

EUROPE TAKES THE LEAD ON NANOTECHNOLOGY

Inauguration of the International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory

Braga (Portugal) – The King of Spain, Juan Carlos I, the President of Portugal, Aníbal Cavaco Silva, the President of the Government of Spain, José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero and the Prime Minister of Portugal, José Sócrates, together with the Spanish Minister of Science and Innovation, Cristina Garmendia, and the Portuguese Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education, José Mariano Gago, inaugurated on the 17th of July the *International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory (INL)*.

The INL is the first laboratory in Europe dedicated to nanotechnology endowed with an international legal framework. It also is the first international research organization in any scientific area in the Iberian Peninsula. INL brings for the first time to nanotechnology the advantages and opportunities that were provided to other areas by international research organizations like CERN, EMBL and a few others. It is a joint initiative of the Governments of Portugal and Spain decided in November 2005, and has already established partnerships with prestigious universities and research centres in Europe, North America and Asia. The construction of the INL main building is finished and it will now receive the initial staff in order to start operation, pursue the international recruitment of researchers of excellence from all over the world, and be fully operational for research activities by the end of 2009.

Nanotechnology – working at the scale of atoms and molecules and having an enormous potential impact in several fields of science and applications such as medicine, industry and others – is considered by the European Union (EU) as a key strategic driver for future economy and social development, as it can contribute to increase competitiveness among existing and new industries as well as produce great medical advances. This is also reflected by the EU Member States which have earmarked a total of €3.5 billion for funding nanotechnology over the duration of the EU's Seventh Framework Programme for research and technological development (2007-2013).

The construction of the Laboratory is supported in equal parts by Portuguese and Spanish funds and counts with the partial support of European Community regional development funds from the “Transborder Portugal-Spain Cooperation Programme” (POCTEP 2007-2013) and the “Portugal North Region Operational Programme” (PO NORTE).

“Combining human capital with technology and knowledge, INL will work on a strategy focused on results, taking advantage of its international legal status to deliver results of value”, states José Rivas, INL’s Director-General. “We believe that with the contribution of all, we can spread top level scientific results around the world with consequences for the economy and society.”

INL will work closely with universities, research centres and business incubators from all over the world to identify projects in four priority areas: Nanomedicine; Environment monitoring, Food quality control and security; Nanoelectronics and nanomanipulation.

PRESS RELEASE

INL is planned to grow to reach 200 researchers, including 25% of tenured positions. With an additional 100 PhD students, and about 100 technicians, administrative and other auxiliary personnel, the total number of people working at INL will be about 400.

During the past two years, INL has already established strategic partnerships with prestigious research centres and universities¹. All of these joint ventures involve challenging research projects in the area of nanoscience and nanotechnology. The main purpose of this knowledge network is to create close links between institutions sharing information, technologies and resources, as well as to develop science solutions to meet some of the current needs of our society.

The ***International Iberian Nanotechnology Laboratory (INL)*** is now opening to the membership of other countries in the world.

About nanotechnology

Nanotechnology has the potential to profoundly change our economy and to improve our standard of living, similarly to the impact information technology had in the past two decades. Numerous products featuring unique properties of nanoscale materials are already available to consumers and industry today. Most computer hard drives, for instance, contain giant magnetoresistance (GMR) heads that, through nano-thin layers of magnetic materials, allow for a significant increase in storage capacity. Some other current uses that are already in the marketplace include catalysis, coatings for easier cleaning or glare-reducing. It is likely that solar cells can be significantly improved with nanotechnology. The pharmaceutical and chemical industries are also being impacted by nanotechnology, both on advanced drug delivery systems and medical diagnostic tools. For instance, a new range of medical treatments is arising, for certain diseases such as Alzheimer and brain tumours.

¹ Micro and Nanotechnology Centre of the Denmark Technical University (Denmark); Interdisciplinary Nanoscience Centre – iNano-Aarhus University (Denmark); Max Planck Institute for Biophysical Chemistry in Göttingen (Germany), Max Planck Institute of Colloids and Interfaces in Potsdam (Germany); Max Planck Institute of Microstructure Physics in Halle (Germany); NIMS – National Institute of Materials Science – Tsukuba (Japan); University of Glasgow (Scotland, UK); Centre for Functional Materials - Brookhaven National Laboratory (USA); Chemical Engineering Department of the University of Texas at San Antonio, (USA); MIT - Massachusetts Institute of Technology (USA).