CaixaBank and Microsoft recognise Spain's top female STEM students with the WONNOW Awards

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- ***María del Carmen Cortés Navarro has been recognised as having the best academic record, along with various outstanding professional, personal and social achievements. She will receive a cash prize of €10,000 and gain access to a Microsoft mentoring programme***

- ***A total of 15 award-winning students will join different areas of the CaixaBank Group for six months and take part in a Microsoft mentoring programme***

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CaixaBank and Microsoft have recognised Spain's top female STEM students with the WONNOW Awards. The initiative, which has become a benchmark event in the university sector, recognises excellence among female students pursuing degrees in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), with the aim of helping to close the gender gap in these fields.

Now in their ninth year, the awards have attracted a record number of applications. A total of 1,773 students from Spanish universities applied this year, marking an increase of 64.2 % on the previous year and more than six times the number of applicants in the inaugural edition. A total of 7,695 students have submitted entries since the WONNOW Awards were launched in 2018, reflecting the initiative's growing outreach within the university community and increasing interest in recognising and raising the profile of female talent in science and technology.

The WONNOW Awards were presented at a ceremony held at CaixaBank's 'all in one' branch in Madrid, attended by the bank's CEO Gonzalo Gortázar and Microsoft Spain President Paco Salcedo.

During the event, Gonzalo Gortázar remarked: "The winners of the WONNOW Awards are an outstanding example of the talent we have in Spain. These are highly qualified young women who have chosen to pursue STEM disciplines, fields that are becoming increasingly important to our economy and society, but in which women remain underrepresented. Through these awards, we want to recognise their hard work and abilities, but above all, help pave the way for more young women to see science and technology as an opportunity for their future. We need to harness all the talent available to successfully address the major challenges that lie ahead."

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For his part, Paco Salcedo had the following words: “The record number of applications for this year’s WONNOW Awards reflects the extraordinary talent and ambition of a new generation of women who want to help shape the future of science and technology. At a time when artificial intelligence is redefining how we work, innovate and tackle society’s major challenges, we need to draw on every perspective and skill. At Microsoft, we firmly believe that recognising talent is important, but providing opportunities to develop it is even more so. That is the true value of our partnership with CaixaBank: supporting these young women as they take their first steps in their professional careers, helping them turn their knowledge into real-world impact and enabling them to play a leading role in the next generation of technological innovation.”

Women’s representation in STEM disciplines

Women remain underrepresented in STEM disciplines. According to the European Commission’s Education and Training Monitor 2025, women account for 28.6 % of university students studying STEM subjects in Spain, a figure that falls to 27.1 % in engineering and 15.9 % in information and communication technologies (ICT). These figures lay bare a gender gap that remains particularly pronounced in some of the technology fields where demand for skilled professionals happens to be highest.

Against this backdrop, initiatives such as the WONNOW Awards aim to raise the profile of female talent and create opportunities for more women to pursue academic and professional careers in these fields.

Recognising female STEM talent

María del Carmen Cortés Navarro, who graduated in Biomedical Engineering from CEU San Pablo University in Madrid, was recognised for having the best academic record, along with various outstanding personal, professional and social achievements. She has received a cash prize of €10,000 and access to a Microsoft mentoring programme.

The other 15 award-winning students will join different areas of the CaixaBank Group for six months under employment contracts and will also have access to the Microsoft mentoring programme. This experience will give them first-hand exposure to projects in areas such as innovation, technology, data, digital transformation, risk and business. The winners are:

- **Paula Rodríguez Fleitas**, who graduated in Mathematics from the University of La Laguna and is currently studying for a Master’s degree in Financial Management at the International University of Valencia.

- **Clàudia Morales Porqueras**, who graduated in Mathematical Engineering in Data Science from Pompeu Fabra University.

- **Anna Gil Moliner**, who graduated in Data Science from the Polytechnic University of Valencia.

- **Susana Medina Cano**, who is pursuing a double degree in Computer Engineering and Mathematics at the University of Granada.

- **Irene Wenya Martínez Alonso**, who is studying for a double degree in Mathematical Engineering and Economics at CUNEF University.

- **Mercedes Román Ruiz**, who graduated in Industrial Electronics Engineering from the University of Málaga and is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Industrial Engineering at the Polytechnic University of Madrid.

- **Scherezade del Carmen Rodríguez Roca**, who is working towards a degree in Mathematics at the University of La Laguna.

- **Julia Díaz Canón**, who is pursuing a degree in Physics at the University of Granada.

- **Celia Soledad Abajo Belinchón**, who graduated in Mathematics from the University of Valladolid and is now studying for a Master's degree in Statistical and Computational Information Processing at the Complutense University of Madrid.

- **Laia Martinez Mora**, who graduated in Industrial Engineering and is currently studying for a Master's degree in Industrial Engineering at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia.

- **Ana Xuemei Blanco Garcia**, who graduated in Computer Engineering from the University of Barcelona and is presently studying for a Master's degree in Machine Learning and Cybersecurity for Internet Connected Systems at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia.

- **Ángela Esteban Gutiérrez**, who graduated in Biomedical Engineering and holds a Master's degree in Signal Theory and Communications from the Polytechnic University of Madrid.

- **Claudia González Bautista**, who graduated in Mathematics from UNIE University.

- **Diana Solvinda Vaquero Morales**, who is pursuing a degree in Mathematical Engineering at the Complutense University of Madrid.

- **Patricia Navarro Herencia**, who is undertaking a degree in Mathematics at the University of Granada.

Aside from recognising academic excellence, the WONNOW Awards create opportunities for the winning students to begin or continue their professional careers in fields related to technology, innovation and digital transformation.

Notably, 35 winners from the previous eight editions are still working at the CaixaBank Group, demonstrating the initiative's lasting impact and its ability to help attract female STEM talent to the organisation.

The ninth edition thus strengthens an initiative which, since its launch, has combined academic recognition with access to professional experience, mentoring and development programmes.

CaixaBank's firm commitment to diversity and talent

CaixaBank promotes the WONNOW Awards as part of its broader commitment to diversity, equal opportunities, meritocracy and the recognition of talent. The bank runs a range of initiatives aimed at promoting female leadership both within and outside the organisation and increasing women's representation in fields where they remain underrepresented.

The awards form part of Wengage, CaixaBank's diversity and inclusion programme, which works to champion equal opportunities and raise awareness of diversity both within the bank and across society as a whole. Externally, CaixaBank fosters diversity through a range of initiatives related to leadership and entrepreneurship, innovation and education, sport, rural communities and labour market inclusion. These include 'CaixaBank Premio Empresaria', 'Premio A Profesional Autónoma' and the 'GIFT, Girls in Finance & Talent' programme, a ground-breaking initiative that promotes female talent in investment banking and financial markets.

About Microsoft

Microsoft (Nasdaq: MSFT; @microsoft) creates AI-powered platforms and tools to deliver innovative solutions that meet the evolving needs of its customers. The technology company is committed to making AI widely available and doing so responsibly, with a mission to empower every person and every organisation on the planet to achieve more.

Microsoft believes that diversity and inclusion are essential to driving innovation, attracting and developing the best talent, and building a more equitable society. It therefore works to foster a culture in which everyone feels valued and respected and can unlock their full potential, regardless of their gender, background, abilities or personal circumstances. This commitment extends beyond the company through initiatives that champion equal opportunities, accessibility, digital skills development and the inclusion of diverse talent within the technology sector. Microsoft firmly believes that bringing together different perspectives, experiences and ways of thinking leads to better solutions, helps meet the needs of a diverse society and contributes to a more inclusive digital future.