

Structure of model biological membranes by neutron scattering: present developments and perspectives for the future

Giovanna Fragneto

European Spallation Source ERIC, Lund, Sweden

The understanding of the function of cellular membranes requires the study of their structure and dynamics. Cellular membranes are complex assemblies of lipids and proteins. In particular, the lipid scaffold is composed by a large variety of lipid species and levels of chain unsaturation, often difficult to synthesise chemically. Because of this complexity, model membrane systems from simple lipid bilayers are often used for fundamental studies and those can profit from probes able to access different scales of size and time like thermal neutrons and synchrotron radiation. Since the pioneering neutron scattering work in the seventies on cell membrane structure, developments driven by constantly improving neutron instrumentation, coupled with development of measurement and analysis methods, have involved both the optimisation of samples towards more biologically relevant model systems including the use of more and more complex lipid mixtures up to natural extracts. Here, we will focus on developments made in the last decades at the Institut Laue-Langevin in Grenoble, F, on developing model membrane systems and their use in interaction with different proteins, as well as future perspectives that may be offered at the European Spallation Source in Lund.