



ASEICA-INTERNATIONAL POSITIONING

The Spanish Association for Cancer Research (ASEICA) presents **ASEICA-International**, a new working group whose mission is to expand the impact of basic and clinical cancer science within and beyond our borders. Here, we summarize why ASEICA-International is important, discuss the challenges that limit our researchers' international mobility and competitiveness, and put forward a series of concrete proposals for improvement. The overall objective is to improve the diagnosis and treatment of cancer patients through collaborative networks oriented **(1)** to Spanish researchers who want to develop their careers abroad, **(2)** to Spanish researchers abroad, and **(3)** to foreign researchers in Spain or with the intention of joining our country.

ASEICA and ASEICA-International

ASEICA is a scientific association founded more than 40 years ago that brings together more than 1600 members in all areas of basic, clinical, and translational research in **oncology**. Over the past four decades, ASEICA has established itself as a champion of competitive R&D, standing out for fostering the professional growth of young research talent, reducing gender inequalities, encouraging collaboration between academic and hospital institutions, and bringing scientific advances closer to cancer patients and society.

Since its inception, ASEICA has maintained a strong international focus. As the first Spanish association to join the European Association for Cancer Research (EACR), ASEICA now boasts the largest number of contributing members in this network. Its congresses are internationally oriented, and various collaborations have been established to enhance the global professional development of its members. These initiatives are driven by ASEICA-Youth, ASEICA-Women, ASEICA-Learn, and ASEICA-MED. Nonetheless, we recognize the need for a dedicated team to advance talent promotion, specifically at the international level. In an increasingly global and multidisciplinary scientific landscape, fostering competitiveness hinges on training and cross-border collaboration with research centers worldwide.

Challenges: Why is ASEICA-International necessary?



1. Lack of a **registry** or database of **Spanish researchers in the field of oncology living abroad**. The Network of Associations of Spanish Researchers and Scientists Abroad (RAICEX), with which ASEICA has collaboration agreements, estimates that there are between 15,000 and 20,000 Spanish scientists developing their careers abroad; however, we do not know how many of them are directly or indirectly focused on the field of oncology.
2. There is a significant lack of **information on grants** and **research projects** that may be available for scientists who want to train abroad.
3. ASEICA has dedicated efforts to **mentoring** at the national level, but currently, there are no specific training and support networks for researchers outside our country. Researchers outside Spain lose contact with opportunities in our country that could facilitate their return under competitive conditions. **Attracting this talent abroad and defining competitive conditions** that include researchers of other nationalities is a great challenge to which we wish to contribute from **ASEICA-International**.
4. One of the problems identified by ASEICA-International is the **absence of training platforms** specifically aimed at developing *soft skills* in the scientific field and other professional areas. These skills include key aspects such as leadership, organization of diverse teams, and management of personnel with different backgrounds and cultures, among others.
5. International congresses constitute a valuable platform for interaction between scientists; however, their limited duration restricts their impact. We consider it essential to establish a **regular series of webinars** that allow the presentation of projects, discussion of experimental models, and access to clinical samples. These webinars would be a dynamizing system for creating future projects and collaborative consortia between researchers inside and outside Spain.
6. The **visibility of scientists** abroad is currently limited in social networks and the media. We consider it essential to strengthen this aspect, expanding and capitalizing on the interaction networks among ASEICA members, both inside and outside Spain.



7. **Cultural adaptation and social support:** Cultural adaptation programs, social integration support, and networking opportunities outside academia.
8. **Advice on labor and hiring regulations:** Guidance on labor rights and duties in the Spanish academic context, including contractual conditions, benefits, and hiring procedures.
9. **Information on career opportunities:** Access to information on promotion and career development opportunities, including requirements and pathways to stable positions.
10. Another significant limitation identified by ASEICA-International refers to the **bureaucratic** barriers faced by research personnel when trying to enter our country, such as validations and social security procedures. In addition, the use of English as a vehicular language is not sufficiently widespread, which complicates the application for projects and grants.

Proposals for improvement.

For all of the above reasons, ASEICA-International proposes the following actions:

1. **Creation of a database of cancer researchers in foreign institutions** that will serve (1) to promote collaborations among research personnel and (2) as a contact platform for Spanish scientists who decide to undertake or enrich their research career abroad.
2. Preparation of a **registry and publication of mobility programs** that unify the grants and scholarships available for the exchange of personnel between Spanish and foreign institutions, as well as grants for participation in congresses in Spain on cancer research (for example, the recently established Cris Cáncer-RAICEX-ASEICA).
3. Establishment of **an international networking and mentoring network** to facilitate interaction among researchers. Taking advantage of ASEICA's experience in the ASEICA4You program, individual ("one-on-one") and group ("peer mentoring") mentoring plans will be established to encourage interaction between researchers inside and outside Spain. An inclusive environment will be promoted to allow researchers at any



stage of their careers to expand their research networks and boost their professional development.

4. In its training activity, ASEICA-International will include **workshops** to support professional aspects of **international mobility**, such as job interviews or reviews of scientific projects.
5. **Implementation of thematic webinars** among ASEICA members in Spain and abroad (postdoc, early-PI...) focused on specific research topics and cutting-edge technologies. Representatives from different training agencies and Spanish and international administrations will be invited to these webinars.
6. **International dissemination and presentation of ASEICA's programs and activities** in activities/seminars of the associations of Spanish scientists abroad (CERFA, CERU, CEBE,...). The ASEICA Newsletter will be shared through the different associations of Spanish scientists abroad. It will also give visibility to publications, awards, and recognitions of our scientists inside and outside our country. In this context, we propose the creation of an "international map of researchers" accessible through the ASEICA website. This map will allow us to identify possible partner interactions and be an informative platform for the media, companies, and society.
7. **Elaboration of a welcome guide** to accompany the integration process in our country. This guide will include information on administrative and bureaucratic aspects and particularities of the application for state aid and funding for research in Spain.
8. Campaigns for **Awareness and Recognition of International Talent**. These initiatives seek to improve public and academic perception of the integration of international talent and its contributions to the growth of the academic field in Spain. The strategy includes publications in the media and/or the ASEICA Newsletter, events where the importance of the international perspective in the scientific career is made visible and highlighted.



9. **English** will be promoted as the **vehicular language** in the application and justification of national projects and the evaluations of national calls (e.g., FIS, AEI). Similarly, we will insist on the inclusion of English in all official communications of research centers as a requirement for national accreditations (e.g., Severo Ochoa, Carlos III, María de Maetzu, ...).
10. Finally, ASEICA-International will work actively with other entities to facilitate the following aspects:

We propose implementing a comprehensive support plan to facilitate integrating researchers and their families in Spain, both in research centers and universities. This plan should include Assistance in finding housing, access to educational centers for their children, facilitating enrollment and access to health services, and cultural orientation.

Encourage the creation of collaborative networks between foreign researchers and their Spanish counterparts, as well as establish links with industry and the public sector. This approach will facilitate the transfer of knowledge and technology, thus promoting innovation and economic development.

With these measures, ASEICA-International expects to increase the **presence of ASEICA members abroad, favoring their training and mobility, with the overall objective of attracting and retaining both young and established talent.**

Finally, we aim to reinforce ASEICA's global mission to contribute to **better diagnosis, monitoring, and treatment of oncological diseases.**

