

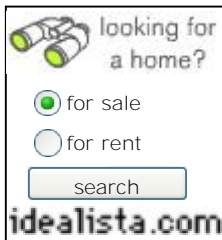


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Antonio Montilla

*The Department of Innovation at the Junta de Andalucía is spending 45 million euros on research this year in benefit of 18,000 professionals*

Andalucía has decided to put an end to its historical low score when it comes to science and technology. To go in line with other European regions the Innovation Department at the Junta de Andalucía has multiplied financial incentives for Andalusian research groups tenfold. This year the regional government has set aside some 45 million euros to continue its scheme to provide incentives for research groups and at the same time support projects to bring national and international experts to Andalucía.

One of the direct consequences of the investment has been to bring home Andalusian scientists who have been working on important research projects at universities in the rest of Spain and abroad as well as attracting professional researchers to the region. In fact some 150 scientists have come to work in Andalucía in the last three years.

In total the Junta de Andalucía is currently providing financial assistance to 1,800 research teams, comprising more than 18,000 professionals.

**Wide-ranging projects**

Projects receiving financial support from the regional government cover a wide range of fields. Three of the research teams at the Universities of Granada, Jaén and Cordoba are using the grants to find out more about the relationship between olive oil and good health as well as doing research into biotechnological solutions to the problem of a land disease which is caused by the verticillium fungus.

In other fields researchers are working on specific aspects of various neuro-degenerative illnesses, such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's and cancer-related research occupies other scientific teams.

Eduardo de Teresa Galván and Carmen Estrada Cerquera, who lecture at the universities of Granada and Jaén respectively, focus their efforts on stem cells. In all these cases the research teams include doctors, biologists, chemists and mathematicians.

**Themes**

Research projects in Andalucía are even more wide ranging, covering themes such as archaeological excavations, constitution reform, energy and environmental engineering, among others.

**A job at home, at last**

Biologist Josefa Muñoz Alamillo finished her doctorate thesis 14 years ago in her native Cordoba and since then has been working in Germany and other parts of Spain, including at the National Centre for Biotechnology. Now she has been given her opportunity to return to Cordoba University where she leads a research team trying to find ways of making crops more resistant to drought.

"I am from Andalucía and my dream has always been to work here, but this has been the first time that I have been offered a five year contract and a really interesting project", she explains.

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