

## 4TH INTERNATIONAL RECTORS MEETING

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### DECLARATION OF SALAMANCA

The 4th International Rectors' Meeting, held on 21 and 22 May 2018 in Salamanca in the year that its University celebrates its 8th centenary under the slogan “University, Society and Future”, enabled the leaders of more than 600 universities from 26 countries to reflect together on the profound paradigm shifts that will shape their future roles in society and the knowledge society. The debate focused on such strategic themes as the acceleration of innovation and globalisation, demographic changes, the contribution of scientific research to the improvement in life quality and the preparation of young people and adults for a more complex and highly unpredictable labour market, and highlighted the huge responsibility of universities in this context.

The impact of the technological revolution is already here and being felt by many industries. Higher education is no different and several technological and social trends have the potential to transform the educational and operational model of universities. It is of the utmost importance that education leaders are not only familiar with but also spearhead this revolution, anticipating paradigm shifts based on the new prevailing realities. The debates at Salamanca 2018 centred on several key actions and programmes for universities, such as: the flexibilisation and application of innovative education methods and rethinking of organisational , administrative and sustainability processes; partnerships, courses and certifications with companies from different industries; new and alternative certification and integration models with global platforms; hybrid training offers and qualification and update programmes in the workplace, within the framework of training tailored to the needs of the student over their lifetime; new qualifications, in particular in relation to computer sciences, artificial intelligence, data science and technology; and a greater emphasis on humanistic education and on the transversal skills of students.

Historically, universities have been synonymous with the generation of knowledge and irreplaceable cornerstones of scientific progress. The academic work and training of researchers must remain one of the hallmarks of universities. However, the way that research is conducted has changed and universities must adapt to this shift. Firstly, there are other public and private bodies which are now active agents in research. Universities must interact and collaborate with these bodies. Second, society must perceive, both in the local and regional sphere where universities operate and globally, and in a reality in which knowledge has no borders, that their research adds value. That is to say that they use their resources and independence to research, freely and in the service of the public interest, the problems that affect and concern society. Universities must make an effort to inform and explain what they do, why and to what end. To do this, research must be open, inclusive

and collaborative, which also means that the paradigms for financing and evaluating universities and researchers must be reviewed. Finally, research must be interdisciplinary and span all areas, with a particular effort made to achieve a *harmonious and sustainable balance* between technological and scientific advances, especially the most disruptive, and human values.

The debates held on the contribution of universities to social and territorial development illustrate the existence of profound inequalities in our societies. While universities reflect these inequalities and cannot eliminate them alone, they can and must play an important role in addressing them, serving as beacons of equality and diversity and as transforming agents of the economic and social system. To do this, they must strengthen partnerships with different sectors of society including private enterprise, local communities, the media, the political class and non-governmental organisations as well as other universities.

They must also reflect strategically on the Sustainable Development Goals within the framework of a university policy of social cooperation, which must necessarily include aspects of access, equality, internationalisation and a spirit of innovation and entrepreneurship. This will require self-reflection, an ongoing quest for good practices and new ideas and a willingness to adapt and change in order to continue making a vital contribution to social and territorial development.

In conclusion, a context of rapid and constant change, which poses significant challenges to our knowledge society such as the achievement of equitable and sustainable growth, requires universities to not only be able to adapt to but to spearhead change. This means universities must draw up an institutional strategy in order to play a central role in the construction of a better future, both for the communities in which they are situated and for society as a whole. Furthermore, within this process alliances between universities and collaboration with other agents will be key, with the common goal of improving quality of life for the average person. Universities are and will remain responsible for the development of critical, ethical and able citizens; the creation, transmission and transfer of the knowledge that will enable the aforementioned challenges to be met; and the championing of the role of education as a vital tool in the future of people and territories.