

General characteristics

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In previous decades, the analysis of the research system carried out highlighted the fact that, in general university research centres and public research bodies needed to improve the flexibility of their operations. Excessive bureaucracy, together with complex governance, with many numerous committees involved in the decision-making process, did nothing to enhance the activities of these entities.

To overcome this dilemma, the Government of Catalonia launched a process of change in existing centres and the creation of its own new research centres, giving rise to CERCA, the current research centre system.

All the centres in the CERCA system are organised according to a governance and operational model that ensures they are efficient and flexibly managed, can attract and promote talent, have able managers and function according to strategic planning.

The characteristics that define the CERCA centre model are the following:

- They are **independent bodies** with their own legal identity in which the Government of Catalonia has a holding, their main purpose being to carry out **top-level scientific research**.
- They follow a **private sector management model** that is totally flexible and self-monitored, based on multi-year activity programmes within the framework of a **strategic plan** and **ex-post supervision** that respects the autonomy of each centre.
- Their governance is effective and hierarchical, based on a **management team with broad powers** devolved to it from the centre's governing body, to which it reports.
- They have been designed to have a **research staff selected to ensure an international impact**, divided into research groups headed by **internationally renowned scientists** from different fields and with a high turnover of post-doctoral researchers.
- They develop **frontier research** intended to have a major scientific and economic impact and to improve the wellbeing of societies and individuals.
- They have **significant and stable structural funding** through programme contracts with the Government of Catalonia, and apply a **policy of attracting talent** based on the scientific careers of their research staff, in accordance with the specific features of each field and the recruitment strategies chosen by each centre.
- As an essential feature of the system, they receive regular advice and assessment from a top-level **international scientific committee**. This committee ensures practices and criteria are implemented in accordance with international standards of excellence in research.

[ECO/2405/2015](#), of 21 October, in recognition of various research institutions of Catalonia as CERCA centres.

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