

Spain saves research council from imminent bankruptcy

Last minute government cash boost prevents closure of institutes.

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Javier Lizon/EPA

Many Spanish researchers took part in a 'day of mourning for science' last week, in protest against deep cuts to government science funding.

Spain's National Research Council (CSIC) has been brought back from the brink of financial disaster by a cash injection. The government approved additional funds of €70 million on Friday — close to the €75 million the institute's director had said was needed before the end of the year to save the institution from ruin.

CSIC, Spain's largest scientific organization, is responsible for more than 100 institutes, employing about 6,000 scientists. But annual funding from the government has been cut over the last five years to 30% of 2008 levels.

The government gave CSIC an extra €25 million at the end of June and, by [clawing back unspent grant money from its institutes](#), the research council slashed its spending. But in July, Emilio Lora-Tamayo, CSIC's president, told reporters that the institution faced "catastrophe" — with the closure of some institutes — unless a further €75 million were found before the end of the year.

With last week's funding agreement, "the Ministry of Economy has fulfilled its promise of 'not letting the CSIC fall'", Lora-Tamayo said in an email to *Nature*.

But many scientists remain deeply concerned about the future of science in the country. Letter for science, a group representing the country's main scientific societies, organized a 'day of mourning for science' last Thursday, marking the anniversary of the death of the pioneering pathologist Santiago Ramón y Cajal with protests in many of Spain's major cities.

Emilio Criado, a retired chemist formerly at CSIC, and member of the Workers' Commissions (CCOO), Spain's largest trade union, agrees that CSIC has avoided bankruptcy for now. But the funding will barely keep the institution afloat, he says: "Now the engine is on, but there is not enough gasoline to make the car move." Criado also notes that the government has yet to issue Spain's next National Plan for Science and Technology Research, Development and Innovation, which will detail the main government research grants available to scientists from 2014–16 and was expected at the beginning of the year. Meanwhile, the number of new permanent positions at CSIC has dropped from 267 in 2008 to just 13 so far in 2013.

“This money allows us to get to the end of the year, but there are question marks over the institution’s fate in 2014,” says Carlos Andradás, a mathematician at Complutense University in Madrid, and president of the Confederation of Spanish Scientific Societies (COSCE). Spain’s draft budget for next year increases CSIC’s budget by €50 million, he says, but that is only about half of the €95 million that was required this year to ensure the funder’s survival.

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