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Basque Vocational Training Opened to the World

Last 4th and 5th February, San Sebastián's Kursaal Congress Palace held two interesting conferences around the internationalization of Basque Vocational Training, under the name 'Basque Vocational Training: Open to the World'. During those two days, around 2,000 people visited this event and some of the speakers came from the other side of the Atlantic (Chile, Italy, Finland, or France).

→ Wednesday 4th



↑ **Josu Aboitiz**, Vocational Training Director of the Basque Government, focused his speech on some vocational training experiences in Europe.



↑ Deputy Minister **Iñaki Mujika** talked about the international character of Basque Vocational Training.



↑ **Amaia Guijarro**, Manager of HETEL.



↑ The speech of **Brussels Commission representative** dealt with the relevance of Vocational Training internationalization.

↓ **Fernando Susteta**, coordinator of the collaboration project between the towns of Camarones (Argentina) and Mutriku (Gipuzkoa).



↑ **Denis Brillant**, Crafts Vocational Training Manager in Pau, and **Ramón Martínez de Murguía**, Director of TKNIKA.



↑ **Paloma Enriquez**, Director of CEBANC, offered a long speech on AICE's experience.



↑ **Lars Möller** (CIRIUS) and **J.L. Fernández Maure**, international project developer of Tknika, talked on the collaboration projects between Denmark and the Basque Country.

→ Thursday 5th

- ↓ **Darío Montoya**, General Director of SENA in Colombia, talked about his students' internship in Gipuzkoa.



- ↓ **Gianfranco Simoncini**, Deputy Director of EARLALL in Italia.



- ↑ **Iñaki Agirre**, Secretary General of External Action of the Basque Government.

- ↓ 'Collaboration Policies and Strategies' was the title of **Tontxu Campos's** speech, Minister for Education, Universities and Research of the Basque Government.



- ↓ **Xabier Maidagan**, Internationalization General Manager of Innobasque.



- ↓ **Joxe Mari Elola**, technical adviser of the Basque Deputy Ministry of Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning.



- ↑ **Maximiliano Mariano Jara** focused his speech on Chilean specialisation programmes.

- ↓ The **students** who have made their internships abroad plaid the main role in an interesting debate.



- ↑ **Igone Azpiroz**, Lifelong Learning Director of the Basque Department for Education, universities, and Research, talked about Leonardo and Erasmus programmes.

“Our goal is to create a common degree for the Basque Country and Aquitaine”

Bernard Cazala is the President of the Chamber of Commerce and Crafts of the Atlantic Pyrenees; an organisation that, a year ago, started a collaboration project with the Basque Training Centres through the Basque Government. The congress ‘Basque Vocational Training: open to the world’ showed the goals and actions that have been carried out within the framework of this joint work on the occasion of a round-table.



**Bernard
Cazala**

President of the Chamber of Commerce
and Crafts of the Atlantic Pyrenees

- The Chamber of Commerce and Crafts is a figure that does not exist in the Basque Country. Could you explain us its functions?

- It is a public service whose mission is, on one hand, to deal with learning and training and, on the other, to defend the interests and economic development of the 11,000 craft companies in the Atlantic Pyrenees.

- Which is the profile of a craft company in Aquitaine?

- They are small companies –most of them with less than ten workers– that play a role of service and closeness. In the Basque Country, the population is concentrated in cities, but here it is dispersed. So, if a baker disappears in a small village, the public service disappears too.

- How many students are there in the Chamber of Commerce and Crafts?

- Our centres in Pau and Bayonne have 1,000 trainees. We work on all sectors, except for construction, food, automation, dental prosthesis, aesthetics, hairdressing, and dressmaking. The rate of labour market integration is approximately 75% regarding apprenticeship contracts.

- Which is the situation of the collaboration project with Basque Vocational Training Centres?

- The project was started a year ago in collaboration with the Basque Country, within the framework of the Aquitaine-Euskadi forum. Now, it allows us to work on a feasibility study on cooperation. Some visits have taken place between the centres on both

sides of the frontier and trainers have held some meetings with the aim of sharing knowledge on both educational systems.

Depending on teachers’ assessment, we will draw up a series of proposals to develop future collaborations; these will be embodied in a report submitted to the Aquitaine Regional Council or in Europe, depending on the nature of the actions to be programmed.

- In your opinion, which are the most feasible collaboration channels?

- There are different options. We can organise exchanges between students and trainers, but the main goal is beyond this. We want to work on a model that, in the long term, will allow us to establish a common degree. Without reaching the status of a national degree, it would allow young people to find a job in the Northern Basque Country or in the Southern Basque Country.

- Which is the schedule for its achievement?

- It will take a long time to achieve this goal; three or four years. In 2009, we will start a more operational phase, with exchanges between students and trainers. At this moment, the aim is to get to know how our respective training centres work and to see how we can implement in our centres the way of working in the Basque Country, and vice versa. I think that we have a lot to learn from each other.

- Which obstacles are you finding?

- In my opinion, we must not force the situation or try to make many things at the same time. Among other reasons, because, culturally speaking, our people enjoy a lower mobility than Basque teachers and they must get used to this kind of exchanges.

We also have the problem of language. This collaboration will probably lead us to organise language courses for students and teachers –not existing currently. Since, if we want mobility, language may be a barrier sometimes.

- How will exchanges between students be materialised?

- This is to be defined. Legally speaking, there are some issues to be solved, since labour contracts are different. For example, in the case of the student exchanges with the Community of Aragon, our students stay there fifteen days and they come for a longer time, since they take part in the Erasmus Programme.

- During the visits to the Basque centres, is any issue of special interest for you?

- For us, the way Vocational Training Centres operate regarding certification is highly interesting. The Basque Government has started a quality certification system based on management, organisation, and profitability of the training centre, promoting the centres’ innovation, development, and competitiveness.

I would also like to stand out the close relationship between companies and training centres, as well as the importance acquired by Lifelong Learning. In Aquitaine, only 3% of workers attend these courses, while I get the impression that, in the Basque Country, companies regularly send their workers to retraining courses.

- At this moment, which are the challenges of the Chamber of Commerce and Crafts of the Atlantic Pyrenees?

- We intend that, when it comes to choose this or that degree, young people opt for the degrees we offer, since the continuity of our craft companies depend on that. If young people do not attend courses in traditional trades, who will take over the business?

The crisis, an opportunity for training



The presidents of Ikaslan Araba, Ikaslan Bizkaia, and Ikaslan Gipuzkoa –Jon Landaluze, José Ignacio Angulo, and Iñaki Konde, respectively– reflect on the situation and role played by Vocational Training in the current crisis situation during a round-table held in San Sebastián, together with Confebask training manager –José Luis García Bengoa– and Pablo Isasi –Mayor of Amurrio and Second Deputy President of Eudel.

- José Ignacio Angulo. President of Ikaslan Bizkaia

"Vocational Training Centres have gone from an optimistic situation, in which we were not able to meet the demand of professionals required by the productive sector itself, to have at the moment, not a lack of students, but a worry, since in view of the great uncertainty that is emerging among young people due to the crisis –who wonder what is going to happen–, we must take the opportunity to offer them the best training and qualifications with the aim of being at the best condition at the end of this unfavourable situation.

We have noticed that, at the same time, more and more unemployed and active workers, or those immersed into downsizing plans come to our centres for training with the aim of improving their qualification.

We think that Vocational Training –and training, definitely– is a highly important part to take into account in the current economic situation. We must take advantage of this opportunity, especially when those suffering most from the consequences of this crisis are low-educated people or whose education does not suit the company's requirements."

- Jon Landaluze. President of Ikaslan Araba

"The crisis promotes training. Everybody –both employed and unemployed– have to face new challenges using training. And many companies are now devoting a time they did not have before to train their workers.

We have been a long time trying to offer high quality training and, logically, this challenge is increasing at present. To find the right training, we must detect the needs that will emerge in the productive sector and here appears the excellent relationship between Vocational Training Centres and companies.

The different ways of communication–of the Government or of its different bodies, like Hobetuz and Lanbide– should help us to know their needs, to know to stress in training."

-Iñaki Konde. President of Ikaslan Gipuzkoa.

"I agree that we have to train unemployed workers or those who are affected by downsizing plans, but, above all, we should find out what will actually allow us to compete in the different markets, when, in 2011, the economic activity need workers again.

It would be appropriate to start thinking where the major added value is and to provide centres with these new technologies. We will thus train workers so that they can be at the 'starting grid' within a year, a year and a half, or two years; being able to respond to that added value they have to give in their jobs.

We also need to implement that with initial trainees, pointing out to them that Vocational Training still is a highly interesting bet for the future."

- José Luis García Bengoa. Confebask

"There is no doubt that, in times of crisis, companies will have to go through a shorter or longer 'period in the wilderness'. Nevertheless, it is true that, generally speaking, companies have made a strong bet on their staff. In the Basque country, our professionals are very well trained and entrepreneurs are in no way interested in doing without them, because they would not be competitive when the economic recovery begins.

We have to take advantage of this crisis and improve the staff and young people's training. Otherwise, developing countries will 'eat' us, since their products will be better and cheaper than ours.

However, we also have to start analysing the competences and qualifications that our industry will need in the medium-long term, as we are staying behind and we need to start incorporating them to our educational system.

In fact, nearly all European countries are already carrying out deep researches.

Here, we have the Basque Vocational Training Council –a tool that, in my opinion, is being under-



José Ignacio Angulo: "The number of unemployed and active workers who come to our centres for training has increased"

Pablo Isasi: “At the moment, it is essential to train those people who, low-educated, are at risk of exclusion, as well as to promote Higher Education”



sed-, which must lead this issue, observe what is happening in Europe.

Vocational Training Centres must be perfectly prepared for the needs existing in nine years' time and must be capable of transferring this knowledge to small companies, especially.”

- Pablo Isasi. Mayor of Amurrio and Second Deputy President of Eudel.

“At this moment, it is important to know the specific training required by each industrial sector and to focus it on the immediate development we need to incorporate to overcome the crisis. We need companies to tell us the current and short-term training needs.

At the same time, there must be a specific subsidy for workers' training for the next five years. Because unemployed people not only need advices, but also an incentive allowing them to receive that information with, at least, the minimum resources. In this crisis situation, it is also essential to train those people who, low-educated, are at risk of exclusion and low-educated, as well as to promote Higher Education.”

- José Ignacio Angulo. President of Ikaslan Bizkaia.

“The Basque Country has made an important and strategic bet on Vocational Training, but we should not lower our guard. There is a medium-long term strategy –as José Luis García Bengoa says–, but the problem is that there is a short term, a ‘today’, with a delicate situation. From the Centres, we would like to show our willingness to collaborate. And we would be glad if, in this context, companies give us the clues of the professional profiles they need in the short-medium term, we would be glad.

We also encourage workers to make the most of the time they now have and attend training courses. And we want Eudel –and the member town and city councils– to know that our centres are good allies and that they can count on us to contribute to improve this situation.

Miracles happen in Lourdes, but we believe that Vocational Training Centres are –if not a key element– a highly important element. We want to offer training, but offer it properly.”

José Luis García Bengoa: “Moreover, we must analyse the degrees our industry would need in nine-year’s time to include them in the educational system”



WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

Within the framework of the round-table on ‘Vocational Training and Crisis’, Confesk Training Manager –José Luis García Bengoa– offered the results of a recent research on women’s situation in the industrial sector.

“We have been pleasantly surprised. All commonplace have been broken: women, generally speaking, shows a lower absenteeism rate than men, and absenteeism due to maternity is perfectly controlled and is not a problem for the company”, explained García Bengoa.

The liking for a well-done job is ‘usually higher’ in women than in men and, when we talk about quality, order, and the conditions in which they keep their position, it is ‘usually much better’ in women than in men, which benefits quality improvement and increase.