



The leading philanthropic research institution in Spain and Portugal awards 75 new grants for cutting-edge research and innovation of great social impact

"la Caixa" Banking Foundation has devoted 400 million euros to research and training of excellence

- Isidre Fainé, Chairman of "la Caixa" Banking Foundation; Jaume Giró, CEO of "la Caixa" Banking Foundation; Javier Solana, member of the Board of Trustees and of the Board of Expert Consultants on Research at "la Caixa" Banking Foundation; and Manuel Heitor, Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education in the Government of the Republic of Portugal, today awarded 75 grants for national and international research and innovation projects of excellence.
- "la Caixa" Banking Foundation operates three main lines of action within the field of research: post-doctorate grants to promote talent; calls for proposals for biomedicine and health projects; and the CaixaImpulse programme, aimed at transferring the results of research to society.
- Can we create new materials with extraordinary properties? Can the liver reveal malaria's Achilles' heel? Can we treat cancer by inducing cellular aging? These are three examples of the questions that the selected researchers will seek to answer in the coming years.
- "la Caixa" Banking Foundation seeks to promote cutting-edge projects in multidisciplinary research with the goal of improving social welfare. The Foundation's Strategic Plan 2016-2019 establishes investment in research as a priority, making provision for the research budget to triple to 90 million euros in 2019.
- The president of "la Caixa" Banking Foundation, Isidre Fainé, noted that: "We live in a changing society in which discoveries open up scenarios that pose new future challenges. Applying the principles of anticipation, engagement and excellence to help guide the actions of our organisation for more than a century has led us to give firm support for research in the field of health".

Barcelona, 5 November 2018. Isidre Fainé, Chairman of "la Caixa" Banking Foundation; Jaume Giró, CEO of "la Caixa" Banking Foundation; Javier Solana, member of the Board of Trustees and of the Board of Expert Consultants on Research at "la Caixa" Banking Foundation; and Manuel Heitor, Minister of Science, Technology and Higher Education in the Government of the Republic of Portugal, today awarded grants to 75 national and international researchers whose work at leading universities and research centres in Spain and Portugal will help to change the future for many people.

"Questions for the Future" is the slogan embracing these 75 projects, which formulate such enquiries as: Can we create new materials with extraordinary properties? Can the liver reveal malaria's Achilles' heel? Can we treat cancer by inducing cellular aging? These are just three examples of the research projects supported by three initiatives: "la Caixa" Junior Leader post-doctorate grant programme; the call for research proposals in biomedicine and health; and the CaixaImpulse programme. All form part of a global project established by "la Caixa" that focuses on three main themes: training of excellence, preparing future generations and promoting talent; research into the field of life sciences and health; and the translation of research from the laboratory to business, providing solutions for people.

There is no doubt that, in order to transform societies, a good system of science, technology and innovation is required. Universities and centres devoted to research and innovation play a key role in such a system, as does the investment that a country devotes to R&D&I in both the public and private sectors.

Investment in research is established as a priority "la Caixa" Banking Foundation's Strategic Plan 2016-2019. This year, the organisation will devote 70 million euros to knowledge, research and innovation, and the figure is set to rise to 90 million euros in 2019. This investment makes "la Caixa" Banking Foundation the leading philanthropic institution in Spain and Portugal, and one of the largest in Europe. All this, with a very clear objective. In the words of Isidre Fainé, president of "la Caixa" Banking Foundation: "To create an ecosystem in which we train the best national and international research talents; in which we accelerate research of excellence in the best biomedicine and health projects; and in which we enable the translation of research from the laboratory to citizens".

Solid, sustained commitment to scientific excellence

"la Caixa" Banking Foundation's commitment to research goes back to the date when, more than thirty years ago, the institution launched its Grant Programme. Since then, "la Caixa" has devoted nearly 400 million euros to training of excellence, research and

innovation. Few institutions can boast such sustained commitment. This year, moreover, "la Caixa" Banking Foundation seeks to strengthen its promotion of research and society by attracting international talent and encouraging researchers to stay; providing support for the world's leading researchers engaged in cutting-edge work; and, in the final step, promoting the translation of this research to society through the creation of companies. In short, an ecosystem that goes from the laboratory to the company.

- **"la Caixa" Junior Leader post-doctorate grants.** In the first call for proposals under this programme, launched in 2017, 30 researchers of excellence were selected to carry out their work, thereby helping to further scientific careers of high quality and innovation in Spain. Of the 30 grants awarded, 20 will be devoted to attracting international talent to the Severo Ochoa and María de Maeztu centres, while the other 10 are aimed at retaining talent to research at any Spanish university or research centre.
- **Call for proposals for biomedicine and health projects.** In the first resolution of this open, competitive call for proposals, "la Caixa" Banking Foundation selected 25 research projects – whether basic, clinical or translational – of scientific excellence in biomedicine and health with great potential value and social impact. The objective of this call is to promote projects of excellence to combat illnesses that have the greatest impact on the world, including cardiovascular, neurological and infectious diseases and cancer.
- **CaixaImpulse programme.** This year, 20 grants were awarded by "la Caixa" Banking Foundation and Caixa Capital Risc in cooperation with EIT Health. The grants go to non-profit research centres, universities and hospitals in Spain or Portugal that are engaged in innovative projects in the field of biotechnology or life sciences. Since the programme was first launched in 2015, some 7.5 million euros has been devoted to promoting 58 initiatives, 10 of which have already generated spin-off companies, with 7 more at the creation stage.

These 75 projects seek responses to questions that can help to build a better future for society. On this point, Isidre Fainé quoted Albert Einstein, when the great physicist said: "The formulation of a problem is often more essential than its solution". In other words, the real step forward is made when the key question is formulated rather than when the solution is found, because understanding the reasons behind certain phenomena opens up new ways forward to their solution.

* [The annex attached to this press release contains details on the 75 projects selected, along with a brief summary of their goals.](#)



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