

A full-page portrait of Anna Fontcuberta i Morral, a woman with dark hair, wearing a blue jumpsuit and a black blazer, standing in a modern architectural courtyard with curved glass buildings in the background. The text 'Biography of Anna Fontcuberta i Morral' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

Biography of
**Anna
Fontcuberta
i Morral**

Anna Fontcuberta i Morral, a full professor of materials science and engineering at EPFL, became the School's president on 1 January 2025. She was appointed by the Swiss Federal Council for a four-year term, succeeding Martin Vetterli.



A vocation in physics and materials science

Anna Fontcuberta i Morral was born in 1975 and grew up near Barcelona, where she earned her bachelor's degree in physics. She then completed a PhD at École Polytechnique in Palaiseau, France, before joining the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) as a postdoc in 2001. In 2003, she became a permanent research fellow at the French National Centre for Scientific Research (CNRS).

She returned to Caltech in 2004 as a visiting scientist; this was also where she co-founded Aonex Technologies, a company that developed lower cost substrates for LEDs and solar cells. In 2005, she took a position as a team leader at the Walter Schottky Institute at Technische Universität München, where she earned a Habilitation in experimental physics in 2009. Her globetrotting career is reflected in the many languages she speaks: her native Catalan as well as Spanish, French, English and German.

From semi-conductor research at EPFL to the presidency

Prof. Fontcuberta i Morral joined EPFL's Institute of Materials Science as a tenure-track assistant professor in 2008. She was promoted to associate professor in 2014 and full professor in 2019. She heads the School's Laboratory of Semiconductor Materials – a world-renowned research group in nanotechnology and the development of sustainable semiconductor materials. Her research group is exploring the potential of semiconducting nanowires.

In addition to her research and teaching, Prof. Fontcuberta i Morral plays an important role in EPFL's outreach activities and management. For example, she helped create an *Interdisciplinary Seed Fund* to support cross-disciplinary research, contributed to plans for the new Advanced Science Building, and served as EPFL's Associate Vice President for Centers and Platforms. In this latter role, she worked to build synergies across research disciplines and give EPFL scientists and engineers access to state-of-the-art research facilities. She also opened or re-opened several R&D centers at EPFL, including the Research Computing Platform, EcoCloud, the Bernoulli Center and the Center for Quantum Science and Engineering (QSE Center).

Drawing on her own experience, Prof. Fontcuberta i Morral actively encourages young women pursuing careers in science and engineering, such as through her prior role as president of EPFL's Wish Foundation. And as a mother herself, she supports the Dorigny daycare center association, serving as its vice president from 2012 to 2015.

Promoting research at EPFL and in Switzerland as a whole

Prof. Fontcuberta i Morral's efforts reach beyond EPFL and include fostering dialogue on research and science at the national level. She joined the Research Council of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) in 2015 and, from 2020 to 2024, she served as chair of the SNSF's specialized committee on international cooperation. In this role, she helped develop the international strategy and took part in a working group to design the recent changes to the SNSF's bylaws and policies.

This included serving on several Swiss delegations alongside Guy Parmelin, who is a Swiss Federal Councilor and the head of the Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research. She helped raise awareness among the general public and inform officials at Switzerland's State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation of the risks and opportunities associated with quantum-technology research and applications.

As an internationally renowned scientist, Fontcuberta i Morral was invited to speak on quantum technology at the World Economic Forum in Davos; she also helped open the Open Quantum Institute, an initiative of the *Geneva Science and Diplomacy Anticipator*, at CERN.

Numerous distinctions

Prof. Fontcuberta i Morral's work has been recognized through a number of distinctions. For instance, she was selected for a *Marie Curie Excellence Grant* in 2005, a *European Research Council Starting Grant* in 2009, an *SNSF Back-up Schemes Consolidator Grant* in 2015, and the Emmy Noether Distinction for Women in Physics from the European Physical Society, also in 2015. In 2020, Fontcuberta i Morral received the Polysphère best teacher award for EPFL's School of Engineering – a prize handed out by students every year to recognize professors for their excellence in teaching.