



Reunión de seguimiento de la Conferencia Regional de Educación Superior (CRES+5), Brasilia, Brasil, 13 a 15 de marzo 2024

Reunião de acompanhamento da Conferência Regional de Educação Superior (CRES+5), Brasília - Brasil, 13 a 15 março 2024

Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES+5) follow-up meeting, Brasilia, Brazil, March 13-15, 2024

## CRES+5 DECLARATION

15 March 2024

### PREAMBLE

We, the participants of the Follow-up Conference to the III Regional Conference on Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, referred to as CRES+5, representing governments, public bodies, higher education institutions, networks, associations, trade unions, multilateral organisations, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendant peoples, students, and academic, technical-administrative, and scientific staff from Latin America and the Caribbean, convened in Brasilia from 13 to 15 March, 2024, recognise the significance of this intermediate meeting strategically positioned between CRES-2018 and the upcoming conference in 2028. This initiative provided a valuable opportunity to assess and reaffirm the guiding principles and actions for transforming education, particularly higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean.

We reaffirm that higher education is a universal human right and a social public good that must be fully guaranteed by States, as endorsed and approved in the Declarations of the 1998 UNESCO World Conference on Higher Education and the Regional Conferences of Cartagena, Colombia (2008), and Cordoba, Argentina (2018). We also agree that this principle should be the cornerstone guiding the comprehensive organisation of the education system.

The CRES-2018 Declaration particularly emphasises that the agreed initiatives are based on the deep conviction that access to, utilisation, and democratisation of knowledge are social, collective, and strategic goods essential for guaranteeing the basic human rights necessary for the well-being of our peoples, the construction of full citizenship, social emancipation, and the integration of Latin America and the Caribbean in solidarity.

Among other things, this emphatically implies advocating against the commercialisation of education and the privatisation processes of educational systems at all levels. It also entails promoting and ensuring regulations and controls that prevent education from being treated as a for-profit commodity, since education is a public good.

Similarly, we emphasise this Declaration's alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals. In this context, we underscore the centrality of affirmative actions that the region's States must promote, committing to the transformation of educational systems and societies, and enhancing the strategic role of higher education for the sustainable development of our region.





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Special attention must be paid to promoting inclusion and equity throughout the entire system, ensuring the essential integration and evaluation of academic quality with social relevance, as well as for other levels of the education system, and enhancing the value of teaching professionals, administrative technicians, and scientific staff. It is imperative to promote policies that guarantee higher education workers' rights while also eradicating job insecurity, instability, wage depreciation, and the progressive deterioration of social security conditions and benefits.

### AN URGENT CALL TO ACTION

From 2018 to the present, there has been a noticeable deterioration in the political, economic, and social spheres that significantly impacts higher education in the region. Governments have arisen that openly oppose participatory democracy and autonomy in knowledge acquisition to achieve full sovereignty in science and technology, the humanities, culture, and the arts. Some even negate fundamental aspects necessary for our future.

For this reason, we argue that to defend higher education, we must defend democracy, and to defend democracy, we must defend the university. This includes advocating for a diversified higher education system and supporting open, pluralistic, inclusive, and humanistic science while also reaffirming the public significance of knowledge.

The anti-scientific denialist speeches of political leaders who revisit dogmatic and religious views are a danger that must be denounced. The propagation of dogma smothers the possibility of deliberation, and without deliberation, democracy cannot exist.

It is imperative to acknowledge the ongoing deterioration that has significantly impacted the working conditions of higher education workers in recent decades. This is evident in increasing job insecurity, instability, wage depreciation, and deteriorated social security conditions and benefits. These challenges are compounded by a regional context marked by a significant rise in poverty, marginalisation, and inequality. Work precarization has reached such proportions that it is affecting all sectors of higher education. It is imperative to acknowledge that advancing higher education is contingent upon ensuring the rights of workers, who are instrumental in implementing progressive policies. We must promote policies that make a difference, based on dialogue with society.

Higher education must contribute to repair the contemporary societies' and states' historical debt owed to indigenous and African descent peoples; educating against racism, racial discrimination, and all forms of intolerance; and guaranteeing these peoples' educational rights, which are recognised in numerous





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international conventions, treaties, and declarations. To achieve this, higher education must transform itself through an intercultural perspective, overcoming the limitations of monocultural and monolingual approaches that impact its quality and socio-cultural relevance.

Similarly, we must encourage policies that promote equal opportunities for women and members of the LGBTQIA+ community. States and higher education institutions, working in collaboration with student groups, trade unions, and social representatives, should undertake efforts to advance gender equality, respect for diversity, and effective non-discrimination policies. This approach will ensure that all members of the community can thrive, regardless of their sexual orientation, ethnic-racial background, gender identity, or expression.

## WE THEREFORE PROCLAIM

Our commitment to equity and lifelong learning. To this end, it is the States' duty to guarantee the necessary, progressive funding for the work and strategic tasks of public higher education institutions, in order to better respond to a society facing major challenges. Providing adequate funding is not an expense but a responsibility that cannot be negotiated. As a priority, it must focus on promoting affirmative policies, always from an intersectional perspective, for full access, free tuition, permanence and graduation for the most impoverished, discriminated and marginalised sectors of the education system and higher education, including indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, migrant and refugee populations, the adult population, people with disabilities and people discriminated against due to gender and/or sexual orientation, language and/or skin colour. We categorically demand a statement from the region's current governments regarding increased funding and the implementation of educational recovery actions, which have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the 21st century, higher education institutions, as integral parts of the science, technology, and innovation systems, play a pivotal role in facilitating self-determined and globally connected knowledge building. They serve as a foundation for ensuring that the benefits of research and the generation of new knowledge are accessible to all citizens. However, the generation and transfer of knowledge can lead to greater collective well-being and reduced inequality only if institutional arrangements and public policies are designed with this goal in mind.

We reaffirm that knowledge exchange is intrinsic to higher education. We must enhance the integration of the knowledge and cultures of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, communities, popular sectors, and the workforce in knowledge generation, utilisation, and appropriation.





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In this context, safeguarding students' right to education is particularly important. We advocate for unconditional respect for their organisation, expression, and critical thinking, allowing them to exercise this right without discrimination or fear of criminalisation. Students are at the forefront of our efforts, whether in teaching, research, institutional matters, or social spheres, as they represent the future of our communities and embody the most valuable aspects of our identity and diversity.

We, the participants of CRES+5, express our commitment to strengthening transformative and emancipatory action, valuing higher education as an inalienable right to achieve sustainable development, a culture of peace and non-violence, and integral health, while fostering citizens' awareness of their duties and responsibilities. To this end we call on all government actors, authorities, society, networks, unions, and associations, from the different communities of our region and our planet, to support our statement and our actions.

A decolonising perspective must be at the heart of Latin American and Caribbean awareness. Knowledge and science, shared learning and sovereignty in the use and governance of new technologies must be open, freely accessible and considered a human right and social benefit. In this spirit of collaboration, we advocate dialogue for an inclusive, ethical, digital transformation that serves the individuals comprising the educational community and higher education institutions.

We express our commitment to fostering collective action among governments, societies, and higher education, science and technology institutions that strive for agreements on horizontal and supportive cooperation, co-participation in good practices and experiences, and highly relevant projects that seek to improve living conditions, education, health, and sustainability.

The goal is to create a favourable scenario for significant development as a regional bloc, oriented towards well-being and equity. To achieve this, it is essential to strengthen cooperation networks, particularly highlighting the importance of the Latin American and Caribbean Higher Education Space (ENLACES, in Spanish), as well as all our cooperation and solidarity networks and bodies, to enhance regional integration and inter-regional cooperation.

We proclaim that the democratisation of knowledge and the universalisation of higher education are two strategic objectives for CRES 2028, aimed at ensuring the sovereign development of Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC) and the consolidation of democratic systems of government. To achieve this, we must promote broad social and political partnerships, both national and regional, to establish a new socio-educational pact.

It is important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the increasing complexity of crises, which transcend territorial and disciplinary boundaries. Therefore, solutions must be comprehensive and solidarity based. During this time, science and its social appropriation, along with the internationalisation of higher





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education systems, emerged as crucial responses to global health emergencies. International collaboration among scientists and the application of joint methodologies remains key to addressing future challenges.

University internationalization policies and mobility programs are particularly fundamental for integrating countries in the region and fostering international relationships, to promote the exchange of academic, scientific, and technological knowledge and the development of strong cultural ties among Latin American and Caribbean communities, which contributes to a broader understanding of the cultural diversity that defines the region.

Emancipatory regional integration must be promoted through inter-institutional conventions, student mobility; exchange programs for students, academics, technical-administrative and scientific staff; domestic internationalisation programs; and other intra-regional internationalisation strategies, as well as through collaboration with other regions of the world.

Therefore, we request that our States ratify both the Regional Convention and the Global Convention on Recognition of Higher Education Qualifications.

Higher education institutions have a responsibility to critically analyse their own trajectory and propose transformation pathways that align with the effective democratisation of quality higher education. They should also contribute to establishing systems for science, technology, innovation, art, and culture that support sustainable, inclusive, and equitable development.

We are committed to the transformation that society expects from our institutions, and we request that governments ensure progressive investment aimed at universalising higher education, science, technology, and innovation between 2024 and 2030. It is proposed that a certain but growing percentage of these resources be allocated for the purposes of cooperation and integration based on education and science. These resources are essential for implementing projects that address the significant challenges facing Latin America and the Caribbean.

We call on ENLACES and the regional and national higher education networks, associations, and consortia to promote the creation of a Regional Knowledge Agency (ARCO). This agency should facilitate collaborative, solidarity-based, and horizontal research, outreach, and innovation, as well as their integration with teaching. ARCO should operate based on a clear, pragmatic, forward-looking, and integrationist approach, aligned with the content and orientation of public policy outlined in this document.

Finally, we endorse the validity of higher education institutions as valuable spaces for building a promising future based on full citizenship, social justice, sustainable development, and regional integration.





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## THEMATIC AXES' PRIORITIES

### AXIS 1 - HIGHER EDUCATION AS PART OF THE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

For the higher education system to be part of the education system, progress is required in guaranteeing that higher education is recognised as a fundamental human right in all countries of the region.

Articulated national education systems need to be consolidated, both vertically and horizontally, in order to foster individuals' mobility and trajectories, as well as lifelong and continuing education.

In this task, initial teacher training plays a fundamental role and the dignity of the teaching profession becomes preponderant in guaranteeing the students' comprehensive education, socioemotional well-being, and full integration as citizens. In this context, institutional sustainability is a regional imperative in addressing nations' present and future challenges.

### AXIS 2 - HIGHER EDUCATION, CULTURAL DIVERSITY, AND INTERCULTURALITY IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

Update laws and other higher education regulations, adopt public policies and allocate sufficient budgets to ensure the rights of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples established in the international instruments signed or ratified by the States; in consultation with these peoples.

Adopt public policies (financing, evaluation, and quality assurance) and concrete measures in each higher education institution (HEI) to eradicate racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and all forms of intolerance in Higher Education, respecting the principles of university autonomy and the autonomy of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples.

Promote the transformation of the systems and of all HEIs (not only in the so-called "intercultural" institutions), through: i) the incorporation in the curriculum of the worldviews, values, systems of knowledge and wisdom, linguistic systems and ways of learning of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples; and ii) the establishment of specific programs of quotas and scholarships to respond to the inequities that affect these peoples, with the participation of representatives of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples.

Strengthen teachers' training in intercultural bilingual and plurilingual education and promote the teaching and use of the languages of indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples in higher education.





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Establish university outreach programs that respond to the demands and proposals of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

States should recognise universities and other HEIs created by indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples, develop appropriate legislation in consultation with these peoples, and provide them with sufficient resources.

### **AXIS 3 - HIGHER EDUCATION, INTERNATIONALISATION AND INTEGRATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Since CRES 2018, the Latin American academic community proclaims the need to broaden and deepen regional integration through the internationalisation of higher education, with the recognition of the cultural plurality characteristic of the region in favour of Latin American and Caribbean citizenship and sovereignty, and for the quality and relevance of teaching, research, and outreach, with public policies to protect the rights of migrants.

Progress has been made: some countries have ratified and signed a new agreement for the recognition of degrees; many universities and networks have developed good practices in the recognition of credits, competencies, and multiple degrees; and student mobility continued to advance slowly, despite the pandemic. However, progress is considered limited and insufficient.

A real articulation between State policies and the academic strategies of higher education institutions is needed to face the challenge of regional integration. In this way, the regional cooperation initiatives that HEIs are promoting can be strengthened, expanded, and perpetuated.

For the next few years, the essential priorities are to:

- Create a regional knowledge agency, with public budget allocation, that can design and promote collaborative and supportive research (e.g., through multinational laboratories), postgraduate, innovation, and outreach programs for issues of common relevance.
- Create a comprehensive academic mobility, training, and exchange program that integrates the expertise of university networks and partnerships. This program should be inclusive, aiming for social integration and reinforcement of Latin American and Caribbean culture. It must include the entire academic community, including education workers and administrators.
- Integrate these activities into the ENLACES common academic space, which will thus have the central role of proposing and monitoring accreditations and activities in regional public programs.





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- Advance in the recognition of degrees and diplomas, through the new agreement, but also through greater integration between the government and educational institutions, which can and should achieve recognition through their regimetal practices.
- Expand the use of educational technologies and virtual exchange, as a way to expand internationalisation at home, in order to strengthen the autonomy and digital sovereignty of our countries.
- Strengthen partnerships with other regional blocs: Africa, Asia, Europe, always based on the principles of solidarity, reciprocity, and horizontal cooperation.
- Promote inclusive language policies.
- Address the specific issues of cross-border cooperation and transit in order to create educational and internationalised territories and ecosystems.

#### **AXIS 4 - THE ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE FACE OF SOCIAL CHALLENGES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Promote, through higher education, the strengthening of Latin American and Caribbean democracies to address violations of public liberties, human rights, different forms of social violence and other forms of authoritarianism in the region, contributing to political sustainability and respect for fundamental democratic principles and human rights for a socially responsible coexistence. In its political role, the university is critical in addressing social and political injustices, defending the general interest, and promoting national and regional development as well as open, constructive dialogue with new alliances and representative consensus in order to reach a "new social contract" for education.

Design and implement a new generation of public and institutional policies for the expansion of access, permanence and graduation from higher education to include historically excluded or underrepresented groups, such as socioeconomically disadvantaged youth, indigenous peoples, Afro-descendants, people with disabilities, migrants, rural dwellers, and LGBTQIA+ people, among others. In addition, they should be based on the perspective of Inclusive Social Territorial Co-responsibility and the State's commitment to financing public higher education.

To this end, it is urgent to establish an institutional framework to follow up on compliance with the agreements and proposals of the III CRES (Observatory, Monitoring Unit), with a view to 2028, for the collection and systematisation of information in databases, statistical studies, national and regional legislations or other relevant, reliable and updated information to be able to prepare diagnoses, statements of knowledge, reports on results, and to compare and project the design, implementation, and evaluation of governmental and institutional policies for this level and of connections with other countries' educational systems.







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## **AXIS 5 - SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND INNOVATION AS ENGINES OF HUMAN, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

The last five years have shown that it is necessary to articulate the science, technology, innovation, arts and humanities (STI-AH) debate not only with socio-productive development strategies but also with democratic processes. In Latin America and the Caribbean, democracies are under siege. The problem is that science and freedom of research and innovation has also been involved in this siege. In this context, it is not coincidental that investment in research, development, and innovation has declined in the period under analysis. While it could be said that scientific production in the region has increased in absolute terms, it has remained constant since 2010 when compared to global scientific production. Perhaps the most serious issue here is the quality of scientific research, since the impact of the research carried out in the region has systematically declined. It can also be observed that technological innovation is not only minimal, but has shown a downward trend.

Priority recommendations:

1. Guarantee stable, sustained, and incremental funding for STI-AH in accordance with the region's needs, oriented towards sustainable development and the improvement of our peoples' living standards.
2. Strengthen innovation ecosystems in higher education institutions as a key factor for the well-being of our peoples.
3. Create a regional agency for science, technology, innovation, arts, and humanities to reflect, propose, and coordinate regional policies, articulating with existing networks.
4. Make a commitment to open science.
5. Promote academic mobility for students and researchers.
6. Encourage the development of joint research and innovation projects on topics relevant to the region.
7. Incorporate as a research priority the development and impact of new disruptive technologies, with special emphasis on artificial intelligence.





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8. Recognise the strategic role of the arts and humanities in the process of knowledge production, defence of cultural sovereignty and pluricultural integration of the countries in the region.
9. Guarantee freedom of research and the right to decent work in the systems of science, technology, innovation, arts, and humanities.

## **AXIS 6 - STRATEGIC ROLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN**

Our political, social, economic, and environmental particularities call for Latin America and the Caribbean to exercise associative, innovative leadership at a global level in the field of sustainability.

From our communities, institutions of higher education, and the systems that group them together, we must assume a serious commitment to the defence, promotion, and implementation of all the sustainable development goals, with adequate measurement and monitoring of progress towards them, demonstrating social transformations and impacts.

In view of this, it is necessary to consolidate that which has been achieved during these past years, and to incorporate sustainable development as a permanent axis in strategic planning. From there, achievements can be deepened through the management of the HEIs' substantive functions.

Above all, we must enhance our public exemplarity to strengthen the strategic role of higher education in sustainable development through intersectoral alliances, dialogues of knowledge, and concrete actions with the public and private sectors and citizens, particularly empowering the youth as protagonists in the construction of a better world for future generations.

## **AXIS 7 - DECENT WORK AND LIVING CONDITIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION WORKERS**

States and higher education institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean must guarantee their workers labour conditions as established by the International Labour Organization (ILO). In particular, they must guarantee the right to freedom of association; the freedom to strike; social dialogue and collective bargaining; a healthy and safe working environment, respectful of the environment, and free of all forms of discrimination





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and violence that recognises, protects, and values equality and diversity in all its expressions; and social security benefits. They must also establish active policies to guarantee workers stable professional careers and decent wages, reversing the current situation in which there is a high degree of precarious hiring practices and unsatisfactory salaries.

Promote the creation of a strategic alliance for decent work at HEIs, supported technically by the ILO, in collaboration with the teams of UNESCO IESALC, ENLACES and the participation of trade union and social-educational organisations, with the objective of concretising tangible commitments for decent work.

Create the "Permanent Observatory of Decent Work and Collective Bargaining in Latin American and Caribbean HEIs" with the mission of carrying out studies and research while promoting debates that enable comparative working conditions, salary schemes, and bargaining dynamics in the region. Likewise, the joint ILO and UNESCO standards on decent work should be reviewed and revitalised, based on a broad consultation and elaboration of proposals for their analysis at the global level.

States and HEIs must guarantee professional careers to their professors, technical-administrative workers, and scientists, based on transparency and merit, supported by a systemic institutional policy of promoting continuous training, with special emphasis on the professors' pedagogical and technological training, in order to intensify students' commitment and learning, complemented by internationalisation and mobility policies.

The digital transformation in education process must be built in permanent dialogue with workers and their unions, averting labour precariousness and overload, guaranteeing technological sovereignty, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and autonomy in learning.

## AXIS 8 - THE IMPACT OF COVID IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The outbreak of COVID-19 affected humanity all over the planet, combining a highly contagious virus with a symptomatology of special care and treatment, which disrupted the functioning of educational systems, leaving millions of students without access to educational institutions. Faced with this, HEIs implemented training plans and strategies, mostly based on the use of information and communication technology (ICT), for which teachers and students were not prepared, or only had incipient experience. This, together with a previously existing digital divide, led to a lack of motivation and disorientation, which in turn ended up creating more school dropouts, rejection of virtual classes, and an isolated and individualistic training process. This only served to add to the already present affective and psychological problems experienced by the onset of the pandemic.





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As such, teaching and teacher training must be adequate, considering they are catalysts for learning transformation, developing emerging digital competencies, to provide continuity to academic programs through the use of virtual interaction, online platforms, digital content, asynchronous and virtual assessment. All this with an emphasis on the participants' psychological care and mental well-being. The aforementioned highlighted the need for public policies that guarantee investments oriented to teacher training, the construction of free technological platforms, and the acquisition of equipment for students and teachers, providing access to technology for stakeholders in equal conditions. Multimodality development merits investment, review, and standardisation to achieve the implementation of hybrid modalities in the HEIs, which enhances the virtues of ICT in terms of inclusion and flexibility, obtaining more equitable, personal, and meaningful experiences.

At the same time, scientific, technological, and outreach research were consolidated as engines of human, social, and economic development, serving as a platform for innovation and socialisation of knowledge. Contingency plans focused on consolidating the practice of research and outreach for the resolution of social problems, demonstrating that the investment and effective management of resources contributes to improving research performance in HEIs. Finally, in the next few years HEIs should focus on the redefinition of professional training; the transformation of academic processes and models; the development of empathy, solidarity, and cooperation; fighting against school dropouts and mental health problems; coexistence with generative artificial intelligences; the adaptation of strategies for online learning; and the application of public policies focused on the modernisation of higher education systems.

## **AXIS 9 - INCLUSION, DIVERSITY, AND THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Axis 9 on inclusion, diversity, and the role of women in higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean is a new axis within the framework of the Regional Conferences on Higher Education. This crucial issue, both for universities and for governmental public policies, must be approached from the perspective of law in its intersectional dimension, and in the liberation and emancipatory logic. A truly equitable and inclusive higher education system requires the systematic identification and elimination of all barriers that prevent equal access to inclusive, quality education, training, and academic advancement. Issues of gender, racial-ethnic diversity, sexual orientation, religion, health, social background, socioeconomic status, age, disability, and other identity markers serve as multiple impediments to access, retention, advancement, and success in higher education. The elimination of barriers requires the design and implementation of accessibility understood as a right and as a constitutive and transversal principle of a higher education policy.

In this context, the central role of universities and institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean lies in their ability to prioritise inclusion, diversity, and gender equity in its various facets, in research, teaching, and





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outreach activities, in order to ensure equal opportunities. This includes equal opportunities for all members of academic communities in producing and disseminating cross-cutting, contextualised knowledge to promote social transformation, socioeconomic development, and the establishment of sustainable and equitable futures for future generations.

#### **AXIS 10 - FINANCING AND GOVERNANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

We call for the generation of public policies with programs to accompany and monitor HEIs in the responsible, efficient use of technologies in favour of comprehensive, quality education, always preserving the humanist, fair, and supportive character of our peoples. This should be promoted in all educational spaces, regardless of modality, accompanied by investment programs for teacher training, generation of free technological platforms, and financing the acquisition of technological equipment to guarantee access to students and teachers under equal conditions.

Likewise, we urge the cessation of the sanctions and economic blockades affecting some countries in the region, in order to enable these States to better comply with the commitments that will allow them to improve the conditions of their HEIs. This includes guaranteeing decent salaries to teachers, staff, and workers, as well as sufficient budget allocation for student services such as transportation, scholarships, and food service, and the maintenance of infrastructure and provision of technological equipment to drive research aimed at addressing social problems, while also strengthening science and technology as a whole, open and inclusive, underpinning the sovereignty and independence of the peoples.

#### **AXIS 11 - AUTONOMY OF HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS**

One of the core concepts of the University and a transversal axis for developing its mission is autonomy, which is suffering setbacks in many countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as in other regions of the world. This concept has been widely discussed at UNESCO's World and Regional Conferences on Higher Education and should be defended as a basis for the University to fulfil its social function as a knowledge-producing institution and as a place of productive criticism. Responsible autonomy includes pedagogical, academic, administrative, people management, financial, and patrimonial dimensions. It requires transparency and accountability of its processes and results, and is a condition for the full development of the connection between the university and society. This implies that the resources for the full functioning of higher education institutions are a governmental obligation, but governments often use budget control to limit autonomy. It also requires democratic and transparent management, with full participation of all segments of the institutional





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community. Autonomy must guarantee plurality and the representation of minorities in spaces of power and knowledge construction, as well as the defence of the commitments of a university necessary for democracy, society, and the planet to face contemporary challenges. In this context, political persecution of members of the university community must be repudiated and the inviolability of the campuses guaranteed.

Although progress has been made in autonomy in recent years, there is still much to be done to institutionalise it. The following priorities are proposed for 2024-2028: to include autonomy in the highest law of the country, indicating its various dimensions and establishing permanent financing in the national budget to fund public HEIs, which guarantees institutional development in the short, medium, and long term, with adequate distributive models and integral allocation of funds; to create organic laws of higher education that clearly establish the rights and obligations of HEIs, their evaluation and forms of accountability, guaranteeing instruments that enable the exercise of permanent self-assessment and collective and public reflection on the purposes and results of the institutions; to establish a solid student assistance policy and freedom for HEIs to implement affirmative policies; to keep curricular and professional guidelines to a minimum so that the HEI can reinvent itself in tune with contemporary and future scenarios; to promote comparative studies that recognise the enormous heterogeneity and contrasts between countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and other regions in terms of university autonomy, in order to highlight good practices and possibilities for progress; to promote studies to establish the social value of HEIs for society; to generate coherent systems of higher education, based on institutional autonomy and articulated with independent accreditation agencies, to facilitate exchanges and complementarity, free movement of students, teachers, and non-teaching staff, and to implement solidarity-based cooperation with the aim of consolidating international academic communities.

## AXIS 12 - THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

The future of higher education in Latin America and the Caribbean is inexorably linked to the dream of the future that our societies are continually debating, within a framework of recurrent crises arising from an accelerated dynamic that is proper to this late modernity, as is happening throughout the world. Historical tensions that characterise our democracies, weakened and conditioned by their inability to meet the multiple human, social, and environmental demands that arise from an anachronistic development paradigm that seems to exacerbate problems rather than solving them. The higher education of the future must not only meet the demands of its territories, but also the demands of humanity and above all of the inhabitants of Latin America and the Caribbean during this present time, full of challenges.

The future of higher education in our region must be based on the strengthening of its substantive processes (teaching, research, and outreach) based on contextual responses, while developing the communication and support infrastructure that unites Latin America and the Caribbean.





Reunión de seguimiento de la Conferencia Regional de Educación Superior (CRES+5), Brasilia, Brasil, 13 a 15 de marzo 2024

Reunião de acompanhamento da Conferência Regional de Educação Superior (CRES+5), Brasília - Brasil, 13 a 15 março 2024

Regional Conference on Higher Education (CRES+5) follow-up meeting, Brasilia, Brazil, March 13-15, 2024

Governments and stakeholders must develop and implement appropriate, relevant models for the governance, financing, and development of higher education systems, guided by the principles of decolonisation, inclusion, equity, quality, efficiency, autonomy, participation and accountability. In particular, decolonisation requires transcending curricula and advancing towards the transformation of academic structures, processes, governance structures, organisational culture and the vision of quality, and implies considering reparations to victims, all of which constitute a great challenge.

The higher education of the future must reinforce the idea that education is a human right and a social good, made available to everyone, regardless of origin or conditions, promoting forms of social inclusion that improve opportunities for the most vulnerable sectors of society. This calls us to collaborate in the consolidation of our democracies, as so many demands cannot be solved by themselves. We must consolidate an integrated system of higher education, articulated and efficient in promoting new forms of internationalisation that, from a regional intercultural perspective, allow for a more harmonious union of our nations and territories in a complex international context. All this requires the search for regional consensus capable of building a new concept of quality that considers social inclusion, territorial relevance, and respect for cultural diversity as indispensable presuppositions that drive educational, scientific, and technological planning and evaluation. The region urgently needs an intergovernmental agency made up exclusively of all our nations, devoid of any colonial heritage, that will allow us to maturely assume an agenda of knowledge that promotes new values and new ways of living well to put an end to so many centuries of pain and shame. Finally, we understand that the dialogue of knowledge and culture is indispensable in a region that must value the richness of its diversity, promoting knowledge and art in each of its multiple traditions.



MINISTÉRIO DA EDUCAÇÃO

