

DIPC: Coming of Age

Donostia International Physics Center (DIPC) was effectively born on April 27th, 2000. On this date, Heinrich Rohrer, Nobel Laureate in Physics, delivered the

opening lecture that set the commencement of activity in the center. Rohrer claimed in his talk that “the purpose of an international center is to bring science together from different cultures, of different thinking, and that is one of the very promising ways of approaching solutions to the complex issues of the future”.

Like any other young creature, DIPC started its scientific life full of energy and enthusiasm. DIPC was eager to use science to disentangle the complexities of the world. In accordance with Rohrer’s wisdom, DIPC became soon an international hub between the local community of researchers and a world-wide network of elite scientists. A constant flow of new ideas was obtained through a program of top-level visiting researchers who enjoyed complete freedom to go about their work. This dynamic atmosphere proved to make a direct impact in the quality of DIPC research as well as in its visibility and recognition.

Eighteen years later, DIPC has reached what is often considered the age of majority, the maturity as organism. *Coming of age* implies assuming further responsibility, careful thinking, and new projects. All this without losing the spirit that drives DIPC’s personality. In the case of DIPC, planning for the future was also prompted by the external evaluation arranged every four years by the Department of Education of the Basque Government within the Basque Excellence Research Centers (BERC) Program. The BERC evaluation report, elaborated by an international scientific committee, highly praised the recent activity of DIPC, firmly endorsed the strategy for the period 2018-2021, and strongly encouraged to continue with the development of DIPC.

With age, changes arise

A relevant novelty in the life of DIPC will be diversification of the scientific activity. Until now, research lines at DIPC were mostly focused on several aspects of condensed matter physics and materials sciences, including the study of advanced materials, attophysics, surfaces and interfaces, photonics, plasmonics, quantum information, polymers, soft matter, biofunctional nanosystems,



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and computational chemistry, among other topics. The singular structure of the DIPC research community, in which international visitors naturally collaborate with DIPC Researchers and Associates, is an extremely successful model to generate scientific knowledge of the highest level. The model can be fruitfully extended to other subdisciplines of physics. Hence, DIPC is launching new research lines on topics that were not previously included in the activity of the Center. Experimental particle physics and cosmology are the first research lines that will be added following this strategy.

This qualitative growth will be triggered by scientists of proven excellence, hired thanks to the invaluable support of Ikerbasque, the Basque Foundation for Science of the Basque Government. We are sure that the expansion to other fields of physics will enrich the research atmosphere of DIPC and stimulate the creativity of all scientists working here.

The growth of a creature naturally means the growth of some of its organs too. DIPC hosts an infrastructure that provides services to a large community of researchers, namely, the DIPC Supercomputing Center. Computational physics and chemistry is one of the strongest research lines in the Basque Country and the Supercomputing Center plays a key role in its development. Furthermore, the Center is instrumental to attract researchers to Basque research centers. The DIPC Supercomputing Center is currently expanding not only in size and power but also in scope: scientists affiliated to local research institutions other than DIPC are having access to the computational resources provided by this facility, which is additionally generating and keeping specialized expertise on high-performance computing.

Last but not least, DIPC will reinforce outreach activities. Science cannot and should never be regarded or interpreted without considering its human character. The development of science is intrinsically entangled with the evolution of society. At DIPC we are fully engaged in spreading the beauty of science and the usefulness of scientific knowledge, as well as sharing the joys and challenges of a life in science. So even after 18 years of life, DIPC researchers keep their curiosity and excitement about science. For us, especially when it comes to enthusiasm, there is no childhood’s end. ■