

Postdoctoral Junior Leader  
Fellowships – **RETAINING**  
at universities and research centres  
of Spain and Portugal

# Programme rules

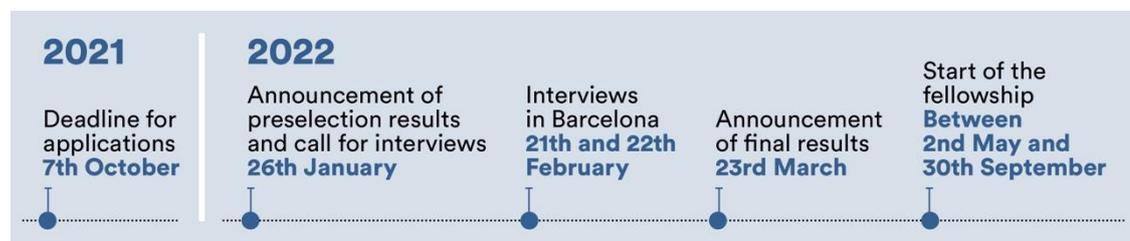
## Introduction

“la Caixa” Banking Foundation, which firmly believes that scientific progress, research, mobility and professional qualification are key to the development of society, is launching this postdoctoral fellowship programme aimed at hiring excellent researchers of any nationality who wish to continue their research at any university or research centre of Spain or Portugal.

They should be outstanding researchers in terms of the originality and significance of their contributions in their scientific discipline, as well as having the leadership skills to head their own research group.

By means of a complementary training programme, these fellowships are intended to consolidate comprehensive training encompassing scientific, technical and complementary skills that will help them to tap into their potential as independent researchers and leaders of the new generation of researchers.

## Timeline



## 1. Call for applications

- 1.1.** “la Caixa” Banking Foundation is offering **15 three-year postdoctoral fellowships** to hire experienced researchers to carry out their work **at any university or research centre of Spain or Portugal**. The research must be carried out in the **areas of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), including Bio and Health Sciences**.
- 1.2.** The call for applications is intended for researchers who **have finished their doctoral degrees two to seven years prior to the deadline for applications**, provided that they also fulfil the requirements for mobility between countries.
- 1.3.** The choice of the research centre will not be binding during the candidate selection process. Candidates should state the research centre that they would prefer to join on their fellowship application on a provisional basis. For this purpose, a declaration of interest letter with the official institutional letterhead signed by a researcher of the research center of preference must be attached indicating the predisposition to accept the fellow. In the online application platform, a template is provided. This declaration of interest will not be binding on any of the parties. The fellowship holder may change the centre chosen before the start of the fellowship.

- 1.4. Fellows should start at the host institution between 2<sup>nd</sup> May and 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022. “la Caixa” Foundation must be notified of the researcher's start date at the research centre prior to this date and as soon as they reach an agreement.
- 1.5. Candidates may freely propose a research project to be carried out at the host organization of their choice.
- 1.6. The call for applications opens on the date it is published and closes on 7th October 2021, at 14.00h Peninsular Spain (Central European Summer Time - CEST).

## 2. Fellowship amount

- 2.1. The **maximum payment amount will be €305,100<sup>1</sup>**, as broken down below:

/ Three maximum annual payments of €97.500 which include:

- a) **Labor costs (salary included): a maximum of 59,000 euros to cover the total labor costs of the university or research centre that contracts the fellow.** This amount includes Social Security contributions and any other payments made by the employer, as well as the annual gross salary of the fellow.

In any case, the minimum annual gross salary to be offered to the fellow by the host institution must be 44.300€.

If the total labor costs exceed the maximum amount offered by “la Caixa” Foundation, the host institution will cover the surplus.

- b) **Annual research project costs of €38,500**, which include:
  - » Acquisition and maintenance of scientific equipment and consumables;
  - » Travel expenses and per diem;
  - » Registration fees for scientific congresses, seminars and conferences;
  - » Management fees for industrial and intellectual property rights related to the project;
  - » Patenting costs;
  - » Personnel costs linked exclusively to the fellowship project;
  - » Expenses related with the mandatory secondment;
  - » Other expenses directly related to implementation of the research project.

This amount will be managed by the centre for the benefit of the fellow and it must be justified separately.

/ Gross annual **family assistance of €1,200** for each of the researcher's child dependant. Family assistance will be determined on the start date at the centre and will be reviewed annually upon renewal of the fellowship. In the event that both parents would get a

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<sup>1</sup> The allowance is calculated based on 2 children. The maximum allowance may be increased if the number of children is greater than 2.

Postdoctoral Junior Leader fellowship, this assistance would be granted only to one of the parents.

**/ Mobility assistance (moving and housing) of €5.400** at the beginning of the fellowship as long as the fellow changes the place of residence on the occasion of joining the selected research center or university, at a distance greater than 50 kms with respect to the initial place of residence.

These amounts will be gross and subject to the total labor costs of each fellow incurred by the host institution that hires it. In addition, these amounts will be subject to withholding that is legally established.

- 2.2.** "la Caixa" Foundation will sign a collaboration agreement with host institutions, which will receive the fellowship payment amount directly. This must be wholly allocated to cover other required corporate expenses payable by the host institution, as well as the fellow's gross pay and additional amounts and assistances.
- 2.3.** The employment relationship between the fellow and the host institution must comply with the provisions of current legislation at any time.
- 2.4.** Entitlement to the fellowship falls on the researcher, who will be hired by the host institution.

### *3. Secondments*

- 3.1.** Fellows will be required to pursue a mandatory international and/or intersectoral secondment of 3 to 6 months within their research projects in an institution freely proposed by the fellows themselves.
- 3.2.** The secondment can be performed in a single period or can be divided into shorter periods with a maximum of 6 months. Likewise, it can take place at one or more organisations.
- 3.3.** Researchers will have a supervisor at the secondment host institution, thus receiving crosssectoral guidance and ensuring continuity in the execution of the projects.
- 3.4.** A declaration of interest letter from the secondment supervisor will be asked to the fellows before the start date of the fellowship at the host institution.
- 3.5.** If, due to unexpected reasons, the secondment did not take place, the fellow must submit a justified report to "la Caixa" Foundation explaining the exceptional circumstances that prevented the mandatory secondment from taking place.

## 4. Complementary training

In addition to the payment amount, the fellowship includes a mixed training programme (face-to-face and online) on transversal skills, innovation and leadership.

Three sessions will be held: at the start of the fellowship, during the second year, and during the third year. Each session will last between 2 and 4 days, and attendance is required for all fellows from the same call, regardless of their discipline. "la Caixa" Foundation will cover all costs for these sessions, as well as the fellows' accommodation and travel costs.

Early after recruitment, fellows will establish a personal Career Development Plan (CDP), based on their personal needs and interests, explaining key achievements and future goals.

## 5. Requirements for applicants

### 5.1. Nationality

Postdoctoral researchers of **any nationality** are eligible to apply for the Postdoctoral Junior Leader Fellowship – *Retaining* programme.

### 5.2. Research training

Those who have **obtained their doctoral degree two to seven years prior to the deadline for applications** are eligible. For such purposes, candidates must have obtained their doctoral degree between 7<sup>th</sup> October 2019 and 7<sup>th</sup> October 2014 inclusive. It will be understood as the date of obtaining the doctoral degree, the date of the defense act of the doctoral thesis. Therefore, a document must be provided where the defense date of the thesis is certified.

Should an applicant hold more than one doctoral degree, the above-mentioned period will be counted from the first degree earned.

In the cases of interruption of the research activity between the date of obtaining the doctoral degree and the call deadline (7<sup>th</sup> October 2021), the candidate may request an extension of the period in which the doctoral degree must have been obtained. To these effects, the following causes are considered as interruption of the research activity:

- a) Illness or accident that has led to sick leave for three months or more. An extension may be applied for the number of justified months.
- b) Maternity. An extension of 1 year can be applied for each child born after the PhD award date.
- c) Paternity. An extension of 1 year can be applied for each child born after the PhD award date.

Both cases must be duly justified by means of an official supporting document.

### 5.3. Mobility

Those candidates who wish to **join a Spanish center or university must** have resided or have carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Spain for **more than twelve months in the three years** immediately prior to the deadline for applications. Short stays, such as holidays, done in a country other than their country of usual residence (where they carried out their main activity), will be considered as time spent in their country of usual residence.

A candidate with an uninterrupted period of at least 2 years of inactivity in research (e.g. unemployment, periods of employment outside research, parental or long-term sick leave) must have resided or carried out the main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Spain for more than 36 months in the 5 years immediately before the call deadline.

In the same way, time spent as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention, compulsory national service and/or short stays such as holidays are not taken into account.

Those candidates who wish to **join a Portuguese center or university must** have resided or have carried out their main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Portugal for **more than twelve months in the three years** immediately prior to the deadline for applications. Short stays, such as holidays, done in a country other than their country of usual residence (where they carried out their main activity), will be considered as time spent in their country of usual residence.

A candidate with an uninterrupted period of at least 2 years of inactivity in research (e.g. unemployment, periods of employment outside research, parental or long-term sick leave) must have resided or carried out the main activity (work, studies, etc.) in Portugal for more than 36 months in the 5 years immediately before the call deadline.

In the same way, time spent as part of a procedure for obtaining refugee status under the Geneva Convention, compulsory national service and/or short stays such as holidays are not taken into account.

### 5.4. International stays

For candidates applying to carry out the research in a Spanish university or research centre, the candidate must have carried out research stays at non-Spanish research centres or universities during their doctorate or postdoctorate, whether of a continuous or discontinuous nature for at least six months prior to the deadline for applications.

For candidates applying to carry out the research in a Portuguese university or research centre, the candidate must have carried out research stays at non-Portuguese research centres or universities during their doctorate or postdoctorate, whether of a continuous or discontinuous nature for at least six months prior to the deadline for applications.

## 6. Application and documentation

- 6.1.** Candidates must apply using the online application platform available in the “Fellowships” section on the [“la Caixa” Foundation website](#).

On this platform, the different pages of the application form clearly specify all information and documentation that must be provided to complete an application to the current fellowship programme. **The application must be completed entirely in English.**

- 6.2.** Information provided by the candidate in the “Prospective research centre” section will be understood to be provisional and strict abidance to it is not implied should the fellowship be awarded.

The candidates who are finally chosen as fellows will have a reasonable period of time in which to confirm their interest in the research centre or university that they specified as their first choice. During this time, they can also explore other alternatives that may better suit their personal goals.

In any case, should the line of research chosen by the candidate to carry out their research project be different from what was originally stated in their application, it must not stray from it significantly in terms of content or discipline.

The candidates must reach an agreement with the research centre or unit that they finally chooses, by virtue of which the centre will hire the fellow with the funds provided by “la Caixa” Foundation.

- 6.3.** Candidates must submit a personal statement with the project proposal that they wish to carry out if they are granted the fellowship. The personal statement must contain the following information:

- 1) Research career directly related to the project proposal, stating the main line of research that the candidate has carried out and specifying the main achievements to date (maximum of 3 pages).
- 2) Summary of the proposed research project (maximum of 4 pages).

This document’s characteristics and format are detailed in the relevant section of the online application form.

- 6.4.** Using the online application platform, candidates must also carry out the formalities to obtain, prior to the deadline for applications, **at least two reference letters** from university professors, researchers or other relevant individuals with whom they have had contact either academically or professionally. It is advisable for candidates to contact them as soon as possible to let them know that “la Caixa” Foundation will get in touch with them through an online procedure. This procedure makes it possible to request and attach up to five reference letters to the application form, provided that they arrive before the deadline for applications (7<sup>th</sup> October 2020). **The reference letters must be written in English.**

These reference letters are confidential. Under no circumstances may candidates request access to their content nor “la Caixa” Foundation provide it, whatever the final results of the selection process for this fellowship programme.

- 6.5. Candidates must attach a copy of their doctoral diploma or academic certificate where the date on which the doctoral degree was earned appears.
- 6.6. If a candidate claims an exception due to an interruption of research activity as contemplated in point 5.2, they must provide the relevant supporting documents.
- 6.7. Candidates must attach an ethics table pointing out the ethical aspects of the project proposal. In the online application platform, a template of the ethics table will be provided.
- 6.8. Candidates that claims the application of the extended mobility rule due to inactivity in research as contemplated in point 5.3, must provide the relevant supporting documents.
- 6.9. Documents uploaded in the online application platform in PDF format must be clear and legible. Similarly, each page of the original document must correspond to a page of the PDF document.
- 6.10. If the documents uploaded in the online application platform were issued in a language other than English, a translation (which can be done by the candidate) into English must be attached.

## 7. Selection process

The evaluation and selection of applications will be carried out taking into consideration the European Science Foundation's recommendations published in the [Peer Review Guide](#) and are awarded on a competitive basis. The members of the shortlisting and selection committees choose the candidates who, in their opinion, accredit superior merits and capabilities.

7.1. The process is comprised of three parts:

- a) **Eligibility check:** all applications received are screened to ensure that applications comply with formal requirements. The eligibility will be checked on the basis of the information provided by the applicant. Only applications that fulfil all the criteria will be included in the Remote evaluation phase.

Should an application not fulfil the formal requirements of the call for applications, "la Caixa" Foundation will send a notification by e-mail specifying the reason for its rejection.

- b) **Remote evaluation:** each eligible application is sent to an evaluation panel made up of two or three experts with broad experience in the discipline of the application and an extensive list of publications or contributions within this field. The applications that receive the highest ratings from each panel will pass to the next phase.

"la Caixa" Foundation will notify candidates whether they have been shortlisted or not by e-mail on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

It is advisable for candidates to inform the potential host institutions that they are interested in once their application has been chosen for the face-to-face selection phase.

- c) **Face-to-face selection:** The candidates whose applications have passed the shortlisting stage will be invited for a face-to-face interview. The interviews will be conducted by a

multidisciplinary selection committee, made up of professors and researchers with extensive experience in selection processes by peer review.

The interviews with the selection committee will be held in Barcelona on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2022. Interviews will be entirely in English.

The dates scheduled for the selection interviews or for the notification of the results may be subject to change due to organizational reasons. In case this occurs, candidates will be immediately notified by e-mail.

Should attending the interview entail travel or accommodation expenses greater than 15 euros, candidates may request compensation accordingly to the travel reimbursement policy of the “la Caixa” Fellowships programme.

“la Caixa” Foundation will notify the candidates interviewed during the face-to-face evaluation phase of the results via e-mail.

## 8. Evaluation criteria

**8.1.** Applications will be evaluated according to candidates’ merit, not penalising candidates with career breaks or younger candidates. The evaluation criteria and scores defined to achieve this goal are:

### Remote pre-selection

- 1. Excellence of Curriculum Vitae (weight 50%):** scientific and/or professional curriculum will be assessed in relation to scientific discipline and stage of the candidate’s career.
- 2. Motivation and research project (weight 35%):** originality, innovation and potential impact of the proposed project, the consistency of the candidate’s personal statement and the suitability of the host organization for carrying it out will be assessed.
- 3. Letters of reference (weight 15%):** reference letters supporting the candidacy will be assessed taking into account the specificity of the content and the signatory’s profile and a personal wording.

### Face-to-face selection

- 1. Academic and professional career (weight 50%):** quality of the contributions made to the chosen field, candidate’s experience in research management, coherence between the candidate’s academic background and track record. Interdisciplinary careers will be positively evaluated, if they respond to clear motivations of the candidate.
- 2. Candidate’s potential (weight 30%):** experts will pay attention to “soft” skills, such as clear, consistent discourse and articulation of ideas, ability to present complex reasoning, team working and capabilities such as independent reasoning, originality, innovation, entrepreneurship and leadership.
- 3. Motivation and impact of the project (weight 20%):** conceptual and methodological novelty of the project as well as its originality, feasibility and impact on society and the researcher’s career.

Further information to learn the rating criteria that govern the shortlisting process and the selection process by interview can be viewed in the [Evaluation of applications](#) section of the “la Caixa” Fellowship Programme website.

## *9. Redress procedure*

- 9.1.** Within seven calendar days from the date the results notification is sent, candidates may submit a redress by sending an e-mail to [fellowships@fundacionlacaixa.org](mailto:fellowships@fundacionlacaixa.org), which must include an explanatory text together with the documents that the candidate deems appropriate.
- 9.2.** Redresses will be resolved by an appeals committee. The resolution will be sent by e-mail within ten calendar days from the date of receipt of the appeal.
- 9.3.** The redress procedure will be strictly confidential.
- 9.4.** The redress procedure will look at procedural shortcomings and into possible errors, not against evaluation panel decisions or experts ratings and comments. The selection and evaluation processes themselves ensure the independence and the objectivity of the evaluation.

## *10. Appointment of candidates and choice of centre*

- 10.1.** The list of candidates chosen as fellows, as well as the candidates on the waiting list, when applicable, will be published with their names and surname(s) on the "la Caixa" Foundation website on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2022.
- 10.2.** Should there be any fellowships given up, these will be offered to the candidates on the reserve list, according to the order established.
- 10.3.** This call for fellowship applications can be declared void for one, some, or all of the fellowships, if so proposed by the selection committee to "la Caixa" Foundation.
- 10.4.** To be admitted as fellows, candidates must start at the research centre no later than 30<sup>th</sup> September 2022. Once this date has passed, the fellowship may no longer be activated. Once an agreement has been reached, the centre will hire the fellow with the funds provided by "la Caixa" Foundation.

## *11. Incompatibilities*

- 11.1.** Candidates may only apply for a fellowship for one of the two Postdoctoral Junior Leader subprogrammes included in the 2022 call for applications: Incoming or Retaining.
- 11.2.** Fellows who have already availed a Postdoctoral Junior Leader fellowship cannot apply for the same programme.
- 11.3.** If a candidate cannot attend the final interview which he/she has been invited to, he/she must notify "la Caixa" Foundation of this issue sufficiently ahead of time so the place can be offered to another applicant. Otherwise, he/she may not submit applications to other calls of "la Caixa" Foundation, unless he/she can accredit reasonable justification for their nonappearance.

- 11.4.** The resignation of the fellowship implies the impossibility of submitting an application to future calls of "la Caixa" Fellowships programme, with the exception of justified cases of illness or other force majeure.
- 11.5.** Under no circumstances may applicants contact the experts who are taking part or have taken part in the selection processes of this call for applications to ask them for information regarding the status of their application or any other aspect related to the selection process. Should this occur, the candidate will be disqualified from present or future selection processes.
- 11.6.** The fellowships are incompatible with any other paid work, fellowship or grant that covers more than the 10% of the annual amount given for salary costs (See 2.1) , unless specifically authorized by "la Caixa" Foundation.
- 11.7.** Fellowships are compatible with other competitive funds that complement the Postdoctoral Junior Leader Research Costs, upon the express authorization of "la Caixa" Foundation.
- 11.8.** The fellowship will not be compatible with a permanent employment contract from another institution other than the host centre.

## *12. Management of the fellowship and obligations of fellows*

- 12.1.** The applicants who are awarded a fellowship should preferably be a current account or bankbook holder at any CaixaBank or BPI branch office, which is where the monthly payments and any other amount included in the fellowship will be deposited to.
- 12.2.** These fellowships are granted exclusively for on-site projects, that is, to carry out full-time research activity on the host institution's facilities.
- 12.3.** Fellows may collaborate with teaching duties, provided that they notify "la Caixa" Foundation as far in advance as possible and they get prior approval from the host institution that has hired them. Generally speaking, and without prejudice to a personalised study and decision on a case-by-case basis, devoting more than 80 hours per year to teaching duties will not be authorised.
- 12.4.** When so required by "la Caixa" Foundation, the chosen candidates should accredit, through original documents or certified photocopies of them, the files attached to the applications. Likewise, "la Caixa" Foundation can ask them for the original certificates for any information mentioned in the application.
- 12.5.** The host institutions will manage the amounts that "la Caixa" Foundation allocates for each fellowship. For such purposes, the host institutions must send to "la Caixa" Foundation a financial report justifying the costs of the activities carried out by the researchers.
- 12.6.** The fellows must provide a scientific report on annual basis, as well as any other information that "la Caixa" Foundation deems necessary or they must authorize the host institution to provide it.

### *13. Ethics*

- 13.1.** The research project carried out by the fellow must comply with the EU's ethical principles, Spanish and international legislation applicable in this field, as well as the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union.
- 13.2.** Research projects of the selected candidates that may involve ethical issues will be sent to the programme's Ethics Committee. Ethical issues that may arise during the implementation of the projects will be also monitored.
- 13.3.** For full guidelines on each area, please refer to [http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants\\_manual/hi/ethics/h2020\\_hi\\_ethics-self-assess\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/research/participants/data/ref/h2020/grants_manual/hi/ethics/h2020_hi_ethics-self-assess_en.pdf) which is provided by the EC.

### *14. Privacy and data protection policy*

- 14.1.** The "la Caixa" Foundation fully complies with current legislation in terms of personal data protection.
- 14.2.** All personal data pertaining to fellowship applicants which are included in the documents referred to in these rules will be processed by the "la Caixa" Foundation to manage and process the application, service or enquiry made by the applicants; send them information—also by electronic means—about similar activities; meet with the legal obligations under which it is subject to; and, if so desired by the applicant, send them communications—including electronic ones—about other activities offered by it which are suited to their profile.
- 14.3.** Fellowship applicants agree to the document on the processing of their personal data upon completing their online application, using the application platform in the "Fellowships" section on the "la Caixa" Foundation website. This document can be viewed by clicking on this [link](#).
- 14.4.** Applicants may exercise their rights of access, rectification, erasure, portability, restriction and/or objection to processing by sending a letter to the Data Protection Officer of the "la Caixa" Foundation to the address Av. Diagonal, 621-629, 08028 Barcelona (Spain) or by sending an e-mail to [dpd@fundaciolacaixa.org](mailto:dpd@fundaciolacaixa.org).

### *15. Notes*

- 15.1.** The deadlines and times included in these rules are in the local time of Peninsular Spain (Central European Summer Time - CEST).
- 15.2.** The submission of an application for these fellowships implies all candidates' express acceptance of all these rules and the criteria and decisions that "la Caixa" Foundation may make in case of any doubts regarding how to interpret the requirements and terms and conditions contained herein.

**15.3.** Detection of any noncompliance with these rules, regardless of when this occurs and the status in which the application is found within the fellowship awarding process, will result in automatic cancellation of the application or the fellowship, should it have been already awarded. Should the fellow not fulfil the aforementioned obligations, or any other obligation included among the terms and conditions of the fellowship, "la Caixa" Foundation reserves the right to act as it deems appropriate, including requesting the return of the amounts received.