

THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE RVCTI. AN URGENT COMMITMENT

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The recently launched Basque Government has put on the agenda of priorities the restructuring of the Basque Network of Science, Technology and Innovation (RVCTI), to enhance and strengthen its functions and optimize its operation. The matter will not be easy. Well, despite the fact that this issue arouses a great consensus among the majority of Basque scientific and technological agents who are very aware of the need for change, and that it has remained on the political agenda for a good number of years, the reality is no significant progress has

been made in this matter.

The Basque Technology Network was created on April 29, 1997 (Decree 96/1997) with the aim of articulating in the Basque Country a set of capacities and scientific and technological services of high added value that would contribute significantly and in a differential way to the improvement of the competitiveness of the Basque productive fabric.

Since then, the Network has evolved considerably: the word "science" was soon added to its name with the conviction that it is a fundamental part of the whole (Decrees 278/2000 and 221/2002) and immediately began to show a great dynamism. Numerous agents are added (currently there are more than a hundred) and important typologies are added, among which the Cooperative Research Centers (CICs) and the Basic Excellence Research Centers (BERCs) stand out. In 2010 with the creation of Tecnalía, Research and Innovation ([TRI](#)) -fusion of 8 technology centers- and the strengthening of the [IK4 Technological Alliance](#) -alliance of 9 technological centers- the network acquires a new dimension that clearly escapes the Basque Country and reaches a European size indisputable.

The RVCTI is now very different than when it was conceived and it is time to redefine the global objectives to adjust them to the new characteristics and, especially, to the new transformation and competitiveness challenges faced by Basque companies and society -internationalisation, competition and economic and environmental sustainability- and in this way make clear what is the added value that Basque society expects from each type of agent individually and from the active and dynamic interrelation between all of them, as a network that they are.

This requires a much more articulated conception and a vision of the RVCTI as the main support pillar of an "eco-system" in which the most critical thing is the multiplicity and richness of the relationships that are generated between the nodes of the network. In terms of innovation, the greatest potential unfolds when scientific and technological agents cooperate with each other effectively to respond to real problems of companies and institutions. In this sense, the RVCTI has to overcome its vision as a "list" of agents and reinforce its practical role as a uniting instrument that promotes connections and cooperative work to transmit an image of greater coordination both internally -within the network itself- as towards the rest of the "eco-system" of innovation.

In addition to setting the objectives, the need to adjust the financing system of the network to guarantee its economic sustainability is increasingly evident, which is more than doubtful at present due to the more than notable drop in income that many of the agents are experiencing. . All this, as a result of the increasing difficulties of companies to finance their innovation projects in these times of crisis and by the fall in subsidies and public aid of all kinds in this field (fundamentally in the Central Administration and increasingly more notable also in the Administration of the Basque Country).

Guaranteeing the sustainability of the network does not mean that the public sector has to guarantee without limit the economic survival of the agents, it means planning, organizing and adequately guiding the necessary transformation based on the generation and contribution of value. And for this, it is necessary to establish a clear scheme that marks the rules of the game and that motivates the fulfillment of the functions that the network has been assigned.

In this new framework, in the first place, it will be necessary to demand maximum efficiency and performance from public and private investments while imposing new forms of collaboration and joint work that make it possible to take advantage of technical, physical infrastructure and management economies of scale. which could save significant resources.

Secondly, it is clear that agents will have to make a great effort to open their business and internationalize their activity -especially corporations that have the potential and size to do so- and make a qualitative and quantitative leap in their global positioning as operators. that offer technology, services and business solutions to leading innovative companies and institutions in their sector.

Thirdly, the RVCTI as a whole has room to have a greater presence and positioning in the new Horizon 2020 program, for which it will be necessary to add to the experience and recognized prestige of some of its agents, the scientific excellence that has been forged. in emerging areas with great development potential for the productive fabric of the Basque Country.

Finally, it is logical to think that the private sector has to take the initiative even more and that despite the crisis, companies, and particularly those with the greatest potential and leadership, have to strengthen their commitment to the RVCTI, investing in its development.

But having said all this, the sustainability of the RVCTI also implies for the public sector to put its economic commitments for the next 5 years on the table, because it would be a great lack of responsibility if the main "smart infrastructure" in the Basque Country and in the that the transformation of its competitiveness model must rest is diluted in the misery of the cuts, because the priorities are not defined.

You can see the photo that accompanies the news in a large size [here](#)

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