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Spain's top research centres get cash infusion - October 10, 2011

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Posted on behalf of Michele Catanzaro

The first eight Spanish research centers selected for a special funding injection of €5 million over the next 5 years, were announced last week by the Ministry of Science (see full list below).

The funding comes from the first round of the Severo-Ochoa programme, set up by science minister Cristina Garmendia (pictured) in order to preserve scientific excellence in times of economic crisis. The government plans to fund 32 more centres over the next four years.



But some of those who missed out on funding this year reacted badly: after the announcement, the directors of the Center for Genomic Regulation (CRG) in Barcelona, and the Institute of Chemical Research of Catalonia (ICIQ) offered their resignations (neither was accepted). Garmendia said the two centres were among four finalists vying for the final two spots (the programme can make up to 10 awards per year) - but the selection committee decided it could not decide between them.

Resignation may sound like a drastic reaction when there are 32 more places up for grabs, but there is concern that the programme may not survive a change of government after elections in November. "The selection process lacked clear guidelines, and resulted in the exclusion of top-level centers: this gives an excuse to the next government to change rules, and nobody knows whether the program will stay what it was meant to be," says Pere Puigdomènech, director of Center for Agrigenomic Research (CRAG).

The Severo-Ochoa programme replaces the Consolider program, the previous initiative for promoting excellence in Spain, which focused on networks of groups, rather than on single centers.

The eight selected research centres:

Institut de Recerca Biomèdica de Barcelona (IRB)
Barcelona Supercomputing Center (BCN-CNS)
Barcelona Graduate School of Economics (GSE)
Instituto de Ciencias Matemáticas (ICMAT)
Instituto de Ciencias Fotónicas (ICFO)
Instituto de Astrofísica de Canarias (IAC)
Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Oncológicas Carlos III (CNIO)
Centro Nacional de Investigaciones Cardiovasculares (CNIC)

Posted by Brian Owens on October 10, 2011

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