CIC biomaGUNE
MEMBER OF BASQUE RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGY ALLIANCE

PRESS RELEASE

CIC biomaGUNE celebrates 20 years at the forefront of biomaterials research

The internationally-renowned Basque centre today celebrates its 20th anniversary with the Director of Innovation of the Basque Government, the General Deputy of Gipuzkoa and the Mayor of San Sebastián

Representatives from CIC biomaGUNE emphasise its capacity to attract international talent and transform cutting-edge knowledge into solutions for today's healthcare challenges

San Sebastián, 12 November 2026. CIC biomaGUNE today celebrates its 20th anniversary at Miramar Palace in San Sebastián, accompanied by Jon Insausti, Mayor of San Sebastián; Eider Mendoza, General Deputy of Gipuzkoa; Maialen Agirre Pinedo, Director of Innovation of the Basque Government; and Fernando Cossío, Scientific Director of Ikerbasque. The event provided the opportunity to share their pride in establishing CIC biomaGUNE as a centre of excellence in its field, as well as to reflect on the challenges that the future holds both for the research centre and for science in general.

During the opening ceremony, José María Mato, General Director of CIC biomaGUNE, commented that "over these two decades, CIC biomaGUNE has become an internationally recognised centre of scientific excellence that has attracted top researchers, made significant scientific contributions, developed outstanding research infrastructures and has established itself as a leader in biomaterials, nanotechnology and molecular imaging."

Over these 20 years, the Centre's scientific community has published more than 2,000 research papers in high-impact journals and has carried out 125 doctoral theses, with another 87 theses currently in progress. In addition, CIC biomaGUNE has applied for 40 patents and has been involved in the creation of 5 spin-off companies: MD-Renal, Asparia Glycomics, Hylezitek, Taldeki and Onkoreplica. The Centre works on an annual average of 160 projects; among them the 13 projects that have received prestigious grants from the European Research Council (ERC).

"But perhaps", adds Mato, "our greatest achievement cannot be measured simply in publications, citations, patents or scientific recognition. Our greatest achievement was to establish an institution with its own identity, a culture of scientific excellence, of intellectual freedom and collaboration and, above all, an institution capable of attracting and training new generations of scientists."

Aitziber L. Cortajarena, Scientific Director of CIC biomaGUNE, pointed out that behind all these achievements is the work of all those people who have passed through the doors of CIC biomaGUNE or are currently working at the Centre: "It is talent from all corners of the globe working alongside each other to generate cutting-edge knowledge in the field of biomaterials and to transform this knowledge into solutions for today's healthcare challenges."

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Expansion

Cortajarena highlighted the importance of "each stage the research centre has gone through, from its beginnings to its consolidation, growth and internationalisation, and CIC biomaGUNE's extensive scientific infrastructure." After consolidating itself as a leader in fundamental research, the Centre went one step further "to promote this science of excellence and to ensure that, through the transfer of knowledge, it has an impact in society, with the aim of translating our research to clinical practice and offering therapeutic and diagnostic solutions to the main healthcare challenges, and also through the creation of new companies."

The Ikerbasque research professor outlined the Centre's scientific strategy "with increasingly interdisciplinary and comprehensive programmes centred around biofunctional nanomaterials, synthetic bioengineering and molecular and functional imaging." In fact, the San Sebastián research centre has implemented an expansion plan "with new laboratories and equipment, new computing capabilities, artificial intelligence and automation, that will enable us to accelerate scientific discovery and its subsequent transfer."

The officials attending the event then took the floor. The first to speak was Jon Insausti: "During these two decades, CIC biomaGUNE has been much more than a research centre of excellence. It has played a decisive role in consolidating a vision and strengthening the identity of San Sebastián as a city that promotes science, knowledge and innovation as drivers of progress." The Mayor of San Sebastián commented that "thanks to the work of its researchers, San Sebastián has consolidated its place on the international science map and has also fostered an inward look: an open science culture accessible to everyone and shared with society. Because research is at its most valuable when it goes beyond the laboratories and generates solutions that improve the lives of people; from new advances in healthcare to technologies that benefit our wellbeing and drive social development."

Maialen Agirre Pinedo, Director of Innovation of the Basque Government, commented that "CIC biomaGUNE is part of a decades-long national commitment to knowledge, science, technology and innovation. It forms part of the history of creating a scientific, technological and innovative ecosystem in the Basque Country." And, looking back, Agirre Pinedo reflected on the future: "Many of the decisions made 20 years ago explain what we are celebrating today. And the decisions we make now will help define what we could be celebrating in 20 years from now. At the Department of Science, Universities and Innovation of the Basque Government we want to continue to accompany CIC biomaGUNE on this path." In fact, these "20 years of CIC biomaGUNE prove that national scientific and innovative projects require time, trust and continuity", she concluded.

Finally, Eider Mendoza, General Deputy of Gipuzkoa, congratulated everyone who, "through their work and commitment to research" have made and continue to make CIC biomaGUNE "a true beacon of advanced knowledge and science" that extends throughout the territory and the country. In her opinion, over these years, CIC biomaGUNE has become a "key player" in the region's Science and Technology network and especially in the field of biosciences and advanced therapies, one of the "strategic sectors of the future" identified by the Gipuzkoan institutions. "It is one of

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the priorities that we have established as a region: to continue to develop and strengthen sectors that will drive the economy and generate quality employment in the future, and that will contribute to the wellbeing of our society. For this, it is essential to have research centres of excellence such as CIC biomaGUNE. Your experience and success in achieving your objectives will mean more knowledge, more talent, more progress and, therefore, greater wellbeing for Guipuzcoans", she added.

After the opening ceremony, the event continued with a roundtable discussion on cutting-edge science, its transfer for generating impact, and the key role of talent. This was followed by a series of talks by people trained at CIC biomaGUNE and who continued their scientific career outside the Centre.

About CIC biomaGUNE

The Centre for Cooperative Research in Biomaterials, CIC biomaGUNE, a member of the Basque Research and Technology Alliance (BRTA), is a non-profit research organisation in San Sebastian that carries out cutting-edge research at the interface between chemistry, biology and physics, with a particular focus on the study of the molecular-scale properties of biological nanostructures and their biomedical applications. In 2018, it was accredited as a María de Maeztu Unit of Excellence, for meeting the excellence criteria of having a significant impact and high level of competitiveness in its field of activity in the global scientific community.

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