NCBIO
ERA CHAIR

D4.1
Bi-annual capacity building and knowledge transfer plans 1

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1. Natural spill over

Together with the senior members of the 'Neurobiology and Neurologic Disorder' program (Drs. João Relvas and Paulo Aguiar), various measures are being explored to try and build scientific capacity at i3S.

At present, the co-ordination of activities at the program level can be substantially improved. One action which is being actively pursued is the introduction of monthly faculty meetings. Such meetings would have two main features. First, they would allow the discussion of institutional issues/policies directly affecting the Neurobiology program (e.g. refurbishment of tissue culture facilities) and a strong consensus position agreed for presentation to the Director's board. Second, it would provide a forum where one or two PIs (per meeting) could present their ideas for their next large European grant application (ERC, EIC, ETN, etc). This would enable critical feedback on the scientific content and discussion of best practice in grant writing and submission. To facilitate the process, and identify possible administrative bottle necks, representatives from both the financial and technology transfer offices would be invited to the discussions.

A critical part of adding to scientific capacity is through expansion of the i3S scientific network. The ERA Chair is involved with the institutional seminar committee (chaired by Dr. Diogo Costa). It has been decided to integrate 4-6 ERA Chair speakers per year into the Friday Seminar series. Seventy five percent of speakers will have direct relevance for the 'Neurobiology and Neurologic Disorder' program. The remaining twenty five percent of speakers will be chosen to cross-over with the other thematic programs at i3S, 'Oncology' and 'Host Interaction and Responses'. Confirmed speakers for 2023 all originate from the ERA Chair's scientific network and include Claudia Bagni (Lausanne), Bassem Hassan (Paris), Bart De Strooper (UCL London) and Adrian Liston (Cambridge)[1]. These speakers are top scientists in the fields of local translation, CNS wiring, neurodegenerative disease and neuroimmunology respectively, holding multiple ERC awards (AL and BdS) and an Allen Distinguished Investigator award (BH). In addition, all have experience with running top level science programs either at their own institutions (vice-dean for research and innovation in Lausanne, CB; science director at ICM, BH; director of Dementia Research UK, BdS), or through international review panels (ERC, CB: MRC, AL), and can provide valuable insight and feedback on the structure of the 'Neurobiology' program, and its integration within the wider i3S and University of Porto ecosystems. They can also provide feedback on the direction and running of the NCBio academic-industrial hub.

In addition, the glia community of the i3S (Drs. João Relvas, Paulo Aguiar, Teresa Summavielle and Ana Pêgo) was further strengthened by the ERA Chair Holder, who sponsored and organized the Portuguese Glia meeting, held in Porto in October, 2022. This meeting leveraged the position of the ERA Chair within the glia field to bring together experts from across Europe to discuss various aspects of glial cell development and function (see WP4_Annex1). A similar meeting was

[1] Adrian Liston is the first of the 'cross-over' speakers who will speak on March 31st, 2023. He is a joint invite with Dr. Margarida Saraiva of the 'Host Interaction and Responses' thematic program.

organized around general neurobiology themes in November 2022 for the benefit of the entire 'Neurobiology and Neurologic Disorder' thematic program (see WP4_Annex2).

2. Capacity building and knowledge transfer

As of December 2022, a full-time senior technician (Dr. Mobina Alemi) was hired by the group (and will be joined by Dr. Simone Bessa in January, 2023). Mobina Alemi is a neuroscientist by training with a strong background with in vivo mouse work; Simone Bessa is an oncologist with a strong background in molecular biology. Once they have both settled in the lab and their relative strengths and weaknesses have been assessed, individual development plans will be drawn up together with the individuals in question as part of their ongoing professional development. For example, it is already clear that Dr. Bessa has comparatively little experience in animal work and so will undergo extensive training in basic animal handling and surgical procedures, supervised by Dr. Sofia Lamas, head of the animal facility at i3S. At present, the plan is for both technicians to be initially involved in the project aimed at identification of secreted synaptogenic proteins from astrocytes. This will involve the use of advanced cell culture systems (co-operation with Drs. Paulo Aguiar and Ana Pêgo) and proximity biotinylation methods (co-operation with Drs. João Relvas and Teresa Summavielle), establishing new protocols and expertise at i3S.