

Conclusions

From 2018, and after the global economic crisis had eased, the Catalan public university system has begun to recover the positive trend in obtaining state and regional competitive funds, as well as non-competitive private funds. There was a slight decrease in European and international competitive funding, probably due to a certain cycle in the submission of proposals. In whatever case, this fluctuation can be interpreted as short-term or transient, given that the said trend is currently being corrected in a very significant manner.

Despite minor variations, in line with Chapter 1, it can be stated that Catalonia has held onto its prominent position in the European and Spanish context, both in terms of the H2020 framework programme and with regard to European Research Council programmes. The data shows this, and also pinpoints the important role of Catalan public universities in the field of both national and international fundraising, showcasing their relevance and their roles as guarantors of Catalonia's strong position in terms of R&I activity.

As shown in Chapter 2, the scientific production of Catalan public universities is ahead of that generated by Catalan and Spanish research institutions. This production, weighted in terms of population and generated wealth (GDP), places the Catalan research system high up in the international rankings. Moreover, its publications also have a very significant impact, and all of this is attracting young foreign researchers who are increasingly more likely to choose Catalan public universities for their doctoral training in all areas of knowledge.

As mentioned earlier, this report shows that universities are key agents for the socio-economic development of the region, and that promotion of the third mission is one of their fundamental objectives. We can conclude that the drive to monetise research results and public-private partnerships, as well as the growing number of technology-based start-ups, patent applications and university-business-society chairs, are clear examples of this social and economic commitment to local society. Chapter 3 presents a whole series of data and showcases the efforts that Catalan public universities are currently making to promote the third mission.

In short, the report shows that the results of the Catalan research and innovation system and, in particular, the significant contribution made by universities, is consolidating and confirming the upward trends in our university centres, both in quantitative as well as qualitative terms.

However, there is still a long way to go. Our innovation content can be improved compared to other similar European economies. Increased efforts are needed to bring universities and businesses closer together and for the latter to ultimately benefit from the training, knowledge and creativity of new doctors trained at universities, which must lead to innovation. Meanwhile, the end of the H2020 framework programme and the start of the new Horizon Europe programme should offer an opportunity to increase the resources raised by public universities as a whole and to improve the current percentage of 25% of the total H2020 resources in Catalonia. We believe that the promotion of professional support units to prepare international proposals can be a significant and successful improvement.