

Two million euro endowment

Age-related diseases and adversary risk analysis are the two new AXA Research Fund in Spain research chairs

The AXA Research Fund has created the permanent AXA Chair in Risk prediction in age-related diseases, given to Ben Lehner, from the Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG); and the permanent chair in Adversary Risk Analysis, given to David Ríos, from the CSIC - Institute of Mathematical Science.

Madrid, April 4, 2014 - in Paris yesterday, the AXA Research Fund presented new financial aid to the global scientific community. Among those selected to receive funds, the panel of experts chose two Spanish projects focusing on diseases associated with age and the mathematical analysis of adversary risks, with an endowment, an innovative figure in Spain to support scientific research, of two million euros, bringing the Fund's total investment in Spain to 8.8 million euros.

The AXA fund, set up in 2007 to support the study of socioeconomic, environmental and health risk prevention around the world, directed 100 million euros in their first five years into 367 projects led by researchers of 49 different nationalities, working in more than 150 universities in 27 countries across Europe, Asia and America.

The institute, which last year renewed its commitment to scientific research with the endowment of a further 100 million euros for the next five years, aims to increase its efforts in helping scientists share their knowledge with a wider audience, in order to actively encourage public debate on the risks that threaten our societies.

An extra two million euros for supporting science in Spain

The two permanent Spanish chairs have been awarded to Professor Ben Lehner, from the Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG), who has been granted one million euros; and Professor David Ríos, from the Royal Academy of Sciences, at the Institute of Mathematical Sciences (ICMAT), part of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC), who also has the support of the CSIC General Foundation (FGCSIC), and whose research will be supported with 1.1 million euros.

Jean-Paul Rignault, CEO of AXA Spain, and spokesman for the AXA Research Fund in Spain, explained: "we are convinced that better knowledge and a deeper understanding of the risks facing societies are crucial for their development. This is the reason for our commitment to providing the academic world the means and the freedom they need. Supporting them is our responsibility and it is a unique opportunity to enrich our common knowledge and contribute to protecting people better."



Ben Lehner, head of the Genetic Systems research group, and ICREA Research Professor, currently carries out his work at the Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG), an international institute of biomedical research of excellence based in Barcelona, set up in December 2000.

Professor Lehner confirmed that "the support provided by the AXA Research Fund will allow us to continue studying how we can predict the future of a person's health, looking at how genetic changes and variations in the environment predispose us to certain diseases. And we do this by combining experiments on our model organisms with the computational analysis of large amounts of data on each individual."

The AXA ICMAT-CSIC chair will examine those problems in which an individual or organisation must face negative or even catastrophic threats, and where some of these threats have intelligent and adaptive behaviour.

David Ríos stated that "the developments obtained thanks to the aid granted by the AXA Research Fund could apply to issues such as the protection of critical infrastructure against terrorist attacks, the preparation of an auction bid against other potential buyers, and the protection of a company's information systems against cyber attacks. In general, any situation where there is one or more adversaries who can observe us and learn how we react, and adapt themselves to increase the damage they cause."

As Professor Ríos points out, "so far, most approaches have looked at the standard problem of risk analysis, regardless of intent, but terrorists are not like hurricanes, it is necessary to consider their objectives and their ability to modify their strategy in order to achieve them."

The AXA Research Fund proposes to use this new aid plan to fund the ideas of innovative researchers which have good potential for being introduced to the public and, in this way, try to raise awareness of risk prevention, in addition to developing participatory scientific methods to better understand global challenges.

Ben Lehner and David Ríos join the scientific community of the AXA Research Fund in Spain which already includes internationally renowned researchers like Mariano Barbacid, María Blasco, Joan Esteban and Albert Marcet.

The Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG) is a non-profit foundation funded by the Department of Economics and Knowledge, the Department of Health of the Catalan government, and the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness. It also involves the participation of Pompeu Fabra University, and is accredited as a Severo Ochoa Centre of Excellence. Its mission is to discover and advance knowledge for the benefit of society, public health and economic prosperity.

The Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) is the largest public institution dedicated to research in Spain and the third largest in Europe. The CSIC plays a central role in scientific and technological policy, as it covers everything from basic



research to the transfer of knowledge to industry. The driving force of the research are the centres and institutes, distributed throughout Spain's autonomous communities, and its 15,000 plus employees, of which more than 3,000 are staff researchers, and which also includes many doctors and scientists in training. In addition, it manages an important set of infrastructures and a very comprehensive and extensive network of specialised libraries. Its multidisciplinary and multisectoral nature means the CSIC covers all fields of knowledge.

The Institute of Mathematical Sciences (ICMAT) is a joint centre of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) and three higher education institutes in Madrid: the Autonomous (UAM), Carlos III (UC3M) and Complutense (UCM) universities. Its main objective is to encourage high quality mathematical research and interdisciplinary investigation. It is one of Spanish centres accredited as a Severo Ochoa Centre of Excellence, a fact that attests to the significance of their research programme. In addition, its scientists have won eight of the prestigious 'Starting' and 'Consolidator' European Research Council grants.

The CSIC General Foundation (FGCSIC) is a private non-profit entity. It operates both as a platform for knowledge transfer and internationalisation, aimed at increasing the economic and social value of CSIC research, and as a promotor of public-private collaboration in research.

For further information

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