

## PRESS RELEASE

# BCN Health Booster accelerator kicks off with eleven business projects in health innovation

**This morning at the Barcelona Science Park, the first edition of the accelerator kicked off in an event presided by Mayor Ada Colau and University of Barcelona Rector Joan Guàrdia**

- Five spin-offs and six start-ups comprise the first generation of companies accelerated at the BCN Health Booster, an initiative promoted by the University of Barcelona Science Park and the Barcelona City Council, with support from Barcelona Activa and collaboration from Biocat.
- The eleven companies selected from a total of nineteen applications are: Aptadel Therapeutics, Artificial Nature, Bioliquid Innovative Genetics, DeepUII, GAT Biosciences, GAT Therapeutics, MiMARK, Nuage Therapeutics, Ona Therapeutics, Oncoheroes Biosciences and OneChain.
- Among the companies accelerated, seven are in the therapeutics discovery phase, three are developing diagnostic tools for various diseases and one is designing biomaterials for the health sector. More than half (64%) work in the field of oncology.
- The BCN Health Booster accelerator, with an investment of €1 million, was created under the Barcelona Science Plan and is an example of collaboration and consensus among public centres, companies, universities and administrations to promote innovation in health and bring a return on investment in research to society.

**Barcelona, 24 November 2021.** Eleven innovative companies with high social impact are taking part in a new business-growth programme and will have subsidised access to the new PCB laboratory for three years under the new [BCN Health Booster](#) accelerator promoted by the [University of Barcelona \(UB\)](#), [Barcelona Science Park \(PCB\)](#) and the [Barcelona City Council](#), with support from [Barcelona Activa](#) and collaboration from [Biocat](#).

In choosing the participating companies, the expert panel valued highly those with the best chances of technical and financial viability, an experienced founding team and a chance to impact society, prioritising spin-offs from research centres, hospitals and universities.

Finally, five of the companies selected (45%) are spin-offs of research centres of excellence: **Aptadel Therapeutics** (Bellvitge Biomedical Research Institute, IDIBELL), **Ona Therapeutics** and **Nuage Therapeutics** (IRB Barcelona), **OneChain Immunotherapeutic** (Josep Carreras Leukaemia Research Institute) and **MiMARK Diagnostics** (Vall d'Hebron Research Institute-VHIR).

The rest are six start-ups: **Artificial Nature**, **Bioliqoid Innovative Genetics**, **Deepull Diagnostics**, **GAT Biosciences**, **GAT Therapeutics** and **Oncoheroes Biosciences**, with innovative business projects in the health arena.

Of the eleven companies selected, seven are in the therapeutics discovery phase, three are developing diagnostic tools for various diseases and one is designing biomaterials for the health sector.

More than half the companies taking part in the accelerator (64%) work in the field of oncology, whether searching for treatment solutions or working on early diagnosis. The rest are developing products to detect infectious diseases, drug delivery systems for chronic conditions, and drug discovery for various fibrotic diseases.

The acceleration programme will allow seven companies (64%) to set up offices in the new spaces and use a new laboratory space at the PCB, while four will continue in the current space. All of them will take part in the acceleration programme given by Biocat, which starts in January 2022.

The eleven companies have jointly raised initial funding of €43 million. Excluding the €30-million round by Ona Therapeutics, each company has between €600,000 and €3.5 million in start-up capital for its projects. The funding rounds over €1.5 million included international investors, which is in line with the growing foreign interest in investing in the sector in Catalonia.

### **Female leadership**

Over half of the companies (55%) are led by women: either the founders (Ona Therapeutics, MiMark and GatBiosciences) or in various leadership positions, such as chief scientific officer (CSO), chief technology officer (CTO) or chief financial officer (CFO).

### **€1 million to promote entrepreneurship and innovation in health**

BCN Health Booster was created under the **Barcelona Science Plan** and is an example of collaboration and consensus among public centres, companies, universities and administrations to promote innovation in health and bring a return on investment in research to society, leveraging science to improve people's welfare.

The Barcelona City Council's contribution to the project is **€468,936**, €343,240 of which will go to subsidise renting the laboratories and €125,696 to funding the Biocat business support programme. For the new laboratories in the Cluster II building, the Barcelona Science Park has invested **€685,334**.

## A country-building commitment

The inauguration of the [BCN Health Booster](#) accelerator took place today at the Barcelona Science Park with Mayor **Ada Colau**, **Jaume Collboni**, first deputy mayor and city councillor for Economy, Work, Competitiveness and Tax; **Jordi Martí**, sixth deputy mayor for Culture, Education, Science and Community; and **Félix Ortega**, CEO of Barcelona Activa, accompanied by **Joan Guàrdia**, rector of the University of Barcelona; **Olga Lanau**, UB Group general manager; **Robert Fabregat**, Biocat CEO; and **Maria Terrades**, CEO of the Barcelona Science Park, among others. The event also featured **Valerie Vanhooren**, co-founder and CEO of Ona Therapeutics, representing the first generation of companies being accelerated through the programme.

“BCN HealthBooster is a new piece of the much-needed puzzle that connects research, transfer and social impact, which are key to the development of the city and the country as knowledge societies. After the pandemic, it is urgent that we face the challenge of giving back to society the important advances in health that we can offer through this initiative,” highlighted UB Rector Joan Guàrdia.

Barcelona Mayor Ada Colau noted, “BCN Health Booster focuses on promoting science and research as a driving force for a new economic model for this city that is more sustainable and generates greater welfare for citizens”. Colau also remarked that “science, innovation and knowledge must play a key role in this new model and, especially, the life sciences sector, where our city is a global scientific benchmark”.

“With the launch of the accelerator, we have, in particular, promoted spin-offs, as they are companies created with public research centres, hospitals or universities, entities that, indirectly, can benefit from this new project. It is essential for public bodies to support entrepreneurship and innovation in the health sector as a way to raise awareness of its strategic value for Barcelona and Catalonia. We hope the work these eleven companies are doing will reach society quickly”, explained Maria Terrades.

The inauguration event included a tour of the facilities the Barcelona Science Park has set aside for the accelerator, a total of 527 m<sup>2</sup> in the Cluster II building, where the eleven chosen companies will have subsidised access to a dedicated or shared laboratory, from 1 January, and access to science equipment and latest-generation facilities within the PCB ecosystem to actively contribute to their business growth.

The companies will also have access to a Biocat business guidance programme for three years, which totally adapts to the needs and challenges each one will face over this period, including personalised mentorship and consultancy services; training (customer discovery, intellectual property, market access and regulatory affairs, etc.), and advisory services on access to funding, as well as coming up with a pitch, one-pager and brochure, and taking part in the Health & Bio Team Dating and Investment Readiness Series (TIRS) programmes.

• **More information and profile of the eleven selected companies:** <https://www.pcb.ub.edu/en/bcn-health-booster/>

### ■ About the Barcelona Science Park

The [Barcelona Science Park \(PCB\)](#) is a benchmark ecosystem in Europe for innovation in science, technology and business in the healthcare and life sciences. Established by the University of Barcelona in 1997, it was the first science park in Spain. With 100,000 m<sup>2</sup>, it hosts over 110 companies and public bodies (including six large public research institutes) and nearly 3,000 professionals (54% women).

One thing that sets the Park apart is its wide range of Science and Technology Services to facilitate R&D, available to internal and external, national and international companies and research groups, rounded out with a programme to build community at the PCB that encourages interaction among members and the innovation ecosystem.

The Park's strategic lines also include hosting scientific dissemination activities to bring research to the people and encourage young people to go into science. As part of its Research in Society programme, the Park organises over 100 activities a year with 6,400 participants.

### ■ About the Barcelona Science Plan

The [Barcelona Science Plan](#) is a strategy project on science policy created by the Barcelona City Council, which has led to a new Science and Universities Department that implements actions and programmes in science that in 2021 will have a budget of nearly €5 million. The plan, recently expanded to cover the new challenges arising from the pandemic, comprises 15 goals and 70 actions to promote Barcelona as a city of science and research.

The plan has a multidisciplinary approach that links science to culture and education, but also incorporates many actions focusing on the international projection of Barcelona as a city of science and promoting research and knowledge transfer for a new production model that is more sustainable, resilient and improves citizens' quality of life.

### ■ About Barcelona Activa

[Barcelona Activa](#) is a municipal agency that aims to promote economic policy and local development to improve quality of life for the citizens of Barcelona by fostering employment, boosting entrepreneurship and talent, and supporting companies, addressing the needs of the people in its territory from a plural economic standpoint.

This local development agency has been guiding entrepreneurial projects in the city for over 30 years, with advisory services, specialised programmes and expert mentors who guide each process of setting up the companies.

### ■ About Biocat

[Biocat](#) is the institution that promotes the healthcare and life sciences ecosystem in Catalonia and is working to maximise its social and economic impact. Biocat's strategy focuses on positioning the BioRegion of Catalonia as one of the main European hubs, offering up the innovative abilities of researchers and professionals with programmes to improve talent and entrepreneurship; accelerate technology transfer and business growth by supporting TTOs and start-ups, and attract investors and investment to the ecosystem.

Established in 2006 by the Government of Catalonia and Barcelona City Council, Biocat also promotes strategic large-scale policies and projects to help make the sector more competitive.

---

#### More information:

**Germán Sierra** • Head of Communication • Barcelona Science Park • Tel. [93 403 46 62](tel:934034662) • [gsierra@pcb.ub.cat](mailto:gsierra@pcb.ub.cat)