



“Creating bridges with society is an integral part of what we do and is fundamental to shaping our identity”

MARIA A. BLASCO
Director

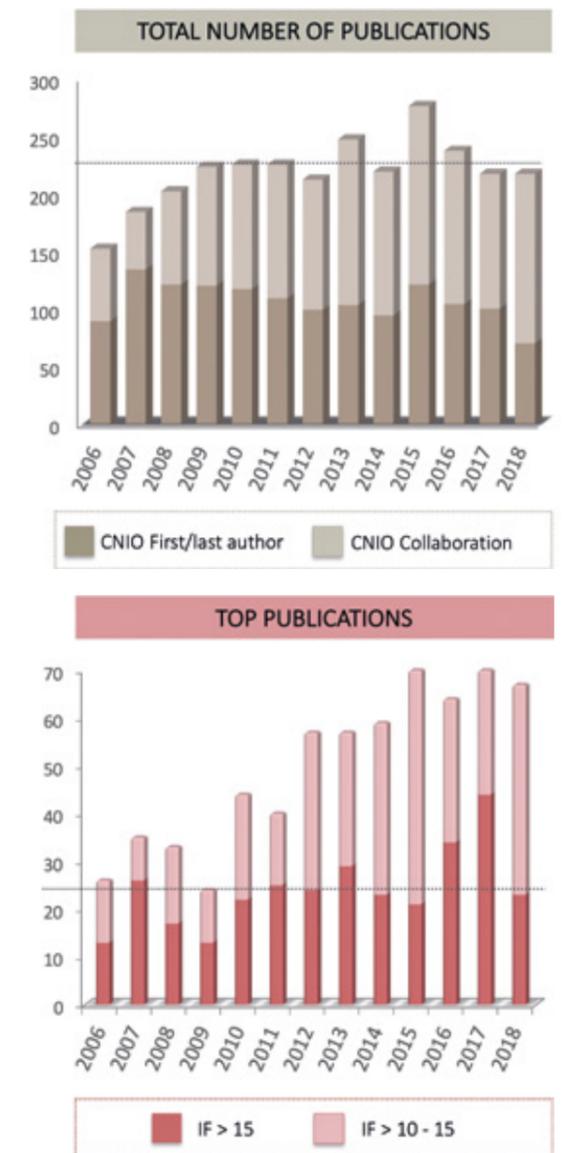
FOREWORD

Maria A. Blasco Director

With 2018 already behind us, we take this opportunity to reflect on the many achievements that the CNIO and its people accomplished throughout the year. We have continued to consolidate our strategy, reinforcing those institutional core values on which our Centre of Excellence rests. One of our main accomplishments continues to be our scientific output, which continues to excel and places the CNIO firmly on the map as a flagship research centre in Europe. This year, according to the *Nature Index* considering our scientific contributions in the life sciences and healthcare field, we moved up the ladder to reach the top position among cancer-focused institutions in Europe. In 2018, the CNIO authored a total of 217 papers, 44 of which were published in journals with impact factor between 10 and 15, and 23 publications in journals with impact factor greater than 15. This achievement unquestionably portrays our international competitiveness and our leadership in cancer research.

Numerous collaborations are taking place with scientists throughout the world and the goal of the Centre is to continue fostering CNIO's participation in international consortia and forums so that we can actively engage in and promote the dissemination of research advances. In line with these efforts of international outreach, we continued to nurture our alliance in 2018 with the Weizmann Institute of Science (WIS) in collaboration with the *Ramon Areces* Foundation. As a result, the first call for collaborative projects for CNIO-WIS went out in 2018; this will materialise in outstanding projects that will cross the boundaries of land and science in 2019.

Our commitment to Spanish science and to bolstering the future of new generations of researchers in Spain perseveres; in 2018, we showed our support and involvement in SOMMa, the *Severo Ochoa* and *Maria de Maetzu* Alliance born in 2017. The first 100xCiencia, organised in the context of the Alliance, took place at the CNIO and successfully brought together various stakeholders, including scientists, science reporters, politicians from all main political parties in Spain and members of the society, in order to put together existing opportunities



and challenges with the aim to forge a bridge between science and society. In 2018, I have come forward to assume the Vice-Presidency of SOMMa, and from that position I am eager to further contribute towards the goals of the Alliance from the CNIO.

Science evolves, and so do we as a Centre. In 2018, we have said goodbye to several esteemed members of the CNIO who have contributed to CNIO's excellence during their time at our Institution. Thus, we pay tribute to our colleagues Manuel Morente, Erwin Wagner, Maria J. Barrero, and Daniel Lietha for their contributions and the years they dedicated to the CNIO: we wish them all the best for their future personal and professional endeavours. This year, we have also reinforced our basic research arm by merging the Cancer Cell Biology Programme with our Molecular Oncology Programme. The promotion of Nabil Djouder to senior group leader also adds to the renewed muscle of our basic research programme. Moreover, Óscar Fernández-Capetillo, one of our more seasoned investigators, has been appointed as new Director of the Programme to steer the wheel and keep heading towards excellence in research and innovation. In 2018, we had the honour to host Scott Lowe from the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center in NY, as visiting scientist. We also established an agreement with Raúl Rabadán, renowned expert in cancer systems biology and full professor at Columbia University, to strengthen our position in this field and keep abreast of new technologies and developments in cancer genomics. We expect to continue consolidating this relationship next year. 2018 has been an important year to start the recruitment of 2 new senior groups and 2 new junior groups to expand the Molecular Oncology and Structural Biology Programmes that will join our Centre in 2019.

It is by supporting our excellent science, stemming from both our basic, translational and clinical programmes, that we can achieve remarkable numbers that stand testament to our innovation activities. This is another core value at the CNIO, as we believe in contributing to society and our industry ecosystem by turning new discoveries into tangible beneficial products in biomedicine. Our Experimental Therapeutics Programme continues to develop new drug candidates to close the valley of death in drug discovery, bringing CNIO discoveries closer to the patient. This year, we made substantial progress in the development of novel TRF1 inhibitors for treating brain tumours, a project that has been awarded a *CaixaImpulse* grant. Another example of our work in biomedical innovation is another project also supported by *CaixaImpulse*, which exemplifies how leveraging gene editing can become a novel approach for treating cancer. More technologies are growing and developing in our pipeline, which is open to collaborations with investigators both at CNIO and abroad. Our efforts in drug discovery always reach beyond our borders, and we continue to be part of the international initiative Milner

Therapeutics Institute at Cambridge, with our active participation in 2018 in the second symposium organised by the alliance. We continuously measure our innovation impact as we actively strive to improve with every year. In 2018, we obtained more than 580,000 euros in royalties, a 5% increase compared with 2017; this return feeds back into our research organisation, providing us with motivation, incentive and important support to help achieve our institutional goals.

Our training programmes are the main vessel that feeds into our investigators and groups. Creating highly prepared generations of researchers is a priority for the CNIO and we strongly thank our sponsors as they contribute to support our collaborations with investigators abroad. During 2018, we continued to participate in the “Science by Women” programme to host African researchers and contribute to the progress of science abroad. Thanks to this programme, Hayet Rafa from the University of Science and Technology Houari Boumediene in Algiers, will join the CNIO's Melanoma Group for a 6-month stay as visiting scientist.

Society has become an integral part of our strategy and we are strengthening our initiatives to create the appropriate channels for dissemination and communication with citizens, including youngsters who could evolve into the next generation of scientists. In 2018, our media coverage increased by 46% over the previous year, featuring stories that have a strong impact worldwide. But we also want to create science and research awareness among our citizens through actions such as our event on the “Present and Future of Cancer Research”, co-organised with the *Atresmedia* media group and *Fundación AXA*, that was held at the *Cibeles* Palace with the support of the City of Madrid. We invited the Nobel Laureate Elizabeth Blackburn to be part of a discussion panel to spread the message that research is one of the pillars on which the fight against cancer rests. A special mention is reserved for our platform for scientific education and STEM support, CNIO & The City, which has again proven to be a success among participants as well as volunteers. In 2018, the project was again awarded by the FECYT, consolidating this initiative at the CNIO and in the educational community. In 2018, we aimed to reach out beyond the Region of Madrid; a commitment that will continue in future editions of the project.

Our efforts to reinforce our initiatives to engage with society have translated into a new “Office of Institutional Image and Outreach”; this office is leading several projects that aim to open up new avenues to gain society's trust and attention as well as emphasise the value of science. The very first step was the launch of our new website, a portal between the scientific community and society with the goal of opening up the CNIO and its discoveries to the world as well as making more CNIO Friends to support our goal to stop cancer. In fact, in 2018 our CNIO Arte project, which explored the common territories

between scientific research and artistic creation, was exhibited in February and brought together the Spanish molecular biologist Margarita Salas and the artist Eva Lootz. This is an unparalleled project that we shared with the world via different forums, including ARCO. The funds obtained from the works of art totalled 100,000 euros, which contributes directly to our CNIO Friends philanthropic initiative. CNIO Friends has provided the funds and means to launch one pre-doctoral researcher contract and six CNIO Friends Postdoctoral Contracts, one of them supported by *Juegaterapia* Foundation to develop a project in brain tumours in children. The growing amount of donations, totalling over 370,000 euros, surpassed our record since the launch of the initiative in 2014. We enthusiastically thank all of our friends for their support and commitment to cancer research.

Finally, as an integral part of our alignment with the values of Responsible Research & Innovation, the CNIO demonstrates its full-blown commitment to gender equality. The work of the CNIO Women and Science (WISE) Office is instrumental to undertake the different initiatives that support women in science and to coordinate efforts with other departments and societal groups involved in closing the gender divide.

During 2018, we had the pleasure of listening to many exceptional women in different fields who shared with us their experiences and wisdom. We are indebted to all of them for their support to women and our cause.

Continuing with our mission to stop cancer will always require a robust team effort — a team of scientists, administrative support personnel and societal partners — who all help to establish a solid foundation to further build upon.



Visual artist Eva Lootz in our CNIO Arte 2018 exhibition.