

## Press Release

# Society in Science – The Branco Weiss Fellowship selects three new fellows

The program of ETH Zurich to support outstanding junior scientists appoints new research fellows with a rich international track record

Zurich, August 25, 2010 – ***Society in Science – The Branco Weiss Fellowship***, a program of ETH Zurich to support outstanding junior scientists, appointed three new research fellows. **Reinette Biggs, Arko Ghosh and Aoife O’Donovan** received the prestigious award that may provide them with up to five years of complete academic freedom.

The fellowship was initiated and is funded by Dr. Branco Weiss, a Swiss entrepreneur and philanthropist. It provides junior researchers, shortly after the Ph.D., with an opportunity to pursue new avenues of thinking. The fellowship aims primarily at novel interdisciplinary research topics. One of the fellows now selected is engaged in neuroscience, one in psychoneuroimmunology, and one concentrates on environmental regime shifts.

Dr. Reinette Biggs, born in Namibia and being a South African, today conducts her research at the Stockholm Resilience Centre where she focuses on the dynamics of human/environmental interrelations. In her research she examines abrupt, persistent, non-linear changes – so-called regime shifts – that can arise in complex social-ecological systems. She is anxious to find out how such shifts may be better anticipated and managed.

Dr. Arko Ghosh was born in India and is now doing research at the Institute of Neuroinformatics at ETH and at University Zurich. His primary research interest lies within the cerebral cortex. As a Branco Weiss Fellow, he will explore how mental processes and motor behavior, involving the cerebral cortex, can be influenced by sensory information from the body. His research will be conducted at laboratories in Zurich and London, thus combining the resources of two leading academic environments.

Dr. Aoife O’Donovan was born in County Cork in Ireland and today does her research in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of California San Francisco. Her postgraduate research focused on uncovering relationships between psychosocial and biological factors that index and influence biological aging. As a Branco Weiss Fellow, Aoife O’Donovan will work on elucidating the mechanisms of psychological stress effects on biological aging.

“We are very pleased with the quality of the applications this year and happy that this prestigious award attracts the right crowd of promising high-potential researchers from all over the world,” says Prof. Olaf

Kübler, President of Society in Science and past President of ETH. "One future challenge will be to attract applicants from research areas that are not yet represented in the fellowship. We encourage junior researchers in any field of science and engineering to consider applying."

For more information on Society in Science and on the projects of the recently selected as well as other fellows please consult [www.society-in-science.org](http://www.society-in-science.org).

### **About Society in Science**

*Society in Science – The Branco Weiss Fellowship* was founded in 2002 to provide a platform for researchers in the natural sciences and in engineering who are aiming to extend their scientific work to cover specific social and cultural questions and perspectives. The fellowship was initiated and is financed by the Swiss entrepreneur Dr. Branco Weiss. It is domiciled at and coordinated by ETH Zurich (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich). Professor Olaf Kübler, former President of the ETH Zurich, directs the fellowship program. He is supported by an advisory board consisting of prominent international scholars from a wide array of disciplines. Up to ten fellowships with a maximum duration of five years will be awarded in 2011. Candidates must hold a Ph.D. and provide evidence of outstanding scientific achievement to qualify for the prestigious grant.

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