

**CRUE Position Statement on the European Universities Alliances  
and the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF)**

The Conference of Rectors of Spanish Universities (CRUE) wishes to express its concern regarding the amendments introduced in the draft report of the European Parliament's ITRE Committee on the European Competitiveness Fund (ECF), which could significantly reduce the visibility and explicit recognition of higher education and the European Universities Alliances within this new European instrument.

European competitiveness cannot be understood solely through a purely industrial lens. Europe needs a strong ecosystem of knowledge, research, and innovation. Universities are an essential part of this ecosystem: they contribute to scientific and technological progress, educate new generations of professionals and researchers, and strengthen Europe's strategic autonomy and capacity for transformation.

In a context of growing global competition and shortages of highly specialised talent in strategic sectors, Europe must reinforce its commitment to higher education, research, innovation, and skills development. Industrial, digital, and technological transformation can only be sustained if accompanied by an ambitious strategy for education as well as for attracting and retaining talent.

For this reason, CRUE considers it essential to maintain a clear legal basis enabling the participation of higher education and, in particular, the European Universities Alliances in the European Competitiveness Fund, especially in areas related to skills development, innovation, artificial intelligence, knowledge transfer, and cooperation with industry and the economic sector.

The European Universities Alliances represent one of the most transformative initiatives promoted by the European Union in the field of higher education and constitute a strategic instrument for strengthening the European Education, Research, and Innovation Area. Developed primarily within the framework of the Erasmus+ programme, they play a key role in fostering talent in strategic areas for European competitiveness.

Erasmus+ must remain the central instrument for mobility, educational cooperation, and the strengthening of the international dimension of European universities, while the European Competitiveness Fund should complement — and neither replace nor exclude — the role universities play in Europe's competitiveness, innovation, and skills development strategy.

In line with other calls and declarations that it has supported together with national rectors' conferences, university associations, and European stakeholders in research and higher education, CRUE supports ambitious funding for the next European Multiannual Financial Framework, including an allocation of €220 billion for FP10 and €60 billion for Erasmus+.

Such investment would send a clear signal that Europe intends to remain a global hub for knowledge, innovation, and talent, capable of attracting and retaining highly qualified researchers, students, and professionals.



For all these reasons, CRUE calls on Spanish Members of the European Parliament and the relevant European institutions to support maintaining the references to higher education and the European Universities Alliances included in Recital 21 and Article 30 of the European Commission's original proposal, thereby preserving their strategic role within the European Competitiveness Fund and in building a more innovative, competitive, cohesive, and globally engaged Europe.

European competitiveness needs universities.

10 May 2026