

## PRESS RELEASE

# BCN Health Booster accelerator companies close the programme with 107.5 million euros in new funding

This morning the closing ceremony of the accelerator was presided over by Joan Guàrdia, rector of the University of Barcelona, Jordi Valls, Fourth Deputy Mayor of Barcelona City Council, Lorenzo di Pietro, managing director of Barcelona Activa, Robert Fabregat, managing director of Biocat, and Maria Terrades, director of the Parc Científic de Barcelona (PCB). The initiative, promoted by the PCB and Barcelona City Council with the support of Barcelona Activa and the collaboration of Biocat, bids farewell after three years of activity (2022-2024), having accompanied eleven health sector organisations in their growth.

- The eleven entities in the programme, initially selected for their business projects' innovative potential and social impact, have increased their human resources by 99%, the recruitment of international talent by 66% and the female leadership of their management teams by 71%. In total, 69 patents have been registered throughout the programme, 3 of which are pending.
- More than half (55%) of the indications addressed in the projects are in the field of oncology. Six of the participating companies are in the discovery phase for therapeutic products, three are developing diagnostic systems for various diseases, one is involved in biomaterials and one in enzyme design.

Barcelona, 21 February 2025. The [BCN Health Booster](#) accelerator comes to a close after three years in operation with a total of **107.5 million euros** in funding raised by the accelerated companies through both private (52% of the total) and public (48%) investments. This amounts to a 116% growth compared to the 49.8 million euros of funding they declared three years ago when they joined this business development programme, promoted by the [Parc Científic de Barcelona](#) (PCB) of the [University of Barcelona](#) (UB) and [Barcelona City Council](#), with the collaboration of [Barcelona Activa](#) and the support of [Biocat](#).

During 2024, the last year of the acceleration programme, the amount of **private investment** raised reached **9.5 million euros**, while **public funding** exceeded **8 million euros**. By the end of the programme, the companies had been granted a total of **66 patents**, with 3 more pending, a figure that represents an increase of 306% over the 17 registered when they started in 2022.

### Global talent with outstanding female leadership

There has also been remarkable growth in terms of staff. All accelerated companies ended the programme with a **99%** increase in staff, having grown from an initial 88 workers to 175 by the end of 2024, a remarkable exponential growth that has translated, in some cases, into an increased need for laboratory space.

This increase has also been accompanied by outstanding **female leadership** on the management teams. The presence of women in senior positions increased by **71%**, with a total of 24 women on the companies' founding or management teams, compared to 14 at the start of the programme. Similarly, the accelerated companies have managed to attract **global talent** to their teams, with a 66% increase in the presence of international professionals, specifically from Belgium, Brazil, Colombia, Cyprus, Germany, Greece, Portugal, Poland and the United States.

Of the eleven projects selected, six are in the discovery phase for **therapeutic products**, three are developing **diagnostic systems** for various diseases, one manufactures **biomaterials** for the health sector, and one is in **enzyme design**. Over the three years of the programme, the main indications have not changed, with a special focus on the **field of oncology**, in which more than half (**55%**) of the participating companies are active. The remainder work to create solutions for the detection of infectious diseases, the development of drug delivery systems for chronic diseases and the discovery of new therapeutic molecules for fibrotic diseases.

The rector of the University of Barcelona, **Joan Guàrdia**, stressed that projects such as the BCN Health Booster are what give meaning to the University of Barcelona's transformative spirit: "The boost the accelerator gives to these companies with social impact in the field of health is proof that the new models of collaboration between institutions and innovative formulas for knowledge transfer have a promising future". He added: "We have an obligation to work with a global perspective, in close connection with our scientific and business environment, and with the spirit of vanguard and public service that defines us as a public university."

"BCN Health Booster is a success story. A win-win between science, business and social and economic progress. And an example of the power of planting an entrepreneurial seed, the one represented by the companies participating in the project, in fertile ground, which is the excellent ecosystem of science, research and training that we have in Barcelona, and watering it with the essential role of entrepreneurial public institutions, such as Barcelona City Council, which also innovate, finance, promote and accompany the innovative drive. All of this contributes to building a better society. It is no coincidence that Barcelona is a global benchmark city in the biomedical sector. This is the way of the future," said **Jordi Valls**, Fourth Deputy Mayor of Barcelona City Council.

"The success of this accelerator shows us a way forward," said **Maria Terrades**, director of the PCB, "It is essential to get lab space for emerging entities so that they can develop their research and work on innovations that transform the health sector. The talent and ideas are there, and we at the PCB of the University of Barcelona must work to provide the necessary infrastructure and create an environment that favours the growth and success of these companies. We intend to work along these lines in the immediate future."

According to **Robert Fabregat**, director of Biocat, "health accelerators are a key tool for transforming scientific knowledge into real solutions that improve people's lives and solve global challenges. Programmes such as the BCN Health Booster allow health projects and start-ups with great potential to grow faster, access investment and establish strategic connections. Therefore, Biocat will continue to promote initiatives that help make these innovations a reality and reinforce Catalonia's position as one of the most competitive health innovation hubs in Europe".

### Key laboratory spaces to consolidate projects

For **Marina Rigau**, CEO and co-founder of the spin-off [MiMARK Diagnostics](#), which is working on a test to detect endometrial cancer, "having these laboratory spaces has been fundamental, and we probably would not be where we are today without this support." **Judit Anido**, CEO of [Nuage Therapeutics](#), described the PCB as "a unique space in Europe", without which "it would have been impossible to

develop our technology and grow so efficiently". For his part, **Rafel Bru**, CTO of the start-up [deepull](#), has valued "the confidence of both the PCB and Barcelona City Council in start-ups".

- For more information on the BCN Health Booster: <https://www.pcb.ub.edu/bcn-health-booster/>

## About the Parc Científic de Barcelona

The [Parc Científic de Barcelona \(PCB\)](#) is Europe's leading ecosystem for scientific, technological and business innovation in life sciences and health. Established by the University of Barcelona in 1997, it was the first science park in Spain. With a total area of 100,000 m<sup>2</sup>, it is home to more than 115 companies and public entities (including 9 major public research institutes) and nearly 3,600 professionals (57% of whom are women).

One of the things that makes the PCB stand out is its wide range of scientific and technological services for RDI, which it offers to both national and international companies and research groups both on the premises and off, complemented by a programme that seeks to enrich the PCB community by multiplying interaction between its members.

Among the PCB's strategic lines are the organisation of activities to awaken scientific vocation and encourage the critical spirit of Catalan students. It does so through the RESSÒ (Recerca en Societat) programme, which has been running for 21 years and organises 100 activities annually, reaching 7,000 pupils aged 10 to 18 throughout the country.

### ■ On Barcelona City Council's Strategic Plan for Science and Innovation 2024-2027

Barcelona is redoubling its commitment to science with a new Strategic Plan for Science and Innovation that incorporates knowledge transfer as a driving force for the economy and in which the City Council plans to invest a total of 130 million euros between 2024 and 2027. The strategic plan doubles the resources of the previous plan and includes a set of initiatives organised into 5 strategic lines, 8 lines of action, 5 key projects, 10 strategic projects and 46 specific measures. The plan also sets as essential future objectives moving towards climate neutrality, expanding and promoting the participation of women in science and technology, and contributing to public governance that is based on the technological humanism and sustainable artificial intelligence. In terms of sectors, Barcelona aims to be decisive in the design and production of electronic and photonic chips, to consolidate its position as the capital of biotechnology and health sciences, especially in the fight against neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and dementia, and also to be one of the European capitals of creation and exploitation of digital and quantum technologies.

### ■ About Barcelona Activa

[Barcelona Activa](#) is a municipal agency whose aim is to promote economic policy and local development in order to improve the quality of life of the citizens of Barcelona through the promotion of employment, entrepreneurship and talent and by lending support to companies, responding to the different needs of the territory's inhabitants from the perspective of a plural economy. This economic development agency has been supporting entrepreneurial projects in the city for more than 30 years, providing advice, specialised programmes and expert mentors who accompany each business creation process.

### ■ About Biocat

[Biocat](#) is the driving force behind the health innovation ecosystem in Catalonia, working to scale and consolidate the sector, generating economic and social impact, and positioning the BioRegion of Catalonia as an international benchmark. It was founded in 2006 at the initiative of the Generalitat de Catalunya and the Barcelona City Council, as a public-private foundation, and its governing bodies include representatives of all the sector's agents, both public and private. With this neutral position within the ecosystem and as a strategic instrument of the Government, Biocat focuses its efforts on developing programs to: accelerate the growth and competitiveness of the sector, facilitate access to and adoption of innovation in the Catalan Health System, promote the training and education of specialized talent, and increase the international projection and positioning of the BioRegion of Catalonia as one of the main hubs of health innovation in Europe. All this with a common objective for all the agents working in this strategic sector: to actively contribute to improving the health and quality of life of citizens.

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