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Frontier Research and Innovation Take Center Stage at BIST Forum 2026

Leaders from research, policy, and innovation gathered at the BIST Forum 2026 to discuss how frontier research can help shape new industries. The event highlighted collaborative projects across the BIST centres, celebrated initiatives supporting women in science, and showcased research advances emerging from the BIST community, including ICFO.

March 10, 2026

Leaders from research, policy, and innovation came together at the BIST Forum 2026, held at the CosmoCaixa auditorium in Barcelona, for the annual meeting of the scientific community of the Barcelona Institute of Science and Technology (BIST). The event brought together researchers, institutional representatives, and members of the scientific and business ecosystem to reflect on the role of frontier research in the creation of new knowledge-based industries.

The forum, held under the title *Frontier Research: The Ground for a New Industry*, explored the organizational, legal, and funding conditions required to ensure that scientific discoveries developed in Europe can evolve into scalable innovations capable of generating new industries.

The institutional opening featured Andreu Mas Colell, President of BIST; Maria Eugenia Gay, Second Deputy Mayor of Barcelona; Nuria Montserrat, Minister of Research and Universities of the Government of Catalonia; and Jordi Hereu, Minister of Industry and Tourism of the Government of Spain.

One of the main sessions of the Forum focused on a discussion about the conditions required for frontier research to drive new industries. The session included Nadia Calvino, President of the European Investment Bank, Teresa Garcia Mila, President of the Cercle d'Economia, Carolina Aguilar, Chief Executive Officer and Co Founder of INBRAIN Neuroelectronics, and Gabor M. Lamm, Managing Director of Technology Transfer at the European Molecular Biology Laboratory. The conversation was moderated by Eduard Vallory, Director General of BIST.

During the discussion, Nadia Calvino, President of the European Investment Bank, highlighted the importance of strategic investment in strengthening Europe's deep tech innovation ecosystem. She referred to companies such as INBRAIN Neuroelectronics as well as ICFO

spin offs LuxQuanta and Quside as examples of how sustained support from institutions such as the European Investment Bank and the European Innovation Council can help translate cutting edge scientific research into new industries.

During the event, several examples emerging from the BIST community illustrated the transformative potential of scientific research in areas such as the semiconductor industry, cancer research, and the decarbonization of industrial processes.

The second part of the Forum included the announcement of the 2026 edition of the To the Mothers of Science program, an initiative that supports researchers with children so they can continue advancing their scientific careers. The program contributes to reducing the gender gap in research careers, particularly during key stages of professional consolidation.

The researchers awarded in this edition were Yolanda Castillo Escario (IBEC), Amelie Godeau (IBEC), Amaris Guevara (ICFO), Blanca Majem (IRB Barcelona), Silvia Pittolo (IBEC), Maria Soler (ICN2), and Ariane Stucki (ICFO). The session also included a discussion on the gender gap in leadership positions within experimental sciences.

The Forum also highlighted the BIST Ignite Awards, a program designed to promote multidisciplinary research collaborations across the BIST centres with the goal of exploring new research directions with high scientific impact.

Among the projects presented was BREATH CO₂, which investigates new chiral hybrid molecules(?) to improve carbon dioxide electrolyzers through atomic scale visualization. The project brings together researchers from several BIST centres and is led by Alba Garzon Manjon (ICN2), Felipe Andres Garces Pineda (ICIQ), and Viktoriia Golovanova (ICFO).

Another project highlighted during the Forum was MAPtoFinAD, focused on studying the initial transition of the Tau protein into solid fibers associated with Alzheimer's disease. The project is led by Amayra Hernandez Vega (IBEC), Felix Ruhnnow (CRG), and Lorena Ruiz Perez (IBEC).

In addition to these projects, five new initiatives received seed funding to support emerging collaborative ideas across the BIST community.

Through initiatives such as the BIST Forum, the BIST community continues to strengthen connections between research institutions, policy makers, and industry, promoting collaboration and the translation of scientific knowledge into societal and economic impact.

BIST brings together seven research centres within the CERCA system: the Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG), the Institute for Bioengineering of Catalonia (IBEC), the Institute of Photonic Sciences (ICFO), the Institute of Chemical Research of Catalonia (ICIQ), the Catalan Institute of Nanoscience and Nanotechnology (ICN2), the Institute for High Energy Physics (IFAE), and the Institute for Research in Biomedicine (IRB Barcelona). Together they form a scientific community of nearly 2700 professionals and are among the leading research institutions in Europe in terms of scientific excellence and participation in projects funded by the European Research Council (ERC).

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Alba Garzon Manjon (ICN2), Felipe
Andres Garcia Pineda (ICIQ), and
Viktoria Golovanova (ICFO)

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'Conditions for Frontier Research to
Shape the New Industry' roundtable