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The government will overhaul the Puerto Rico Science Technology and Research Trust [1]

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El Nuevo Día [2]

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The Puerto Rican legislature has approved a law to put the fate of the Puerto Rico Science Technology and Research Trust (the Trust) in the hands of eight people to be named by the gobernor of Puerto Rico, Ricardo Rossello and confirmed by the Senate, claiming that the "current status of the Trust can not Continue "and that its operation should be" consistent with our programmatic government plan". This is reflected in the explanatory memorandum of House Bill 1122, submitted this month.

It's approval this weekend, without any pulbic hearings on the matter, will immediately disolve the current Board of Trustees which oversees the Trust, a non-profit organization that receives public funding and was created by virtue of Law 214 from 2004. The measure will also mean the dismissal of the current Executive Director, Lucy Crespo, and the Director of Operations, Iván Ríos Mena, who began functions during the administration of ex-governor Alejandro García Padilla. This is because the project makes clear that such positions are "of the trust" of the new trustees.

While this measure reaches the governor's signature, the Secretary of Economic Development and Trade (DDEC), Manuel Laboy, current fiduciary of FCTI, stressed that the institution "is fundamental to our agenda of innovation and technology."
In an interview with El Nuevo Día, Laboy made it clear that "both the governor and this server support the institution and the programs that have been carried out."

He specifically praised initiatives such as the accelerator Parallel18, Colmena66 and the Consortium for Clinical Research (PRCCI), which the FCTI created and launched under the management of Crespo, who took office in March 2015.
Prior to this, internal fighting, vacancies and litigation resulted in the FCTI being virtually inoperative from its formalization in 2005 until - and free of legal battles - it began to be reorganized in 2013. The process required audits, correction of administrative failures, drafting of plan Strategic and regulations, as it appears in the archive of this newspaper.

When questioning why they seek to dissolve the leadership of the FCTI just when it has begun to bear fruit and replace its governing body with trustees that will serve for three years, when the current term is up to six, Laboy had no answer.
This contrasts with the Rossello administration's emphasis on the need for continuity, beyond political swings, to achieve consistent results in economic development. With this argument, in fact, two private entities - the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) and Invest Puerto Rico - were established to take charge of promoting Puerto Rico as a tourist destination and as an investment destination, respectively.

"I do not want to go into certain details, because there is a work of the comptroller and that is a fundamental part of the changes that are taking place," said Laboy. The Report of the Office of the Comptroller (OCPR) referred to by Laboy is contained in the explanatory statement of the bill and covers the period from January 1, 2010 to October 31, 2015. That is, it covers seven Months of the management of Crespo. When it was released in 2016, Crespo assured El Nuevo Día that all the indications had already been "taken care of and channeled" and that even the document included old information that the OCPR staff knew had been resolved.

"I reiterate that the FCTI took corrective measures for all the indications in the comptroller's report," Crespo said. Contrary to this information, Laboy asked for room for the legislative process. "But we have had talks in general terms with different stakeholders on the part of innovation and technology, which is fundamental to our agenda, that they understand that it is meritorious to make changes from the perspective of public policy alignment," he acknowledged without elaboration.

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