

Statement by Directors of CSIC about academic freedom and Cátedra Príncipe de Asturias

We want to express our concern about the reports appeared in the media concerning the fact that Professor Clara Ponsatí was not renewed her Prince of Asturias Chair in the University of Georgetown (U.S.) during the next academic year for ideological reasons. Before holding the Chair this year, Ponsatí was director of the Institut d'Anàlisi Econòmica of the CSIC.

As directors of CSIC institutes in the UAB campus, knowing her high professional value and her personal qualities, we want to state the following: the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport claims that there has not been any veto to Professor Ponsatí, arguing that a new call for this chair has been recently published and that she can apply again. But according to our experience the call of a chair at this time of the year is completely unlikely. The selection process would not take place until summer, so it will be practically impossible for a highly recognised researcher to move to Georgetown at the beginning of the academic year. The university would hardly accept to start now a rigorous process of selection since they have to schedule the teaching for next academic year long beforehand. In our opinion the fact that the Ministry calls now the chair suggests that, indeed, Professor Ponsatí was not renewed due to non-academic criteria.

We think that academic freedom is a fundamental principle that should be scrupulously observed. Ignoring this case will only perpetuate any inappropriate behavior that may have taken place, and it will induce researchers to be afraid of expressing their opinions. It is essential to preserve academic freedom, which according to the UNESCO consists of

"the right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies. All higher-education teaching personnel should have the right to fulfill their functions without discrimination of any kind and without fear of repression by the state or any other source.."

Signed by

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Carles Cané, Director Barcelona Microelectronics Institute, CNM-CSIC

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