



Early career researchers retreat: 26-27 Sept, 2024

Forty three early career researchers came together for two days of scientific exchange in Staufen. The retreat program focused on facilitating exploratory exchange among early career researchers. In addition, young researchers hosted a panel discussion on post-PhD career perspectives and a workshop on research data management.

The retreat kicked off with a talk by Dr. Slava Slesarenko on doing interdisciplinary science. He challenged the young researchers to consider the differences between multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary science and what these really entail. Slava combined theoretical frameworks with his personal experiences in science to raise awareness about the highs and lows of collaborative science. His talk was well received and set the table for group work.

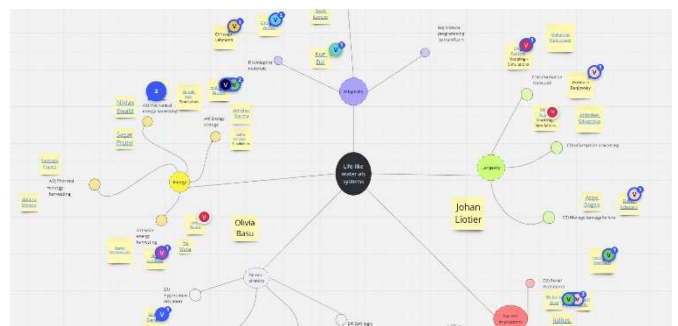


Figure 1: Miro board – pre-retreat preparation

Via an interactive [Miro board](#), all early career scientists were tasked with forming groups in advance based on common research interests (see figure 1). During the retreat, groups explored potential research questions, which combined insights and know-how from respective disciplines in the livMatS cluster. The groups iterated their idea(s) into a 2 minute pitch and ad-hoc poster, which each group presented on day two of the retreat (see figure 2). For day two, early career researchers invited Bastian Rapp and Edorado Milana to listen to, question, and feedback the pitches. Some of the initial ideas include: *Advancing O₂ release control via crossdisciplinary collaboration; triboelectric sensing in soft robots; and UV light-induce self-healing*. Groups who wish to pursue their ideas can recruit students in the Master Lab program to work on research challenges on their proposed research questions. In sum, the exercise aimed to foster and deepen cross-disciplinary exchange among early career researchers as well as provide a venue to practice presentation skills for a multidisciplinary audience.



Figure 2: Poster discussion post-pitch



In addition to scientific exploration, the early career researchers also reflected on what may come after their PhD. Four panelists (two from academia and two from industry), shared their insights on the differences they see between a career in academia or in industry and the skill sets required to successfully navigate these paths. There were also interesting discussions about the future of work and what skills will be relevant, i.e. how AI will change the landscape.



Figure 3: Panel discussion on career paths

To round out the retreat program, Angelika Gedsun and Amir Bayani led a session on research data management. Angelika and Amir used concepts such as Data Life Cycle, Data Journey, and Research Data Maps to guide early career researchers through first designs of their own Research Data Management Plans and to identify next steps.

Feedback on the retreat program was positive, with many early career researchers valuing an informal setting to explore new ideas as well as simply learn about other fields/disciplines in livMatS. Moreover, including other career and research topics was appreciated as a way to address different interests of the participants. To conclude, a big thank you to the young researcher's panel (Louisa Estadieu, David Schwarz, Abhishek Sharma, and Shalini Soman) for helping make the retreat happen. They held several meetings to discuss input and formats that would be beneficial to the early career researchers.



Figure 4: Young researcher's panel