

CHALLENGES AND DIFFICULTIES FOR A VICE-PRINCIPAL FOR RESEARCH

Carlos Hermenegildo

In the onset of our journey as a governing team, many feelings and ideas intermingle. In my case, as the new Vice-Principal for Research, I enthusiastically take on the responsibility of coordinating and facilitating the work of the researchers of the University of Valencia. Evidently, many challenges exist and resources are limited, but in recent years we have also managed to maintain and even increase research activity in science and humanities.

One of the challenges we must face is, obviously, obtaining better funding in the regional, national, and international level. This funding will necessarily come from competitive calls, but also from private sources and the development of our activity through contracts and innovation agreements and their impact on society, which we will promote in close collaboration with the new Vice-Principal for Innovation and Innovation and Transference.

There are also threats around us that can considerably hinder the development of these activities, and we will face them to the best of our ability. One of them is the excessive bureaucratisation to which researchers are subjected. All of us have undergone the thorough control of our project's (rather than general scientific activity) economic movements, which takes away time and illusion, and still cannot prevent the waste or misappropriation of resources. Prospects are not good, with a new Public Contracts Law that leads to a great increase in paperwork for any acquisition. We must find measures – we are already trying – to minimise and streamline these processes, and to urge political authorities to account for the exceptional nature of scientific activity.

Another threat is the aging of the Spanish research system in general and of the University of Valencia in particular, with very experienced (in politically correct terms) but demotivated human resources and



Susana Novella

«WE THINK IT IS ESSENTIAL TO BET ON YOUNG RESEARCHERS, LET THEM LEAD THEIR OWN GROUPS AND PROJECTS IN ORDER TO ENSURE THE CONTINUITY OF THE RESEARCH SYSTEM»

an underrepresentation of women. Law and budget restrictions prevent the incorporation of young researchers to the research system at the time when it would be most productive for their professional career. For this reason, we think it is essential to bet on young researchers, let them lead their own groups and projects in order to ensure the continuity of the research system.

On the other hand, the activity of researchers is insufficiently recognised, both in economic and labour terms. We have to make a firm commitment to the comprehensive recognition of all the activities we develop. Fundamentally, the recognition of research, of course, taking

into account the different fields of knowledge, all of them represented at the University. But we must also recognise our activity as educators, managers, innovators, and popularisers.

Finally, with the first woman leading as Principal of the University of Valencia, we have taken the first step towards a greater presence of women leading research groups and scientific activities. This is not only a matter of justice, but also the need to have better research. Londa Schiebinger, honorary doctor in our University, stated that including more women in research teams would lead to more opportunities to include gender and sex analysis in our work, which would not only improve the quality of research, but also save financial resources in the long term.

Quality research is – and will always be – one of the hallmarks of the University of Valencia. But, in addition, we believe that dissemination and popularisation can help deepen the exchange of wisdom and ideas, which are the basis of the knowledge society. This permanent dialogue is also undoubtedly the fundament of more equal, fair, and respectful society. 🌱

Carlos Hermenegildo, Vice-Principal for Research of the University of Valencia (Spain).