



4TH UNIVERSIA INTERNATIONAL RECTORS' MEETING

Ana Botín calls for a leading role for education and more public and private resources

- Ana Botín: *“Over the next three years, more than 200,000 students will receive a Santander scholarship, obtain experience in an SME or participate in entrepreneurship programmes supported by Santander.”*
- Ana Botín: *“Education spawns equality and freedom, free and critical thinking. It breaks down prejudice and opens minds, helping distance us from extremism and populism, post-truths or attempts to manipulate public opinion.”*
- *“Political parties should promote education as a space for understanding, seeking agreements for common interest and the whole of society,”* according to the chair of Universia and Group executive chairman of Banco Santander.
- Ms. Botín highlights the transformative power of technology and underscores how important it is for the large technological platforms to take a humanist approach to their role, anticipating and managing their impact on society.

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Ana Botín, chair of Universia and Group executive chairman of Banco Santander, oversaw the closing ceremony today in Salamanca of the IV Universia International Rectors' Meeting with a speech advocating a more prominent role for education since it is the “main response and best tool for facing the great challenges and dealing with the problems of today and the future”.

The ceremony was attended by the Prime Minister of Spain, Mariano Rajoy, the Secretary General of the Ibero American Conference, Rebeca Grynspan, the president of the regional courts of Castilla y León, Silvia Clemente, the regional president of Castilla y León, Juan Vicente Herrera, and the mayor of Salamanca, Alfonso Fernández Mañueco. Ana Botín stressed that *“education must have more resources, both public and private ”*, because *“equality and freedom, free and critical thinking were all born of education. It breaks down prejudice and opens minds, helping distance us from extremism and populism, post-truths or attempts to manipulate public opinion.”*

The two-day meeting, which coincided with the University of Salamanca's 800th anniversary, brought together 600 rectors from 26 countries representing 10 million university students around the world, in a discussion with the theme “University, Society and Future” on the challenges facing universities. The conclusions are set out in the ‘Salamanca Charter’, a



document that *“reiterates the universities' commitment to continue leading progress by reinventing and transforming themselves”*, according to Ana Botín.

Botín said Universia and Banco Santander share these objectives via three lines of action in their collaboration with universities:

1. Empower universities' human capital to ensure equal access to opportunities and the development of technical and transversal skills, such as critical and ethical thinking, entrepreneurship, and intercultural and digital mobility.
2. Encourage alliances and networking between universities and other agents
3. Drive digital transformation and manage its impact on society to ensure inclusive and sustainable growth.

“Our alliance with universities is proof of this commitment, demonstrated by the fact that in the next three years, when more than 200,000 students will receive a Santander scholarship, obtain experience at an SME or participate in entrepreneurship programmes led by universities and supported by Santander,” said Ana Botín.

“We face new challenges that require resolute actions with an eye to the future,” stated Botín, and she therefore considered it important to avoid education being a political point of contention, encouraging political parties to *“prioritise it as a space for understanding—for seeking agreement—in favour of the common interest and the interest of society at large.”*

Among these challenges, she highlighted the transformative power of technology and declared herself a *“firm advocate of innovation and technological progress and—in equal measure—of sustainable and inclusive growth.”* Nonetheless, she pointed out that the large technological platforms should have a humanistic vision of their function and warned tech internalise the social setting in which their activities are carried out as well as their scope and potential impact.

In the opinion of Ana Botín, *“resolute actions with an eye to the future”* are required, such as those set out in the Salamanca Charter presented today, which encourage us to *“continue working for a better university in a better world”*, for *“a vision of the future where inclusion, equal opportunities and sustainability—against a backdrop of the pursuit of excellence—will be the priorities guiding all of our decisions.”* In conclusion, *“together we can have a big impact and be catalysts of change.”*

The Salamanca Meeting follows on from the events in Río de Janeiro (Brazil, 2014), Guadalajara (Mexico, 2010) and Seville (Spain, 2005). These events have the backing of Banco Santander, the world's largest investor in educational support (Varkey/UNESCO-Fortune 500 report) with almost 1,300 agreements in place with academic institutions and universities in 21 countries through Santander Universities (www.santander.com/universidades) and

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comprising over 1,300 Latin American academic institutions through Universia (www.universia.net).

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