



## Stefanie KICKINGER

**Finishing year:** 2020

**Supervisor:** Gerhard Ecker,  
Faculty of Life Sciences, Univ.  
of Vienna

**Co-Supervisor:** Margot Ernst,  
Medical University of Vienna

**Thesis title:** Computational  
Studies of SLC Transporters  
with Special Focus on the  
GABA Transporter Subfamily.

**Position after PhD:** PostDoc  
at the Dept. of Pharmaceutical  
Chemistry, UniVie; currently  
applying for Grants and  
international PostDoc  
positions

**MolTag alumni page:**  
[Stefanie Kickingger \(univie.ac.at\)](https://www.univie.ac.at/stefanie-kickingger)

**Social networks:**  
[Stefanie Kickingger | LinkedIn](#)  
[Stefanie Kickingger \(@zmuvas\) / Twitter](#)

### How would you summarize your thesis results in 3 sentences?

GABA transporters are emerging drug targets implicated in epilepsy and stroke. Within my thesis we generated and validated the first binding hypotheses of selective competitive and noncompetitive GABA transporter inhibitors by computationally guided mutagenesis studies. Our findings will lay the basis for the rational design of future inhibitors.

### What did you do after your PhD?

I started to work as a post doc where I was stepping into the field of machine learning. I also got the chance to work on my first own grants for future research projects.

### What was the impact of the MolTag program on your further career?

We were embedded in an interdisciplinary research community which not only **created a supportive and collaborative environment, but also broadened our scientific horizon**. Due to the generous travel budget I was able to attend more than 10 international conferences and to perform research internships at Yale and Copenhagen. These **experiences were tremendously important for building my scientific network**.

### Did you keep connections with some former colleagues?

Yes, of course. We have our own WhatsApp group where we keep tabs on each other and plan to meet for beers.

### What did you particularly like about the MolTag program?

I believe the best value of MolTag was that it gave us a sense of community. Working on your PhD can be at times quite demanding and consuming. **Knowing that you are not alone in this journey and that you have colleagues sharing the same experience really helps you to keep up with all the ups and downs of a thesis.**

### What is your recommendation for current MolTag PhD students?

My recommendation is to make use of the travel budget! Get involved in your scientific community and be bold to **ask inspiring researchers for internships!**

