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Prof. Esther Duflo Wins the Inaugural Calvó-Armengol

Prize

The Barcelona Graduate School of Economics, in cooperation with the Government of Andorra, and the Credit Andorrà Bank Foundation, is pleased to announce that the first edition the Calvó-Armengol International Prize, established in the memory of Prof. Antoni Calvó-Armengol, has been awarded to Prof. Esther Duflo, the Abdul Latif Jameel Professor of Poverty Alleviation and Development Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The Selection Committee is composed of Profs. Matthew Jackson (Chair) (Stanford), Salvador Barberà (UAB and GSE) and Joel Sobel (UC San Diego). Prof. Jackson was the GSE Scientific Council's appointed representative on the Committee.

"We received over fifty nominations from around the world," Prof. Jackson said. "There were many impressive candidates, which bodes well for the future of the prize."

As recipient of the prize, Prof. Duflo will be the scientific director of a fully-funded three-day workshop for 20 to 25 young investigators from around the world. The first workshop and award ceremony will take place in June 2010 in Andorra, the homeland of the prize's namesake, Prof. [Toni Calvó](#), and will bring together some of the brightest minds in Prof. Duflo's field to share their research. Prof. Duflo will also deliver a keynote lecture in Barcelona.

The [Calvó-Armengol International Prize](#) memorializes Antoni Calvó-Armengol, professor of UAB and GSE who passed away in the Fall of 2007 at 37 years of age. It is awarded biannually to an economist, or other social scientist, who is not older than 40 years old, for his or her contributions to the understanding of social structure and its implications for economic interactions. The prize, which includes a cash award of 30.000€, recognizes exceptional achievement in research.

Studying Social Inequality in the Field

Professor [Esther Duflo](#) is the Abdul Latif Jameel Professor of Poverty Alleviation and Development Economics at MIT and one of the world's top development economists. She has been a leader in showing how useful field experiments can be in evaluating social programs and testing theories. Her research studying various social interactions and influences within and among households involves cleverly constructed field experiments, "natural experiments," and other analyses of data, informed by theory, to understand causal relationships. Prof. Duflo has made many contributions to our understanding of social interaction including important research using field experiments to understand gender differences in altruism, social network effects of diffusion of information, and allocations and risk sharing within households.

In particular, Prof. Duflo's research touches on many subjects that Prof. Toni Calvó had worked on from different angles. For example, one of her best-known contributions, in a paper with Prof. [Abhijit Banerjee](#), relates to showing that any increase or decrease in inequality in a country is followed by a reduction in a country's growth rate, which has turned out to be an interesting puzzle. Prof. Calvó had worked on understanding sources of inequality and how differences in social network structure might lead to inequality.

More generally, Prof. Duflo has used novel techniques based on taking advantage of randomization in social programs to understand various aspects of social interaction. For example, she studied cash transfers to households in South Africa, taking advantage of the fact that sometimes they went to males and

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Prof. Duflo is regarded by many as one of the most outstanding young economists



Barcelona GSE Affiliated Professor [Toni Calvó](#) in his office at the UAB



[Watch Prof. Duflo speak at the 15th Barcelona Economics Lecture on YouTube](#)

sometimes to females. She examined how the transfers were passed on to children in the household, uncovering differences depending on whether the recipient of the transfer within the household was male or female and the child was male or female, providing some important evidence for differences in altruism by gender.

Another important study of hers, together with UC Berkeley Prof. [Emmanuel Saez](#), studied diffusion of information about retirement programs diffuses through a social network by studying a randomized trial where some employees of a firm were given incentives to participate. Using this variation, they were able to see how the choices of other employees were affected by whether they worked with someone in the trial program, providing important new insights into peer effects and information transmission. Overall, her research is not only important in terms of the new conclusions it generates regarding social interactions, but also for its clever designs and innovative techniques.

After receiving degrees in history from the Ecole Normale Supérieure in 1994 and economics from DELTA in 1995, Prof. Duflo completed her PhD in economics at MIT in 1999. She went on to become a faculty member there and was tenured three years later. She is also the editor of the American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, and has served on many other boards. She has been widely recognized for her research contributions including the Elaine Bennett Prize for research, the [Le Monde Prize](#) for the best young French economist, and the BBVA Foundation [Frontiers of Knowledge Award for Development Cooperation](#) that was awarded to her lab.

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Prof. Duflo gave a lecture titled "Fighting Poverty Effectively: Creating Experimentation in Development Economics" [\[download pdf\]](#)

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