

Garmendia warns that Europe cannot keep its worldwide leadership if it does not place R&D&I at the heart of its policies, and announces that Spain will foster a common European space for researchers and the common use of research infrastructures

Statements made by the Minister for Science and Innovation during the Symposium on “Innovation and Equality: two main priorities of the Spanish Presidency of the EU for 2010”, which saw the participation of the Secretary for Equality Policies of the PSOE, Soledad Cabezón, and the Secretary for Innovation Policies, María González Veracruz, and the head of IDEAS Foundation, Jesús Caldera.

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The Minister of Science and Innovation, Cristina Garmendia, affirmed today that the European Union will not keep its world leadership by 2025, if it is not able to place R&D&I at the heart of its policies, and announced that during the Spanish Presidency, Spain will foster the creation of a common space for researchers as well as the common use of a map of research infrastructures. Garmendia declared that Spain will also promote the link between researcher and innovation policies with the construction of a Europe with more solidarity, so as to show citizens that science offers economic and social solutions to challenges like climate change, the implementation of new technologies and the ageing of the population and the related diseases.

During the symposium on “Innovation and Equality: two main priorities of the Spanish Presidency of the EU for 2010,” organized by IDEAS for Progress Foundation, Garmendia explained that, once the Lisbon Strategy 2010 is over, she will pledge to transform Europe into an economy based on knowledge while respecting the Environment and Social cohesion. It is time to foster a new Strategy with the outlook of 2020, which arises in the middle of an unprecedented economic and financial crisis.

In the opinion of the Minister of Science and Innovation, this new Strategy depends on a radical transformation of the economy, so as to integrate into the Europe of movement of people, goods, services and capitals, “free transfer of knowledge and talent”.

For this, as Garmendia explained, the Spanish Presidency will be founded on three axes: Integration, Implication and Inclusion in order to continue constructing the European Research Space.

The first of these axes, Integration, depends on making this European Research Space work really like a common and integrated space, avoiding duplicating efforts. Garmendia reminded that currently, 85% of research projects are financed by regional or national institutions which derive into 27 systems that give social and economic coverage to researchers. In Garmendia's opinion, it is crucial that all these projects "are in the same line as the general objectives of the EU," which, in her opinion, "will allow sharing research infrastructures, encouraging the exchange of knowledge and avoiding researchers to join the labor market advanced in the years".

According to Garmendia, the success of the Integration axis needs three steps: develop in the whole EU a financial environment prone to research, pledging for sustainable markets, internationalizing innovation, disseminating scientific knowledge to countries with problems to access it, and involving regional and municipal administrations to this process as the pillars to change the productive network.

The second axis, which is that of Implication, means to bring science closer to the people and raise citizens' awareness on the transcendental role of science in the recovery of economic growth. For this, citizens must understand that science gives real economic as well as social answers to the challenge of climate change, ageing of the population and the related diseases. This citizen nature of science must be compatible with the guarantee of excellence in scientific research "without the results having immediate pragmatic effect."

Finally, the third axis, that of Inclusion, depends on the fact that science and innovation play a clearer role in the promotion of social inclusion and the fight against poverty, for which it becomes necessary to transfer knowledge to areas of the planet with worst living conditions.

In the opinion of the Minister, "as a result of our effort for Integration, Implication and Inclusion, three specific aspects will be improved: excellence research, opportunities for researchers and technology specialists, management and deployment of a European map of scientific infrastructures, the connection of research and innovation policies with citizens and the construction, based on science, of a more engaged Europe with solidarity and beyond our borders."

Before Cristina Garmendia, María González Veracruz, Secretary for Innovation and New Technologies of the PSOE, noted the main role of the New Technologies of Information and Communication in the economic growth, and reminded that "40% of the increase of productivity of European economy is due to TICs." In this sense, González Veracruz encouraged social and economic actors to continue pledging for e-commerce and noted that technological development and its expansion to the whole territory will increase economic productivity, generate stable employment and contribute to cover social needs.

As for Soledad Cabezón, Secretary for Equality of the PSOE, she affirmed that the main objective of the Spanish Presidency of the EU is to create the European Protection Order that sets the minimum level of common equality and protection for the whole European Union, and has affirmed that it is not tolerable that equality of professional and personal promotion is not guaranteed for 50% of the population.