

Foreword

The Co-ordinating Committee of the Scientific Council

This Report presents the work carried out at ITN in 2006. The document highlights activities with results believed to be of particular relevance, and contains short descriptions of the progress made in other activities, as well as references to publications and data concerning human, technical and financial resources.

The report reflects the unique nature of ITN among Portuguese public laboratories, and the specific nature of the activities under way, that make use of or aim at the development and application of specialized multipurpose techniques, methods and instruments, in the general field of nuclear science and technology

Following the trends of the last few years, the report shows that the level of scientific production is consistently high. The total number of papers published in international journals (207), proceedings of conferences (85) and books (6) increased 21% relative to 2005. Also a large number of M. Sc., Ph. D. and post-doctoral students (total of 102) participate in on-going research activities under the supervision or joint-supervision of members of the Institute's scientific staff.

Moreover, the degree of involvement of ITN with institutions of the Portuguese higher education system has been kept at high level. Roughly 1/5 of the ITN research staff is currently responsible for lecturing courses as Invited Professors at Universities or Polytechnic Institutes, and roughly 1/2 of the scientific staff collaborates in teaching activities at higher education level. Furthermore, M. Sc. courses in two specialized areas where the Institute's know-how is outstanding – Inorganic and Radiopharmaceutical Chemistry and Radiological Protection, are run through partnerships with the University of Lisbon and the Technical University of Lisbon, respectively.

It was the commitment and quality of the staff of the Institute that enabled to maintain the scientific output at a high level in spite of the already chronic personnel and budgetary constraints. The near impossibility of recruiting personnel results in the fact that a growing fraction of the Institute's work including R&D, technical support and

services depends on the work of temporary staff, which the institution trains but is unable to keep, in many cases frustrating the purpose of building solid, well trained teams. This affects the institution as a whole and specially those activities in areas, such as radiological protection, where the contribution of ITN to the scientific, technological and regulatory system of the country is mandatory and unique, including the supply of services to meet specific public needs.

In 2005, and for the first time in many years the Institute was allowed to open fourteen positions to recruit research staff at the intermediate level of the research career – Principal Researcher. The selected candidates took their new positions/jobs in 2006 but, unfortunately, this did not solve the urgent need for new staff in several different sectors. In fact, the total number of researchers belonging to the staff of the institution was reduced by two in 2006. New positions to recruit young researchers should be opened to renew the research teams, to maintain know-how that risks disappearing, and boost activities. In addition, the effort made this year should be continued and extended to the top level of the research career. This should be done, guided by the mission of the institution and in the framework of a plan establishing priorities and defining aims to be achieved in the medium and long term.

In this respect the reform of the State Laboratories currently under way, opened an opportunity to address and solve many of the chronic personnel and budgetary constraints of the Institute. However, very little is known about the reform process that, regrettably, was conducted without participation of the scientific council of the institution. On the other hand, it is already known that the operational budget of the Institute for the coming year was again reduced. In this unfavorable context, we fear for the effect of the reform on the ability of ITN to fulfill its statutory obligations and to maintain activities of high scientific production, and we look forward to know details of a programme that was announced to be created at the National Science Foundation (FCT) in support of public policies.