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ACUP statement on Brexit and the Erasmus programme

Barcelona, 28th February 2019

Given the doubts being generated around the participation of British universities in the ERASMUS programme from the moment when Brexit takes effect, ACUP wishes to report on the current situation and possible future scenarios.

The organisations and administrations that are responsible for higher education are in permanent contact in Catalonia, in Spain and in the international context in order to share information and any actions that might be taken. In this regard, the Interuniversity Council of Catalonia (CIC) has begun to gather information on the positions of Catalan universities, and the Conference of Spanish University Rectors (CRUE) is in contact with the Spanish Government, the Spanish Service for the Internationalisation of Education (SEPIE, Erasmus Agency of Spain), Universities UK (UUK), the European University Association (EUA) and representatives of the European Commission to systematically monitor the situation. On March 14 the CRUE will be holding a one-day workshop to look at this issue, which will offer a chance to share the latest available information and coordinate possible actions that may be derived from it.

The situations that might occur are as follows:

1 Departure with EU agreement. If an agreement is reached between the United Kingdom and the EU, two possible situations have been foreseen until now:

- First, that British universities will continue to participate in the ERASMUS programme until the 2020-2021 academic year. After then, their participation in further periods will be subject to subsequent negotiations.
- Second, that the United Kingdom will participate as a non-EU member state, as already occurs with other countries, which would be regulated by the corresponding agreements that would need to be established to ensure the continued participation of British universities in European calls for the programme.

2 Departure without EU agreement. If an agreement is not reached, two possible situations have been foreseen:

- On the one hand, that partial agreements will be reached for participation in the ERASMUS program until the end of the 2019 programme.
- On the other hand, that there is no agreement of any kind, which would imply the immediate departure of the United Kingdom. In such a case, two questions must be taken into account:
 - The European Commission announced on 30 January 2019 that any student mobility that began before March 29 could be completed in full and would be eligible for funding from the EU itself.
 - If there is no agreement in this regard, the European Commission would not deem ERASMUS agreements valid and would stop funding the current call (2019), which would affect any students who applied for mobility in the 2019-2020 academic year.

Given the uncertainty of the situation and the likelihood of shifts and changes during the negotiation process and in the position of the parties, as well as their effects or results, the Catalan public universities believe it would be wise to wait until March 29 (the date set for Brexit), in order to have more reliable data on which to base decisions. At the same time, government teams are studying possible contingency measures that would need to be applied in the event of non-agreement scenarios, should they be necessary. Finally, the Catalan public universities are in permanent contact with the international administrations and organisations of which they are members, and pledge that they will inform students and all other affected groups in a clear, transparent and permanently updated manner.

About ACUP – Catalan Association of Public Universities

The Catalan Association of Public Universities (ACUP) was created in 2002 on an initiative of the Universitat de Barcelona (UB), Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB), Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya (UPC), Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF), Universitat de Girona (UdG), Universitat de Lleida (UdL), Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV) and the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC). The ACUP's main purpose is to be the principal voice of the universities of Catalonia and combine efforts to promote initiatives, programmes and joint projects with the aim of improving the university system and ensuring that it spearheads social, cultural and economic development.

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