

THE BIENNIAL OF MACHINE TOOLS, BETWEEN THE OASIS AND THE MIRAGE

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These days are held in Bilbao the main trade fair of the city: the Spanish Machine Tool Biennial. A reference fair in the sector at a European level and even at an international level. There are two reasons to rejoice at this event.

On the one hand, the Biennial shows these days at the BEC the strength of a sector that is knowing how to weather the storm of the crisis, presenting positive results in terms of employment, turnover and internationalization. At least for a large part of the Basque companies present in Barakaldo, the data is encouraging, the result of a determination to innovate and compete in the global market. It is reassuring and encouraging to see that not all is economic desertification in this protracted systemic crisis. Fortunately, there are also plenty of oases where things work.

The other positive aspect of this event is the event itself, which brings thousands of people closer to Bilbao and projects the image of a thriving city with good infrastructures and better resources for the development of entrepreneurial and business activity in a country like the our breathing industry everywhere. In addition to this more intangible impact in terms of image, the University of Deusto estimated the direct impact of the event in the Bilbao metropolis at 30 million euros (fundamentally in its hospitality), therefore much higher than the cost of its organization and implementation. on going.

This very positive circumstance should not take our eyes off the search for new business opportunities for fair facilities that are totally disproportionate to their level of occupancy, whose enormous investment we have to continue paying from the public treasury because the business that in its day is not generated at all I justify its construction.

We are not in the 70s or the 80s and the world of fairs moves along completely different paths. Bilbao is not the only case in the world that has been displaced from all the fair circuits and we must dare to turn as soon as possible. Many millions of euros are paid each year from the public budget to cover an investment that at the time was considered an opportunity for the future but has turned out to be a fiasco. Not even the intangible gains in terms of image, or the brilliance of an event such as this Biennale, can hide the fact that one must be much more daring and much more realistic as well.

Those responsible for the institutions that own the premises must know how to demand that those responsible for the BEC formulate new alternatives for use. There are many things that can be done, although some paradoxically involve looking for alternative spaces to the quintessential star, the Machine Tool Biennial. Four weeks every two years of use at 70% do not justify such land occupation in the center of the city nor do they cover a small part of the cost of the investment. It is surely a pity but it must still be recognized that it is so.

We know that multiple steps are taken to try to channel the tide and, in fact, the offer of activities has diversified, but perhaps we have to move towards much more disruptive options, which are not for that reason reckless. One can speak of university facilities, socio-cultural facilities, basic sports infrastructures, alternative commercial facilities. Formulas that add value to the city and, if they do not generate profit either, that at least justify to a much greater extent the outlay involved in the investment made. There are many and very interesting options. Exploring them is brave.

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