

Ana Botín announces additional 125,000 Santander scholarships for 2021

- The executive chairman of Santander and Universia, Ana Botín, presided over Universia's 21st annual general meeting held virtually with rectors of Spanish universities.
- Botín appealed to the public and private sectors to work together so universities can help rebuild Spain's economy and reiterated that EU funds would prove vital to the "big leap in their transformation".
- According to Botín: "Every industry, company and person, from students to those in their 50s, needs to refreshen".
- By year end, Santander will have granted 325,000 scholarships and endowments in the last three years (85,000 in Spain), 62% above its initial target.
- Universia wants to help over 400,000 graduates with their job search through the Universia Jobs employment and internships platform.

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The executive chairman of Banco Santander and Universia, Ana Botín, has announced that the bank will award 125,000 scholarships on top of its initial pledge for 2019-2021. As a result, it will have granted 325,000 endowments in the last three years (85,000 in Spain).

Botín made the revelation at Universia's 21st annual general meeting, which she chaired alongside José Carlos Gómez Villamondos, the president of Crue Universidades Españolas (an association of Spanish universities); Matías Rodríguez Inciarte, the chairman of Santander Universities; and Javier Roglá, the CEO of Universia and global head of Santander Universities, in a virtual gathering with rectors and academics from Spain's universities.

In her remarks, she called on universities "to build the competitive, inclusive and sustainable country we all want" and entreated governments, state agencies, international organizations, universities and the private sector to work together to "transform our society through learning". Botín believes universities are duty-bound to rise to businesses' challenges and needs, and that "every industry, company and person, from students to those in their 50s, needs to refreshen". "What we do today will shape the future of our country and the next generations", she added. Bridging the digital gap and allocating resources to aid the most vulnerable groups are musts for Botín, who said "Universities have to help speed up the digitalization of the economy".

"We've plunged into the fourth digital revolution", said Botín, who believes that crises have led to watersheds in society throughout history. "We, as businesses, government agencies and social actors, have all had to adapt our processes, our way of interacting with those we serve and our employees' skills through new upskilling and reskilling programmes, in order to cope with the new job market". Such programmes include the new Santander Tech Digital Reskilling Ironhack and Santander Tech Reskilling in Data Analytics Ubiquum Code

Academy. Banco Santander invests EUR 100 million every year in upskilling and reskilling to bolster its employees' technical capabilities, with an average 40 hours' training.

Botín also pointed out the bank's entrepreneurial initiatives such as the Santander X Global Challenge and the Santander X Global Award to put the limelight on the best solutions and biggest challenges of our time. They provide entrepreneurs with international training that gives them the tools to scale their innovations; access expert mentoring; gain visibility; and have the chance to pitch their ideas to our innovation teams, in the hope that, together, we can build a "future full of opportunities for young people".

To get there, the Santander and Universia executive chairman called on universities to strike while the iron is hot to meet their challenges and ramp up their digitalization. "EU funds are vital to the big leap in their transformation", she added.

Botín believes five principles shape the universities we need in a world of constant disruption. First, "there is no better tool than education to combat inequality and move towards a new, open, inclusive and sustainable production model based on talent and knowledge". Second, universities and companies must prioritize employability to eradicate the mismatch between acquired skills and new ones that employers demand.

Botín also called for non-stop training and skills development for workers, as well as "coordinated scientific investigation by organizations that strive to build knowledge". Lastly, she outlined the importance of lending to guarantee everyone has access to quality education. "Education is the best possible investment", she remarked.

Botín highlighted Universia's significant work since its founding 21 years ago and shared some of the challenges that lie ahead in 2021. For instance, the *Universia Jobs* employment and internships platform has helped over 400,000 graduates with their job search. She also announced that the three-year target to grant 200,000 scholarships announced at Universia's last International Rectors' Meeting in Salamanca in May 2018 will have been greatly surpassed: "By the end of this cycle, we'll have granted over 325,000 scholarships, which is at least 125,000 more than our initial target".

Experiences of a student and an entrepreneur during the pandemic

After the Universia meeting, the Santander executive chairman and the president of Crue sat down with Universidad Carlos III de Madrid student and participant in the bank's Explorer entrepreneurship programme Alejandro de Vega and entrepreneur Cristina Sánchez (founder of the start-up, Pelican Comunicación) to talk about their experiences during the pandemic and young people's most pressing needs.

Ana Botín took the opportunity to raise such salient topics with the rectors as enhancing university curricula to help students navigate the new jobs market; boosting the number of female students in STEM subjects from the current 13%; and how private entities and universities can get the most out of EU funds to bridge the digital gap.

Botín ended by sharing her own take-away from the pandemic: "Besides the huge importance of personal relationships, what I've learned the most is that, with a clear goal and no choice due to urgency, we can achieve what we thought was impossible. Spain, Spanish universities and companies have proved we can do anything if we're prepared".



Banco Santander and its support for higher education

Banco Santander, the leader in responsible banking, is firmly committed to progress and inclusive sustainable growth. Through Santander Universities, it has been a pioneering stalwart of higher education for 25 years, standing out among the world's financial institutions. Banco Santander has committed more than EUR 2 billion and awarded over 630,000 scholarships and grants since the Universities programme began.

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