

## **“la Caixa” and Visa to make Barcelona the first major city in Europe to operate contactless payments in ATMs and shops**

- **The bank is to distribute more than 1 million cards, allowing fast contactless payments, and roll out 500 ATMs and new POS in 15,000 businesses.**
- **This contactless technology will also prepare “la Caixa” for handling mobile payments when new NFC terminals become widely available.**

**Barcelona, 12 January 2012.**– “la Caixa” and Visa Europe have begun rolling out their contactless payment system in Barcelona. The new technology permits quick and contactless payment in stores and improves the ATM user experience.

The bank, chaired by Isidro Fainé and directed by Juan María Nin, is to make all cards and POS across Barcelona contactless, requiring the distribution of 1 million cards and more than 15,000 new point-of-sale terminals. “la Caixa” will also install more than 500 ATMs with built-in contactless readers, a service that has made the bank a global pioneer.

The “la Caixa” and Visa Europe project aims to make Barcelona the first major European city to use an extensive contactless payment system at shops and ATMs. Furthermore, given that the technology is the same as that used by NFC (Near Field Communications) mobile phones, “la Caixa” will also be ready to process mobile phone payments right across Barcelona.

The Barcelona contactless system serves as a further demonstration that “la Caixa” is at the forefront in innovation, becoming the first Spanish bank to roll out the new payment technology in major cities and extensive regions.

### **The new POS and cards will start being distributed in January**

The “la Caixa” and Visa Europe project will get underway over the next few days, with the roll-out of new POS and the first cards going into circulation. Over the first two months of 2012 the service is set to be available to 50% of “la Caixa” customers in Barcelona, while the issue of contactless cards is due to be completed over the second quarter of 2012.

New ATMs, featuring contactless readers, will also start being rolled out in January. The aim is to have at least one contactless ATM at every Barcelona branch before the end of 2012.

### **Faster and more convenient micropayments**

Contactless technology is intended to speed up customer payments and transactions. Transactions are made by holding the card next to the contactless reader terminal, whether this be a POS or ATM. The two devices connect by proximity, without the card having to be inserted, and the payment is made instantly.

Contactless technology is considered the fastest card payment system currently available, making it an efficient alternative to physical cash. The system is particularly useful for micropayments and low value purchases, which are made far more conveniently and quickly by electronic means than by conventional methods.

Low value contactless payments are also beneficial for businesses, particularly establishments that attract large numbers of people, such as fast-food restaurants, taxis, newsstands, cafés and restaurants, supermarkets, tourist shops, etc. "la Caixa" believes these sectors, which process large volumes of transactions, will benefit most from the cards.

The contactless system is fully secure and includes EMV technology (the chip currently used in cards). For purchases of over €20 users will be required to enter their card PIN number to validate the operation. For lower value operations, where the contactless system has the most potential, users can complete transactions by simply bringing their card into close proximity with the in-store terminal. Furthermore, "la Caixa" ensures secure use of contactless cards thanks to its CaixaProtect guarantee; coverage that protects all of the bank's card customers from any fraudulent use of electronic payment methods.

The "la Caixa" and Visa contactless system in Barcelona will be fully compatible with other cards and contactless payment devices issued by other banks, both domestic and international.

### **Contactless ATMs: a globally pioneering service**

"la Caixa" is the world's first bank to develop ATMs with built-in contactless readers. These ATMs can identify customer cards without requiring that they be inserted manually.

"la Caixa"'s new contactless ATMs represent a further step forward in the bank's strategy to improve customer service via innovation. With some 8,000 ATM terminals, "la Caixa" has the largest ATM network in Spain and the second largest in Europe.

This new technology is particularly helpful for the physically disabled, who find it easier to use ATMs with contactless technology. As well as the greater accessibility it provides, all “la Caixa” customers will benefit from faster operations at ATMs using the contactless card system.

ATMs with built-in contactless technology will also be compatible with all other contactless payment supports, such as NFC-ready mobile phones, which were used during the first mobile payment trial in the Spanish city of Sitges. More than 1,500 users and 500 businesses took part in this NFC pilot project, Europe’s largest. The enthusiastic reception that the mobile payments system attracted saw the project’s backers decide to leave the NFC infrastructure in place indefinitely for shops and customers.

### **“la Caixa”, international leader in new payment systems**

The launch of the contactless system in Barcelona places “la Caixa” at the forefront of global banks in the development of new payment systems. So far no other European bank has backed widespread use of contactless systems. “la Caixa” is also the first Spanish bank to launch the new technology on a commercial basis.

“la Caixa” already has significant experience in developing new contactless payment systems. In 2011 the bank, along with Visa, rolled out a system of contactless cards, POS and ATMs in the Balearic Islands, where it has more than 130,000 customers. This was the first of Spain's regions to have a widespread contactless system available, with 86% of cardholders now saying they prefer to use the contactless system to make payments.

“la Caixa”'s backing for new payment systems comes as part of the bank’s foremost position in innovation. “la Caixa” is Spain's leading operator in electronic banking, with more than 10.5 million card customers, and operates close to 8,000 ATMs, the largest such network in the country. It is also at the forefront in the development of new customer service channels, such as online banking, where it has more than 7 million customers, and mobile banking, with 2.2 million users in Spain, while its financial applications have been downloaded more than 2 million times.

The bank was recently awarded the prize for the world's most innovative bank at the Banking Innovation Awards, run by the Bank Administration Institute and Finacle.

### **About Visa Europe**

Visa Europe has partnered closely with “la Caixa” in the development of its contactless payment system, contributing the valuable experience it has gained through its more than 27 million contactless Visa cardholders, issued in 17 European countries, and 190,000 compatible establishments.

Visa Europe expects to have issued 45 million contactless Visa cards in Europe by the end of 2012, and sees the technology as paving the way for widespread adoption of mobile payments.