

MEDIOCRITY AND COFFEE FOR ALL

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I continue with the reflections related to [The Divine Comedy of I+D+i](#) from our friend [Guiller](#) at [Thought in Euskadi](#).

I agree that "coffee for everyone" is a "great sin" especially in the world of knowledge and technology where creativity and excellence must prevail. I am not sure, however, that the Basque system is at this point worse than others or that this is even one of its major bottlenecks. But regardless of this, I do firmly believe that it is an absolute priority that our science and technology policy and our value system be capable of establishing an adequate system of incentives to generously reward those who contribute the most value. The EMAITEK program is, in my opinion, a step in the right direction and there is no doubt that it has a long way to go to strengthen and extend the system of rewards for results to all the agents in the system. On the other hand, the liberalization of the system, the opening of the Basque science and technology market to external agents and the struggle for the Basque science and technology sector to have a much more active presence internationally must form an active part of the same incentive system.

The coffee for everyone, leads us directly to the next of the sins. The system only recognizes the cost and is blind to the value. From a very eclectic position, the penance for this sin should go through more market; leave the game of demand and supply to establish prices for services and properly value each one of them. Things, however, are not that simple because, as economists have known for a long time, the invisible hand of the market misallocates science and technology because it does not even remotely take into account the many positive externalities that research, development technology and innovation generate socially. But, in my opinion, there is a significant margin in this area and we have to work on it. Science and technology policy undoubtedly has a great role to play in this field, marking, once again, the correct incentives and giving private initiative a more active role. In addition to this, of course, it is necessary to advance in evaluation systems that break with the idea of R+D+i as a unit of cost and inform us of the return of the public investments made (which are not costs), in order to break with the idea without a future that the more we invest, the better we are.

To be continue...

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