

NEW CHALLENGES FOR BASQUE INNOVATION POLICY

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In the last 30 years, the Basque Country has developed an intense and active industrial policy that has placed the promotion of R+D+I as its main priority. These policies, along with other large-scale social and political initiatives, are the key to explaining its privileged position in terms of per capita income (30% above the EU average), which is undoubtedly what has allowed build a system of welfare and public services comparable to that of the most advanced countries in Europe.

In the current vicissitudes in which we are involved, our society has serious problems, but despite the difficulties it is enduring the heavy blows of the crisis with some solvency. In our opinion, the explanation for this situation is really simple: lean times came to the Basque Country with modern and highly internationalized companies, especially in industry, that had invested generously, had the most advanced technology, had well-prepared people and Inheritors of a great tradition and industrial culture, they had implanted organization and management systems that were leaders in operational efficiency, capable of making good use of the available human, social, and scientific-technological resources.

And all this has been possible thanks to the high strategic commitment to business innovation that has been maintained over time with few nuances and that has allowed, on the one hand, public investment at the level of political priority and, on the other , the development of a sophisticated and advanced public-private network of scientific, technological and innovation agents that is, without a doubt, the differential element and main bulwark of support and promotion of an innovative society in the Basque Country.

In this context, it is easy to recommend that our society should continue to bet on this vocation for R+D+I. However, this is by no means enough, since what is difficult is to understand that what was being done is only history that does not count for the future.

The growing demands of the world environment, the new industrial model intensive in innovation and knowledge for which we have to bet and the current context of financial and budgetary crisis impose far-reaching structural transformations that must be undertaken urgently

In the first place, to recover political and citizen commitment to business innovation to get out of the dynamics of cuts and enter that of investments that build the future. Secondly, to transform our society and adapt our system of values to have enterprising, creative and innovative people and a citizenry with a high level of self-criticism that enjoys learning and training and is prepared for collaboration and networking in global environments. Thirdly, the construction of a global ecosystem of innovation in the Basque Country in which the important thing is not the agents, but the quality of the relations between them in the search for their own identity and effective global leadership. Finally, we will not advance much without completely rethinking the public model for promoting innovation, rethinking the instruments in a new key of effectiveness and efficiency and reinforcing collaboration and public-private commitment. Without a doubt, a complex path, but exciting.

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