

SMART SPECIALIZATION. WE HAVE TO SPIN FINER

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The great "words" that come to us from Europe run the risk of becoming trivialized and becoming what I call "**speech fillers**" to look good. The "[intelligent specialization](#)" The fashionable recommendation of the European Commission's regional innovation and competitiveness policies follows this path. Nobody understands it well, everyone interprets it as it suits them and very few seem willing to change and guide industrial policy, breaking with the inertia of the past.

Let's take the case of the Basque Country, which seems to be clear that it wants to go in this direction, as its government has stated on various occasions, and let's do a **practical exercise in constructive criticism** to understand and, if possible, help to guide what is and what is not intelligent specialization of what the [Science and Technology Plan 2015](#) called as targeting bets.

First of all, **it is not smart to spread too much, not focus and stay in excessively generic market and technology fields and common meeting places** where there is excessive diversity. Thus, in the Basque Country it is not enough to say that our target markets are energy, ageing, transport and mobility, the science industry and the digital world and that our transversal capacities are such a wide range and in which just about anything like life sciences, nanosciences, and advanced manufacturing fits. This is an impractical choice and little guidance both for companies and for the RVCTI that has to make its investment decisions in the long term.

If we really want a smart specialization strategy, we have to select much more defined and homogeneous niches in which technological or non-technological innovation will define growing and/or emerging markets in the world in the medium and long term. Niches in which there are relevant and adequate business and scientific-technological capacities to compete and in which it is possible to **build a solid public-private investment commitment that is lasting and sustained over time**.

Secondly, **it is not intelligent to think that specialization is nourished exclusively by science and technology**, when competitiveness is the result and confluence of a set of factors and agents much most diverse, in which people, training and talent are found first, to be able to count on the best, but also the attitudes and the construction of social values that are adapted to the bets we make and, last but not least, the company and business models that will have to replace the already obsolete hierarchical and competitive business relationship models that are the usual practice in our companies today.

Finally **it is not smart either, to present the niches of specialization as a battle between winners (the fields that are selected as priority) and the losers**, when the most sensible thing is to interpret the fields of specialization as opportunity niches for all companies willing to innovate. First, because the specialization will serve to value the business skills and abilities available (knowledge, technologies and others) in emerging alternative markets. Second, because when differential and reference capabilities are built, the applications are very transversal and applicable to multiple products and processes and, finally, because specialization must be able to open doors to what is really disruptive, to the creation of new products that they create their own market and do not compete with the more traditional ones.

On the contrary **it does seem intelligent to flee from the short-term rush** and isolate oneself from the context of the economic crisis, deepen the available capacities, take more time and spin much more finely to make decisions of specialization that serve **as a bulwark of a new agreement for the Basque Country for an innovative and technologically advanced industry that lays the foundations of the Basque model of competitiveness for the next 30 years**. Model that will serve to guide investments, capacities, resources and, especially, the public and private leadership that we need.

There are no comments yet.