

THE VALUE OF KNOWLEDGE

Pilar Campins

The European University Association (EUA) highlighted in its document *Ambitious funding for excellent research in Europe post-2020* that «education, research and innovation are central to the development and growth of any society». And they added: «Universities remain critical to safeguarding a democratic, tolerant and progressive society.»

Undoubtedly, reaching a knowledge-based society is a challenge with many responsible agents. Among them, universities play a fundamental role. It looks like Spain has finally beaten Unamuno's paradox: «Let them invent»; according to current data, we occupy the ninth or tenth position in the world in scientific production. But we still need to increase the impact of our science in the international field and, essentially, to make it serve society as indicated by the EUA.

The Spanish public universities – responsible for the results of our university system – have run for no more than fifty years in its current form. Its funding has been rather limited in comparison with other surrounding countries and, what is more, scientific policy has not been clear. Despite this fact, we occupy a remarkable international position in some areas of knowledge. Criticising the fact that Spanish universities do not lead international rankings is, therefore, unfair.

And this fact might seem negative, but it is not the worst one. Young people have been prevented from entering, which constitutes, in my opinion, the main problem of today's Spanish public universities. The scientific system needs young people, both in education and in research, to face the changes required by the university. The problem must be tackled with policy, but the university must ask for it.

The University of Valencia occupies outstanding positions in the Spanish public university

system, and enjoys good international indicators. As other Spanish public universities, it can contribute to the goal marked by the EUA, but it needs to adapt its functioning and consider the position it wants to occupy in the near future. We are in a process of deep changes and, today more than ever, it is necessary to show a critical spirit; but also to be able to focus on approaches, processes and even problems and their possible solutions, according to the university's multidisciplinary, sustainable and holistic nature. It is not easy, but it is a necessary challenge to generate knowledge and turn it into something valuable.

Not long ago, the word *research* occupied a unique place. Today it is not understandable unless accompanied by *innovation*. Science changes the world, but in the widest sense, it can also change science itself. A universal and open science, one to set new frontiers. That is the science we need, the one that scientists can offer.

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Miguel Lorenzo

The future is complicated, but also exciting. The figure of the scientist gave way to the research group, and an individual's generation of knowledge is not understood today. Research groups must delve into this new open scenario, which requires internationalisation, intersectorality and interrelation, but also higher funding and even patronage, as occurs in other countries. To address all the challenges set by the new era successfully – in the local, state, European and international playing fields – structure and political commitment are more necessary than ever. Einstein's sentence will surely help us with these challenges: «Imagination is more important than knowledge.»

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