

PRESS RELEASE

The companies of the BCN Health Booster accelerator raise €51.8 M in the first year of the programme

- The eleven accelerated companies in the BCN Health Booster raised €16.4 M of private capital, and €35.4 M of public funding during 2022, the first year of the programme's launch, a period in which the number of patents increased by 12% and the number of employees also increased by 48%.
- In the same year, the five spin-offs and six start-ups enjoyed a 65% subsidy in the rental of laboratories at the Barcelona Science Park along with a free support programme from Biocat, more than 185 hours of training, personalised mentoring and consultancy services.
- The BCN Health Booster accelerator is an initiative led by the University of Barcelona Science Park and Barcelona City Council, with the support of Barcelona Activa and the collaboration from Biocat. With an investment of €1 M, and a duration of 3 years, the programme is founded in the context of the Barcelona Science Plan to promote innovation in health and give back research investment to society.

Barcelona, 27 September 2023. The 1st generation of companies participating in the BCN Health Booster accelerator raised **€51.8 million** of public and private funding during 2022 (the first year of its launch), a figure that represents **6%** compared to the €49 M that had been raised prior to joining this programme, led by the [Barcelona Science Park \(PCB\)](#) and the [Barcelona City Council](#), with support from [Barcelona Activa](#) and collaboration from [Biocat](#).

As of 31 December, 2022, private investment in these [eleven companies](#) in the life and health sciences sector reached **€16.4 million**, and the public funding raised exceeded **€35.4 million**.

The main **rounds of investment** in 2022 were led by **Deepull**, which received €13 M (in addition to a loan of €20 M from the European Investment Bank), **GAT Biosciences** (€1.3 M) and **GAT Therapeutics** (€1.5 M).

Regarding the companies that benefited from **competitive calls** for funding the beneficiary companies were **Ona Therapeutics**, **Aptadel Therapeutics**, **OneChain**, **Dan*na**, **MiMark**, **Nuage Therapeutics** and **Bioliqum Innovative Genetics**, which also closed a capital raise.

By the time the companies entered the BCN Health Booster, they had already secured some of the intellectual property with a total of 17 registered patents. During the programme's first year, this figure increased by **12%** reaching **19 patents granted** with another **30 being processed**. At this point, the signing of the worldwide licensing agreement signed in 2022 by **Oncoheroes Biosciences** with Allarity Therapeutics for clinical development in childhood cancer of the dovitinib and stenoparib compounds.

The main indications in which innovations are being carried out have not changed during the first year of the programme's activity: seven companies are in the **therapeutic products** discovery phase; three are developing **diagnostic systems** for various diseases, and one is designing **biomaterials** for the health sector. **More than half (64%) work in the field of oncology**.

According to **Maria Terrades**, the Director of the Barcelona Science Park: “We couldn’t be any more delighted with the overall assessment of the BCN Health Booster its first year of activity: the accelerated companies have gained financial muscle; they have increased the size of their teams; they have given more prominence to women in their managerial structure; and they have committed to combine local and foreign talent. At the moment we are talking about emerging projects, but it won’t be long that we’re considering them as consolidated companies.”

According to **Joan Guàrdia**, rector of the University of Barcelona and Chairman of PCB Board: “in just one year, the BCN Health Booster has demonstrated that the framework between research, knowledge transfer and social impact are fundamental for the development of both the city and the country as knowledge societies. We have committed to eleven projects which are continuing to work on bringing their research to society and the sustained growth of all these accelerated companies makes us very optimistic”.

Jordi Valls, the Deputy Mayor of Economy, Tax, Economic Promotion and Tourism of the City Council of Barcelona, emphasised that “this increase and consolidation of start-up companies in health has a direct impact on the welfare of citizens and the sustainability of the city. Initiatives such as the BCN Health Booster highlight the value of research centres, universities, hospitals and entities that make Barcelona an internationally renowned city in all of these fields. The life and health sciences sector, which represents 8.7% of Catalan GDP, is one of the most innovative sectors and it responds to the needs of 21st-century society. For this reason, we make the vehicles and resources available to make these new spin-offs and projects in Barcelona possible.”

An increase in the workforce of almost 50%

In 2022 accelerated companies **increased the size of their teams by 48%**, going from 66 to 98 professionals. **Female leadership also increased by 43%**: the number of women holding positions of responsibility increased from 14 to 20. At the end of the first year of launching the accelerator, all of the companies already had a female presence on the management team or as the founder.

Moreover, the **presence of international professionals with managerial or executive duties grew by 29%**. The entities have personnel from Germany, Belgium, Colombia, South Korea, the United States, Italy and Poland.

Financial support, ‘personalised’ consultancy services and access to capital

The Barcelona Science Park has allocated an **area of 527 m²** in the Clúster II building to the accelerator. In 2022, the eleven selected companies enjoyed a **65%** subsidy on the rental of laboratories and general services, a discount which represents a total amount of **€184,794.96**.

In addition, companies gained access to a **free business support programme from Biocat**, tailored to their needs, which included **9 hours of training** and **176 hours of mentoring and consultancy services** in strategic areas such as business plan development, tech-transfer, intellectual property, regulatory aspects, effective communication, accessing the market, financing and internationalisation.

At the same time, Biocat also provided them with personalised support in order to facilitate **relationships with private funding sources and pharmaceutical groups**. During 2022, it implemented **more than 55 actions to promote companies being connected with investment/corporate funds**, and it offered all companies supported by the BCN Health Booster the possibility of registering in its [Invest BioRegion Portal](#), a matchmaking platform which promotes licensing, co-development, and financing arrangements between emerging projects in the BioRegion and the private sector.

Biocat’s Director of Innovation and Business Development, **Núria Martí**, acknowledged that “in this first year of programme, Biocat has contributed tools, knowledge, personalised support and access to international investment funds to the start-ups which has enhanced their business development.” In addition, she gave her assurance that “over the next two years, we will continue to help companies achieve their maximum potential.” Of the companies that have offered personalized mentoring and consulting to the startups in the program in this first year, Asebio, Asphalion, Genesis Biomed, Merk, Pons IP, Swala Ventures, and Verdrags stand out.

BCN Health Booster, a main player at BioSpain 2023

Maria Terrades has officially presented these and other indicators on the assessment of the first year of the BCN Health Booster at [BioSpain 2023](#). Later, representatives of three of the companies participating in the programme, **Aptadel**, **MiMark** and **Ona Therapeutics**, shared the evolution of their projects, what challenges they have faced



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and their needs and explained

how the accelerator contributed to them in significant aspects such as product development, financing, the growth of their teams and intellectual protection.

The session, moderated by Núria Martí, took place on Wednesday, 27 September at 11:30 a.m. in Speaker's Corner (Hall 1 Fira de Montjuïc).

Accelerating the bringing of innovation in health to society

BCN Health Booster is a three-year acceleration programme aimed at emerging companies in the life sciences sector which are seeking to revolutionise the market with disruptive and high social impact products. The project, with **an investment of more than €1 M**, is founded in the context of the **Barcelona Science Plan**, as an example of collaboration and consensus between public centres, companies, universities and administrations to promote innovation in health and give back research investment to society for the benefit of the general public.

Barcelona City Council's contribution is **€468,936**, of which €343,240 will be used to partially subsidise the rental of laboratories at the Barcelona Science Park, and €125,696 to finance the Biocat business support programme. As for the Park itself, it invested **€685,334** in the adaptation of new spaces to accommodate the accelerator in the Clúster II building.

• More information on the BCN Health Booster accelerator and the eleven selected companies:

<https://www.pcb.ub.edu/bcn-health-booster/>

■ About the Barcelona Science Park

The **Barcelona Science Park (PCB)** is a benchmark ecosystem in its scientific, technological and business innovation in life and health sciences in Europe. Founded by the University of Barcelona in 1997, it was the first science park in Spain. With an area of 100,000 m², it houses more than 110 companies and public entities (including 6 major public research institutes) and around 3,000 professionals (54% of whom are women).

A differential value of the Park is the wide range of Scientific and Technological Services designed to facilitate the R+D+I, that it offers to both internal, external, national and international research companies and groups, and which is complemented by a programme to promote the PCB Community to multiply the interaction between its members.

Among its lines of strategy, the Park also organises scientific dissemination activities to familiarise citizens with research and encourage vocations among young people. Within the framework of its Research in Society programme, it organises more than 100 activities each year, with 6,400 people participating in them.

■ About the Barcelona Science Plan

The **Barcelona Science Plan 2020 - 2023** is Barcelona City Council's strategic scientific policies project, which has been specified through a new Department of Science and Universities which implements science-based actions and programmes. It has been expanded recently to include the new challenges generated by the pandemic; it is made up of 15 objectives and 70 actions to promote Barcelona as a city of science and research.

The plan brings together an interdisciplinary perspective which links science to culture and education, and at the same time it incorporates multiple actions focused on the international projection of Barcelona as a city of science and the promotion of research and the transfer of knowledge for a new, more sustainable and resilient productive model.

■ About Barcelona Activa

Barcelona Activa is the city's agency which seeks to boost economic policy and local development to promote the improvement of the quality of life of the citizens of Barcelona by encouraging employment, fostering entrepreneurship, talent and support for companies, responding to the different needs of people in its territory from a plural economy perspective.

The economic development agency has been supporting entrepreneurial projects in the city for over 30 years, offering advice, specialised programmes and expert mentors who accompany them in each of the processes involved in setting up companies.

■ About Biocat

Biocat is the institution that promotes the ecosystem of life sciences and health in Catalonia, and it works to maximise its economic and social impact. Biocat focuses its strategy on the positioning of Catalonia's BioRegion as one of the main European hubs, offering innovative capability to researchers and professionals through programmes to improve talent and entrepreneurship; accelerating technology transfer and business growth supporting the Research Results Transfer Offices (OTRI in its Spanish acronym) and start-up companies, as well as promoting the attraction of investors and investment in the ecosystem. Created in 2006 by the Government of Catalonia (Generalitat) and Barcelona City Council, Biocat also promotes broad-based strategic policies and projects aimed at contributing to Catalonia's competitiveness.

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