



## "la Caixa" Foundation Fellowships help to attract and retain talented researchers

Goretti Torres Perez receives a fellowship in the framework of the doctoral INPhINIT program and Prof Nioletta Liguori in the postdoctoral Junior Leader Programme

March 22, 2023

Two ICFOonians are among the 105 recipients of doctoral and postdoctoral fellowship from the *la Caixa* Foundation in their most recent calls. . The **doctoral INPhINIT** and **postdoctoral Junior Leader fellowships** pursue the twofold aim of supporting young talents to carry out their research in Spain or Portugal and attracting international researchers to these countries.

[Goretti Torres Perez](#), PhD student in the [Functional Optoelectronic Nanomaterials](#) research group led by ICREA Prof at ICFO Dr Gerasimos Konstantos, receive INPhINIT Fellowship. During her career as a mechanical engineer in Mexico and, currently, as a PhD student at ICFO, she has developed projects in different fields, such as energy, aerospace engineering,

biomechanics and nanotechnology. All these projects, while diverse in their applications, were intended to address global social and technological challenges. In addition, these experiences linked to her participation in different international forums led her to find a new technological innovation strategy in nanofabrication and optics. Currently, she works closely with the industrial sector and researches technology transfer for functional optoelectronics.

[Prof Nicoletta Liguori](#), leader of the new [Photon Harvesting in Plants and Biomolecules](#)

research group at ICFO, received the Postdoctoral Junior Leader Fellowship. She is graduate in Physics and has empirical and computational experience in biomolecular physics especially photosynthesis. She graduated cum laude in Physics from the Università degli Studi Roma Tre (IT) and then presented a master's thesis on molecular dynamics (MD) simulations of biomolecules at UC Berkeley (USA). To carry out her PhD, she joined the Photosynthesis Biophysics Group, directed by Roberta Croce at the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (NL). During her PhD, she combined ultrafast spectroscopy with molecular dynamics simulations to investigate how light-harvesting complexes from plants and algae activate photoresist. In 2018, she was awarded a prestigious VENI national grant that enabled her to develop a spectroscopic tool to measure how photoactive molecules respond to pH changes. In 2022, she became a Principal Investigator at ICFO, within the Cellex Nest elite fellowship program. Her group develops new experimental and computational tools to study the functional response of photosynthetic proteins to changes in the microenvironment. In 2022, she received her Junior Leader postdoctoral fellowship from the [la Caixa Foundation](#) to apply her integrated approach to a biodiversity of photosynthetic organisms and understand how they activate photoprotection in different ecological niches. [la Caixa](#) Fellowships offer competitive salaries and cross-disciplinary training. In the case of doctoral fellowships, complementary training is provided to strengthen such areas as scientific communication, the researcher's emotional wellbeing, leadership, and opportunities for funding. On the other hand, this training in the postdoctoral fellowships promotes the independent scientific degree program as an option for a professional future, and fosters innovation and leadership.

During the presentation ceremony of the fellowships at the CosmoCaixa Science Museum which took place on March 22nd, [Elisa Duran, Deputy General Manager of the la Caixa Foundation](#), indicated that funding science and technology is essential to avoid human knowledge becoming stagnant, to be able to go further and propose new solutions to old problems or new challenges. The coming future is in the hands of people like these fellows, with huge potential as agents of change and as co-creators of a future in which the long list of global issues becomes ever shorter.

The [la Caixa Foundation](#) fellowships programme is the most important of its kind promoted by private institutions in Spain and Europe, both in terms of the number of fellowships offered and the variety of disciplines covered. In all, the Foundation will allocate 20.2 million euros to this intake of doctoral and postdoctoral fellows. Both programs

ave been jointly financed by the European Commission through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND Action, in the context of the Horizon 2020 Framework Programme.