

## **The need to build a Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean based on knowledge**

by Manuel P.López\*

Some countries in Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean have experienced in recent decades high rates of economic growth, thus finding a better way to cope with the crisis, which has been accompanied by a strong social development. Although these countries live through different situations, we all find ourselves in a key moment to make decisions that allow us to star in a new type of insertion into the economy and politics of the world. The need for the existence of Europe, Latin America and Caribbean which are organized around knowledge focuses all eyes of the University. Universities accept that challenge and moreover, they have joined their strengths to become more competitive in their social function of promoting development. Indeed, this objective is what has brought together the heads of Latin American universities last July in the city of Rio de Janeiro, in the III Meeting of rectors of Universia.

We rectors are convinced that the University should contribute and make this vision come true. Walking together towards the goal of a Europe, Latin America and Caribbean driven by science and culture requires that universities take concrete measures for the development of bi-regional area.

Governments, institutions, companies and organizations must invest in higher education, research and innovation to build a society that is active and autonomous in making global decisions. Nothing is possible without the endorsement of society.

Spanish universities, being present in both the European space for knowledge and the Ibero-American one can be useful as a bridge between the two global regions, so that this mediating role, which is, at the same time, generating role as well, represents an important added value for our society. The communication Spain favours between Latin America and Europe will spread from universities to other areas of social, economic and political development.

The rectors who attended the II Meeting of Rectors, which took place in 2010 in the Mexican city of Guadalajara are convinced that this event generated a "*spirit of Guadalajara*", which allowed the stimulation of the cooperation in initiatives and future goals. We are on the way to build up the creative University of opportunities for integration and social transformation, as well as space for cultural leadership, dissemination and creation of ideas,

intellectual revulsion, critical thinking and the generation and transmission of most precious commodity of our times, and the only one that is inexhaustible: knowledge.

A clear example of cooperation between Europe and Latin America is the Alpha Bridges program, which was launched in 2011 by the *European University Association* (EUA). The objective of this project is to develop a number of initiatives for the modernization of higher education in Latin America, aimed towards the convergence of the different systems in the region. These lines of work are intended to renew teaching, improve recognition of qualifications, quality assurance and promote mobility in the region. Twenty two European partners participate in Alfa Bridges, among which is the CRUE.

Globalization is a challenge for everyone and it gives a special meaning to our collaboration, both in national and in the international sphere, and in the case of Spain, with a special connection to the Ibero-American culture, education and research area. Not only that universities occupy a key place for development, but they must also perform this function in a network of coordination and mutual understanding, taking advantage of all the synergies of the present situation and participating in mutual learning of the original experiences.

**\*Manuel J. López** is the President of CRUE (Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities), Rector of the University of Zaragoza. This document is a contribution to the September 2014 edition of the newsletter of the EU-LAC Foundation dedicated to higher education. The translation of this document was carried out by the EU-LAC Foundation. The original version in Spanish can be consulted here:

<http://eulacfoundation.org/sites/eulacfoundation.org/files/CRUE.pdf>