

The Research in Europe

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Abstract

On the 23rd October 2008, the R+D+4i Project held the first conference of the 1st Round of Meetings at the Col.legi /Associació d'Enginyers de Catalunya in Barcelona. This cycle includes a series of conferences that will end in June 2009.

This first conference focused on European research and was given by Mr. Andreu Mas-Colell, Professor of Economics at the Pompeu Fabra University and President of the Barcelona Graduate School of Economics. Professor Mas-Colell will become Secretary General of the European Research Council (ERC) of the European Union in July 2009. Mr. Joan Vallvé, dean of the Col.legi d'Enginyers Industrials, reiterated its support to the Project and showed the importance of comparative studies and benchmarking and highlighted the interest of the speakers and topics treated in this 1st Round of Meetings. Mr. Joan Amorós, general director of the R+D+4i Project, gave a summary of the most important aspects of the Project and introduced the speaker to the audience.

Status of research in Europe

The first thing that Professor Mas-Colell emphasized was that Europe is not innovating enough despite having a first line productive and scientific environment.

The reasons are:

- Insufficient investment on R+D
- Rigidity of transmission from the sector of knowledge

Frontier science in Europe is certainly good but it comes second after the United States. It could match the United States, but achieving this is mainly a question of commitment and attitude. The challenges are to be found both in the different European States and the European Union.

The challenge at European Union level: the Seventh Framework Program and the European Research Council (ERC). According to Professor Mas-Colell, the European scientific policy has gone through three clearly differentiated phases:

- A first period of dominance of the intergovernmental system
- A second period with more weight accorded to the community
- A third period, the current (since 1985), with Framework Programmes as the main reference.

Framework Programmes are in their seventh edition which runs from 2007 to 2014, and has a budget of 54.5 billion Euros.

A very important aspect of the Seventh Framework Program is, according Professor Mas-Colell, the creation of the European Research Council (ERC), born as an initiative of the scientific community. It is an initiative born "from below".

The European Research Council (ERC) presents a series of "revolutionary" features:

- Only scientific excellence matters
- Help to individuals
- All fields of knowledge are taken into consideration
- Significant amounts of resources and a flexible use
- Only the results of the research matters
- Evaluation done by panels of peers
- Predominant role of the Scientific Council

Motto of the ERC: the three R: Europe wants to retain, recover and recruit talent at the highest level.

Today's situation in Catalonia

The present situation in Catalonia is relatively bright: Thus, in the current, 2008, call, Catalonia has obtained nine from a total of fifteen ERC Advanced Grants obtained by Spanish-based researchers.

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