase the risk of blood clots, other methods such as patches which release oestrogen through the skin into the blood stream, when tailored to the needs of individual women, do not necessarily increase this risk.



## Dr Csaba Schneider

*Go8 European Fellow 2007*

**Dr Csaba Schneider is no stranger to Australia, having completed his PhD at The Australian National University and postdoc work at The University of Western Australia (UWA) in the 1990s.**

He has enjoyed showing Perth and other parts of Australia to his partner and young family during his five months at UWA as one of the inaugural Go8 European Fellows.

Dr Schneider's research discipline is abstract group theory. He applied for the Fellowship because of the opportunity to work with Australian researchers who are recognised as some of the world leaders in this field.

He describes his academic supervisor and main research partner in Australia, UWA's Professor Cheryl Praeger as an "exceptional mathematician" with whom he hopes to continue a long-lasting research collaboration in future.

While group theory is classified as basic research, it has important applications in a range of other fields such as chemistry, geometry and theoretical physics.

Dr Schneider says he was excited to learn he had the opportunity to return to Australia and particularly appreciated his warm welcome from the Australian Ambassador in Hungary before he began his Fellowship.



## Dr Zoltán Petres

**Coming from a European city like Budapest with its two million residents and centuries old history, Dr Zoltán Petres finds life in Canberra a bit quiet for his liking.**

But he is delighted about the collaborative opportunities his Go8 European Fellowship at The Australian National University (ANU) has made possible.

Dr Petres has been working with ANU and CSIRO experts in his field of complex systems modelling, a discipline that has huge benefits for a wide range of industries and particularly for small to medium enterprises (SMEs), on which the Australian economy is heavily reliant.

His employer in Hungary is the Computer and Automation Research Institute where, among other projects, he works with European industry giants like ThyssenKrupp and Knorr-Bremse and designs systems that will prevent trucks rolling over on icy roads.

In Australia for four months, Dr Petres was working on automatic text summarisation, and has benefited from ANU's 3D virtual room and the CSIRO's advanced

robot technology, both of which are not available to him in Budapest and will assist his own future research efforts.

Though he is looking forward to making his way home to Hungary for a Christmas involving hot wine and snow rather than beach and sun, he is confident the Go8 Fellowship will be the start of an ongoing collaborative research relationship with the ANU and Australia. Already there is potential for Australian involvement in a multi-lateral EU funded project to improve the efficiency of SMEs.



*Go8 European Fellow 2008*

## Dr Malgorzata Kotula-Balak

**Dr Malgorzata Kotula-Balak says accepting a Go8 European Fellowship was a big decision because Australia is so far from her home in Krakow, Poland. But she is delighted to have the opportunity of working with an international team of experts based at The University of Adelaide and with the very latest technology and equipment for research in her discipline of reproductive physiology and endocrinology.**

Her research centres on the male reproductive system and specifically the role of a peptide called relaxin in fertility and the ageing process. She believes that a better understanding of relaxin has great potential benefits in human medicine.

The University of Adelaide was her first choice of all Go8 institutions because of its reputation for research in male reproductive physiology. She is working closely with Professor Richard Ivell and Dr Ravinder Anand with modern techniques, methodology and equipment she would not have access to at Jagiellonian University in Krakow.

Dr Kotula-Balak says the Go8 Fellowship is a great opportunity for her which will result in joint publications with her Australian and Polish academic

supervisors by the end of the year and that her time in Adelaide will certainly lead to a life-long professional and personal connection with Australia.

Though admitting she misses the historic atmosphere in Krakow, she is delighted with Adelaide. "I feel very good here," she said. "The staff are very friendly and helpful so I have never felt alone. I love to walk to work every morning along the River Torrens. It's a very green city with fresh air."



*Go8 European Fellow 2009*

## Dr Magda Cuciureanu

A Romanian pharmacologist who has spent six months at The University of Adelaide learning new scientific techniques says the experience has been “life changing”.

Dr Magda Cuciureanu, a teaching assistant at the Grigore T. Popa University of Medicine and Pharmacy in Iași, Romania, was awarded a Go8 European Fellowship earlier this year.

The 33-year-old has been researching the role of a specific brain molecule (or neuropeptide) called Substance P in post-traumatic stress disorders, a severe anxiety disorder that develops after major psychological trauma.

Working under the supervision of Professor Bob Vink, Head of the School of Medical Sciences, Dr Cuciureanu says the scientific techniques and new teaching methods she has learned during her Fellowship have been invaluable.

“The skills and experience from this Fellowship will not only help me in my academic career, but it will also have a huge impact on the hundreds of Romanian undergraduate medical students who I teach in my home country,” she says.

Dr Cuciureanu says she applied to study at Adelaide because the city is “safe, friendly, and provides an excellent environment for research”.

“I was also very keen to learn from Professor Vink, who has an international reputation for his work in neuropeptides and drug development.”

Substance P is a neuropeptide that comes into play when the body is stressed and reacts accordingly. These responses include hyperventilation, bronchial restriction, sleeping difficulties, increased gastric problems, and raised blood pressure and heart rate.

*Go8 European Fellow 2010*

“It is common for people who have suffered a major trauma or life-threatening event to experience some of these physiological changes in the weeks and months after the event,” she said.

“I am looking at the potential benefit of a drug called an NK<sub>1</sub> antagonist (blocker) which medicates these responses and acts like an anti-depressant.”

Dr Cuciureanu has a medical degree and PhD in Pharmacology.



## Dr Jaroslav Miller

*Go8 European Fellow 2010*

**What is it that makes a community? Urban historian and sociologist Jaroslav Miller came to Australia from the Czech Republic to help him find out.**

“There is a rich tradition of debate on the sociology of community in Australia,” said Dr Miller, who has been a Visiting Fellow in the Centre for Medieval and Early Modern Studies since October last year. His research is funded with a Go8 European Fellowship.

“One of the most commonly-used words in Australian newspapers is community and yet there is no consensus among historians and sociologists on what community actually is,” he said.

“I am interested in the complex process by which a medieval community has transformed itself into a modern society. Most medieval cities defined themselves with harmony and unity, but since the 16th century, most European urban settlements have been confronted with agents of change: with an influx of people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, reformation and/or significant shifts in the European economy.

“It was a gradual process that lasted several hundred years but I think it contributed to many cities in Europe losing the attributes of a community.

“Since the 19th century the European society was increasingly based on industrialism and rationalism.”

Is the sense of community stronger in Australia because it is a relatively new and young society, compared with society in European cities?

“Perhaps so,” Dr Miller said. “A lot of literature on Australian communities is related to migration. So how do we form a community, a neighbourhood, with so many different people? How do we make unity out of diversity?”

He said these were especially important question in Australia with its multicultural society and that he hoped to find some answers here.

“A significant sideline of my research here has been an approach from Czech communities in Perth and in other parts of Australia. Most of them fled from the old Czechoslovakia in the 1940s or in the 1960s. There were two waves of political refugees.

“They would like me to do some work on the communities of Czech exiles in Australia. So I might be back,” he said.



### The Group of Eight

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