

Feasibility Study  
for the establishment  
of a Category 2 International Centre  
for Social and Human Sciences  
under the auspices of UNESCO  
in Barcelona (Spain)

*Final Report*

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**TANDEM**SOCIAL

## PREFACE

This feasibility study has been conducted by Tandem Social, SCCL, a non-profit cooperative expert in social transformation initiatives and social policies. With more than 10 years' experience assessing private and public bodies in the analysis, design, and implementation of meaningful and long-term social transformative initiatives at the local and the international levels, the two consultants that have conducted this study have extensive experience in advising and managing high level strategy initiatives and projects for social transformation.

Tandem Social is located in Barcelona and has wide experience in the territory. Moreover, it develops positive social impact projects in other regions around the Kingdom of Spain, Europe, and Latin America.

The experience working with UNESCO for the development of the feasibility study for the establishment of a Category 2 International Centre for Social and Human Sciences at Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" has been enriching and at all times we have felt accompanied by all parts involved: UNESCO's secretariat, the representatives of "la Caixa" Foundation and the representatives of the Spanish Government. Additionally, we would like to highlight that this process of external contrast for the categorization of a project with the distinctive seal of UNESCO is a sample of the excellence, impartiality and quality of the work developed by this prestigious organization.

Finally, we would also like to highlight the great potential of the partnership that emerges from this study. We envisage a turning point in terms of the generation and dissemination of knowledge in the field of social and human sciences that will have a meaningful impact on the resolution of the great challenges of humanity, present and future.

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Tandem Social

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## I. BACKGROUND

- In 2020, "la Caixa" Foundation requested the Director-General of UNESCO, Ms. Audrey Azoulay, to initiate all necessary steps for the establishment of an International Centre for Social and Human Sciences (hereafter: the Centre) in Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" Foundation, Barcelona (Spain) as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre, in application of the new "Strategy for Category 2 Institutes and Centres under the auspices of UNESCO", also referred to as the "2019 Strategy", adopted by the General Conference at its 40th session (Resolution 40C/79).
- The proposal, supported actively from the outset by the Kingdom of Spain and the Spanish National Commission for UNESCO, counted with the support of the Republic of Portugal and the Republic of France. Supporting letters from pertinent ministries were provided in the proposal.
- In May 2020, "la Caixa" Foundation set up conversations with the Director-General of UNESCO, considering the relevance of the proposal. Since then, there have been formal gatherings with UNESCO, led by the Assistant Director General for Social and Human Science, Gabriela Ramos, the Spanish Delegation in UNESCO, and the Spanish National Commission for UNESCO. The latter has played a significant role in advocating and endorsing the proposal for the creation of the Centre.
- From the second semester of 2020, fruitful cooperation activities between "la Caixa" Foundation and UNESCO have been celebrated. Ms. Gabriela Ramos, and Mr. Francesc Pedró, Director of the International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean of UNESCO, have participated in activities organised by "la Caixa" Foundation. Through the Management of Social Transformations (MOST) Programme, "la Caixa" Foundation has celebrated relevant activities such as the Minimum subsistence income debate and the development of MOST discussion papers. Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation has likewise hosted the production of research reports and discussions at international level, in collaboration with UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab, such as the publication of the article "The minimum subsistence income in Spain", by the economist and former Spanish Minister Mr. Jordi Sevilla, in collaboration with Ms. Gabriela Ramos.
- In December 2020, UNESCO carried out a field mission in collaboration with "la Caixa" Foundation, in order to evaluate the feasibility of the proposal for the establishment of the Centre.
- Tandem Social, as external consultant for social transformation, has conducted an additional feasibility study. The data for the assessment has been gathered through a systematic desk review of relevant UNESCO documentation, including its guidelines and strategic documents, reports and evaluations of previous feasibility studies; as well as an in-depth review of the documentation provided by the "la Caixa" Foundation in support of the application. In addition, Tandem Social has carried out a series of interviews with relevant stakeholders in the field of social and human sciences with a local and international vision. Likewise, distinguished personalities people from the Spanish government and "la Caixa" Foundation have been interviewed.
- This study has contributed to refining the administrative, organisational and technical aspects related to Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation proposal for the establishment of UNESCO Category 2 Centre. This report presents the main findings and highlights the main conclusions and recommendations. Annex I contains the list of people interviewed.

## II. FINDINGS

### A. RELEVANCE AND POTENTIAL IMPACT

1. "la Caixa" Foundation has historically been aligned with the principles of UNESCO, promoting social inclusion, education, culture and science as agents for social transformation and the achievement of democratic and peaceful societies. In this line, Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation has been configured as the reflective space of "la Caixa" social work, focusing on the analysis and study of social problems from both, local and international dimensions. Mr. Juan José López-Burniol, Vice-chairman of the Foundation's board of trustees, pointed out that the establishment of a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO at Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation would mean a recognition of the work undertaken by the institution; moreover, it will contribute to global peace by articulating knowledge and culture, thus promoting reflection around the main human development challenges and encouraging social inclusion and social justice. This is pretty much in line with UNESCO's agenda on Social and Human Sciences.
2. Indeed, Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" is in line with UNESCO's medium-term strategy (37 C/4 2014-2021) and more specifically with UNESCO's Strategic Objective 6 "Supporting inclusive social development, fostering intercultural dialogue for the rapprochement of cultures and the promotion of ethical principles". Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation is also aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goal 1 "No poverty"; 2 "Zero hunger"; 3 "Good health and well-being"; 4 "Quality education"; 10 "Reduced inequalities" and 16 "Peace, justice and strong institutions". Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation will complement UNESCO in the development of its functions, particularly in serving as a laboratory of ideas, generating innovative proposals and policy advice, and developing and reinforcing the global agenda through policy analysis, monitoring and benchmarking. As pointed out by Ms. Arantxa Ribot, Director of the Social Observatory of "la Caixa" Foundation, an alliance between Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" and UNESCO has great potential to contribute to the achievement of these long term objectives and to the development challenges that humanity could face, from reflection and scientific debate.
3. Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation has extensive and proven experience since 2012 in generating knowledge focused on social transformation and inclusion, through social innovation and dissemination, as well as holding regional and international events. It has developed a methodology for the exchange of ideas (knowledge brokering) in a participatory way and with a prospective approach. Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" envisages promoting research and serving as a collaborative space for the generation and exchange of innovative ideas in line with UNESCO's objectives; and especially with UNESCO's Social and Human Sciences programme goal to promote inclusive societies; its Management of Social Transformations Programme (MOST); and its role as coordinator of the Youth global priority. Ms. Sònia Fuertes, Social Action Commissioned at the Barcelona City Council, highlights the success of Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" in becoming a committed social actor focused on the generation of knowledge to achieve social equality. In the same way, Ms. Francina Alzina, President of the Catalan Social Sector Entities Platform, shares the essential role played by the Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" in the transfer of knowledge to action for the improvement of the living conditions of the most vulnerable people, fostering the culture of decision-making in public policies informed by the scientific evidence in a field (that of the social and human sciences) where this type of reflection is scarce.

4. Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation is fully aligned with the two main thematic priorities of the MOST Programme: social inclusion and social transformations arising from environmental change, promoting social innovation at the heart of all its activities. Mr. Jordi Sevilla highlights the innovative approach of Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" Foundation addressing social challenges. He pointed out how the institution focuses on questioning the status quo, from an impartial point of view, bringing together those experts who stand out for their different fields of experience, proposing open-minded strategies for the generation of knowledge focused on social innovation.
5. The Centre would be the first Category 2 Centre of UNESCO dedicated to Social and Human Sciences under the new regulation established in 2019 and also the first one of this type in Spain. Ms. Olga Cantó, Professor and renowned researcher in Well-Being, inequality, poverty and public policy, highlights the importance of knowledge transfer and dissemination from an unbiased perspective and how Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation plays a significant role here in this regard, becoming the only self-financed centre focusing on social and human sciences. The higher impact it can achieve due to the alignment of perspectives with the Social and Human Science Sector of UNESCO, and the synergies it can create, is unique.
6. This feasibility study did not find any significant risk of possible redundancy of the proposed Centre with Category 2 institutes of centres under the auspices of UNESCO or with other similar institutions established by other United Nations system organisations.

## B. TYPE, NATURE AND SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES

From the analysis of all the documentation provided by Palau Macaya – "la Caixa", as well as from the interviews carried out with the project's representatives: Ms. Arantxa Ribot, Director at Social Observatory Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" Foundation, Ms. Yolanda Altimiras, Project Manager at Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" Foundation, and Ms. Bàrbara Palacios, Palau Macaya's Director; this study determines that the work of the Centre in Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" Foundation focuses on the following range of activities:

7. "Laboratory of ideas" initiative, promoting knowledge exchanges and debates at the international level to address challenges in the social, economic, industrial-technological, humanistic and environmental fields. With the aim of fostering social inclusion and transformation, Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" Foundation will keep functioning as a global forum to advance innovative thinking and generate transforming policies; promoting generation, sharing, and dissemination of knowledge from a reflective approach;
8. International high-level forums, to examine efforts and to advocate for UNESCO's commitments to global agendas. Likewise, through UNESCO's MOST programme, these events will aim to mobilise support and generate cooperation from Member states to UNESCO projects;
9. Research activities, supporting innovative research projects with social impact that will contribute to enhance critical decision making and to the betterment of the society and the achievement of UNESCO's objectives. As a result, Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" Foundation foresees to develop joint publications with UNESCO and other partners. Particularly, a joint UNESCO-Palau Macaya, Annual Flagship publication on the state of inequalities, and the need for equality objectives in policy making will be part of these efforts.

## C. RECORD OF EXCELENCE OF AT LEAST TWO YEARS

10. Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation devotes its initiatives to two main dimensions: **social innovation and dissemination**. Over the last two years, the Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" Foundation has hosted more than 1,000 activities, with the presence of 56,560 attendees. The context of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to the adaptation of the agenda for the year 2020, limiting face-to-face activities and promoting remote and streaming formats.
11. **Social innovation** covers reflection projects on social challenges based on the exchange of ideas (knowledge brokering) among different agents of society, with a prospective vision and with the aim of making new proposals to respond to the challenges that arise. Within this category, the Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation hosts:
- Own reflection projects composed of seminars and public lectures that, based on the exchange of ideas, reflect on new models and trends that contribute to building a better society;
  - Observatory on the SDGs created by "la Caixa" Foundation in collaboration with the research team of the ESADE Business School's Chair in Leadership and Democratic Governance, with the aim of continuously monitoring the business sector's compliance with the SDGs;
  - Reflection projects in collaboration with partners (social entities, universities, public administration, etc.), which are selected through a call for proposals process. The projects propose future challenges through the application of the methodology of the exchange of ideas in a participatory manner and with a forward-looking approach.
12. **Dissemination** entails projects in which the social challenges of the world are analysed with the aim of spreading knowledge. Dissemination activities imply:
- Public lectures or round tables on social challenges of the global agendas;
  - Projection of audio-visual material related to some of the programmed cycles with a final debate with the participation of relevant stakeholders in the subject matter;
  - Hosting the headquarters of the *EUROPEAN SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES*, a space for debate and cultural movement, with three main levels of activity: public lectures, courses, and meetings; and *CLUB OF ROME*, that organises public lectures and informative round tables dealing with economic, cultural, environmental, and social challenges from a global perspective.

## D. INDEPENDENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

### i. LEGAL STATUS

13. Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" is part of "la Caixa" Foundation, and is therefore covered to all intents and purposes by the legal capacity of this institution. In this regard, "la Caixa" Foundation has legal personality and is regulated by its statutes. "la Caixa" Foundation counts with a solid and recognised independence as institution, which ensures the appropriate and efficient management of Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" financial sustainability.
14. The proven solvency and financial independence of "la Caixa" Foundation will ensure the financial sustainability of the Centre. The Foundation's commitment to strengthen its partnership with UNESCO through the establishment of a Category 2 Centre involves

guaranteeing the economic capacity of the Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation and therefore its financial sustainability. It is relevant to note that "la Caixa" Foundation is the biggest foundation in Europe and the third in the whole world.

15. "la Caixa" Foundation has allocated more than 5,000,000 euros in 2020-2021 to the development and implementation of activities and initiatives involving social and human sciences. The Foundation has additionally made more than 500,000 euros available to Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation for the running of the centre and for expenses related to the maintenance of the facilities and costs derived from the contracting of external personnel. "la Caixa" Foundation is about to achieve a cooperation agreement with the Spanish Government to set the terms and conditions of cooperation for the management of the Centre. Both parties have been in close coordination and will cooperate in order to mobilize additional extra-budgetary resources requested. UNESCO will not provide financial support for administrative or institutional purposes, initiatives, or events. Moreover, Palau Macaya, la Caixa Foundation will provide financial support to UNESCO for the development of joint initiatives and to cover the secretarial support necessary in the SHS sector to advance this cooperation. This is established in the Draft Tripartite Agreement.

#### ii. GOVERNANCE

16. With the aim of providing a particular and high-level dimension to the governance of the Centre, "la Caixa" Foundation is determined to establishing a specific governance body for the Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation, in which UNESCO and the Spanish Government have direct representation. This government body will include the presence of representatives from both institutions. In the case of UNESCO, representation will be in the person of the Assistant Director General of the Social and Human Science sector, to ensure synergies are created and joint delivery of high-level impact projects. The members of the board highlight the commitment of "la Caixa" Foundation to adapt to the specificities of the regulations of Category 2 Centres. Thus, Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation will have complete governance, financial and operational autonomy for decision-making and execution.

#### iii. HUMAN RESOURCES

17. Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" has a team with extensive and proven experience in the field of social and human sciences. Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" Foundation team is dynamic and multidisciplinary, with technical experts in the social sciences and humanities, researchers and assistants. Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" foresees the incorporation of additional staff (if needed) as a result of becoming a Category 2 Centre, with the aim of reinforcing its operational capacity in response to the impact of UNESCO's support.

#### iv. LOCATION AND PREMISES

18. Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" is located in the Macaya House, in one of the most notable and centric streets in Barcelona. The building represents an architectural masterpiece of Catalan modernism designed by Josep Puig i Cadafalch in 1898. The historical and artistic value of the Centre is remarkable. For this reason, Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" counts with programmed cultural visits to the building, highlighting its architectural value.

19. In 2012, the new facilities were inaugurated and transformed into a centre for reflection and debate for multiple social actors, with the aim of promoting knowledge and intellectual reflection for its real social application with tangible results.

20. The Centre has different spaces suitable for holding events and public lectures, including Sala Macaya, a multidisciplinary space with capacity for 80 people; a conference hall with 142 seats and several multi-purpose rooms with capacity from 20 to 70 people. In global terms, Palau Macaya – “la Caixa” Foundation's facilities can accommodate around 500 people.

21. The Centre is fully adapted and complies with accessibility requirements for people with reduced mobility, people with hearing difficulties and people with visual impairments. Furthermore, “la Caixa” Foundation applies comprehensive management systems at Palau Macaya - “la Caixa” to reduce the environmental impact and energy consumption of its activities and services.





## E. COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

22. "la Caixa" Foundation have been maintaining fluid relations of cooperation with UNESCO, collaborating in the fulfilment of various activities as well as in relation to the candidature process to host the Centre. The consideration of the Palau Macaya - "la Caixa" as an UNESCO Category 2 Centre is intended to strengthen the degree of cooperation between UNESCO and "la Caixa" Foundation, expanding the liaison between the two partners which currently includes the preparation of an Annual Flagship publication on the state of inequalities.

23. Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" has developed cooperation strategies with different relevant public entities, such as the Spanish Ministry of Education, the Spanish Commission for UNESCO, the French and Portuguese governments, the Government of Catalonia and the Barcelona City Council. As pointed out by Ms. Leticia Pico de Coaña, Secretary-General of the UNESCO's National Commission, public-private partnerships are key for the consecution of UNESCO's objectives, thus stressing the importance of the alliance in this matter. Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" also has cooperative relationships with a large number of entities and organizations related to the social and human sciences that participate actively in the activities organised by Palau Macaya – "la Caixa", among others: Barcelona Centre for International Affairs (CIDOB), Save the Children Foundation, the research group CER Migrations, Catalan Council for European Movement, Centre of International Affairs (CEI), Catalonia Europe Foundation, Ernest Lluch Foundation, Catalan Sociology Association, Institute Barcelona of International Studies (IBEI), Justice and Peace Association and Joan Maragall Foundation.

### III. CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results of this evaluation, the feasibility study concludes that the proposal for the establishment of the International Centre for Social and Human Sciences under the auspices of UNESCO in Barcelona (Spain) is in conformity with UNESCO's guidelines and meets the criteria set by the General Conference in its Resolution 40C/79.

#### A. RELEVANCE AND POTENTIAL IMPACT

The proposal presented by "la Caixa" Foundation for the establishment of a Category 2 Centre in Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" under the auspices of UNESCO provides convincing arguments about the relevance of the activities and initiatives devoted to the generation and dissemination of innovative knowledge related to most human pressing challenges. All persons interviewed agree in the potential positive impact that this Centre could generate, positioning itself as the international benchmark in the reflection and generation of knowledge for the achievement of global peace and justice.

#### B. TYPE, NATURE AND SCOPE OF ACTIVITIES

The scope of activities developed and proposed by Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" are in accordance with UNESCO's objectives and UNESCO Social and Human Sciences Programme. All these activities are coherent in the aim of promoting knowledge exchange, international debates and forums, research, and capacity building, all related to social innovation from an international approach.

#### C. RECORD OF EXCELENCE OF AT LEAST TWO YEARS

- Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" has ample experience in the development of activities linked to social innovation and dissemination of knowledge in the field of social and human sciences. The programme of activities developed over the last few years endorses its wide-ranging capacity for organising and managing both, local and international events.
- Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" has also been able to adapt its programming to the recent context of the pandemic, offering virtual alternatives to its events and streaming broadcasts, broadening its audience and capacity for impact.

#### D. INDEPENDENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

The feasibility study concludes that Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" Foundation complies with the requirement of independence in terms of legal status and financial sustainability, which is reinforced by the will expressed in the letter of February 2021 of the Head of Institutional relations of "la Caixa" Foundation to the Assistant Director-General of UNESCO for the Social and Human Sciences. The background of efficiency of "la Caixa" Foundation and the resources at its disposal enhance financial sustainability of Palau Macaya – "la Caixa" Foundation. The foreseen budgetary assignation for the Centre successfully ensures its management capacity and independence.

## E. COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

- Palau Macaya – “la Caixa” has a well-established and long-standing cooperation strategy that includes partners with proven experience in the field of social and human sciences. As a result of these cooperative relationships, Palau Macaya – “la Caixa” enriches its activities and serves as a confluence forum for many regional and international organisations with a transformative mission.
- Palau Macaya – “la Caixa” and “la Caixa” Foundation have strong institutional cooperation relations with local, regional and international institutions, including UNESCO. They also have the explicit support of the Government of Spain, the Governments of France and Portugal, the Government of Catalonia and Barcelona City Council.

## IV. RECOMMENDATION

This feasibility study recommends to the Executive Board to favourably receive the proposition of “la Caixa” Foundation for the establishment of an International Centre for Social and Human Sciences in Palau Macaya – “la Caixa”, Barcelona (Spain) as UNESCO Category 2 Centre.

## V. LOOKING AHEAD

- The alliance between UNESCO, “la Caixa” Foundation and the Spanish Government has a significant potential for positive social impact. Moreover, the creation of the Category 2 Centre of Social and Human Sciences is a meaningful opportunity to put this area of knowledge and research in the centre of the global agenda. For doing this, it is important to strengthen the relationship between all parties, working together from the identification of the local and global most pressing challenges to the generation of UNESCO SHS-Palau Macaya “la Caixa” Foundation joint research, debate and knowledge to address them.
- The feasibility study team had the opportunity to engage with “la Caixa” Foundation and Palau Macaya - “la Caixa” interlocutors and to discuss subsequently with them considerations for the successful implementation of Centre.
- The following points reflect those key aspects that were agreed to be useful for framing and supporting sound governance and management in Palau Macaya - “la Caixa” as well as provide a basis for a meaningful relationship with UNESCO:
  - “la Caixa” Foundation should undertake the requested adjustments (if deemed appropriate by UNESCO) in relation to the governance status of the Centre;
  - “la Caixa” Foundation should pursue the appropriate processes to conclude the collaboration agreement with the Government of Spain.

**ANNEX I: LIST OF PERSONS INTERVIEWED**

<b>Person</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Institution</b>
Ms. Leticia Pico de Coaña	Secretary-General of the UNESCO National Commission	Spanish Government
Mr. Juan José López-Burniol	Vicepresident	"la Caixa" Foundation
Mr. Sergi Loughley	Head of Institutional Relations of "la Caixa" Foundation	"la Caixa" Foundation
Ms. Arantxa Ribot	Director of the Social Observatory	"la Caixa" Foundation
Ms. Bàrbara Palacios	Director at Palau Macaya	"la Caixa" Foundation
Ms. Yolanda Altimiras	Project Manager at Palau Macaya	"la Caixa" Foundation
Ms. Sònia Fuertes	Social Action Commissioned	Barcelona City Council
Ms. Francina Alzina	President	Catalan Social Sector Entities Platform
Ms. Olga Cantó	Professor and renowned researcher in Well-Being, Inequality, Poverty and Public Policy	Independent
Mr. Jordi Sevilla	Economist and former Spanish Minister	Independent