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## Science Minister Opens 29th Spanish Universities Research Meet

Minister for Science, Innovation and Universities, Diana Morant, together with UAB Rector Javier Lafuente, Minister for Research and Universities of the Generalitat, Joaquim Nadal, and president of Crue and rector of the Universitat Jaume I, Eva Alcón, participated this Thursday 30 November in the opening ceremony of the [29th Spanish Universities Research Conference](#), organised by Crue in collaboration with the UAB.



In his welcome speech, Rector Lafuente highlighted the considerable effort made by universities in recent years to create and consolidate support structures to promote the participation of research groups in national and international programmes and calls, and to support them in the management of large projects. "However, we have achieved remarkable results with clearly insufficient resources. This evident lack of resources seriously conditions our future and greatly limits our social impact," he remarked.

Rector Lafuente stressed that the excellence and competitiveness of the research groups of Spanish universities, which has resulted in a sustained increase in the attraction of European resources and in the leadership of large transnational projects, "cannot make up for the lack of sufficient investment at national level". "Undoubtedly,

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the deployment of new regulatory frameworks should lead to a progressive increase in the resources allocated to the research system, in line with the reference countries of our environment, but universities have the obligation to claim the urgency of the corrective measures of this deficit," he concluded.

#### Help to alleviate the bureaucratic overload

The president of Crue requested the minister to help alleviate the "bureaucratic overload that universities are suffering" with research projects financed with European Next Generation funds. President Alcón also asked Minister Morant to approve the Statute of teaching and research staff, to implement a strategy for the consolidation and retention of talent and to reactivate the six-year transfer that was paralysed in 2019 after the pilot call. She also conveyed the "urgency" of strengthening aid programmes for proof of concept and public-private collaboration, as well as changing the regulation of R&D&i contracts between universities and companies.

"We ask for your help to extend the philosophy of flexibility and anticipation" put into practice in the Ministry's Fortalece programme, said the president of Crue, who also indicated that the implementation of the Organic Law of the University System (LOSU) "is not being easy" for universities, while reiterating the need to deploy state funding programmes to "guarantee a university education service under the principles of equal opportunities and equity throughout the territory."

«No us deixarem solos», ha subratllat la ministra, que ha indicat que, malgrat les deficiències de finançament que arrossega el sistema universitari, Espanya és, en l'actualitat, «el país de la Unió Europea que més fons Next Generation està dedicant a la ciència i a la recerca». També ha anunciat la seva intenció que el programa «Fortalece», per a finançament de la ciència més flexible i menys burocràtic, s'estengui a les universitats aquesta legislatura.

#### The need to work together for the Spanish university system

Minister Diana Morant, who attended the Crue-R&D&i conference for the first time as head of Universities, expressed her satisfaction in the unification of the competences in science, innovation and university matters in a single department and described Crue as a "highly collaborative" institution. In this sense, she stressed that she agreed with the president of this association and with the rector of the UAB on the need to work "together": Ministry, Crue, universities and autonomous communities, to solve the "difficulties" that the university system has, while also emphasising that it has "great opportunities and challenges".

"We will not abandon you", the minister remarked, and pointed out that, despite the deficiencies in financing in the university system, Spain is currently "the country in the

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European Union that is devoting the most Next Generation funds to science and research". She also announced the intention to extend the Fortalece programme, a more flexible and less bureaucratic financing of science, to the universities this term of office.



From left to right: Assumpció Malgosa, Vice Rector for Research at the UAB; Julián Garde, President of the Crue R&D&i sector and Rector of the University of Castilla-La Mancha; Carlos Cordón, Mayor of Cerdanyola del Vallès; Joaquim Nadal, Minister for Research and Universities of the Generalitat; Diana Morant, Minister for Science, Innovation and Universities; Eva Alcón, President of Crue and Rector of the Universitat Jaume I; Javier Lafuente, Rector of the UAB and Rosa María Sebastián, Vice Rector for Innovation, Transfer and Entrepreneurship of the UAB.

The conference, which began on Wednesday 29 November and ends on Friday 1 December, will be attended by more than half a thousand specialists in research management and science policy. The opening speech, given by Director of ANECA Pilar Paneque, addressed the reform of research evaluation. In addition, the results of the survey on research and knowledge transfer in universities were presented, and different round tables discussed ethics in research and the emergence of ChatGPT, research in Spanish universities, open science and the gender perspective, among other issues.