

Due to the urgent need to support SMEs, businesses and start-ups

CaixaBank and the international organisation Vital Voices have launched a virtual mentoring platform to help female entrepreneurs affected by COVID-19

- ***Women who are interested in receiving guidance on potential solutions to their companies' problems, or new career focus, can register on www.vitalvoicesmentoring.com.***
- ***Successful professionals and executives of large companies, such as Guy Hands, Paolo Riva, Nina Pustilnik, Marty Wikstrom and US businesswoman Rose Marie Bravo, among others, will be collaborating as mentors.***
- ***The financial institution and the international organisation are strengthening their collaboration to drive new projects that help to promote female executives and diversity in the professional field.***
- ***41.3% of managerial positions are held by women in CaixaBank, who also represent 40% of the Board of Directors, one of the highest percentages in the sector.***

Barcelona. 8 May 2020

CaixaBank and the international organisation Vital Voices, whose mission is to support and invest in women leaders around the world, have created a virtual mentoring platform with a view to helping women entrepreneurs and founders of SMEs and start-ups across Europe, who are currently facing professional challenges due to COVID-19.

Both women who want to receive guidance and experts (both male and female) in senior positions who want to use their knowledge and experience to help businesswomen can participate in the initiative. Executives from large companies have already confirmed their collaboration, including **Guy Hands**, chairman of the British private equity firm Terra Firma; **Paolo Riva**, former CEO of fashion brands Diane Von Furstenberg and Victoria Beckham; **Nina Pustilnik**, investor in companies with a social impact; **Marty Wikstrom**, founding partner of Atelier Fund, specialising in the acquisition and development of luxury brands; US businesswoman **Rose Marie Bravo**, who has held leadership positions in various major

fashion companies; **Sagra Maceira de Rosen**, board member of Vital Voices, and **Anna Quirós**, corporate director of Work Relations, Culture and Development of CaixaBank, among others.

A project with a focus on consolidation

Any interested individuals can register for the initiative on the website www.vitalvoicesmentoring.com. The project has been launched in Spain and the United Kingdom, with an ambition to expand to other European companies.

As highlighted by Anna Quirós, corporate director of Work Relations, Culture and Development of CaixaBank, “as a company we are committed to diversity, and this is why we promote initiatives that contribute to improving equal opportunities, meritocracy and talent regardless of gender.” Anna Quirós added that “one of the most powerful actions to promote the presence of women in executive positions is mentoring, which has extraordinary benefits: it establishes productive relationships, helps to build contact networks and facilitates personal and professional development. With virtual mentoring this is no longer a major challenge, as we can combine it with our complex lives at the time and place that suits us best.”

The people in charge of the project will pair women entrepreneurs with their mentor so that they can carry out virtual guidance sessions that will help businesswomen to think about potential solutions to problems they are facing in their companies and new career goals.

For Sagra Maceira de Rosen, board member of Vital Voices, “mentoring the next generation of women leaders is at the heart of the mission of Vital Voices. This is even more significant now, in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, as many women are being particularly affected. We are delighted and grateful, once again, to be joining forces with CaixaBank to launch this virtual mentoring initiative.”

The initiative was launched as a result of the current crisis, given that many businesswomen are facing challenges and need urgent support. However, the objective is to consolidate the project in the long term so that, when the state of alarm ends, the platform will continue to operate.

Collaboration between CaixaBank and Vital Voices

This project is a new milestone in the collaboration between CaixaBank and Vital Voices, who share a commitment to promote diversity and equal opportunities. The institution, chaired by Jordi Gual and with CEO Gonzalo Gortázar, and the international organisation led by Sagra Maceira de Rosen and Jennifer Taylor in Europe, have already collaborated previously on other professional guidance initiatives for women, such as Global Mentoring Walks with women executives.

This global movement from Vital Voices was born out of one woman's efforts to share her

knowledge and experience with other women who aspired to be leaders in their careers. CEO and founder of Oxygen Media, Geraldine Laybourne, currently deputy chairwoman of the board of Vital Voices, took advantage of her daily walk through Central Park to have these mentoring meetings.

Due to the success of this simple formula, she decided to organise walks in the main US cities to highlight the importance of mentoring, and to facilitate access to the most successful women in the country, who shared their experiences and advice with promising young women. What started as a personal goal has transformed into a global movement thanks to the momentum of Vital Voices Global Partnership, an organisation founded in 1997 seeking to identify women leaders who are building progress in their communities around the world, team up with them and drive them to making their projects a reality. Figures like Hilary Clinton and Madeleine Albright founded the organisation, and others such as Diane von Furstenberg, Tina Brown and Sally Field have supported the initiative.

CaixaBank, committed to diversity and equal opportunities

CaixaBank has its own diversity programme, Wengage, developed by people from all areas of the company, based on meritocracy and promoting equal opportunities, which works to promote and achieve gender, functional and generational diversity. Wengage includes internal measures to foster flexibility and work-life balance, training and female mentoring plans, through which female managers will guide other professionals in developing their careers.

Externally, CaixaBank's commitment to diversity includes promoting discussion and public conversation around diversity, with initiatives such as eWoman days or CaixaBank Talks; the organisation of different awards and initiatives recognising business leadership (Businesswoman Award) or academic excellence (WONNOWN Awards); or sport related activities (sponsorship of the women's basketball team).

Currently, CaixaBank's managerial positions have a ratio of 41.3% women, and 40% women on its Board of Directors, one of the highest percentages in the sector. It is also committed to progressing further in this respect and reaching 43% women in management positions in 2021.