

Spain’s leading philanthropic research institution devotes 90 million euros to promote talent, research and innovation

”la Caixa” awards grants worth 28 million euros to 79 pioneering research projects with great social impact

- Isidre Fainé, President of ”la Caixa” Banking Foundation, Jaume Giró, CEO of ”la Caixa” Banking Foundation, Javier Solana, member of ”la Caixa” Banking Foundation’s Board of Trustees and Expert Advisory Council for Research, and Pedro Duque, the Spanish Government’s Minister of Science, Innovation and Universities, today awarded 79 grants to national and international research and innovation projects of excellence.
- The research projects respond to the three lines of action promoted by ”la Caixa” Banking Foundation in the field of research: postdoctoral grants to foster research talent; support for projects of excellence in biomedicine and health; and CaixaImpulse, a programme aimed at transferring the results of biomedical research to society.
- Can we use smart materials to reduce environmental impact? Is it possible to reverse the immortality of cancer cells? Can a simple blood test be used to diagnose dementia? These are three examples of questions that the researchers selected will attempt to answer in the coming years.
- ”la Caixa” promotes pioneering multidisciplinary research projects aimed at increasing social wellbeing. Over the last three decades, the institution has devoted more than 500 million euros to training, research and innovation, helping to build a global ecosystem that spans from the laboratory to society.
- As Isidre Fainé, President of ”la Caixa” Banking Foundation, says: “Scientists are capable of transforming the world through their imagination, their talent and their efforts, and can provide answers to questions that we may not even have asked yet. ”la Caixa” Banking Foundation promotes projects aimed at broadening the horizons of our



knowledge, including the 79 research initiatives that we present today, which we are sure will help us to create a future full of hope”.

Barcelona, 16 September 2019. Isidre Fainé, President of “la Caixa” Banking Foundation, Jaume Giró, CEO of “la Caixa” Banking Foundation, Javier Solana, member of “la Caixa” Banking Foundation’s Board of Trustees and Expert Advisory Council for Research, and Pedro Duque, the Spanish Government’s Minister of Science, Innovation and Universities, today awarded 79 grants to national and international researchers who, through the work they will conduct at leading universities and research centres in Spain and Portugal, hope to make a better life for people. “la Caixa” will devote a total of 28 million euros to these initiatives.

“Questions for the Future” is the central theme that all 79 projects revolve around, as each seeks answers that will help to build a better future for society. The questions include: Can we use smart materials to reduce environmental impact? Is it possible to reverse the immortality of cancer cells? Can a simple blood test be used to diagnose dementia?

These are just three examples of the research projects that are conducted with support from “la Caixa” in the form of postdoctoral grants, calls for proposals in biomedicine and health research, and the CaixaImpulse programme. All form part of a global project launched by the institution and based on three pillars: education of excellence to train future generations and promote research talent; research in the field of life sciences and health; and the transfer of research results to society to provide solutions that can enable citizens to face the great challenges of the future.

It has been demonstrated that a good system of science, technology and innovation is essential to transform societies. Universities and research and innovation centres play a crucial role in this, as does the investment that a country devotes to R&D in both the public and the private sectors.

“la Caixa” Banking Foundation’s Strategic Plan 2016-2019 identifies investment in research as a top priority. This year, the organisation will devote 90 million euros to knowledge, research and innovation. This level of investment makes “la Caixa” the leading philanthropic research organisation in Spain and Portugal, the second-largest in Europe and one of the most important in the world. As Isidre Fainé, President of “la Caixa” Banking Foundation, points out: “Scientists are capable of transforming the world through their imagination, their talent and their efforts, and can provide answers to questions that we may not even have asked yet. “la Caixa” Banking Foundation promotes projects aimed at broadening the horizons of our knowledge, including the 79 research initiatives that we present today, which we are sure will help us to create a future full of hope”.

”la Caixa”: a long tradition of firm commitment to research

”la Caixa” has been whole-heartedly committed to research and training of excellence for more than thirty years. This tradition began with the launch of ”la Caixa” Programme of Grants, and since then the organisation has devoted over 500 million euros to training, research and innovation. Few institutions can match this engagement. ”la Caixa” strengthens the institution’s commitment to research and society by: attracting international talent and helping to retain researchers in the territory; supporting world-class researchers conducting frontier research; and – the final link in the chain –promoting the transfer of results to society through the creation of companies, products or technologies. In short, ”la Caixa” is helping to build a global ecosystem that spans from the laboratory to society.

- **”la Caixa” Junior Leader postdoctoral grants.** Thirty-three researchers of excellence of different nationalities were selected at the second call for proposals under this competitive programme. The grants will help the successful candidates to conduct their research, promoting quality innovative scientific careers in Spain and Portugal. Of the 33 grants awarded, 22 will serve to help to attract research talent to the Severo Ochoa and María de Maeztu centres, the Carlos III Health Research Institutes and centres awarded seals of excellence by the Portuguese Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, while the remaining 11 are aimed at retaining research talent at any Spanish or Portuguese university or centre.
- **Support for research projects in biomedicine and health.** In the second edition of this transparent, open, competitive call for proposals, ”la Caixa” selected 25 biomedicine and health research initiatives of scientific excellence and social impact, whether in basic, clinical or translational research. One of the novelties in this second edition was the creation of a specific line for financing health-enabling technologies. The aim of this initiative in the field of health is to promote projects of excellence in the fight against illnesses with the greatest impact, such as cardiovascular, neurological and infectious diseases, and cancer.
- **CaixaImpulse.** This year, in cooperation with Caixa Capital Risc and EIT Health, ”la Caixa” awarded 21 grants under this programme. The CaixaImpulse programme is aimed at non-profit research centres, universities and hospitals throughout the European Union that are engaged in innovative projects in the field of biomedicine. Since it was first launched five years ago, CaixaImpulse



has assisted the implementation of 99 initiatives, 14 of which have already become spin-offs.

* The Annex contains the Press Release detailing the 79 projects selected, with a brief summary of their aims.

For further information and to arrange interviews:

"la Caixa" Banking Foundation Communication Department

Irene Roch: 934 046 027 / 669 457 094 / iroch@fundaciolacaixa.org

Andrea Pelayo: 934 044 087 / 618 126 685 / apelayo@fundaciolacaixa.org

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