**News Release from the IULTCS on behalf of AQEIC**

 **10 July 2020**

**Mercè Paniker i Alemany**, Barcelona 1920 - 2012, co-founded AQEIC in 1950 and was the first female president of IULTCS from 1975 to 1977. She was an entrepreneur and actively co-operated in the Catalan Society promoting the importance of small and medium sized companies, feminism and women’s rights.

The Catalan Women’s Institute, with the support of the Catalan Government (Govern de la Generalitat de Catalunya) is officially honouring her 100-year anniversary and will celebrate with several commemorative events. They include presentations and round tables to reflect upon the importance of her professional life. A biography will be published to emphasise her valuable contributions and thoughts to the society throughout her life.

Mercè graduated in Chemistry in 1943 from the University of Barcelona and worked in the company that her father founded in 1922, Paniker S.A. In 1954 she became General Manager after her father’s death. In 1974 she founded Bil.liena Química, S.A. She was also a member of the board for the Small and Medium-sized Companies in Catalonia (PYMEC) and representative of the Social Council of the University of Barcelona.

She was a member of the Organizing Committee for the First Congress of Women and Economy. In 1992 she co-founded FEMVISIO, a European organisation dedicated to the promotion of women entrepreneurs and a participant of the IV World Women Congress in Beijing in 1995. In 1998, in memory of her father, she founded the Ramuni Paniker Trust Foundation in the State of Kerala (India) to support talented students with limited economic resources in rural areas. She is also recognised for her political participation and contribution to the democratic recovery in Spain.

Mercè Paniker was one of the pioneering women as entrepreneur and defender of women's rights in Catalonia. She always fought to defend the economic independence of women and supported the initiatives undertaken in Catalonia in favour of small and medium-sized companies. She was convinced that women should lead business organisations of all kinds and, in her public interventions, she called women to enter an arena that had been denied to them.

As a member of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), towards the end of her professional life, she carried out industrial advisory missions in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Her work has been recognised at a european level by the European Women's Lobby and by global institutions such as the United Nations.

AQEIC has joined the Mercè Paniker Memorial Year. Barcelona hosted the III Congress of IULTCS in 1953, when Mercè Paniker was President of AQEIC and the XIV Congress of IULTCS in 1975, when she was President of IULTCS.

Attached pictures:

* Opening Ceremony and attendance of the III Congress of IULTCS, Barcelona, 1953
* Opening Ceremony and attendance of the XIV Congress of IULTCS, Barcelona, 1975
* Gala Dinner of the XXXI Congres of IULTCS, Valencia, 2011. Mercè Paniker with IULTCS former Presidents. From left to right: Dr Volkan Candar (Turkey) 2012 – 2013; Mr. Juan Salazar (Colombia). 2001 – 2003; Mrs. M. Paniker de Pelach (Spain), 1975-1977; Prof.Dr. Jaume Cot (Spain) . 2003 – 2005; Prof Dr. Bi Shi (China) 2010 – 2011; Mr. Elton Hurlow (USA), 2008 – 2009; Prof Dr Anthony J. Covington (United Kingdom), 1997 – 1999.

## End News Release ##

For editorial Information: Christine Powley-Williams Email: christine.powley-williams@satra.com