



"la Caixa" Foundation Fellowships

ICFOnians receive fellowships in the framework of the postdoctoral Junior Leader Program

May 05, 2026

A total of 100 researchers will carry out their projects in Spain and Portugal thanks to the 60 fellowships awarded under the INPhINIT doctoral programme and the 40 fellowships from the *la Caixa* Foundation's Junior Leader postdoctoral program.

The *la Caixa* Foundation has awarded 100 new doctoral and postdoctoral fellowship to outstanding researchers so that they can carry out their projects at universities and research centres in Spain and Portugal. Through the INPhINIT doctoral fellowships and the Junior Leader postdoctoral fellowships, the *la Caixa* Foundation pursues the dual objective of retaining and attracting talent to foster research excellence in these co

tries. This program is one of the most significant initiatives promoted by private organisations in Spain and Europe, both in terms of the number of fellowships awarded and the diversity of disciplines they cover. In total, the organisation has allocated more than 22 million

euros to this cohort of doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships. Both programs have been co-funded by the European Commission through the Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND Actions, within the context of the Horizon 2020 framework.

Junior Leader Postdoctoral Fellowships

In total, 751 applications were received and 40 fellowships were awarded in the fields of Technology, engineering, physics, mathematics, and health and life sciences (Incoming and Retaining).

ICFO recipients of Junior Leader Fellowships include:

Andreu Riera-Campeny, Postdoctoral Researcher, Macroscopic Quantum Optics Theory research group

Sarah Hirthe, Postdoctoral Researcher, [Ultracold Quantum Gases](#) research group

Andreu Riera-Campeny is a Postdoctoral Researcher at ICFO, where he works at the interface between quantum optics and fundamental physics. He obtained his PhD in Physics from the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona as a member of the Grup d'Informació Quàntica (GIQ), where he studied open quantum systems and nonequilibrium physics. He later joined the group of Prof. Oriol Romero-Isart at IQOQI Innsbruck and subsequently continued his research at ICFO, focusing on levitated nanoparticles as a platform to explore quantum phenomena with increasingly massive objects. With this fellowship, he will pursue the project, *Tabletop Tests of Fundamental Physics with Levitated Nanoparticles*, developing theoretical tools to investigate how nanoparticles trapped and controlled with light can be used in future precision experiments to probe fundamental questions in physics, including the nature of dark matter and gravity at the quantum scale.

Sarah Hirthe is a Postdoctoral Researcher in the Ultracold Quantum Gases group led by ICREA Prof. at ICFO Dr. Leticia Tarruell. She obtained her PhD in Physics from the Max Planck Institute of Quantum Optics in Garching, Germany, where she conducted research in quantum many-body physics and ultracold atomic systems. She subsequently joined ICFO as a postdoctoral researcher, where her work focuses on exploring strongly correlated quantum matter using ultracold quantum gases. With this fellowship, she will pursue her research on quantum simulation with ultracold atoms, advancing the understanding of complex quantum phenomena and contributing to the development of next-generation quantum technologies.



Andreu Riera-Campeny and Sarah Hirthe