

CNIO WOMEN IN SCIENCE OFFICE

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The CNIO Women in Science Office (WISE) was established in 2012. Our main objectives are to give visibility to women, to raise awareness regarding the importance of gender equality, to help correct imbalances in the career ladder at the CNIO community, to try to promote and support women in their professional careers, as well as to come up with ideas and policies to improve the life/work balance at the CNIO. The WISE Office is composed of CNIO volunteers from across all the areas represented at the Centre and also includes the Director. All of us share the belief that women are still underrepresented in leadership positions in science and we are committed to ensuring gender equality within the research domain.

Several studies and statistics from different organisations within Spain and the European Union still display the ‘scissors’ graphic when it comes to gender distribution and career ladder positions. There is a clear lack of female talent in leadership

positions, which, together with an average 20% salary gap between men and women, are clear indicators that there remains a lot of work to be done in terms of promoting female talent and facilitating access to areas that are still not traditionally open to women. Still to this day, women are underrepresented in academia. Although data from Universities here in Spain and other European countries show that the percentage of women undertaking university studies is over 50%, and the representation of women at the pre-doctoral and post-doctoral stages is similar, those percentages diminish significantly as we move up the scientific career ladder: a poor 25% of women are represented at the Principal Investigator level, and it is even lower at the levels of department directors and beyond. Moreover, the acknowledgement of women when it comes to prizes continues to be very low and, in particular, when we consider the most prestigious ones; is there simply not enough female talent present in the scientific fields, or is it still just harder for them

Raquel García-Medina, Diego Megías,
Francisca Mulero, Fernando Peláez,
Carolina Pola, Sandra Rodríguez

to be recognised for their achievements? We believe it is mainly due to the second cause and so we continue with our endeavours that take the form of a successful seminar series where we give all CNIO members and others (including students from different high schools in Spain) the opportunity to listen to and meet women who embody roles and positions that are traditionally not held by women. With this initiative, it is our mission to promote scientific vocations among girls – it is worrying to see the lack of female students in the so-called STEM careers – as well as to positively change the cultural and gender stereotypes that exist among teenagers. A real change is needed, and we are convinced that it needs to come through the education of our younger generations.

The Office counts two main working groups: 1) *Life/Work Balance* – aimed to promote and support initiatives to help improve the delicate balance between professional and personal life at CNIO; 2) *Seminars and Events* – aimed to raise and stimulate institutional awareness of gender issues, and to provide networking opportunities to all CNIO researchers.

In 2018, the WISE office seminar series continued to host several top female leaders from different areas. Some of the talks given during 2018 include:

- Laura Ferrero Carballo, writer, freelance editor and literary advisor Instituto Vasco Etxepare. Title: ‘Decisiones racionales e irracionales: una breve historia de cómo llegué a ser escritora’. 30/01/2018.
- Elisa Martín Garijo, Chief Technology Officer for IBM, Madrid, Spain. Title: ‘Yes, we can’. 20/02/2018.
- Fátima Bosch, Director of the Centre of Animal Biotechnology and Gene Therapy at the Autònoma University of Barcelona, Spain. Title: ‘Translational Gene Therapy Approaches to Treat Metabolic and Neurodegenerative Diseases’. 06/03/2018.
- Victoria Camps, Philosopher, Professor of Ethics Universidad Autònoma de Barcelona, Spain. Title: ‘La filosofía como instrumento de emancipación’. 24/04/2018.
- Laura González Molero, Ibex35-company Board member and ex-President of Merck-Serono and Bayer HealthCare. Title: ‘Atrévete a ser el rector de tu propia vida’. 05/06/2018.
- Pepe Verdes, from Librotea, interviewed the writer Elvira Sastre. Title: ‘Escritoras, más allá del género y la biografía’. 25/09/2018.
- Eulalia Pérez Sedeño, research professor at the CSIC Institute of Philosophy. Title: ‘Conocimiento y estereotipos de género’. 23/10/2018.

Here at the WISE Office, we share the view of the American journalist and social political activist Gloria Steinem: “a feminist is anyone who recognises the equality and full humanity of women and men.” To this end, we endeavour to build a fair society for all where stereotypes, unconscious bias and gender barriers are eliminated, as we firmly believe that working together as equals, is the only way to reach true excellence.

- Marta Macho, professor of mathematics at the Universidad del País Vasco. Title: ‘Entre el suelo pegajoso y el techo de cristal: la realidad de las mujeres en el ámbito laboral’. 11/12/2018.

The WISE Office signed an agreement with the ASTI Foundation to be a strategic partner for their project STEM Talent Girl Madrid. The goal of this project is to promote STEM careers among 13-14 year-old students. Eight Master classes given by top professional women from the STEM field have been organised to be held in the CNIO Auditorium. The first 2 already took place and were given by Rosa García, president of Siemens Spain (November, 2018) and Marta Martínez, president of IBM Spain (December, 2018). We also participated in other educational initiatives, through the 11defebrero.org platform, to promote scientific careers among students from the *Comunidad de Madrid*. This initiative was carried out in collaboration with ‘CNIO and The City’, a science outreach project, co-financed by the *FECYT (Fundación Española para la Ciencia y Tecnología)* and *Obra Social “la Caixa”*, with the aim of creating closer links between society and the education system.