

Innovation in the Basque Vocational Training Model

Hilario Murua Cartón (Coordinator)

Jon Altuna Urdin, Paulí Dávila Balsera,
Ana Eizagirre Sagardia, Iñaki Zabaleta Imaz



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Introduction: The innovative “lauburu”

One of the axioms most highly respected by those of us who devote ourselves to education is “to teach by delighting” – still a valid aspiration in modern pedagogy, despite Horace saying so in the first century before the Christian era. Horace, moreover, was the first proponent of *carpe diem*, that catchphrase so dear to those who enjoy living the present. Currently, however, after having lived through a “school of boredom”, no other remedy remains but to assume that faculty are becoming a kind of socio-cultural cheerleader confronting a panorama of students browsing screens. The dominant trend today, then, is to compete or form alliances with those virtual friends or enemies managing to capture the full attention of the studentry. This new form of learning, surfing the net, is giving rise to a malaise of nostalgia in teachers, already familiar to those who miss schools that had the warmth of a classroom, listening to the voice of a mentor who opened to us the windows of knowledge. Those were other times, and learning consisted of a slower, deeper process of laying foundations, with a horizon of expectations in the distance. These days, we face an unknown horizon of uncertainties, and the only way of confronting that future is with superficial knowledge, which implies remaining ignorant of the value of what is learnt in the presence of constant and future threats of new dangers, risks, or challenges.

Another axiom, possibly dearer to vocational training professionals than to others, is that of “learning while doing”, or “*ikaslan*” in Euskera, as the only way of testing one’s capacities and skills in a learning experience, recognising error and imbibing new knowledge, having to innovate because new and unexpected challenges emerge along the way. As we are always being reminded, life —and school as well— are none other than processes of continuous learning, in which errors teach lessons and quality is improved through constant practice. Being able to unite both ways of teaching and learning could conceivably be the greatest desire of those who dedicate their lives to education: learning while doing through teaching that delights. Who could ask for more?

Apart from these mottoes, there persists in vocational training a very deeply-rooted mentality on the value of apprenticeship: the honour of hav-

ing learnt the basics of a trade from a workshop master or enthusiastic professional, without which experience the higher degrees of instruction hold no sense. This is the most elementary, albeit also the richest process of transmission, putting one in contact with the hardships and joys of an occupation and mapping out a future path to follow. Moreover, not only is this learnt in school: contact with factories, companies and production realities is required. Hence, vocational training can only be explained in terms of the unavoidable relationship between the spheres of labour and education. Therefore, achieving greater success for “teaching while delighting” and “learning while doing” is the best path to the triumph of vocational training. Couched in these terms, our discourse may seem somewhat naïve, but it is backed by the conviction that such a new language as we use in analysing vocational training comes from the benefit of experience.

Having taken this pedagogical stance —no more than a pretext for underscoring the value of vocational training— we cannot but admit that its analysis is a task that calls for broadening vistas beyond the mere process of teaching and learning. In this sense, the Basque Vocational Training Model is the best example to enable analysis of all the factors, institutional agents, enterprises, educational centres, teaching staff and students involved in an undertaking that has propitiated a modern and sustainable vocational training system very closely linked to corporate necessities. This reality, which now seems quite commonplace, is no more than the consolidation of a long process that has never lost sight of the needful relationship between education and labour, always focused on adjusting to the needs of the country, adapting to training programmes and devising inclusive strategies for the studentry.

It is true that the Basque Vocational Training Model is a reference due to its effective operation, not just in the country but also in Europe and among other nations of the world. It has become normal to read about the benefits of this model in non-specialised periodicals as a result of either some conference, the presentation of some strategic plan, or interviews with those responsible for this area of education. The discourse upheld coincides with many of the statements that are going to be made in this book. This is not a static narrative; rather, it portrays ongoing dynamics that underscore the value of strategic plans, of the work done by the training centres and faculty, of innovation as a motivating element, of network collaboration between the centres and companies, and of the necessary response that vocational training must provide the needs, not just of companies, but also of the country. The extremely high employability rates achieved by students under this vocational training model is the best indication of its effectiveness and operativity. Securing all this has made it necessary to face some risks but, above all, certain challenges that have stimulated decision-making and the actions to be taken.

The historical perspective applied in this book also seeks to establish the referential frameworks of vocational training and the periods in which different events have taken place, phenomena sometimes concerned with the educational policy on vocational training, at other times with developments in innovation, institutional collaboration entailing the creation of diverse agencies, or work conducted in the centres. This process not only has had to struggle to achieve certain objectives; it has also had to develop a new language, a new way of denominating the innovations being created. To put it in other words, there is an impression of having to win as well a linguistic battle, using new expressions and concepts to explain the advances that were being achieved. That is, from quality to innovation, from innovation to the high-performance centres, and, amid all this, the parallel narrative of an institution that would account for the progress and the results obtained.

The study we present seeks to answer an unavoidable question in referring to vocational training in the Basque Country which has to do with its success: with a model that is being taken into account in proposing improvements to vocational training in Europe and in many other countries. The answer is simple, but at the same time complex: simple because it entails acknowledging that only those things done well are successful, and complex because we have to refer to the continuous process of transformation undergone in the course of the last few decades, whether with regard to institutional agents (the creation of agencies, institutions or strategic vocational training plans), to centres (the commitment of associations, centres, teachers and students), to teaching methods, to innovation, etc. In other words, an answer in which proper operation requires a combination of forces striving in the same direction. In this sense, the chapter devoted to innovation is what best synthesises the keys to this process – what we could call the innovative *lauburu* or “four heads” of Basque vocational training: quality, entrepreneurship, creativity and internationalisation, all in a collaborative framework of centres, enterprises and Basque government agencies and institutions.

These keys are what have guided the preparation of this book, as well as the attempt to give coherence to this Basque Vocational Training Model, always with a view to close historical perspective, largely not extending beyond the 1970s. However, one of the problems we faced in organising the information gathered is that of dating the whole process we are analysing. The historical perspective is important, but so too are the criteria we have used to categorise the Basque Vocational Training Model – that is, the elements we understand as comprising this model. This is why the outline of the study has a first part that follows a certain chronological criterion, from the Franco era to the period of autonomy, while the rest of the chapters deal with aspects such as innovation, qual-

ity, internationalisation, or the role of enterprise. This presentation seeks to leave record of a recent process in which vocational training found itself immersed in a mesh of institutions, players, agencies, and human and material resources, accounting not just for its success in Euskadi, but also for the creation of a model that could well prove useful in other territorial and economic contexts.

Amid the works consulted, it is not easy to find an approach to the historical process establishing phases that could help account for the phenomena being analysed. However, the 2018 study by Mujika and Intxausti may be highlighted, roughly outlining three cycles as these were understood by the authors, which might serve to underscore certain traits characterising each phase. Thus, a first cycle from 1980 to 1996 may be distinguished, marked by a set of activities tending towards the renovation of vocational training, relying on a new generation of centre directors, more effective relations with the entrepreneurial fabric, and the incipient participation of the Basque Council for Education and the territorial governments. This is therefore a cycle of *configuration* reflecting many of the elements present at the time, working under the central state legislation of the 1970s. These would undergo “remodelling” with the onset of a period characterised by the recently implemented autonomous structure. It is true that this configuration was subjected to testing for possible risks, but this was taken as a challenge by the leaders of that period, who faced it with a high degree of enthusiasm. This long, 16-year cycle seems to justify the inclusion of a law as important as the Organic Act on the General Educational System (OAGES) of 1990. From our viewpoint, however—given the position we are taking, in which references to legislation mark certain policies for adaptation—we believed it more suitable to close that cycle the year this law was promulgated, since its effects would cover specific centres, a new vocational training structure, and curriculum changes. This is why it seems more proper to use legal frameworks as references, in order to differentiate developmental phases.

As regards the second cycle, from 1997 to 2003, referred to as “institutional articulation”, features are determined by the First Basque Vocational Training Plan of 1997, the integrated qualifications system, the quality system, the institutions revolving around vocational training, and funding. This is therefore a process of *institutional standardisation*, inaugurating a set of institutions and economic resources earlier envisioned in the 1990s that mark an entire period, in the framework of an organic act and its implementation throughout the Basque territories. Lastly, the third cycle, denominated “system maturity”, from 2004 to 2018, begins at the milestone represented by the Second Basque Vocational Training Plan, which is characterised by a firm support for innovation, the creation

of Tknika, the processes of applied innovation and transfer, and the objectives of internationalisation and sustainability. This is therefore a process of *permanent innovation*, in which plans succeed one another, offering constants to serve as references in future challenges. It consequently seemed pertinent to differentiate these three stages, although we may underscore the importance of the Organic Act, which imposes a new model for accessing vocational training. There may be nuances with regard to the names of the three stages, but they clearly indicate the key to each: configuration of the vocational training system (1980/1990); institutional standardisation (1990/2004); and innovation in training processes (2005/2018).

The structure of the book focuses on three complementary aspects. The first one deals with a panoramic view of vocational training from its more recent beginnings to its different legislative contexts, with some key data on its recent historical development, above all with the establishment of the Basque Autonomous Community. The second focuses on an analysis of the different Basque Vocational Training Plans, from the initial plan, “Lanbidez”, up to the Fourth Plan, entitled “Towards a Different Vocational Training”. “From Tradition to Innovation” and “The New Vocational Training as a Country Brand”, respectively, represent the Second and Third Plans, and we conclude with some brief references to the Fifth Plan, “Vocational Training in the Environment of the Fourth Industrial Revolution”, the implementation period of which refers to the four years of the 2018/2021 period. Throughout this analysis, we carry forward a constant principle of vocational training, represented by its strategic dimensions, explaining many of its novel features, changes, and innovative proposals.

The third aspect is the most relevant, as it is the key to the Basque Vocational Training Model. It deals with innovation, which is carried out on different planes: a first plane revolving around the institutional fabric; a second, spanning dual training to continuing faculty education and the evolution of “quality management”; a third, conducting a vital analysis of entrepreneurship and creativity in the world of vocational training; another plane focusing on the process of internationalisation that Basque Vocational Training has followed over these past few years; and, lastly, in close contact with this entire process, the plane devoted to the relationship between enterprise and vocational training – a “marriage of convenience” that has historically worked to near perfection, where we shall see that not only the companies but the administration as well have formed part of this educational and labour structure.

There are a couple of questions before ending. In conducting this research, we have accessed innumerable sources of information and docu-

mentation from different archives and libraries, but above all —given that this deals with a very recent phase of vocational training— we have relied on a significant cast of individuals and their testimonials, persons who have given their points of view and experiences from their diverse areas in vocational training, whether in management, research, innovation, centres or enterprises. At the same time, we have resorted to a significant number of collaborating entities such as institutions, agencies, centres and companies that have contributed and provided support for the achievement of this task. We would like to thank all of them for their participation, support and collaboration. Lastly, we want to clarify that, with regard to the use of gender, neutral terms such as “chair” have been used whenever possible. It will also be observed that, throughout the study, different names regarding the territorial reality of Euskal Herria and its administrative divisions have been resorted to, without differentiating between the Basque Country, Euskadi, the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC) or the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, in the understanding that we refer to one and the same territorial reality.

Donostia, March 2020

Chapter I

Background, legislative context and data on Basque Vocational Training

PAULÍ DÁVILA BALSERA & HILARIO MURUA CARTÓN

The evolution of vocational training in the Basque Country has had a long history, from the Middle Ages up to the present. However, it was from the process of modernisation and industrialisation not more than fifty years ago when it began to acquire the contemporary traits that defined it, making it possible to identify agents, institutions, the local and territorial policies, or the present-day innovations involved. Throughout the period from its beginnings down to our times, a constant may be perceived: the adaptation of vocational training to the economic, social and educational needs of Basque society.

As is well-known, during the 20th century, the process of building national educational systems in Europe was consolidated with the establishment of the different educational levels: early childhood, primary, secondary and higher education. This structure, in the case of Spain, was to be current up to the late 20th century. Meanwhile, vocational training subsisted on the fringes of this system. It was only starting from the 1950s, and more emphatically, the 1970s, that vocational training was included in the formal educational system as a mode where, not only was it possible to obtain academic degrees, but other vocational training also became available on the margins of the system, such as continuing education.

Nonetheless, this sort of restriction on the part of the central state, imposed for such a long time, brought about the emergence of other educational initiatives, such as the intervention of different agents like church institutions, municipalities, territorial governments and companies, while new curricular proposals proper to the needs of the country arose, which, over time, have turned out decisive for the success of vocational training, above all in the case of the Basque Country. In this context, the function fulfilled by the Schools of Arts and Trades of the 19th century and, to a great extent, part of the 20th, practically up to the effective date of the Industrial Vocational Training Act of 1955, must be highlighted. During the Franco era, given the state neglect of vocational training, the aforementioned agents were the ones intervening in it. This situation under-

scores the fact that it is in such a background where we are to find the most immediate proposals that laid the foundations for vocational training, and that, at present —starting from the emergence of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country— decisions made in this area were to be critical.

1.1. From the Schools of Arts and Trades to Vocational Training in the Franco Era

When speaking about the origins and evolution of vocational training even now, some authors resort to a commonplace (Brunet & Moral, 2017). We are referring to the Western European Middle Ages, when guilds set the pace of production and social organisation in all walks of life, from material to artistic production or, in other words, from the making of pots or cathedrals up to universities. This guild model was to last practically up to the early part of the 19th century. In regard to the Basque Country, we cannot ignore the fundamental contribution of the Basque Royal Society of Friends of the Country (the *Real Sociedad Bascongada de Amigos del País*, RSBAP; see Recarte, M. 1990), which introduced a series of reforms in the agricultural and industrial sectors, along the line of propitiating the useful contributions of enlightened Europeans. Useful teachings began to emerge in the discourse of the Enlightenment, such that quality vocational training for the people became an indispensable element in achieving the felicity of the State.

While this situation persisted in the Spanish state and in the Basque Country, thanks to the influence of the French Revolution, a liberal educational system began to take shape along the French model from the beginnings of the 19th century onward, which upheld uniform, mandatory and free education. However, the implementation of such a system was not immediate, and it was not until 1857, with the so-called Moyano Act, which stayed in force up to 1970, that this system was finally organised. This notwithstanding, vocational training remained outside the educational system. Schooling lasted three years, and job access took place at age 10. As the years passed, the Moyano Act was to undergo diverse reforms as to school-leaving age —which, in 1901, would increase from 9 to 12— or as to curriculum (Puelles, M., 1980). This educational system was proper to the economic and social reality of Spain throughout the 19th and 20th centuries.

During this period, the economic profile of the Basque Country had begun to experience an upsurge in production that was to shape a process of industrialisation and modernisation. Thus, starting from the second half of the 19th century —above all, from 1876, with the disappear-

ance that year of the *fueros*, the medieval system of local jurisdictions, and the implementation of the Basque Economic Agreement in 1878— vocational training was promoted through the agency of the Schools of Arts and Trades, which, in the Basque Country, were of particular relevance. We can affirm that the creation of these schools sowed the seeds and nurtured the roots accounting for the evolution of vocational training and the success it enjoys at present. First of all, because it occurred during a period when the accelerated industrialisation of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa was taking place as the driving force behind the modernisation of the country, affecting other spheres of social, political and cultural life. Secondly because the participation of different agents related to industrial production who propitiated a vocational training that would mark the standards to be followed in the future begins to be perceptible: in the vocational training assistance and funding policies of provinces and municipalities; the involvement and labour demand from enterprises; and the flexibility in apprenticeship. Thirdly, the availability and collaboration of educational centres in adapting vocational training to social and local needs (Dávila, P., 1994). These three elements, which began to be perceived in the provinces of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa at the end of the 19th century, could be said to be the seed of what, in the future, vocational training would be in the Basque Country, where the marginal participation of the state was a key to configuring a training system adapted to local economic, social and educational needs. For that reason, the defining traits of the Basque Vocational Training Model are to be sought in these precedents.

The Schools of Arts and Trades in the Basque Country emerged starting in 1879 in Bilbao and 1880 in Donostia, and serve as an example of vocational training adaptation to the local and economic needs of the country during a period of economic and social modernisation (Castells, L., 1987). Apart from these two important schools, a series of preparatory vocational training schools, which would also be called Schools of Arts and Trades, would also open, supported by municipal and provincial authorities, who would pay the teachers and offer curricula adapted to local industry. The distribution of these schools accords with the industrial and commercial level of their different locations: in the case of Bizkaia, around the left bank of Bilbao, and in Gipuzkoa, throughout the entire territory. The access of women to vocational training was also facilitated. This was a response implemented on the margins of the educational legislation of the time, because, until 1924, no law on vocational training existed in Spain.

The progress achieved during the first fifty years of validity of the Bilbao School of Arts and Trades adds up to 56,314 male and 41,786 female students enrolled, accounting for a total of 98,100 students. With regard to curriculum, except for Bilbao and San Sebastián, where industrial, artistic and commercial education benefited from complete professional cur-

ricula, the majority of the schools in the different locations served to complement a deficient network of higher primary schools. The curriculum of the Schools of Arts and Trades basically restricted itself to graphic literacy, in which the subjects of Geometry and Drawing in all their modalities, in addition to Arithmetic, accounted for the highest numbers of students enrolled. In this way, occupational education substituted an evident deficiency in the educational system, which was barely structured at the levels following primary education during this period, if we exclude secondary education, which admitted another type of student with other objectives that were not oriented to trades.

These Schools of Arts and Trades would continue their evolution in a context of economic growth in the Basque Country after the First World War. Those years posted an increase in the enrolment and prestige achieved by these schools, which offered a curriculum adapted to the changing occupations progressively emerging. Around this time, vocational training was already enjoying a certain stability and standardisation acknowledged in the Basque Country, and its occupational preparation was in great demand among students and enterprises (Dávila, P.; Naya, L.M. & Murua, H., 2014). At this point, companies, municipalities, provinces (Lozano, C., 2008) and religious congregations (Dávila, P.; Naya, L.M. & Murua, H., 2009), such as the Salesians and the Lasallian Brothers, participated in a process of collaboration.

On its side, after the military coup of Primo de Rivera in 1923, the central state began to legislate on vocational training. In a brief period of time, it approved the Industrial Education Statute of 1924 and the Vocational Training Statute of 1928 that would “establish a new phase of maximum state intervention regarding worker vocational training” (Rico Gómez, M. L., 2012) in a context where the need for qualified workers adapted to the requirements of the job market was becoming increasingly evident. The enforcement of the Industrial Education Statute attributed responsibility to the Ministries of Labour, Commerce and Industry – although the latter was to play the leading role, relying on the Higher Council for Industry charged with controlling the “Apprenticeship or Elementary Labour Schools”, the “Advanced Training or Industrial Schools” and the “Industrial Engineering Schools”. The preference for this teaching model affected few students, since in 1930, “Spain had 189 Industrial Vocational Training schools and 27 schools in industrial expertise, with a total 36,893 students, 5,885 of these in expertise. As of those same dates, France had ten times these indicators in industrial expertise training: 272 schools and 54,550 students” (Lozano, C., 2008).

In this manner, the laws under Primo de Rivera established the three pillars that were to remain in force until the act of 1955: first, the uni-

formity and centralised character of technical and industrial training, under the control of the Ministry of Labour, as against emerging private alternatives; second, worker training in a practical and technical sense, imparted in appropriate workshops; and third, the creation of a new training venue, the so-called “Labour Schools”, differentiated from the Schools of Arts and Trades existing up to then (Rico Gómez, M. L., 2012). Still, this government intervention proper to the central state as a corporate body was not capable of formulating a sustainable project, leaving vocational training in the hands of private initiative, as it had been up to that time.

In 1926, in-between the legal provisions of 1924 and those of 1928, the Fourth Conference of the Society of Basque Studies —Eusko Ikaskuntza (SEV/EI)— was held, specifically focused on vocational training (Sociedad de Estudios Vascos, 1926). This topic was the last choice among the SEV organisers as the least confrontational, in comparison with other proposals to deal with matters regarding Basque language and culture, as was usual up to then. The Basque participation in the Exposition, held at the School of Arts and Trades of Vitoria/Gasteiz, took place under diverse agencies, institutions and schools in the sphere of vocational training.

The proclamation of the Second Republic introduced a noteworthy change in that vocational training and proficiency, then attributed to the Ministry of Labour and Welfare, were reassigned to the Ministry of Public Instruction. The newly-created Elementary Labour Schools, which were covered by the statutes under Primo de Rivera, grew in number up to 59 in 1936, distributed throughout the region, but above all in important towns and provincial capitals. In the Basque Country, this type of school existed in Bilbao, Eibar, San Sebastián, and Bergara (Novo Miguel, Luciano, 1933). These schools could have served as the blueprints for a “Regulated Vocational Training System”, but they were failures, since state intervention was minimal and they became marginal in the educational system. As a result, this situation “was to persist up to the implementation of the Vocational Training Act of 1955, starting in 1963” (Viñao, A., 2004).

However, after the Civil War and the start of the Franco era, vocational training left the aegis of Ministry of Public Instruction and returned to the Ministry of Labour, recovering its foundations in the Industrial Education Statute of 1924: the uniformity and central character of technical industrial training under the Ministry of Labour, worker training in a technical and practical sense in appropriate workshops, and continuity in terms of the creation of some Labour Schools, to which attention was barely paid.

The Franco era was not particularly inclined to state intervention on vocational training. Nevertheless, educational legislation laid several legislative milestones, the most significant of which were the Industrial Vocational Training Act of 1955 and the General Education Act of 1970, which marked a new chapter by situating vocational training within the formal educational system (Echeverría, B., 1993). The new position of vocational training in the whole process once more posed the problem of discerning the position of intermediate and occupational education. The interest for an Occupational Baccalaureate during the early phase of the Franco era shows that there was no clear policy with regard to vocational training. Likewise, the political families who, in every period, contributed to the development of the educational system, would take vocational training away from the political groups controlling the Ministry of Education, such that vocational education was to have increasing relations with the Falangist Organisation of Trade Unions, and consequently, a dependence on the Ministry of Labour. This situation would begin to clear up in 1955, but even so, not until 1970 would the legislative dependence of vocational training on the Ministry of Education be clearly visible. In this sense, it is possible to talk about transition from a period of “undecided state intervention” to another of “state intervention” based on a series of instruments and the creation of vocational training institutions during this period (Rodríguez Herrero, J.J., 1997).

The challenge of vocational training was not taken up until 1949, when the Act on the Fundamentals of Intermediate and Occupational Education came into force, the objectives of which were to extend Intermediate Education to the greatest possible number of schoolchildren, initiate them in the practice of modern occupational techniques, and equip them for entry into the technical schools and centres. However, what was achieved was to create three target groups of students for intermediate education: those attending the “Elementary Baccalaureate”, those taking the “Occupational Baccalaureate” and those studying for the “University Baccalaureate”. The Occupational Baccalaureate enjoyed little success from its beginnings onward, and in academic year 1955/56, the Occupational Institutes in Spain numbered 91 (Centro de Estudios Sindicales, 1958). In a word, it was a very unambitious proposal for what vocational training required. Closely bound to the Occupational Institutes were the Occupational Universities, under the control of the Falange (Ministry of Labour, 1959). Six among these 91 centres were located in the Basque Country.

The approval of the Industrial Vocational Training Act in 1955 did not conclusively fulfil its initial objectives; it may in fact be said that it was the readaptation of the Vocational Training Statute of 1928.

However, it managed to situate vocational training in the educational sphere, endowing it with greater formality. The preamble to this law, in fact, reflects the uneasiness of government authorities of the day and the problems confronting them: “In the advent of growing industrial development and improving labour legislation, they found a dearth of labour skilled in the multiple demands of modern technology” (Melendo Abad, F., 1962). Despite efforts to initiate implementation, the act was applied belatedly since, as late as 1963, plans for its study had still not been approved. From a more positive standpoint, what had indeed been done was to establish the three phases in which vocational training was to be imparted: pre-apprenticeship, apprenticeship, and proficiency, to be accessed starting at 18 years of age. This law also established the difference between “Official Centres” (state-dependent) and “Non-Official Centres” (private), under the specific condition that, in turn, these were subdivided into “Authorised” and “Acknowledged” centres. In 1955, a total number of 131 such centres were accounted for in Spain, distributed as follows (Centro de Estudios Sindicales, 1958):

Table 1

Types of centres by vocational training degree, Spain, 1955

VT Centres	Apprenticeship	Mastery	Total
Non-Official	34	13	47
Official	39	55	94
Total	73	68	141

Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data:* Murua (2015)

On another front, the Industrial Vocational Training Act of 1955 made it possible to diversify agents and their relationships with different institutions. In what concerns the Basque Country, the following table indicates the reclassification of the centres in accordance with this Act (Centro de Estudios Sindicales, 1958), showing the resulting diversity in terms of their respective institutions and backers (state, provincial authorities, municipalities, church and business), apart from geographic distribution. A new reclassification of the centres took place when the OAGES came into force:

Table 2

Vocational training centre reclassification, number and location,
as per the Act of 1955.

Reclassification	Spain	Basque Country	Location
Occupational Schools to Masters' Schools	40	2	San Sebastián (State) Bilbao (State)
Official Vocational Training Schools to Masters' Schools	6	2	Baracaldo (State) Éibar (State)
Vocational Orientation and Apprenticeship Schools to Apprenticeship Schools	18	2	Bilbao (State) Tolosa (State)
Considered Masters' Schools	13	3	Jesús Obrero, Vitoria, SJ (Church) Vocational School of Mondragón (Administration) Salesian Vocational School, Deusto (Church)
Considered Apprenticeship Schools	22	7	Escuelas del Salvador, Amurrio (Business) Catholic Action Apprenticeship Schools, Vitoria (Church) Workers' Vocational School, Hernani (Administration) Instituto Obrero de San Ignacio, San Sebastián (Church) Workers' Vocational School, Zarautz (Church) Vocational Schools of San José, Durango (Church) Chemical Apprenticeship Schools, Indauchu (Church)
Company Training Schools to Apprenticeship Schools	12	3	Locksmiths' Union, Mondragón (Business) Altos Hornos de Vizcaya, Sestao (Business) Sociedad Española de Construcción Naval, Sestao (Business)
TOTAL	111	19	130

Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data:* Centre for Union Studies (Centro de Estudios Sindicales, 1958)

In general terms, the Act of 1955 was very well-received, since “from a more theoretical than practical point of view, its coverage was not just good, but very good for the period in which it was promulgated. From the qualitative point of view, fine skilled workers and industrial experts were produced” (Martínez Usarralde, M. J., 2002). For AY 1966/67, the number of students rose to 125,577 whereas in 1955, there were only 41,197. During those years, the Directorate General for Employment and Social Welfare exhaustively monitored the courses, centres and individu-

als receiving training assistance (Ministry of Labour Archives, 1965). In addition, the National Plan for Workers' Vocational Promotion (*Promoción Profesional Obrera*, PPO), which also involved an army contribution in the form of courses and subsidies for worker training in less productive sectors, was initiated in 1964 under the Ministry of Labour (Fernández de Pedro, S. & González de la Fuente, A., 1975). Another initiative was the creation of the Training Action Unit (*Servicio de Acción Formativa*, SAF) in the Ministry of Labour in 1973, which took over PPO functions. This was the agency that preceded the National Employment Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Empleo*, INEM), created in 1978.

The Industrial Vocational Training Act sought to improve the situation described, as we have pointed out, exerting efforts to reform the critical state in which vocational and technical training was in Spain. To this end, the new law sought the cooperation of private companies, church institutions and Falangist unionism. In a word, for the first time, the Ministry of Education was acknowledged the competence for coordinating and managing vocational training. That total number of 141 centres stood for 1.66 for every 1,000 inhabitants from among the total population, whereas in Germany that ratio was 37.82; in Austria, 14.88; and in The Netherlands 13.34, according to UNESCO data for AY 1952/53. But even though these figures may have been irrelevant, more alarming were those concerning the studentry: out of a total of 19,695 students enrolled in Occupational Schools, only 1,406 had finished their studies by AY 1954/55.

However, the vocational training dependent on the Falangist Organisation of Trade Unions continued to grow. Thus, the overall data refer to 71 Industrial Vocational Training Centres with a total number of 15,142 students. Of these centres, four were located in Gipuzkoa, whereas Bizkaia had three. As late as 1970, this Organisation was maintaining some of its centres, even opening another 6 and controlling a total of 13 between Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa (Murua, H., 2015). The centres run by the Church were in the highest number, also in terms of students, indicating the degree of state neglect for vocational training and the interest of the religious orders and congregations in this sphere of education.

The last legislative milestone in the vocational training of the Franco era occurred with the General Education Act (GEA) of 1970, which did not provide the disruption required by vocational training. This law imposed the continuance of students in the educational system up to 14 years of age, since they could not access the job market before that. To resolve this situation, three levels of vocational training were established: VT I, which was where a large part of the student body fell, given academic records that disqualified them from accessing the Unified Polyva-

lent Baccalaureate (UPB, or Spanish “BUP”); VT 2, which was largely accessed by students from VT 1, in which certain vocational qualifications were acquired; and VT 3, which was never implemented, representing an absolute failure. In any event, despite the increasing number of students opting for this educational model, what is certain is that the 150,997 students of AY 1969/70, upon the dawning of the General Education Act, contrast with the 328,010 and 1,371,078 general baccalaureate students for that same year (Viñao, A., 2004). In this sense, the GEA, in the development-oriented context of that era, with its defence of the theories of human capital and the dominance of technocracy, managed to introduce a comprehensive character on unifying Primary Education and eliminating the Elementary Baccalaureate in the form of a single school system up to 14 years of age, incorporating vocational training into these educational system criteria.

In this context, as the sociologists of the period have underscored—confirmed by subsequent studies—social selection was evident, since the students from the upper social classes took the baccalaureate, while students of vocational training were seldom upper-class, bringing about in turn certain psycho-social behaviour in terms of higher self-concept or lower interest levels, as applicable, with greater academic failure (Ovejero, A., Gracia, A. & Fernández, J.A., 1994). Nevertheless, the great achievement of the 1970 Act lay in the inclusion of vocational training into the system of the Ministry of Education and Science. This innovation also spelled out a change in the organisation and operation of the vocational training centres. The GEA, moreover, brought along changes in denomination. If, during the previous phase, there was talk about Official and Non-Official Centres, now there were to be State and Non-State Centres.

However, not all opinions on the virtues of the GEA are shared as regard both its process of formulation and its subsequent materialisation. Hence, some authors talk about an educational counter-reformation (Viñao, A., 2004), due not just to the economic crisis of 1972 but also to ministry changes during the last years of the Franco era, which facilitated such counter-reformation, since “its application gave rise to strong corporate conflicts and revealed, at the lower levels, the difficulties entailed in fitting occupational studies into the formal educational system in the form of school-going levels separate from the world of labour and enterprise” (Viñao, A., 2004). The key point in this educational counter-reformation may be found in Decree 995/74 on the legal organisation of vocational training dated March 1974, which substantially changed the nature of vocational training within the educational system, nullifying the levels and forms of access between them. The gradual application of the GEA extended up to AY 1975/76.

1.2. Vocational Training in the Framework of Autonomy

The death of the dictator Francisco Franco in 1975 formally initiates the so-called democratic transition, which conventionally ends in 1982 with the triumph of the Socialist Party (PSOE) in the elections, and which produced a series of elements affecting all levels of daily life. The transition from an authoritarian to another, democratic regime has been presented subsequently as an example of political consensus which, above all, with the preparation of the 1978 Constitution—which did not obtain a majority vote in the Basque Country—had managed to agglutinate all democratic interests. The watchwords of that period are well-known and seemed to herald a new world where freedom, amnesty and the statutes of autonomy represented the greatest demands given voice before the constitutional referendum. In the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, the 1979 Statute of Gernika was approved with a 58.5% of census participation and a result of 90.27% in favour among the Basque citizenry.

In terms of the educational sphere of the Basque Community, the region is acknowledged its competences in Article 16 of the Statute of Gernika, according to which the Basque Country holds the competence in education throughout its duration, levels and degrees, modalities, and specialisations, subject to the restrictions reserved for the central state, such as higher inspection. This acknowledgment would be upheld by Act 1/1993 on Basque Public Schools. The challenges that the Basque Autonomous Community educational system has gradually overcome may be stressed beginning with the transfer of educational competence: from increased schooling for students to the permanent existence of three school networks – public, private and *ikastola* schools, which went through a process of going public, painful in many cases, up to the implementation of schooling models with a progressive evolution in favour of the “D” model, using Euskera as the sole medium of instruction, and a process of reconverting students and teachers to its use, in addition to a defence of pedagogical innovation, educational inclusion, and the use of ICTs. The entire process was forged from 1980 down to the present.

In the same way, the enforcement of the Statute of Autonomy entailed that, in a brief period of time, teaching services were transferred, which, in the case of Education, occurred on 29 December 1980, with the approval of Francisco Tovar Mendoza, secretary of the Mixed Commission on Transfers. Of those services and institutions transferred, those pertaining to vocational training concerned: the ownership of public school centres; the implementation and control of investment programmes; the preparation and approval of plans, curricula and teaching orientations; the approval of textbooks and other teaching materials; the

creation, transformation, expansion, classification and elimination of centres; and budget credits.

It is in this context of transfers and the new overall situation opening during that period that we can situate the changes that were to germinate into the new vocational training model. It was a time, not just of uncertainties, but also challenges, and there was an intention to enhance vocational training quality. In this sense, some protagonists of the period state the enthusiasm with which the old educational structures were being changed. To achieve this, a Basque government capable of structuring different projects was necessary, but above all, a new generation of teachers who believed that vocational training could forge ahead if a series of institutional and corporate agents supported it: “In the 1980s, the Basque government and the provinces were fully aware of the importance of the vocational training strategy in order to emerge from the crisis... a generational relay took place in the vocational training centres through a series of civil service examinations, which redounded to faculty rejuvenation and a new generation of directors and management teams” (Mujika, I. & Intxausti, K., 2018). This same development is attested by another witness, Mari Carmen Marín¹, who lived through this period in the educational centres and subsequently came to occupy positions of educational responsibility. Years later, starting in 1983, the Usurbilgo Lanbide Eskola managed to start up one of these projects, specifically that conducted through company internships. The first among such companies was Michelin in Lasarte, in 1986, when an agreement facilitating work-linked training was concluded. Within a few years, by 1990, 720 students in this position had grown to 7,765. After the signing of a Framework Agreement in 1991 between the Department of Education and Confebask, this arrangement was consolidated, covering over 3,500 companies (Mujika, I. & Intxausti, K., 2018). Likewise, the territorial councils, beginning with Gipuzkoa and the Hezilan Plan, collaborated financially in terms of centre equipment.

On another front, this process of transfers that began with the formation of the Basque General Council opened a period of what we could refer to as a certain standardisation and regularisation of practices habitually conducted in the vocational training centres of that period. It was also time to make certain policy decisions with regard to education, and one of the tasks initiated in January 1980 was that called “Proposal to Study Vocational Training in Euskadi: Analysis of Social Needs and Future Forecasts, Horizon 1990”. This was done by request from the Basque General Council Board of Education, which sought to obtain trustworthy information on the status of vocational training during that period, so as

¹ Interview with Mari Carmen Marín, Donostia, 20 June 2019.

to make the appropriate decisions for planning the action required. The study focused on the three Basque territories and their regional divisions, account taken of training requirements with a view to their economic and social needs. The reports finalised between February 1982 and May 1983².

The amount of information that these reports facilitate refer to the population structure, the level of teaching at the different educational levels, job expectations, and a forecast of educational needs up to the Y2000 horizon. In summary, and in view of the data facilitated by SIADECO, the growth posted for that period is visible with regard to the centres, the student population and the faculty, offering differentiated profiles. Thus, whereas Araba posts similar rates in terms of these three factors, Bizkaia increased above all in terms of centres and less in student population and teachers. In contrast, Gipuzkoa shows lower percentages, although it offers the same profile as Bizkaia with regard to increased student population, as may be seen in the following table.

Table 3
Evolution of centres, student population and faculty
in vocational training from 1973 to 1981.

Province	Centres		Students		Teachers	
	N.º	%	N.º	%	N.º	%
Araba	9	16,6	3 581	16,2	178	17,7
Bizkaia	31	57,4	10 600	47,9	495	49,2
Gipuzkoa	14	25,9	7 951	35,9	333	33,1

Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data:* SIADECO, 1982.

The nuances of all these data must be checked by type of centre —whether or not run by the state— since a higher percentage of state-run education is posted for the Spanish state: “we can unmistakably say that ... state-run education has been pronouncedly greater in the rest of Spain, which spells out greater investment and effort for the benefit of Spain than of the Autonomous Community. This is not new. In this country, private initia-

² We thank Juanjo Allur of SIADECO for his willingness to facilitate us access to all the written reports, consisting of 11 volumes, since these were indispensable to knowing the situation and prospects of Vocational Training during the first years of the 1980s, a period that poses difficulties in terms of obtaining information about the educational model.

tive has generally accounted for greater efforts and has had to pay for its own education” (SIADECO, 1982). In relation to the different regions as well, nuances have to be checked, since the more industrialised towns post higher percentages in terms of centres, students and teachers. In view of the outcomes, a single observation is evident: the high number of students enrolled in secondary is clear evidence of the dependence of vocational training on the industry of the country. Based on this information, the report draws a series of possible hypotheses for the future which, given the course taken in the 1980s and the OAGES educational reform of 1990, nullifies the forecast conducted, although it does underscore the occupational profiles of the future, in which the tertiary sector acquires greater presence. It must also be pointed out that we do not know what use was made of this report in making policy decisions on vocational training in the 1980s.

1.3. Vocational Training in the Reorganisation of the Educational System

If the General Education Act of 1970 set an important milestone in attributing vocational training to the educational system, the OAGES of 1990 also marks the start of an important stage in the educational system and in vocational training. However, between these two dates, a series of laws that shaped the legislative framework throughout the three decades in-between were also proposed and approved. We have to bear in mind that so-called organic acts develop some heading of the Spanish Constitution of 1978 and are therefore mandatory legal provisions throughout the state, affecting the legislation of autonomous communities. In this sense, we will refer first of all to these laws and, subsequently, to two laws applicable to the Basque Autonomous Community.

On 27 June 1980, the Organic Act regulating the School Centre Statute (OASCS) came into force, which made practically no contribution to the educational model. The OASCS restricted itself to recalling that Vocational Training, together with Preschool Education, Basic General Education and the Baccalaureate, was one of the four educational levels existing in Spain. The Organic Act regulating the Right to Education (OARE) likewise made no great contribution to vocational training, focusing more on other aspects such as educational centres, participation in the general educational programme, and the organs of governance for public or subsidised centres. With regard to the Basque Country, it created the Basque Vocational Training Board after the transfer of educational competence and the regulation of national technical inspection for vocational training.

State legislation was gradually designed around plans and state agencies were created. Such were the First National Plan for Vocational Training and Placement and Occupational Vocational Training proposed by the government council in 1985, which came into force in 1988, and the creation of the General Council for Vocational Training in 1986, an advisory body for institutional participation and assessment on behalf of the government to attend to Regulated and Occupational Vocational Training. Among other measures, vocational training programmes for youth and long-term unemployed workers, occupational placement programmes for youth seeking their first jobs, and schooling recovery and work-linked educational programmes were instituted. A provincial network composed of a group of vocational orientation and placement promoters was also organised, to be charged, among other activities, with promoting vocational training initiatives, adjusting them to needs detected, and evaluating the outcomes achieved at the end of the year. In this sense, a window of opportunities opened up: “Barring some exceptions, vocational training then was restricted to working with the students in initial training, isolated from the surrounding companies. In that context, three elements contributed to opening up a new scenario for VT: work-linked training, continuing education, and experimental implementation” (Mujika, I. & Intxausti, K., 2018). Thus, in the work-linked training programme, the number of students involved rose from 720 (1986) to 2,479 (1987), 5,871 (1988), 7,809 (1989) and 7,765 (1990). The signing of a Framework Agreement between the Department of Education, the Department of Labour, and Confesbask in 1991 has consolidated this work-linked training since that time. Throughout AY 1995/96, 12,365 students from 162 vocational training centres underwent work-linked training in over 3,500 companies.

The Organic Act on the General Educational System (OAGES) dated 3 October 1990 was preceded by the creation of Provincial Committees for Regulated Vocational Training and for the regulation of the National Vocational Training and Placement Plan, which, moreover, was immediately subjected to analyses and proposals by the Basque government Department of Education, Universities and Research (EUR Department) at a seminar held on 2 July 1990, in which Ministry and Council staff participated, along with other vocational training and employment experts (Departamento de EUI, 1991). In its preamble, the OAGES acknowledged the modernisation process in which Spain was immersed, headed more and more clearly towards a common horizon called Europe. Insistence was laid on the fact that dominating the accelerated change in knowhow and cultural and production processes required more prolonged, more versatile basic training, capable of adapting to new situations through a process of continuing education that would be able to respond to the specific needs of the individual while enabling a maximum possible development.

Consequently, all these transformations raised sufficient reasons in favour of reforming the educational system, given the diverse deficiencies existing, such as the configuration of education for the period prior to mandatory schooling, the lag between the end of the mandatory period and the minimum job-hunting age, the existence of a dual entitlement at the end of Basic General Education which, despite being discriminatory, made access to vocational training possible for those not finishing basic education satisfactorily, and the ensuing design of vocational training as a secondary path, while at the same time remaining too academic and too far from the world of production, etc. In a word, the OAGES undertook a sweeping reform of vocational training, devoting Chapter IV of its first heading to the subject, aware that it was one of the problems in the current educational system that required an urgent, more in-depth solution, and that it was a sphere of major relevance for the future of the productive sector. As a result, the OAGES would take account of Basic Vocational Training addressing all secondary education students and organise specific vocational training into intermediate and advanced cycles. Thus, to access the intermediate cycles, it would be necessary to complete basic education and hold the qualification of graduate in secondary education; i.e., the same requirement to access the baccalaureate. This did away with the existing dual option upon finishing basic education, which was exerting so many negative effects on vocational training. Similarly, to access the advanced cycles, it would be necessary to hold the baccalaureate.

Another of the measures taken in OAGES enforcement was the design and planning of the training cycles, which would include a practical workplace training phase and promote participation from the various social agents. The outcome of this decision was to consign them to the autonomous communities, which had fully assumed competence in educational matters, as in the Basque case, playing an absolutely decisive role in the task of designing and ensuring the implementation of this educational reform. Hence, from this moment onwards, the educational system was restructured into general courses and specialised education. The general education levels established consisted of: early childhood education, primary education, secondary education—which would include Mandatory Secondary Education (MSE)—the Baccalaureate and Intermediate Vocational Training, Advanced Vocational Training, and University Education.

Focusing on what the OAGES entailed in terms of vocational training, the law stated that this educational model would cover all the courses imparting skills for the qualified exercise of different occupations—including continuing education in companies—contributing to worker job placement. What this Act proposed for vocational training encompassed the purpose of preparing students for activity in a professional field, providing

them with versatile training that would enable them to adapt to modifications. In this context, the proposal extended to Mandatory Secondary Education (MSE) and to the Baccalaureate, so that all students would receive a basic vocational training, whereas Specific Vocational Training would cover a set of training cycles organised into variable-duration modules, composed of areas of theoretical and practical knowhow based on the different vocational fields concerned. Moreover, this Specific Vocational Training would attempt to facilitate the transition of youth to life in the workplace, to contribute to the continuing education of individuals, and to attend to the demands of the productive sector for qualification (Sarasola, L., 1996).

The organisation of the system in the Basque Autonomous Community by the parameters established introduced some characteristics into the Basque Vocational Training Model (Consejo Escolar de Euskadi, 2001): centres were able to organise the manner of imparting the modules with a margin of freedom – 55% of the curriculum was determined by the educational administration, 30% by the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, 15% by the centres, and all the training cycles included the Quality and Continuous Improvement module. In order to teach in Specific Vocational Training, the same qualification as for Secondary Education was required of faculty, although for certain areas, specialised teachers could be hired based on their qualifications and system requirements.

On another front, in the design and planning of vocational training, promoting the participation of social agents was proposed, account taken of the socio-economic environment of the educational centres in programming. This participation by the social agents would propitiate or facilitate another of the objectives of the new educational model: the inclusion of a practical workplace training phase in vocational training, whereby a method promoting the integration of scientific, technological and organisational contents was proposed to benefit student capacity for independent study and teamwork – one of the keys on which the Basque Vocational Training Model is based at present.

Apart from the OAGES, some other measures were also initiated in the 1990s, such as the creation of the so-called *Provincial Committees for Regulated Vocational Training* in all the provinces of Spain. The need to provide an adequate response to the production sector demand for human resources obliged the educational system to reposition and define itself continually. Aware of the situation, the Ministry of Education and Science was to propose the creation of collegiate bodies to conduct an overall analysis on the status of vocational training and, in addition, allow the participation of social agents, local institutions or development agencies, while forging closer relations between enterprise and the training centres.

Due to the 1986 Spanish incorporation into the European Community, new regulations came to affect any decision. Thus, when Royal Decree 1618/1990 regulating the National Plan for Vocational Training and Placement was enforced in 1990, it was subject to the new regulating mechanisms of the European Social Fund approved by Regulation 4255/88 of the Council of Europe. Belonging to the European Union required certain adaptations, and lines were drawn to pinpoint a working population qualified for mobility and free circulation within that panorama of market globalisation and the continuous advance of the information society. Therefore, it was necessary to legislate in accordance with the times, and state authorities approved the Organic Act on National Vocational Training Qualifications in 2001, which aimed to organise an integrated system of Vocational Training, Qualifications and Certification that could respond effectively and transparently to social and economic demands through the different training modalities. Diverse lines of action were drawn, among them, that of providing vocational training with an orientation based on individual development and the right to employment, the right to the free choice of occupation or trade, and the possibility of satisfying the needs of the production and employment systems throughout all the phases of an individual's life. In this context, the participation and cooperation of the social agents with public authorities was considered necessary in training and professional qualification policies, the criteria for which the European Union would establish, to be determined based on the objectives of the single market and the free circulation of workers.

The participation of social agents was a key element that the law itself reflected, underscoring that “the required collaboration of companies with the public administration, universities, chambers of commerce and training institutions shall be promoted. Companies may participate individually or as groups through their representative organisations”. The said participation of companies and other institutions in the National System of Qualifications and Vocational Training was implemented in the spheres of teacher training, student workplace training, and the conduct of other vocational internships. Collaboration was mediated through the proper conventions and agreements. In sum, what this law sought was to create a “new” vocational training that would cover the set of training activities preparing students for the qualified practice of different professions, facilitating job access and active participation in the social, cultural and economic life of the country – a vocational training which, in turn, would cover Initial Vocational Training, Occupational Vocational Training with its activities of worker placement and reintegration, and Continuing Vocational Training in companies that would serve workers for continuously acquiring and upgrading their professional skills.

To continue with the changing fortunes of educational laws, when government leadership changed hands in 2004, elections were convened, in which polls granted a possible absolute majority to the People's Party; however, three days before this, the terrorist attacks on Madrid took place (11th of March), and these poll results dropped due to the mismanagement of People's Party leaders, who lied brazenly to the Spanish populace about the authorship of the attacks. This caused the party to lose the elections to the benefit of the Socialist PSOE, and the law they had prepared for immediate application became void. At the time, the conservatives were prepared to reform the Organic Act for Quality Education (OAQE) of 2002, but failure in the elections did not allow them to push through, and in 2006 the Organic Act on Education (OAE) came into force. In its preamble, this act acknowledged the work that OAGES implementation had entailed, extending the period of mandatory schooling, set at 10 years; but above all, it acknowledged the impulse and professional and social prestige it had given vocational training, enabling Spain to be on a par with the more advanced countries in its environment. Thus, the stake for vocational training continued along the lines of the OAGES, and the following principles under this Act were established: the demand to provide quality education to all citizens of both sexes at all the levels of the educational system, the participation and collaboration of all the members of the educational community in this process, and a decided commitment to the educational objectives set by the European Union for the next few years.

The Spanish educational system had to accommodate its activities for the following years to achieving these objectives shared by its partners in the European Union, and to do this, it had to take action in several complementary directions. In the first place, training had to be conceived as a permanent, lifelong process. If learning had been traditionally seen as a task to be achieved in childhood and adolescence, at the time this law was implemented, that view was no longer sufficient. Hence, departing from the premise that the capacity to learn remains intact throughout life and the needs arising from economic and social changes obliged citizens to permanently expand their training, the attention paid to adults had to be increased. Another of these complementary directions would be the transition from training to work and from work to training, or from both to other activities, for which reason it was needful to increase the flexibility of the educational system, too rigid up to then, which did not benefit two-way transit. Such flexibility on the part of the educational system would entail granting an independent space for the purpose to the educational centres. Teaching centres had to avail of an independent space proper to the purpose that would enable them to adapt their activity to their specific circumstances and the characteristics

of their student population, so as to achieve success in terms of schooling for all their students.

In practice, among other contributions to vocational training, this Act of 2006 brought about the introduction of greater flexibility to this educational model and the relations between its different subsystems. In a word, to increase that system flexibility and benefit Continuing Education, different links were established between general education and vocational training. At the time, ten different educational levels coexisted in Spain, with vocational training situated within secondary education, specifically in post-mandatory secondary education. Thus, on reaching the fourth year of mandatory secondary education, students' parents or legal guardians could choose one of the following school-leaving options: academic courses for beginning the Baccalaureate, or applied studies for beginning Vocational Training.

When the OAE came into force, the students opting for this educational model were to find that vocational training included the set of training activities preparing them for the qualified exercise of different occupations, job access, and an active participation in social, cultural and economic life. This new vocational training would include, moreover, in addition to Initial Vocational Training, job placement and re-employment activities for workers, as well as activities oriented to continuing education in companies that would enable the ongoing acquisition and upgrading of occupational skills.

The last law to come into force was that developed by the People's Party in 2013. This was the Organic Act for Quality Improvement in Education (OAQIE). This Act, which is meeting serious implementation difficulties due to strong discrepancies between many educational agents and the Ministry of Education itself, is a reform of the OAE that practically skirts the issues confronting vocational training, which is why we will not analyse it. However, we believe it timely to clarify the reasons that led ministry representatives to formulate the reform of an already-existing law and not to frame a new law. The reason for reforming the previous law is justified by a recommendation of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which considers that, in line with the steps taken by other countries producing better results in their respective educational systems, it is more positive to conduct reform on a stable general framework as insufficiencies are detected or as new needs emerge over time, rather than draw up new legislation.

Up to this point, we have roughly described the organic acts approved in the Spanish parliament, the fulfilment of which affects the entire state. However, other laws were approved in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country concerning the sphere of its territorial jurisdiction.

We shall single out the two laws holding implications for vocational training: the Basque Public School Act (BPSA) of 1993 and the Basque Country Vocational Training Act of 2018. Thus, in the Basque government sphere of jurisdiction, Act 1/1993, or the Basque Public School Act, came into force in February 1993, applicable to all non-university educational centres of the Basque Autonomous Community. This law defined itself as “plural, bilingual, democratic, at the service of Basque society, socially and culturally rooted in its environment, participative, compensating for inequities and integrating diversity”. The law barely made explicit references to vocational training, although it acknowledged that organisations of trade unions and businesses could take part in organising the centres. In what concerned their teaching autonomy, it pointed out that objectives and orientations related to non-regulated vocational training could be covered by the Specific Vocational Training imparted in some centres.

The promulgation of the Organic Act on the General Educational System (OAGES) in 1990 in the context of a total transformation of the educational system entailed, on the one hand, the laying of the foundations for a new vocational training model and an integrated view of this and, on the other, the Basque Public School Act of 1993, which, as regards vocational training, would turn out of fundamental importance in the shaping of integrated VT centres, another of the milestones underscored in reports about the course of vocational training in the country during the past few decades.

Although vocational training formed part of the Basque public school system, this did not pay it any special attention, even accounting for the fact that some months after this law came into force, Spain approved the National Plan for Vocational Training and Placement, laying the basis for what vocational training should be. This National Plan evaluated positively some of the measures taken for the proper operation of vocational training. Among them were the experience acquired as a result of transferring management for Occupational Training to the autonomous communities, the assumption of a great degree of responsibility by labour intermediaries for imparting Continuing Education to salaried workers, and the need to ensure the complementary character of Regulated Vocational Training and Occupational Training. In another chapter analysing Continuing Education, we shall devote more space to this National Plan for Vocational Training and Placement.

Of fundamental importance to the configuration of the integrated vocational training centres in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, the Basque Public School Act of 19 February 1993 sought to create a stable legal framework from which to respond effectively to

the requirements created by the educational reform promulgated by the OAGES. Among other expectations, the new law offered training for citizens and quality certification levels for convergence with Europe, but moreover, it would attempt to respond to those demands from the production sectors urgently requiring “versatile professions”. On another hand, the transformation brought about by the Basque Public School Act extended beyond what the OAGES established as strictly applicable with regard to the organisation of vocational training, touching spheres that would particularly benefit public VT, which historically had never had the management flexibility or possibility to adopt acknowledged initiatives with a high degree of autonomy, traits that distinctively characterise the private sector in dealing with these matters. Specifically, Heading V of this act guarantees centre autonomy. Of particular relevance along the lines of what we stated with regard to integrated vocational training centre configuration at the start of this chapter, Article 55 of the Act stipulates that “secondary education centres teaching Specific Vocational Training may impart non-regulated vocational training, as established by regulation”.

In effect, as Iztueta points out (Iztueta, P., 2016), when fairly assessing the scope of the Act, it is recommendable to distinguish clearly between teaching autonomy —or degree of teaching autonomy— that the Basque Autonomous Community is allowed to enjoy, and the administrative autonomy of the centres. In fact, in addition to organising the overall framework for the insertion of the new vocational training, the OAGES states the need to promote, apart from the teaching autonomy of all educational centres, autonomy of organisation and economy, while the Basque Public School Act restricts itself to regulating the application of these matters within the framework of the Autonomous Community.

The most recent legal provisions have been those of the Basque Country Vocational Training Act within Basque government vocational training strategic plans. Act 4/2018, of 28 June, is among the latest, most relevant milestones. As pointed out in its recitals, it deals with a challenge for the new knowledge-based society in a Europe of smart, sustainable and integrated growth. It also indicates an attempt to flesh out the Act on Lifelong Learning by implementing it in new areas related to vocational training. To do this, it points out that Euskadi needs a flexible vocational training system, capable of adapting itself and fulfilling its goals in a society and economy in continuous transformation.

Thus, this law presents itself as the framework capable of regulating all vocational training policy, underscoring not just the relationship

with the knowledge-based society, but also the creation of stable quality jobs that will allow for greater social cohesion. The ten chapters into which it is structured deal with the objectives of this educational model; its adaptation to the European context; the shaping of a coherent vocational training system; the creation of an inter-departmental body to guarantee the coordination of competence for the educational and employment training system; a framework of collaboration reforming the Basque Vocational Training Council; and internationalisation of the Basque Vocational Training System, in addition to adapting the presence of the official languages of the Basque Country into this system and the attempt to guarantee their standard presence. The preoccupation for research, innovation and improvement processes is also palpable, along with a system for evaluating the different vocational training programmes.

1.4. The Evolution of Vocational Training in Data: Some Conclusions

In a more extensive work, we analysed the evolution of the centres, their faculty, the students, the occupational groups involved, the gender perspective and the presence of Euskera from the 1970s practically up to AY 2017/18 (Murua, H. (Coord.), 2020). We summarised the conclusions to which this study led in view of the results obtained. Thus, in general terms, we can say that *Vocational training has improved remarkably from the 1970s down to our times, with Basque vocational training becoming an international reference*. Data and proof were produced for the improvement of vocational training in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, which has changed considerably from decades back down to the present. This overcame the periods of bad press and of a dichotomous choice that pitted vocational training against the baccalaureate. In this respect, vocational training has been gaining ground and good repute both in the Basque Autonomous Community and in Spain (Olarazan, M. & Brunet, I. (Eds.), 2014).

This evolution for vocational training was enabled by multiple factors which, in the Basque case specifically, consisted of assuming the transfers that endowed Basque government with greater competence and autonomy in education; the management initiative for the centres, in collaborative work shared between institutions; the support of the territorial authorities; and the formation of networks linking Basque associations, companies and educational institutions holding stakes in investing, improving, adapting and bringing vocational training closer to the job market – i.e., industrial and business requirements. All these enabled the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country to enjoy a distinct vo-

cational training structure and character that became known and was acknowledged nationwide (Gutiérrez, R., & Olazaran, M., 2016) as well as abroad (Morgan, K., 2016).

The collaboration between different agents and institutions must be underscored as *critical to the development and improvement of Basque vocational training*. The cooperation between different institutions was a key factor and a constant over time in this specific identarian sense. Proof of this have been the financial endowments and training received by both public and private centres, arriving at a balance and collaboration between both in maintaining the number of centres, studies, specialisations, levels and degrees of Basque vocational training. Even then, in the Basque Autonomous Community itself, there have been different processes and developments in different provinces in which Gipuzkoa has historically acted as an activity driver and promoter, pioneering numerous training, methodological and innovation initiatives as well as agreements with political parties, associations, trade unions, and companies themselves, with a view to improving vocational training infrastructures, resources and quality. It is in this way that the track blazed and the initiatives taken in the vocational training of Gipuzkoa have occasionally been adopted afterwards and integrated into the provincial centres of Bizkaia and Araba³.

The presence of Euskera in Basque vocational training *has been growing, particularly in the last five years, with increased enrolment in linguistic models “B” (Euskera and Spanish in equal proportions) and “D” (Euskera as the sole language and Spanish as a subject)*. Basque society and its institutions have backed a bilingual education in which Euskera was a cultural heritage and a key element of history, defining it and giving us our own ethnolinguistic identity (Azurmendi, M. J., Bourhis, R. Y., Ros, M., & García, I, 1998). For this reason, in contrast with past periods in which education in Basque was prohibited, starting from the 1970s through the subsequent decades, investments were made in linguistic standardisation to recover Basque use and facilitate the possibility of training students in both languages at all educational stages (Murua, H., & Garmendia, J., 2016). Specifically, vocational training has lagged behind in the proportion of student enrolment under models “B” and “D” in comparison with the other educational modalities (Etxeberria Balerdi, F., 2004); i.e., this standardisation process was integrated faster in primary, secondary, the baccalaureate and the university itself. However, from the data of the last few years, increased enrolment in intermediate and higher vocational training in the Basque Autonomous Community is

³ Interview with Iñaki Mujika, Donostia, 18 June 2019.

perceptible, meaning that that predominance of Spanish has progressively been reduced.

Nevertheless, despite the improvement detected in this field, if we study the issue by province, some differences that cannot be ignored will be observed. Hence, delving into the linguistic model chosen by students in enrolling vocational training in Gipuzkoa, the sum of models “B” and “D”, with Euskera, exceed that of model “A” in Spanish. This circumstance does not occur either in Bizkaia or Araba, where model “A” clearly outnumbers the sum of models “B” and “D”. This notwithstanding, the situation favouring Euskera as a teaching medium is improving, and it should be noted that model “B” has increased in annual enrolment in all Basque provinces during last five academic years.

As regards the evolution of occupational groups in the regions and territories of the Basque Country, vocational training *has been and continues to be linked to the production sectors, where the needs of society and its services, companies and industry have played a significant part in development*. Thus, from the outset, it is in no way strange to find vocational training centres close to certain factories and companies that were important to a town, city and even an entire region (Olasolo, A., Simón, L. González, A., Basterretxea, I. & Saiz, M., 2003). This fact has resulted in the creation, development and evolution of numerous centres in different regions and provinces of the Basque Country that have been weaving a network of vocational training centres with diverse specialisations and specific training-employment realities. All this has influenced a type of economy, industry and service sector with more weight or less in relation to provincial capitals, with differences existing at the territorial and regional level.

In view of the data gathered and presented in this work, we can affirm that the vocational training centres in the Basque Autonomous Community have increased their course offer in the past few decades, with options in practically all the occupational groups and specialisations associated to each. In turn, the centres situated in the regions have been maintained to a great extent thanks to the production sectors and the entrepreneurial fabric of each area.

This initial rapprochement between the occupational branches and groups having been established, we shall analyse how the different occupational groups are distributed throughout the three territories of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country.

Table 4
Number of VT centres and locations before and after the OAGES

Occupational branch/group	Up to 1990			Since 1990		
	Centres & Location			Centres & Location		
	Araba	Bizkaia	Gipuzkoa	ARaba	Bizkaia	Gipuzkoa
Clerical / Administration and Management	3 C	2 C & P (1-1)	4 C & P (1-3)	3 C & P (2-1)	22 C & P (7-15)	20 C & P (7-13)
Agricultural /Agrarian	3 C & P (2-1)		4 C & P (2-2)	2 C & P (1-1)	1 P	1 P
Graphic Arts	1 C	1 C	0	1 C	1 C	2 C & P (1-1)
Automotives / Transport & Vehicle Maintenance	1 C		1 P	2 C	10 C & P (3-7)	4 C & P (1-3)
Clinical Aides / Health	1 C		1 P	3 C & P (2-1)	18 C & P (7-11)	12 C & P (4-8)
Cutting & Sewing / Textile, Sewing & Hides	2 C	2 P	2 C & P (1-1)		1 P	1 C
Electricity & Electronics	2 C & P (1-1)	12 C & P (2-10)	17 C & P (2-15)	3 C & P (2-1)	24 C & P (7-17)	15 C & P (1-14)
Hotels & Tourism				3 C	8 C & P (5-3)	3 C & P (2-1)
Woodworking & Furniture	3 C & P (2-1)	6 P	6 C & P (1-5)		2 C	3 C & P (1-2)
Metal / Mechanised Manufacture	4 C & P (2-2)	17 C & P (3-14)	24 C & P (3-21)	4 C & P (2-2)	18 C & P (5-13)	19 C & P (1-18)
Hairdressing & Make-up / Personal Image	1 C		2 P	3 C & P (2-1)	6 C & P (4-2)	3 C & P (1-2)
Chemistry		2 C	4 C & P (2-2)	2 C	6 C & P (4-2)	1 P
Automation	1 C		1 P			

Occupational branch/group	Up to 1990			Since 1990		
	Centres & Location			Centres & Location		
	Araba	Bizkaia	Gipuzkoa	ARaba	Bizkaia	Gipuzkoa
Drawing	2 C & P (1-1)	4 C & P (1-3)	12 C & P (3-9)			
Energy & Water				1 C	1 P	1 P
Maritime Fisheries					2 P	2 P
Safety & Environment				1 C	2 P	1 C
Image & Sound				1 C	2 C & P (1-1)	2 C & P (1-1)
Food Industries				1 C	3 P	1 C
Civil Structures & Works				1 C	4 C & P (2-2)	3 C & P (1-2)
Physical-Sports Activities				2 C	8 C & P (2-6)	4 C & P (2-2)
Sales & Marketing				2 C	12 C & P (7-5)	9 C & P (5-4)
Information & Communication Technology				2 C	17 C & P (8-9)	9 C & P (4-5)
Installation & Maintenance				5 C & P (3-2)	12 C & P (3-9)	18 C & P (2-16)
Socio-cultural & Community Services				5 C & P (4-1)	19 C & P (7-12)	12 C & P (2-10)

Capital: C; Province: P; Capital & Province: C & P

Source: Prepared by the authors. Data: EUSTAT

On another front, the increase in training courses offered has been the most evident in the three provincial capitals, since it is these cities that have accumulated the greatest number of centres and, in consequence, they offer the broadest range of studies and training cycles. This brings us to an analysis by territory, where the clearest example of this occurs in Araba. That is, barring some few zones and regions in Araba

that offer some specialisation, Vitoria/Gasteiz is the place where practically all vocational training specialisations and studies are offered in the province. A similar phenomenon occurs in Bizkaia, where Bilbao and its region offer the greatest number and variety of vocational training courses, with the other regions proposing some opportunity for training, albeit with reduced and scarce possibilities. Lastly, in Gipuzkoa, it is also the capital —Donostia and its area— which concentrates the greatest number and variety of courses in the province. However, the territory of Gipuzkoa has a sufficiently ample distribution of vocational training centres that is not as densely concentrated in the capital, as occurs in the other two provinces. In sum, we understand that it remains critical to maintain diversity in course offers in the different capitals and regions in order to offer specific, diverse, updated high-quality vocational training.

Another important element in the evolution of the centres is the gender perspective. *It has been perceived that the centres are working towards equality, enticing study without regard to student gender, but reality shows that one gender still tends to predominate in all too many occupational groups.* In general, from the very origins of vocational training, there has been less female enrolment than male in vocational training (EUSTAT, 1994/2019). This circumstance was marked by the fact that, for years, practically all the occupational groups of vocational training were for men, but when women were able to access such studies, this access was solely restricted to a set of very specific occupational groups (Rial Sánchez, A., Mariño Fernández, R. & Rego Agraso, L., 2011): the clerical, the agricultural, as clinical assistants, in cutting and sewing, and in hairdressing and styling.

Currently, the institutions and vocational training centres themselves have exerted efforts and implemented campaigns to promote the enrolment of women in all vocational training specialisations. With regard to the results obtained, we can say it is presently a reality that there is a greater female presence in vocational training and that this has spelled out a more balanced enrolment distribution with regard to gender in majority of the occupational groups, albeit the failings still persist (Mosteiro García, M.J. & Porto Castro, A.M., 2017).

A review of present-day enrolment data shows results that are very similar to what previously existed in some branches and groups. For example, in the case of girls, the fields of clerical work, agriculture, clinical assistance, cutting and sewing, and hairdressing and styling, which were almost exclusively female in 1970, today continue to maintain the same constants, except for agriculture, with a clear female predominance and an enrolment percentage higher than 80%, which means that some occupational groups and the jobs dependent on such training may exclusively

fall upon women. The occupational groups with female enrolment higher than 80% for AY 1999/2016 in the BAC are: personal image, health, community cultural services, and textile, sewing and leather. On the other hand, exactly the same is happening in other occupational groups where practically the entire enrolment is male. The occupational groups with male enrolment percentages higher than 85% for AY 1999/2016 in the BAC are: maritime fishing, electricity and electronics, mechanical manufacture, woodworking, furniture and cork, transport and vehicle maintenance, and installation and maintenance. In these cases, the jobs dependent on such specialisations practically become all-male jobs. In this sense, although the overall situation may have improved, there is still some way to go for all social agents—the administration, companies and educational institutions—before being able to work together socially and culturally in employment and education.

Lastly, employability with regard to hiring rates for students of Basque vocational training *shows very good data in terms of almost all the occupational groups*. The data gathered on Basque vocational training employability, with hiring rates, yield very favourable percentages. Indeed, the average of all the percentages in the occupational groups from 1999 to 2016 tells us that practically 3 out of 4, or 72.7% finishing vocational training in the Basque Autonomous Community are employed and, moreover, that majority of them find jobs in less than one year after finishing their vocational training degrees. Basque vocational training has worked very hard on this aspect, employability, and earned the respect and admiration of society. One factor considered critical to this success has been its capacity to adapt to new labour demands (Hernández Pérez, 2019), shown by the example of the Basque vocational training curriculum, characterised as flexible and sensitive to changes. In this regard, methodological approach (the ETHAZI) and the work of coordinating with companies in the search for quality internships have been able to play significant roles.

Specifically, Basque vocational training has known how to adapt to methods and programmes that contributed certain skills in preparing for a professional future, such as the Dual Vocational Training Model and the Work-linked Training System. In both cases, it is the companies who involve themselves and actively participate in student training. This way, Basque vocational training remains close to the job market, supporting the production sectors, offering a variety of possibilities in terms of company internships and, in the light of the results, almost ensuring entry. Clear examples of this we have found in eight occupational groups of the Basque Autonomous Community from 1999 to 2016, where over 75% of the students found jobs upon finishing their studies. These are cases in: construction and civil works, electricity and electronics, mechanical man-

ufacture, hotels, personal image, the food industry, transport and vehicle maintenance, and production utility installation and maintenance.

The university community itself eyes these methodological and internship models and continues to closely monitor the steps of Vocational Training, given its successful occupancy and employment rates.

Chapter II

The Basque Vocational Training plans: the strategic VT horizon in the Basque Country

IÑAKI ZABALETA IMAZ & ANA EIZAGIRRE SAGARDIA

2.1. *Lanbidez*: The First Basque Vocational Training Plan (1998/2003)

The Basque Vocational Training Plans are fundamental for an understanding of the evolution that VT has undergone in the BAC and represent an essential reference in explaining their development throughout these last few decades. The approval of the first among them represented a turning point as both the beginnings of the design for a Basque Vocational Training Model and a strategic development horizon. It was to take form over the years, endowed with peculiar and uniquely recognisable signs of identity. The *Lanbidez* (Eusko Jaurlaritza/Gobierno Vasco/Basque Government, 1998) is the main reference point for a cycle consolidating the efforts deployed since the 1980s (Mujika, I.; Intxausti, K., 2018): apart from legislation supporting the possibility of promoting it in the framework of new vocational training regulations, a tradition of educational, social and institutional sector involvement in this sphere must be underscored, along with the desire and the need for transformation widely shared by the political, business, union and professional sectors. Similarly, since VT was conceived in its dimension as a fundamental strategy for the development of Basque society, the creation of the Basque Vocational Training Council in 1994 and its “inter-institutional character involving social participation” must be pointed out. This was to assume the task of preparing a General VT Plan for the BAC. It was also to undertake the Continuous Vocational Training Plan of 1995, which resulted the following year in the creation of *Hobetuz*, the Basque Foundation for Continuous Vocational Training for workers, the Strategic Plan for Industrial Policy of 1996—which would also affect VT to the extent that its adaptation to the need for the competitiveness and development of the productive environment was required—and the Basque Parliament bid for an integrated vocational training system.

That integrated vision projects for the dual dimension of education and employment and, consequently, the need for in-depth transformations in VT; convergence between the subsystems comprising it in accordance with its different institutional, educational, social and corporate agents; and for VT centres to assume the basic leadership. Reflecting orientations from Europe, this Plan sought an integrated solution that aimed at the confluence between regulated vocational training and continuing vocational training, and between VT centres and the job market, drawing inspiration from the principle of “enhancing human capital throughout the individual’s working life”, acknowledging occupational skills regardless of how these might have been acquired, responding effectively to the serious problem of unemployment and the social exclusion of youth, providing for the job market’s need for qualification, promoting collaboration between the private and public sectors, and the exercise of a supportive facilitating role by the administration, with a view to satisfying the training needs of both companies and citizens in general and workers in particular, consolidating training as their right. The Lanbidez was to sum up the goals it sought to achieve into three objectives: to increase the level of basic training; achieve convergence between initial and continuous training; and efficiently adapt training systems. This would call for balanced cultural, scientific and technological training; the involvement of the administration, the private sector, companies and workers; and the agreement of all the social agents regarding flexible systems of acknowledging skills.

Drawing inspiration from the principles of integration, foresight, adaptation capacity, flexibility, globalisation, quality, and efficiency, this first plan would seek to respond to the need to integrate vocational qualification and training, the different forms acquiring skills, and the institutional VT course offer in such a way as to form an “integrated system”. Based on a diagnosis of the status of vocational training establishing three fundamental pillars to act on —system coordination and structure, the entrepreneurial world, and VT centres— the system would seek a “beachhead” in a scenario where different realities are evident: the inconvenience of thinking in terms of one and the same job throughout one’s working life; the changes in the classical ways of working; the variations in the training required to perform a job; the transformation in the modes of company organisation; and the perception of jobs in the context of new management models, in which quality, a global perspective of economy, and the demand to project for training requirements are priority thrusts. The Plan formulates the unavoidable challenge of recovering the social value and social roots that have historically characterised it, showing its capacity to provide responses to the needs of the production system, and offering the population a real training alternative with a view to lifelong job placement.

Improvement in vocational training quality levels would call for structural and operational transformations. Cooperation would become a strategic support on which the challenge of radical change in the system sought would depend: cooperation between the administration and the social agents, between the administration and training agents, and between the training agents themselves. The configuration of a network of VT centres, both public and private, responding to training needs from a regulated, global and occupational perspective, and the involvement of VT centre faculty in that collaborative spirit, would turn out to be decisive. The objective of configuring a system endowed with the proper framework and structure, capable of facilitating such a reality, represented the most ambitious of all the goals that the Plan envisioned. This would require “minimal legislation” and completely shape the VT system within what was to become an integrated system, covering what was referred to as the Professional Qualifications System, with a view to achieving training aimed at responding strategically to the challenges raised in this field.

The acknowledgment of administrative sectors, the corporate world, or the job market as a whole, but very specifically those directly responsible for Vocational Training—the centres and faculty—in relation to the “benefits” of Lanbidez, revolve around a very specific question: the establishment of a network of integrated vocational training centres. This would comprise centres offering regulated or initial vocational training as well as occupational and continuous training. There is, in this sense, a dimension of identity, “the identity of VT”, which the Plan underscores, striving for these centres to assume “a ‘driving’ or leadership function”. The fear of exclusion in secondary schools also offering VT studies was resolved in the following way: “the system is backed by a network of centres and the government needs a minimal structure of centres backing it. That network of reinforced VT centres shall offer all the specialisations, supported by the secondary education centres”. An agreement in which representation was shared between both trade unions and entrepreneurs was reached with the public, subsidised and provincial centres, albeit with reservations, to seek a synthesis that was finally achieved with government help: the terms established were no longer those of the network of integrated VT centres, but the network of integrated vocational training centres within the integrated system.

These are some of the functions of the said system: identifying needs in qualification, acknowledgment, and certification of the modes of acquiring skills; providing order, management and organisation in VT training, innovation and development; evaluating and verifying quality; participation, shared responsibility and intervention with regard to social agents; and the integrated planning of VT qualifications (Lanbidez, 1998). These functions called for a structure in which companies and VT centres were

called upon to play a fundamental role in structuring a training course offer in accordance with professional skills criteria, which could take the form of a module catalogue directly linked to the Professional Qualifications System¹. The statement of intentions would be accompanied by an action plan (Lanbidez, 1981) that sought to live up to the objectives it formulated and to a radical transformation of the Basque VT scenario: among others, by creating an Observatory to provide the possibility of studying, analysing and conducting forecasts on the vocational training system, so as to design and implement a Qualifications System in order to improve skill levels, so that these could exert an impact on improving the economy thanks to the improvement of professional qualifications as the result of an improvement in vocational training quality.

The Lanbidez would seek to configure a network of integrated VT centres which, with regard to the productive environment, would respond to the need for the integrated organisation of the vocational training course offer, creating a system of information and orientation by way of approaching the reality of Basque society as a whole². The First Plan also sought to design and initiate an “individual skills file” that would reflect those skills acquired throughout an individual’s working life towards obtaining the pertinent acknowledgment. To do this, it pointed out the convenience of looking towards Europe in the search for applicable formulas. Another vital question reflected in this First Plan is that referring to quality improvement programmes, which, picking up from a tradition started earlier by not a few vocational training as well as public education centres in the 1980s (Intxausti, K.; Elola, J.M.; Larañaga, J.M.; Mujika, I., 2000), sought to improve vocational training quality by dealing with issues such as upgrading teachers and including workplace training under the aegis of the integrated VT centres, which were to undertake the task of designing, organising and managing the pertinent courses. Moreover, Lanbidez would stress the need to implement “a management system based on the VT Total Quality Model”, disseminating the benefits attributed to it and thus attracting both centres and teachers to this way of understanding improvement. This would be a central question in the universe of Basque vocational training to such a point that the First Plan initiated the shaping of a reality – Sarramona even talks about a Basque quality model that pioneered nationwide (Sarramona, J., 2003), and which, in a relatively short

¹ The integrated VT centres would be the institutions taking charge of this training course offer, which fact gave rise to a certain fear among the trade unions (Minutes of the Basque Vocational Training Council Permanent Committee, 21 March 1997).

² The need to establish a training framework facilitating the collaboration between VT centres and companies while adjusting training to the requirements of the environment and exchanging services also emerges reinforced.

time, would be consolidated, showing the coherent line of development linking this to the Second Basque Vocational Training Plan.

The Lanbidez action plan would cover the initial training programmes, for which it was projected that Regulated Vocational Training was to be linked to regional and local development, requiring the involvement of the social agents from the surroundings, and the pertinent endowments in equipment, venues, means and teaching materials necessary. The workplace training plan represented a fundamental pillar that the Plan would resolve to guarantee effective and real learning in actual production settings. The chance for Regulated VT to be offered remotely was also another of the possibilities covered by the action plan as an alternative to combining in-person education and distance learning, while the “professional achievements” of the adult population were to be acknowledged by certifying vocational modules based on work experience. Non-regulated initial training would also be a focus of attention under the Lanbidez in terms of seeking the job placement of youth who, lacking a degree, would require the necessary qualifications³. The Plan envisions different measures (vocational initiation imparted in educational centres, a vocational initiation and “trade school” workshop programme, and the “vocational workshop” modality) seeking to facilitate access to the intermediate training cycles and achieve vocational qualifications for the job market, or providing responses for those with difficulties in adapting to school and job environments. To conclude the chapter on the action plan, we must mention efforts related to the continuous training programmes which, assessing the relevance of lifelong training, cover cases ranging from workers on unemployment⁴ to programmes for upgrading employed workers that can resolve their deficiencies in vocational training, calling for a facilitation of training processes in circumstances of active employment.

This First Basque Vocational Training Plan devotes a specific chapter to the question of quality and evaluation and establishes that the VT centres themselves shall assume responsibility for their management and improvement, also with regard to their adaptation to the needs of the job market from the viewpoint of production as well as employment, and the Basque society demand for training and qualification. This entailed overcoming the traditional concept of vocational training in favour of a more flexible position that would facilitate adjustment of the course offer to the

³ Abandonment of the educational system without having obtained a minimum qualification and the existence of a large group of youth without qualifications represented a very serious problem that this First Plan aimed to confront.

⁴ We do not use the phrase “*on dole*” due to its disparaging connotation, which can attribute responsibility for the situation being suffered to the workers themselves.

surroundings of each centre with a view to economic development and employment. This is an element that illustrates an issue constantly raised by the agents (institutions, professionals, social agents) who have attested to it: the relevance of VT centres, not just as training institutions but as agents of economic and social development (Navarro, M., 2014). Teacher qualification was one of its fundamental quality factors, and the Lanbidez stipulated the need to attract faculty towards the improvement of quality in their teaching/learning methods. In the BAC, a higher number of hours is set aside for in-house training, and the teaching staff was to avail of the orientations pertinent in all the modules (Intxausti, E., 1996). The Lanbidez provided for an evaluation of the entire system in which the VT centre was the fundamental focus, and this would assess the training process in the centres, the training taking place in work centres, the validity of qualifications, the degrees themselves, and the skills of the working population. To achieve this, the convenience of implementing a management model in each centre was considered, entailing in turn the involvement of the professionals assuming responsibility for such training in order to evaluate the levels of quality progressively obtained. The Plan opted for the EFQM management model (formulated by the European Foundation for Quality Management), understood as allowing for an accurate evaluation of each centre to orient its activity in the direction desired.

The effort in terms of budget that implementing the Plan entailed provoked debate within the Basque Vocational Training Council, with members formulating their different positions; but if anything became evident, it was their agreement on the demand to require the transfer of both the funds and the necessary competence. It was agreed for the BAC to assume the costs for those matters that lay exclusively within its competence (issues referring to regulated education, personnel, VT centre operation, etc.), but in matters regarding continuous and occupational vocational training, dependent on different administrations, it “shall guarantee”, in any case, that requirements in financial resources would be satisfied.

On another hand, the need for a regulatory framework reflecting the overall system of vocational training and striving to legally cover the different educational and occupational areas comprising it is palpable. This would require the timely execution of transfers and restrict the scope of public administration competence. It would be significant to mark the differences between matters for which the BAC had a limited margin of manoeuvrability; constitutional, legal and regulation requirements proper to the legal and political framework of the context; and those other structural and organisational issues conclusively assumed for the sake of the better application and development of the “VT model adopted” (Lanbidez, 1981). Although it acknowledged the limits of its legal capacity and confirmed the non-execution of transfers, the Lanbidez nonetheless af-

firmed its sufficient authority with regard to the construction of a regulatory structure with a view to activating this First Basque Vocational Training Plan – more precisely, in relation to structural and organisational matters⁵. This is where the Basque Public School Act opens up clear possibilities of a role in implementing educational reform, particularly through the opportunities offered by non-regulated vocational training. This would require the pertinent legal reform from an organisational standpoint as specifically situated in the Basque environment. The same thing was to happen with regard to the creation of agencies and structures (Unzurrunzaga, E., 2012) specifically conceived in the context of a Basque VT model. The Basque administration response would not be late in coming, and soon, even before the Plan was legally approved in June 1998, it would create the Basque Vocational Training System Observatory and, a little later, the Basque Institute for Qualifications and Vocational Training would also swiftly step in to develop the Professional Skills Accreditation Charter. Likewise, the network of integrated vocational training centres would immediately be formed in the framework of the regulatory development we are referring to.

These centres were reserved a series of significant functions in the progressive structuring of Basque vocational training, turning them into the drivers of a radical transformation. It would likewise fall upon them to mobilise another of the fundamental Lanbidez strategic thrusts, one of the signs of identity peculiar to Basque vocational training: Quality Management. The administration was to play a specific role in disseminating its importance and attracting centres towards quality, apart from including a special module in the training cycles (Hik-Hasi, 1996). The success of dissemination, promotion, consultancy and motivation depended on the centres assuming and applying the pertinent management and evaluation systems. Total Quality —the EFQM model par excellence— was the concept directly issuing from the wellsprings of the production and corporate sectors of the environment, entailing the assumption of this challenge by the centres themselves. This was where the integrated vocational training centres were called upon to play a decisive role⁶.

⁵ Within the Basque Vocational Training Council, there would be those voicing their disagreement with “the express absence of the intention to coordinate this system with a state-based and European counterpart, which would be desirable and urgent” (Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of the Basque Vocational Training Council in plenary session, dated 24 March 1997).

⁶ The leading role of the VT centres with regard to the issue of quality is older than the Plan itself, along with the fact that, by their initiative and with their promotion, projects were developed, either in the private network integrated into HETEL or in the public centres participating in SAREKA. These have acted as stimuli for the entire Basque Vocational Training System.

The preparation of what came to be the First Basque Vocational Training Plan was one of the objectives of the coalition agreement signed for the formation of the Basque government, but such a task would have been sterile without the participation of other institutional agents and regional authorities as well as social agents, and, most especially, both public and subsidised VT centres. These hold the credit for orienting it and underscore the value of the plan as a qualitative leap in the evolution of VT in the Basque Country. Although the debate around the Plan was not free of tensions, the spirit that prevailed in that process was the intention to reach an agreement, and it had favourable support from the Basque government, regional authority representatives, entrepreneurs, UGT as a trade union, and the public and subsidised VT centres⁷. The Basque government highlighted the design and preparation of the First Plan as one of the most outstanding educational achievements approved in the legislation of its time, also underscoring the creation of the Basque Institute for Qualifications and Vocational Training and the Network of Integrated Vocational Training Centres (Consejo Escolar de Euskadi/Euskadiko Eskola Kontseilua, 2001). The Euskadi School Council interpreted its approval as an achievement supplementing the mandate of the reform that gave rise to the OAGES. For VT centres solely imparting vocational training studies, the creation of centres specifically offering such courses, added to their organisation as a network, represented a fundamental milestone, an element strengthening Basque VT as a whole, facilitating more efficient attention to regulated initial training, occupational training and continuous training⁸. This was accepted by public centres, but also by subsidised centres; the existence of such centres forming a network consisting of both types is a unique trait proper to VT in the Basque Country which, moreover, has facilitated closeness to the entrepreneurial world and to society⁹.

The Education, Universities and Research Councillor pointed out the relevance of the First Basque Vocational Training Plan in that it defined

⁷ The abstention of the union, *Comisiones Obreras*, in any case, prevented its unanimous approval. The absence of ELA and LAB prevents us from affirming a total agreement, but neither now nor afterwards was this equivalent to a position of “*rejection*” (Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019).

⁸ Interview with Iñaki Mujika, Donostia, 18 June 2019. In the opinion of Mujika, the construction of this network is what would allow for evolving another reality that uniquely characterises Basque VT; i.e., the collaboration between centres, without discriminating between public and private, and these working together on shared projects. Networking, in any event, along with other realities, as Amondarain demonstrates, is no “invention” of the Plan; rather, previous examples supporting such a move exist, in all fairness, in view of its proven success (Interview with Joseba Amondarain, Donostia, 28 June 2018).

⁹ Interview with Julen Elgeta, Durango, 12 July 2019.

“action of extreme importance”, with the Professional Qualifications System as one of its most outstanding results, after the creation of the Basque Institute for Qualifications and Vocational Training (IVAC, 1999). The Councillor for Justice, Labour and Social Security attested to the value of having approved the *Lanbidez*, in that “it spelled out the beginnings of a process of integrated global change, wide-ranging in its impact on the structure of the three systems of Regulated Vocational Training, Occupational Training and Continuous Training, and in their relation to employment” (IVAC, 1999). The objectives projected in the First Plan were to materialise shortly after approval, giving an indication of up to what point the Basque government perceived it, in the words of the Councillor for Industry, Trade and Tourism, who highlights its “pioneering” character, as “one of the cornerstones of an increasingly effective and efficient training system that generates responses to different groups of interest: companies, workers, social agents, etc... that it brings together” (IVAC, 1999). And those interest groups are precisely the ones underscoring the significance of the Plan. The entrepreneurial fabric saw the Basque Vocational Training Plans and *Lanbidez* in their capacity of initiating fundamental strategic paths as keys that would account for the evolution VT has undergone in the Basque Country¹⁰. The trade unions participating in the preparation of *Lanbidez* also show evident satisfaction about the fact that this was brought about by the consensus between employers and trade unions. *Comisiones Obreras*, even where it abstained from approving the Plan, acknowledged the qualitative leap it spelled out, to the extent that “it begins to formulate the existence of a strategic plan in relation to vocational training”, which would demonstrate “the importance that is sought for vocational training in this country”.¹¹

Speaking in a more institutional key, Arévalo¹² emphasises that the Plan, as well as those that would come after, is backed by the experience of the VT centres and that their success has been directly linked to the

¹⁰ García Bengoa points out that, starting from scratch, the qualitative leap that the Plan represented was significant and underscores the contribution of the entrepreneurial sector from the very outset. Asier Aloria, who held the same office in *Confebask* when this book was being prepared, in addition to pointing out that the different Plans were milestones in what is the history of VT in the BAC —while underscoring its line of unbroken continuity— in the specific case of the First Plan, stresses from among the impressive battery of activities, its thrust towards quality as a language shared by the entrepreneurial world (Interview with Asier Aloria, Bilbao, 1 March 2019). This point is corroborated by the Basque agency for evaluating skills and quality in vocational training (*Agencia Vasca para la Evaluación de la Competencia y la Calidad de la Formación Profesional*, 2008).

¹¹ Interview with Arantxa Martínez, Bilbao, 20 February 2019.

¹² Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Erreterria, 13 April 2019. He highlights the influence that the British model exerted on the Plan as an integrated vocational training model.

participation and collaboration of these centres, a view that Mujika¹³ also stresses, as does the testimony of many other protagonists who lived vocational training in the country “from the inside”. On its part, the Euskadi School Council stresses the value of the Lanbidez diagnosis in order to resolve imbalances between the regulated training course offer and the challenges of economic development and employment, along with its support for quality in training as well as for Total Quality-based management and evaluation systems, in consonance with the interests of the productive sectors. The Council likewise underscores the idea of confronting the problem of young school system dropouts with no training to open the doors of the job market to them (Consejo Escolar de Euskadi/Euskadiko Eskola Kontseilua, 2001). Lastly, we could point out the fact that, years later, in the perspective time brings, with its possibilities of assessment, when the projects of what in principle had been nothing more than the statement of an intention had already materialised, the woman who was to be Councillor for Education in the coalition government formed between the PNV and EA during the 7th legislature, Ángeles Iztueta, would stress the revolutionary nature of this First Basque Plan for vocational training, the achievements of which had earned acknowledgment for Basque VT both in the country and in Europe.

2.2. From Tradition to Innovation: The Second Basque Vocational Training Plan (2004/2007)

The description of the Second Basque Vocational Training Plan gives the precise measure of the spirit behind the new twist on the path to innovation in VT in the Basque Country. Acknowledging a tradition that combines many efforts on the part of diverse institutional, professional and social players, Ángeles Iztueta was to make an express statement in relation to the comparatively high level of quality in BAC vocational training, to the extent that it responded optimally to the needful relationship between the educational system it forms part of and its production sectors (Eusko Jauriaritza/Gobierno Vasco/Basque Government, 2005).

Beyond mere complacency, “our vocational training is among the best in Europe”, the councillor affirms; it would mark the need for continuous improvement as a key to enable effective response to constant social as well as economic changes requiring an incessant capacity to generate flexible quality alternatives, and calling upon us to embrace innovation as a fundamental philosophy of VT. After the radical transformation that vocational training underwent in the Basque Country during the last ten

¹³ Interview with Iñaki Mujika, Donostia, 18 June 2019.

years of the 20th century, and building upon sufficiently consolidated economic and organisational foundations, the dynamism that Basque VT had flaunted was to be obliged to confront new challenges. Acknowledging improvement in the response to the demand for training in terms of professional qualification emanating from the production system, this new Plan points to the strategic need for a state of continual “alert” in relation to detecting training needs, ever-changing in a context of continuous change; the collaboration and coordination of institutional, training, and social agents; and the endowment of structures with a flexible and efficient response capacity. The fabric built up during the ten years prior to the approval of the Plan¹⁴ unquestionably redounded to VT reinforcement in the region. The creation of the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training would enable VT in the region to evolve in a relatively autonomous framework that would mark the path of its development for the following years. On these foundations, the Second Plan would seek to strategically build upon the groundwork of Basque vocational training a structure providing the needed interconnection between knowledge, training and the market, with VT centres in the lead as a strategic thrust, the continuous upgrading of knowhow and educational innovation, and the new technologies (De la tradición hacia la innovación, 2004).

Without breaking with some of the fundamental strategic lines of the Lanbidez (Lanbidez, 1998), the Second Plan would seek to revise and optimise the framework of action that these gave rise to, evaluating its scope and studying the suitability of renovating its working orientations in this sense. Thus, it would revolve around different strategic spheres and orient itself to upgrading and improving Basque VT: the Integrated Qualification and Vocational Training System, the bid for quality, a culture of innovation, and the promotion of the ICTs. The Plan prioritised the upgrade and improvement of the Integrated Qualification and Vocational Training System, which would handle the identification of such skills as were concerned and their integration into the system. To achieve this, the Basque Qualification and Vocational Training Council would take public form “with competence to set and design training policies” (De la tradición hacia la innovación, 2004).

The Basque Vocational Training System Observatory would be required to assume a more strategic role fundamentally based on the reference points of job placement, market analysis and the study of matters

¹⁴ The Basque Vocational Training Council in 1994, *Hobetuz* in 1996, the Basque Vocational Training Observatory in 1998, the Basque Institute for Professional Qualification and Vocational Training in 1998, the Network of Integrated Vocational Training Centres in 1998, the Basque Agency for Skills and Vocational Training Quality Evaluation and the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training and Continuing Education in 2001.

considered decisive from the standpoint of vocational qualification. Based on the objectives set in the Lanbidez, the Institute for Qualifications and Vocational Training prepared a training catalogue during the four years prior to this Second Plan, the validity of which was assessed positively with a view to closing the gap between training and the entrepreneurial demand. This time, the specifications were set from a strategic point of view in which the Institute assumed a more relevant function, investigating the evolution of production modes and determining the manner of transforming professional qualifications, for which it would rely on Observatory collaboration. The Basque Agency for Skills and Vocational Training Quality Evaluation would then assume a new project, developing the “mechanism of acknowledgment, evaluation and certification of non-formal and informal apprenticeships” (De la tradición hacia la innovación, 2004).

The aim was for the integrated VT centres to be configured, no longer as an environment in which mere training functions were fulfilled, but where R+D+i projects were also undertaken. Their potential in terms of both teaching staff and educational and technological resources, and their previous successes and historical development, would enhance the value of their central role in relation to the significance of these components in the context of establishing one uniform training associated to qualification. The integrated VT centres would represent spaces propitious “to conducting R+D+i projects on teaching-learning processes, management models, the application of new technologies, or advanced manufacture” (De la tradición hacia la innovación, 2004). This would specifically be the case of those schools selected to serve as reference centres in terms of each of the occupational groups, centres that would be referential in strategic terms with regard to teacher training in an integrated system of qualification and with regard to the relationship between VT and the workplace. Management flexibility and the funding to go with it, and optimal centre operation and effectiveness, would urgently call for the development of regulation in which the strategic plans formulated would be accompanied by the suitable margin of manoeuvre for the centres, set free from the institutional “corseting” which, in not a few cases, could limit their potential, albeit always under the control and with the participation of social agents who would monitor their activity in the avowed interests of transparency.

In the wake of the experience accumulated since the establishment of the Basque Professional Qualifications System, the Second Plan projected to develop the Catalogue of Qualifications, aspiring to achieve maximum levels of quality. In this context, a report was made on the preparation of the Integrated Modular Training Catalogue, which would respond in terms of the suitability of including new fields of knowledge, also considering a capacity for continuous learning. The Plan also provides for the acknowledgment and assessment of employed workers’ skills through a

series of certifications within the qualification system that would enable them to obtain credentials attesting to their competence. The fundamental question lay in establishing facilitating strategies allowing citizens to integrate continuing education as a fact inherent to the exercise of any job. This would include the vocational training faculty, who would undergo their own continuing education – one of the fundamental keys to open oneself beyond the sphere of regulated training¹⁵ to other fields of training from a renewed and innovative methodological vision. It would also require a logical upgrading from the standpoint of technological knowledge and development, and a framework of action for collaboration with the entrepreneurial world, the university, and technological institutes.

Among the strategic fields contemplated in this Second Plan (*De la tradición hacia la innovación, 2004*), the question of quality comes second, a subject that had already been raised in the Lanbidez. Throughout the following years, internal audits in line with the EFQM model, VT system evaluations by the Basque Agency for Skills and Vocational Training Quality Evaluation, assessments of degree of training optimisation in accordance with the Qualifications System, and external audits by agencies such as Aenor or Euskalit were to be conducted on VT centres. The leading role of the “fledgling” Deputy Councillor’s Office is a development acquiring very significant relevance to the extent that it lumps the different dimensions of the vocational training system together, fully assuming the helm at the forefront of a complex crew. Its central role in the structure of Basque vocational training is what in the end enabled the VT centres to launch the effective fulfilment of what in sum were projections held as advantageous and positive for the country. These were the institutions configured as the focus of attention in the Plan, likewise with a view to quality, acknowledging the “formidable effort” undertaken in order to implement internal quality models and underscoring their achievements. The Plan renews its support for that focus in the context of Total Quality from a standpoint that strives to be demanding, towards a horizon in which VT centres progressively achieve more ambitious standards of management excellence, ongoing improvement, performance evaluation, processes, subject participation, resource use, etc. It is evidently understood that Basque VT must assume “quality as a reference for innovation and continuous improvement” (*De la tradición hacia la innovación, 2004*).

Innovation represents the fundamental strategic pillar on which all the aspirations reflected in the Plan rest and runs through an extensive field: the courses offered in all the vocational training subsystems, their

¹⁵ In any event, regulated training would also be subject to the permanent need to adapt to the continuing transformations taking place in the different production sectors.

design and effective scope in terms of performance and the acquisition of skills, didactic and methodological alternatives, or the degree of efficiency achieved in both schools and workshops, the services they offer the social and economic environment, support services, the management of centres and facilities, professionals, and the subjects in training who comprise them, etc. The continuous improvement of vocational training would require an analysis and evaluation of that vast territory, consolidating the strengths it showed while good practices were detected, and introducing corrections and improvements where the need for these was pinpointed by audits conducted along quality guidelines. This was a scenario in which Basque VT was “the most advanced programme in the country and a cutting-edge example in the European context” (Navarro, M. (Ed.), 2013), but where it could not vainly rest on its laurels without seeking consolidation through the work done by the centres as a network, relying on the fundamental principle of collaboration that characterises Basque VT (De la tradición hacia la innovación, 2004).

Innovation was a subject of express direct concern as the third strategic sphere in the Plan, with the idea of situating it in the framework of a continuous improvement process. It would require a scenario where it could cover a broad spectrum of areas – training processes would call for technological innovation, reconceptualising faculty functions and learning systems, rethinking training itineraries, forecasting the transformations that would call for new readaptation, re-evaluating and enriching the framework of collaboration between VT centres and the business environment, configuring the network of these centres as a knowledge network, etc. Lastly, in view of the strategic importance of VT in the country, the stake in conceiving a “Research, Development and Innovation Centre” must be underscored, the creation of a reference institution for VT centres in which to develop innovation projects: such was the strategic concept that was to materialise shortly after, in 2005, with the creation of Tknika, which was to represent a distinguishing element significantly characterising VT in the BAC from the strategic dimension that we are discussing.

Apart from one last sphere specifically and accurately setting forth financing, the Second Plan would end with a chapter open to diverse issues: technology, equipment, planning, modes of working, teaching materials, expenditure optimisation, VT centre administration, and the use of teaching resources or learning supports. Critical to this was the view that vocational training could benefit considerably from the use of the new technologies for this purpose, bringing in an innovative vision of training, which, when contextualised in what is called the society of information, opens the door to what is known as e-learning. It was not a purely technological question, but one that required the active involvement of centres and training professionals: agents who, in the last analysis, are ir-

replaceable for the purposes of duly exploiting this type of support. In this sense, the attraction of what we mention would lead to faculty training and upgrading in terms of both technology and pedagogy, the endowment of centres with resources and equipment, and the combination of all this in the regional VT network that could well yield the principle intended to drive and distinguish it: collaborative teaching and learning, firmly situated in the context of each VT centre, assuming its place in all of them.

The Second Basque Vocational Training Plan contributes a substantial dimension to the panorama of vocational training in the BAC in comparison to previous periods and spells out a qualitative leap to the extent that it proposes to confront a great challenge: that of innovation (Mujika, I.; Intxausti, K., 2018). This is the element that was to decisively characterise Basque vocational training as a sign of identity, fundamental when talking about a Basque Vocational Training Model. Mujika emphasises the importance of this Second Plan, affirming what we have been saying¹⁶, and Arévalo states that, without waiting for national government, Basque VT went on ahead in that matter; it would even assume a certain leadership, giving more consistency to the idea that innovation uniquely characterises what is defended as the Basque Vocational Training Model: “that Second Plan gave greater coverage to the sphere of training and opened up a new field of consensus with the social agents, the government, the regions – in a new field that, for us, had been previously inaccessible ... innovation”¹⁷.

Deputy Councillor Iztueta has pointed out the intention to come to an agreement which, as happened in the case of the Lanbidez, motivated the process of preparing this Second Plan. Collaboration is one of the elements that evidently characterises Basque VT, appearing as one of the fundamental traits that would help in shaping its specific identity, as for instance would be cited by Confebask at the end of the second decade of 21st century, in identifying “the key to the success of Basque VT and to its acknowledgment in Europe”¹⁸. That collaboration, which not only “is” but “does”, would be seen in the unanimous approval of the Second Plan—once more in the absence of trade unions ELA and LAB—as the result of a process which, departing from the first proposal made by the Office of the Deputy Councillor for VT, assimilated up to 94% of the contributions from the different agents comprising the Council. Comisiones Obre-

¹⁶ Interview with Iñaki Mujika, Donostia, 18 June 2019.

¹⁷ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

¹⁸ Speech of Roberto Larrañaga, Confebask chair, at the Seminar on Vocational Training in Euskadi held in 2019.

ras would assess the effort shown by “all the parties”, pointing out the importance of social agent participation, an opinion shared by the union UGT, which in turn would underscore the visionary nature of the Plan. Business representatives would emphasise the value of its strategic nature, an ambitious dimension, as the regional representatives were to agree, affirming their readiness for the task.

However, perhaps it is necessary to show the position of the vocational training centres as the authentic key capable of opening the doors to the successful culmination of the Plan. Hence, AICE —the association of subsidised centres— would point out the importance of being able to rely on guidelines to orient VT centres in the job. On its side, HETEL, the other association of subsidised centres, would rate the Plan as being a “very good tool for developing vocational training”. Lastly, the representatives from the public centres showed their satisfaction with the level of agreement reached and their readiness to advance along the path of collaboration, understood as fundamental to the progress of Basque VT. The Deputy Councillor herself would issue a statement in very eloquent terms, emphasising the importance of the collaboration between the different institutions, Basque government as well as regional authorities and municipalities, and all the members of the Basque Vocational Training Council, in seeking and achieving agreements to a challenge that was strategic to the Basque Country in a style characterised by “deeds”. Both “doing” and the matters relating to the “style of doing” are elements that have repeatedly been noted by those who gave us their testimony: collaboration, agreements, participation and autonomy in the execution of projects, and the sense of belonging, of spearheading the collective task; in a word, the sense of Country.

If, shortly after the Plan was approved, and after issuing the report for the 2002/2004 period, the Euskadi School Council comes out in favour of “intensifying the development of the Basque VT Plan” (Consejo Escolar de Euskadi/Euskadiko Eskola Kontseilua, 2006), in the following years, it would rate the fact highly that both the Basque government and the Basque institutions had turned vocational training into a focus of preferential attention within the entire educational system, in support of the renowned prestige of VT in the Country: this took the form of financing for the strategic plan as a facilitating element in achieving the objectives projected (Consejo Escolar de Euskadi/Euskadiko Eskola Kontseilua, 2006). However, the creation of Tknika deserves a special mention, as the star objective of the Second Basque Vocational Training Plan, to which the Euskadi School Council devotes noteworthy attention in its report on the status of education for 2006/2008, highlighting its lines of preferential activity, with innovation cutting across all the areas (Consejo Escolar de Euskadi/Euskadiko Eskola Kontseilua, 2006).

2.3. The New Vocational Training as a Country Brand: The Third Basque Vocational Training Plan (2011/2013)

This Third Plan of 2011 was to be approved in a context that was not free of difficulties: the change of government in 2009¹⁹ would mark an evident variation in Basque politics that would have its effects on educational policies, including the sphere of vocational training, while a context characterised by economic globalisation would leave its imprint on one of the essential keys making it possible to understand the situation that the Basque economy was going through – a situation that could not be described as other than critical²⁰. The “single global economic ocean” that the Plan points to as a setting for the crisis and the “imperative” of internationalising the entrepreneurial world are taken as a relevant reference in which Basque VT would have to navigate. Moreover, given the challenge imposed by a context in rapid and radical transformation, a structuring of “successful responses” that would entail cultural modifications would be called for, whereby the need for qualification, entrepreneurship, and continuous training, among other factors, would be the scenarios that Basque VT was to necessarily face (Eusko Jaurlaritza/ Gobierno Vasco/Basque Government, 2011). Successful responses would entail providing the necessary solutions for an ambition: the search for excellence. “Success” would require reaffirming a position which, by then, was able to show a track record in terms of vocational training in the Basque Country: looking towards Europe, a context where requirements for qualification would entail transforming vocational training, and —with a view to “securing personal promotion, employability and social cohesion”— a decided stake in lifelong learning, to be granted the status of law.

The Plan underscores the interest not just in “looking towards” Europe, but participating in a common strategy, which —after the Lisbon 2000 Strategy and its relaunch in 2005— took the form of the Europe 2020 Strategy that left its imprint on the strategic orientation of this Plan.

¹⁹ The Basque Vocational Training Council saw an increase in its activity following the presentation of the action lines of the new government, in the framework of which the objective of achieving an Integrated Vocational Training System may be highlighted (“Memoria del Consejo Vasco de Formación Profesional, 2009”). The change of government was basically the result of the illegalisation of the Abertzale Left and the confluence of the so-called constitutional parties in their desire to dislodge the Basque nationalism of the previous Basque government.

²⁰ An economic recession that crossed borders would have a direct effect on the Country; 2007/08 would mark the onset of a crisis originating in the United States, which nevertheless expanded exponentially, whereby its effects were also felt. There was to be no lack of those pointing out that the Basque Country weathered this storm better than most ... (Aranguren, M.J.; Navarro, M.; Peña, I. 2013; Perez, J. 2013; Letamendia, F. 2012).

From a critical position in relation to its precedents, it formulates the interest in introducing improvements by participating “actively in strategies and processes undertaken on the national and European scale” (Eusko Jaurlaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government, 2011). It assumes the strategic objectives of the European Union as its own, along with those specifically proposed by the Spanish state. In any event, the situation with which the Third Plan begins is very favourable, and a history that makes it possible to talk about the healthy state of VT in the BAC must be kept in mind in view of a simple comparison with other surroundings²¹. In order to strengthen it, the Plan also seeks to introduce corrections in its management. The need to resolve the effects of general underqualification with a view to improving competitiveness, the idea of putting VT in touch with an increasingly older population, the aim of improving social cohesion and confronting the risk of poverty that gives rise to social exclusion, and the requirements of the job market, would demand the modernisation of VT in the Basque Country. Taking the Copenhagen process as a reference point, the objective of which was for VT to “revolve around the need to strengthen cooperation in education and vocational training, seeking the involvement of all the interested parties and working locally as well as regionally, nationally and in the context of Europe” (Morales, J.A., 2010) with a view to the objectives formulated for 2020, modernising VT in the region would entail the use of qualification systems. This would make it possible to face the obstacle represented by the different fragmented modes of certifying and accrediting professional skills, to the benefit of developing a solid vocational training system that enabled the recognition of diverse training alternatives, attending to the needs of the subjects immersed in these training processes and the requirements of the job market.

VT modernisation would also entail strengthening those elements that made it attractive to the population. Its lines of action would be based on three principal factors: the choice of attractive training itineraries in the setting of institutions characterised by the quality of the training they provide and its management; the balance between the prospects for training, employability and job adaptation; and economic incentives through pricing, assistance, tax incentives, and so forth. This would require the potential subjects of such options to avail of the pertinent information offering the adoption of efficient measures from the viewpoint of their professional orientation. The extreme fragmentation currently existing in this sense provoked the lack of positive results, which could be resolved by combin-

²¹ By far, Basque vocational training graduation rates are the best in the country, without mentioning the highly positive outcomes of the VT mechanism for acknowledging skills and the positive opinions that Basque companies express.

ing the different units into an integrated system (La nueva FP, marca de País, 2011); the Plan thus reflected a proposal in the form of a technical board which could remedy that need, and which would require the participation of social agents and VT centres coordinated by the Basque government. In regard to the modernisation of vocational training, the Third Plan stressed the importance of quality in teaching and an optimal professionalisation of the persons assuming the direct task of training, which entailed acknowledging the difficulties that the faculty face in an increasingly demanding context. This kind of demand exceeded the traditional role of a teacher, and the training of professional faculty would have to cover highly diverse areas – social inclusion, innovation and entrepreneurship; research; relations with companies; initial training and continuing education; multilingualism; governance, etc. From a pedagogical and didactic perspective, the focus of interest was the student as the central element around which the training process revolves, requiring flexibility in methodological terms, without in any case overlooking the link to be established with the community environment and the entrepreneurial world, the training requirements of which would have to be met.

With ET2020 serving as framework, the Third Basque Vocational Training Plan merely maintained a line of continuity in relation to the strategic overall traits characterising the period that began with the Lanbidez. If anything, it added the upgrade required by the new times or even incorporated some changes in orientation, based on the balance drawn from previous policies and the challenges identified. Isabel Celaá, Deputy Councillor for Education, would state the significance of the efforts deployed by the Basque Vocational Training Council and highlight the fact that “something dormant for several years” had been activated, clearly referring to the policies of the previous Basque government from an evidently critical position, and allowing for proper connection “with the contemporary needs of vocational training”. The Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training was also very critical of the action taken by the previous government, albeit not in relation to VT, about which she held a very good opinion: in contrast to what was happening nationwide, she pointed out the existence of a network of centres in touch with the territory and its reality, characterised by their quality and well-equipped in terms of facilities, which maintained a “relationship with the productive sector”, a fact that would constitute “the essence of our difference”²². Her view differed notably from the orientation of the previous government’s Office of the Deputy Councillor in matters relating to centre financing, the lethargy of the Basque Vocational Training Council, which had been left to “languish”, talking about “a standstill phase throughout the entirety of

²² Interview with José Carlos Crespo, Santander, 18 July 2019.

vocational training”. Indeed, the Third Basque Vocational Training Plan did not continue from the Second Plan, the validity of which was set for 2004/2007, and, in her opinion, responded to an evident vacuum.

From a viewpoint that is not strictly political, the value of the Third Basque Vocational Training Plan is perceptible to the extent that it would reinforce the work begun with Tknika (Astigarraga, E.; Agirre, A.; Carrera, X., 2017), which was none other than a result of the Second Plan and the efforts subsequently deployed. However, it remains curious that the Office of the Deputy Councillor for VT would maintain a certain position of mistrust regarding the activity of Tknika, in addition to “the eagerness to internationalise”, another of the thrusts most enthusiastically undertaken by the previous authorities in the office,²³ which the Basque Knowledge Institute for Vocational Training (IVAC/EEI) identifies, along with other elements —the Integrated Vocational Training System, the relationship with the production sector, etc.— as one of the strengths of VT in the BAC in its most innovative dimension (IVAC/EEI, 2013). The Basque Vocational Training Council evaluated the Third Plan and highlighted the relevance of fundamental considerations to be integrated into its areas: a). in view of the need to adapt it to the transformations taking place in production and management, training would necessarily require the effective participation of economic and social agents; b). it required a network facilitating information and guidance to disseminate the VT course offer in terms of qualification and professional training; c). the acknowledgment of both formal and informal learning would require systems to be activated in order to respond to the training requirements of the production system; and lastly, d). the evaluation and monitoring that would facilitate analysis of the relevance of what the VT centres implemented would require the incorporation of systems making them possible, to be applied from the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training and Continuing Education.

Consensus and the spirit of collaboration were key elements around which the Plan revolved, something pointed out by Gemma Zabaleta, Basque government Deputy Councillor for Employment and Social Affairs, who would also stress the importance of an old and sought-after claim such as achieving the transfer of the policies that were active in this context. In this sense, the agreements reached by both the departments and the government as a whole would acquire value to the extent that the efforts of the different social agents, entrepreneurs and trade unions were once more united with those of the vocational training centres. The harmony between the positions of the Basque government and the trade unions UGT

²³ Interview with José Carlos Crespo, Santander, 18 July 2019.

and CCOO would be evident in the light of the opinions expressed by their representatives in the Basque Vocational Training Council, a harmony shared by the corporate representatives who would point out that the Third Plan resolved a problem of lack of direction in Basque VT after a spell in “orphan” status. The subsidised centres would point to the uncertainty that had arisen among them for some time already, an uncertainty that the Plan, to be unanimously approved, would resolve, in the sense that the VT centres—including public institutions—had been demanding a “document”; i.e., the Plan that would enable them to join strategic planning “thus aligning us all in one and the same direction”.

2.4. Towards a Different VT: The Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan (2014/2017)

Even before the timeline for the implementation of the previous Plan had run out, the new government elected in 2012 would approve a calendar of fourteen strategic plans to table for the legislature, among them the Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan, “Towards a Different VT”. Together with the other plans, vocational training was to be contemplated as one of the spheres of prioritised action in view of its strategic importance to the region. In a new political context²⁴, the presence of a certain spirit of recovering the helm of vocational training in the BAC was undeniable²⁵. The new government understood that “vocational training is a critical factor in the competitiveness of a country and as such should form part of the strategic policy in government policies” (Lehendakaritza / Presidency and Coordination, 2014), and that the economic crisis continuing to beset the country required re-

²⁴ The impossibility of agreements between those who facilitated a change of parties in government radically different from the preceding team and their subsequent rupture was complicated by the final conclusion of ETA armed activity and the premature elections that brought the PNV back to government.

²⁵ The early elections themselves made it impossible for the preceding government to implement the Plan, with the economic crisis weighing heavily upon it (Interview with José Carlos Crespo, Santander, 18 July 2019), precisely in an environment that had traditionally enjoyed generous financing. It is also certain that not a few players and agents in the world of Basque VT were very critical about what the Socialist legislature did or did not do. At HETEL, it was interpreted to mean that the Third Basque Vocational Training Plan contributed nothing outstanding (Interview with Julen Elgeta, Durango, 12 July 2019). Highly critical, Intxausti (Interview with Kike Intxausti, Donostia, 6 May 2019) decried the loss of autonomy by VT centres. Arévalo alleges the existence of a paralysing attitude in the Basque government (experienced with anxiety by not a few VT sectors in the BAC) that even resulted in the total paralysis of Tknika, threatened by closure (Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 28 March 2019).

sponses from, among others, the field of training, to facilitate recovery thanks to capacity-building and employability for the citizenry, coupled with the resulting competitiveness of the different sectors in the Basque economy. The Basque government was to set itself the obligation to transform Basque VT, albeit the philosophy behind this transformation would go beyond being just another step in the succession of plans to assume positions in facing a categorical demand: “Euskadi must reinvent its Vocational Training” (Eusko Jauriaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government, 2013).

Before implementation of the Third Plan had ended, the Basque government presented the *Euskadi 2015 Strategic VT Agenda* (Eusko Jauriaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government, 2013) to blaze inroads to this transformation, setting the roadmap for vocational training in the BAC for the years to come. The preparation of a new Vocational Training Plan represented the first of its priorities, as the framework for a scenario in which to seek VT “reinvention”. Even confronted by the limits defined by basic national regulations in such regard²⁶, the purpose of the Fourth Basque Plan would be “to advance in consolidating a Basque Vocational Training Model” (General Secretariat of the Presidency. Directorate for Coordination, 2014). It was projected as an instrument for orienting the transformation of the Basque VT system that would situate it as a future international reference (*Hacia una FP diferente*, 2014). There was a broad agreement around the perception of the Fourth Plan as a turning point in the historical evolution of Basque VT: if the first of the Plans had initiated the strategic path with respect to the future of vocational training in the BAC, the Fourth Plan represented a radical transformation that would receive acknowledgment, not just in the country, but also internationally, as a model distinguished for its innovative character. The previous plans bore witness of a continuous transformation, supported by great economic effort and, in particular, the decided involvement of VT centres and their faculty, which assumed a position of strength in a scenario of crises and continuous changes. It is in this scenario where Basque VT was to demand a new and ambitious step based on its strengths, albeit without overlooking the need for continuing renovation, for which reason the Fourth Plan was conceived as an instrument for its orientation, seeking to “conclusively” situate the Basque VT system “as an international reference in vocational training”.

²⁶ Since the approval of the OAQIE—a law questioned by practically the entire political spectrum of the BAC and practically the entire universe of vocational training in the region (institutions, social agents, VT centres and faculty)—the fear of a retrocession that could totally destroy a reality considered a model even by international authorities is something we cannot help but underscore very particularly.

Taking the Europe 2020 Strategy (European Commission, 2020) as a reference point, the Plan sought to respond to the challenges imposed by a period characterised by accelerated global transformations with excellent effects on corporate competitiveness and citizen employability. This required a radical metamorphosis in the Basque Vocational Training System itself that would cover several dimensions: training orientation, innovation, entrepreneurship, internationalisation and the vocational training centre network (*Hacia una FP diferente*, 2014). This Plan aspired to consolidate and strengthen the transformation of VT, to be undertaken in the form of a future Basque Country Vocational Training Act. These were the principles on which it was based, giving an indication of the philosophy that was to sustain it: a) an integrated approach to vocational training, b) the individual as a fundamental objective, c) a bid for knowledge and innovation, d) long-term sustainability and short-term results, e) closeness to companies, f) social responsibility and environmental commitment, g) experimentation, h) the focusing of efforts, i) coordination and collaboration. The objective of the Fourth Plan rests on these pillars: “to benefit the employability of all individuals in Euskadi, women and men, while at the same time strengthening the competitiveness of the Basque productive sector” (*Hacia una FP diferente*, 2014).

There are two strategic fields that take on special relevance in the context of the Plan: that relating to integrated training and that related to the strategic thrusts of the vocational training centres. The pillars for the former are specialised training and its value in terms of employability – training that requires the development of a new model for centres, strengthening them in their response capacity in terms of the autonomy and flexibility of operation called for, and requiring their transformation into knowledge units of advanced management “incorporating competitive intelligence processes and empowering their creativity and constructive thinking” (*Hacia una FP diferente*, 2014). A network of specialised public and subsidised centres would be configured which, in their respective fields of production and innovation, would allow for a strategic response supporting the different production sectors and helping in specific projects. A line cuts across the strategic fields of this Fourth Plan, highlighting its most important pillar – i.e., the undoubtedly axial role played by VT centres and the magnitude of their mission. The Plan did not “initiate” such recognition for the value of VT centres, since many of these, along with their faculty, had been demonstrating their leadership in transforming vocational training in the BAC for decades, from the viewpoint of its strategic function. If anything, the Plan sought to consolidate and strengthen, apart from extending, that leading role to the entire network of VT centres.

VT centres are conceived as fundamental nuclei, with a view to innovation in the companies whose collaboration is sought as core agents

for stimulating entrepreneurship—even developing entrepreneurship projects— or as essential pillars in the Basque VT system striving to be launched internationally. Beyond their role in training for employment, these would be conceived as agents providing technical services, executing applied research projects, and participating in projects for innovation, company creation, or territorial strategy development (Navarro, M., 2014).

The Plan envisioned a management, monitoring and evaluation model resulting from collaboration between the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training and the Directorate of Coordination of the General Secretariat of the Presidency (Informe de la Dirección de Coordinación de la Secretaría General de la Presidencia, 2014). Governance for the Plan was seen as a necessary vessel in the voyage to be undertaken, and would attempt to coordinate the collaboration of different Basque government departments (Education, Employment, and Economic Development) as well as an operative dimension, for which a committee to manage the Plan would be formed, composed of diverse agencies: the Basque Agency for Skills and Vocational Training Quality Evaluation, the Basque Institute for Qualifications and Vocational Training, and Tknika (*Hacia una FP diferente*, 2014). In addition, this would require a monitoring and evaluation system to provide a satisfactory response to the requirements set by the Basque government, while reflecting the contribution made based on an evaluation of the Third Plan, towards urging “the inclusion of evaluation and monitoring systems into the programmes implemented by the Office of the Deputy Councillor and the vocational training centres” (Informe de la Dirección de Coordinación de la Secretaría General de la Presidencia, 2014). It covered impact indicators facilitating the evaluation of Basque vocational training development in relation to the European context, and activity indicators facilitating the accurate measurement of achievement with regard to objectives, and performance on the action lines of the Plan.

In summary, the Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan, which sought to be “one of the pillars driving growth in the Basque economy, intelligent, sustainable and inclusive” (Arévalo, J., 2015), with a well-defined horizon of improving business competitiveness and citizen employability in the Basque Country, entailed not merely reaching the summit in a process of scaling the peaks of Basque vocational training in that strategic vision to which we have been referring, but blazing new trails in the search for a future to be discovered. If the stake of the Second Basque Vocational Training Plan in innovation could be seen in terms of incremental innovation, this Fourth Plan represented a great leap from a strategic global perspective, aimed at exploiting the potential of Basque VT centres

in terms of their capacity to beneficially affect the industrial fibre of the region, already speaking from a vantage of disruptive innovation²⁷.

The Plan did not cease to generate uncertainty (Informe de la Dirección de Coordinación de la Secretaría General de la Presidencia, 2014) and an evident degree of complexity was perceptible. Still, it is not less true that the development of VT in the BAC on its path to the transformation of the vocational training system itself would pass for “the audacity to dare”. Nevertheless, this audacity would be based on the proven strength of an acknowledged historical track record making it possible to close in on a future still to be written; that would be the key to this new vision of innovation, an innovation to be grafted onto “a new model, supported by what the Strategic Agenda had already set in motion; this is the combined model of vocational training – i.e., not just as vocational training, in reference to regulated training and job training, but rather, as a model containing training, innovation and entrepreneurship in one total package”²⁸.

In view of the evident risks that such an undertaking would entail for the future, it would be ill-advised to confuse audacity with recklessness, such as was expressed by diverse administration officials and social agents. The fact is, that one of the key points of the Plan itself was to be the VT centres and, of course, their faculty, who, in the light of the circumstances existing, would decide to confront new challenges. This is where the confidence—the real capacity for self-management by the centres, the networking, with collaboration between the centres themselves and between these and the companies in the environment, or the effective acknowledgment of their social significance— would make it possible to handle the challenges of service delivery, innovation, creativity, new project start-ups, continuous improvement, etc. The agreement between the associations representing the VT centres is absolute, such that we could talk about a shared feeling of belonging to one and the same network. The satisfaction and expectation awakened by the approval of the Plan is shared by institutional agents, including the representatives of provincial authorities and the social agents, each party from their specific point of view, in the confidence of its optimum development and in the conviction—along the horizon of “empowering and relaunching the Basque Vocational Training

²⁷ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

²⁸ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019. That idea of innovation contained what was called “applied innovation”, a subject that awakens evident mistrust, if not direct rejection by trade union representatives. Although the affinity to some extent or other between the government and Confebask is something that all the unions underscore, the most evidently critical is possibly ELA, directly accusing the Basque government of abandoning what effectively should have been the purpose of vocational training, which is patently an educational goal (Interview with Xabier Irastorza, Bilbao, 4 June 2019).

System”— that this represents “a critical tool in leaving the crisis behind”. We could add, in our opinion, that it would not be exaggerated to affirm that the crisis would not be left behind—a vain illusion— but that it is in the crisis where VT has to show its worth, by continuously confronting it. In this context, as a fundamental thrust of the Plan, work had to be done towards a horizon: competitive innovation in the key of cooperation²⁹.

2.5. The Wave of the Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan and its Continuity

The Fourth Basque VT Plan formulated progression along the path of consolidating a Basque Vocational Training Model, for which purpose it was projected to act as an instrument beyond its period of validity. This was the reason behind the need to aspire for the approval of a specific Basque law on the particular sphere of vocational training in 2018. Doing so in relation to the Fifth Basque Vocational Training Plan of 2019 (Eusko Jaurlaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government, 2019)—in Arévalo’s words, merely the result of the need that spurred implementation of the Fourth Plan— only advances along the vision of innovation, since this is more of a supplement to the previous plan than a new project, albeit this time from a disruptive point of view, in the vision that began with the Fourth Plan³⁰.

The Vocational Training Act would respond to the need to implement the Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan, making the drafting of a broad, specifically Basque legal framework undeferrable. The legislation current in the BAC would need to be fleshed out by structuring a specific law on the area of vocational training: legislative development was required that would enable “Euskadi to be capable of situating itself in ideal circumstances in the new economic model that Europe is aiming for, promoting an economy based on smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, while at the same time reinforcing the creation of stable quality employment for the purpose, which will allow for greater social cohesion”.

The law did not have the support of all the political parties represented in the Basque Parliament. It was promoted by the PNV/PSE coalition government and backed by the PP, whereas Podemos and EH Bildu rejected it. Previously, the bill proposed by EH Bildu had been rejected to the extent—in the opinion of the political parties comprising the Basque government—that it lacked legal security and challenged what different

²⁹ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

³⁰ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

Basque and national basic laws stipulated on the matter. The act was presented by its promoters as a strategic bid and sought to respond to a need already detected in the implementation framework of the Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan. It was seen by the administration as the legal corpus that this required, combining apprenticeship in applied innovation (Navarro, M., 2018) and active entrepreneurship into a vocational training model. In addition, it aimed to resolve the question of regulation required by the regional job market by supplementing that requirement with the Lifelong Learning Act. The pursuit of international status was also a topic of preferential attention in terms of a broad spectrum of types of intervention: faculty and student exchanges, an international course offer, and the “export” of knowhow and experience with a view to developing vocational training systems in other countries. Moreover, the law dealt with two elements that were already distinctive in the succession of Basque Vocational Training Plans, specifically beginning with the second, and reaching a peak in the fourth: “the need to promote the conduct of research about vocational training and the development of innovation and improvement processes in terms of course offer, and, in general, of the vocational training system”.

We cannot help but mention two fundamental matters that have characterised Basque VT throughout this long period, which the different policies implemented within vocational training in the Basque Country have not managed to resolve, perhaps because these have not been dealt with from a strategic viewpoint: the linguistic question and the “absence” of women. The law seeks to combat “the gender, affective or sexual stereotypes affecting the continuity of studies, overcoming traditional gender profiles”. It is undeniable that the lack of female students in VT courses is one of the weaknesses shown by vocational training in the BAC. And it is surprising that this question has not been handled from a strategic viewpoint, beyond advertising efforts aiming to attract women to that male or, better said, masculinised territory.

The linguistic dimension acquires a relevance that cannot be overlooked, although it does not extend beyond the historically marginal presence of Euskera in Basque vocational training³¹. This weakness is one of the realities that repeat themselves year after year, and VT has been an exception in the process of normalising Euskera in the educational system of the BAC. Hence, the Vocational Training Act would set itself the objective of “guaranteeing the normal presence of the Basque language in the voca-

³¹ In an attempt to reverse this situation, however, initiatives such as LANEKI in the VT centres themselves, or the creation of the Jakinbai platform and the EIMA programme must be pointed out.

tional training system” and formulates the advisability of “adapting the implementation of linguistic models to the peculiarities and demands of vocational training and the corporate world”. Conscious of the “break with the exercise of linguistic options frequented in previous phases”, the law formulates the need for express linguistic planning in VT and the adoption of measures oriented towards resolving this problem in diverse areas.

It also deals with the presence of other languages in the universe of the professional world, particularly English. Multilingualism would become central to educational processes in Basque VT, and the law would point out that the inclusion of foreign languages was to be a priority objective, to the extent that learning them was understood to form part of the professional training that reality would require.

The approval of the Fifth Plan obliges us to see it as an “extension of the Fourth Plan”³²: as the Fifth Plan itself reflects, this “continues to be valid and the lines of action marked out continue to be implemented wholesale”. The Fourth Industrial Revolution generates the need to adapt vocational training to what the Fourth Plan sought to give a new character, by reinforcing its “capacity for anticipation and disruption” (Irekia, 2019). A social context in incessant change, subject to continuous transformation, requires the capacity to adapt and even anticipate the inevitability of a predominant reality. Hence, the need for a new tweak in the improvement of Basque vocational training, aimed at developing creative and talented subjects capable of treading the paths of innovation around which the future would be written. A running theme repeated particularly and with more insistence in the Fourth Plan is that of competitiveness and the advancement of the Basque production sectors, along with the employability of citizens, a segment for which vocational training holds undeniable strategic importance.

Basque VT is confronting new challenges that will accompany the technologies becoming undeniably omnipresent in the area of Industry 4.0, generating disruptive changes in production models or in the services themselves. Disruptive innovation from here on appears as an inexorable horizon propelled by the Basque business sector and the Basque government itself, a vision which, although not resolving the uncertainty accompanying this new reality, seeks to take advantage of the opportunities this creates. From a strategic standpoint committed to economic reactivation and employment, in which training figures as one of the cross-cutting thrusts of such a bid (Eusko Jaurlaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government, 2017), the Fifth Vocational Training Plan acquires a significance in coherence with the historical track record of Basque VT. It places

³² Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

us before the mirror of a model which, if it has known how to take a positive position in relation to both the country and the world for a protracted period of time, it has done so precisely as the subject of continuous reflection, in the light of challenges persistently arising that demand responses from the training perspective. The need to adapt the Basque Vocational Training System would persist in what is and has been the backbone of the system: the VT centres. These would have to be projected for the future and designed not only as facilitators of cut-and-dried knowhow, but as entities capable of understanding and harnessing “what is to come” in order to orient training in that direction. The uncertainty and preoccupation that this generates would require VT centres to prepare and train subjects to face situations in continuous and fluctuating transformation which, for that very reason, pose a problem. Collaborative learning becomes a fundamental and critical strategy that will open the doors to competitive innovation, a principle that already clearly characterised the Fourth Plan, and which this other case only reaffirms. Evidently, this would require VT centres to have a new vision of themselves in the sense of evolving towards a defined direction: turning into High-Performance Centres (Ethazi).

Chapter III

Innovation as a Basque Vocational Training sign of identity

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This chapter will deal with one of the core themes in the Basque Vocational Training Model: innovation. It is an extensive subject that deserves full treatment due to its importance. This way, we can seek to synthesise the keys to innovation as a distinguishing feature of Basque Vocational Training. For that purpose, we have used a presentation having to do with the other chapters on companies and the evolution of the centres, although what we shall stress here concerns quality, entrepreneurship, creativity and the drive to go international. All these are subjects of relevance if we put them in the context of the strategic dimension promoted by the administration and the capacity for involvement in a series of innovative projects promoted by training and innovation centres such as Tknika.

3.1. Perspectives on Innovation in Vocational Training

One of the recurrent themes in approaching the analysis of vocational training in the Basque Country is the importance acquired by the issue of innovation in every sense, so much so that it seems to be one of the most characteristic features identifying the educational model. It is true that, starting in 2005 with the creation of Tknika, innovation in the vocational training of the Basque Country precisely took the form of what is called an innovation centre, and from that time on, this marked a new type of relationship intervening between the educational centres, training, and the innovation centre.

In referring to educational innovation, a distinction may be made between certain planes that give it different meanings based on the premises involved in each case. Thus, *individual and group innovations* are those relating to classrooms and courses, and directly respond to the needs of students and professional issues. Their modes of learning are based on

seminars for students, laboratory simulations, etc.; then, *discipline-related initiatives* are usually sponsored by professional associations and groups, covering the contents they propose; *innovations in education through technological media* usually deal with taking advantage of the new technologies and acquiring or developing material associated to these; *innovations provoked by curricula* are implemented to satisfy the needs of the modular and/or semesterly models and to adjust to content changes in the study areas as well as interdisciplinary developments; and, lastly, *institutional initiatives* include different regulatory decisions and professional development processes (Hannan, A. & Silver, H., 2005). We thus see how the term “innovation” varies within the educational system depending on its objectives, and at the same time, we become familiar with its definitions and observe that those different planes of innovation characterise the interrelationship of different agents, curricula, etc.

On another hand, if we take the definition given by institutional agents such as ministries, councils, or the CEDEFOP, we see that the combination of elements coming into play in defining innovation varies substantially. Therefore, we can affirm that these are very specific definitions applied to the proposals of agencies involved in vocational training, but that they project a sufficiently accurate image of what we could call a “culture of innovation”, very deeply rooted not just in the production system, but also in education, and very specifically in vocational training. Thus, majority of the definitions agree that the term “innovation” refers to a process of change and, as such, there will always be individuals ready to take on the challenge. This broad concept of innovation will enable us to approach other types of innovation quite frequently found in vocational training, such as *didactic innovation* and *technological innovation*, which have to be in constant evolution, adapting to social changes driven by competitive and polyvalent training.

The European Commission said as much in Riga (Latvia) in 2015 when it stated that innovation should be the principle behind modernising vocational training. Thus, the European policy on vocational training promotes innovation at all levels in different forms, such as new methods of learning, the use of technology, or the application of new financing mechanisms. In addition, it promotes greater cooperation in learning on the job, particularly that between vocational training and higher education institutions, research agencies and companies (CEDEFOP, 2015). In this sense, vocational training is understood as a stimulating factor for economic innovation, shown by the examples of The Netherlands, France or Denmark; as well as social innovation, as in Germany, with its programmes for special needs youth placement; and the furtherance of inclusive and tolerant societies, as in Lithuania and Estonia. In sum, a great

part of Europe understands the need to find new forms of cooperation. “Innovation consists of cooperating with new allies and finding fresh ideas that can generate new contacts” (CEDEFOP, 2015). This happens in research, in other educational levels, and in companies. Consequently, reformulations of the teaching curriculum in vocational training and the renovation of evaluation methods are other challenges assumed by many European countries in their search for innovation with which to face the future.

Nevertheless, if we refer to the objectives of innovation in vocational training, we also observe a combination of elements having to do with scientific and technical research, collaborative culture, the inclusion of gender equality, continuous training, faculty training and strengthening, internationalisation, technological development, faculty and student mobility, acknowledgment for innovative and entrepreneurial activity, the promotion of applied research, the transfer of knowledge, or the strengthening of projects creating small and medium enterprises.

With regard to innovation in the sphere of the projects conducted in vocational training centres, a very important element is emphasised in the form of the collaboration between the centres applying this teaching model, companies, and the public administration, such that one of its basic objectives is for vocational training studies to contribute to sustainable economic development and social welfare. To this end, all vocational training centres must be able to participate in research, innovation and experimentation projects, and such projects must develop into systems integrating didactic and technological innovation in vocational training studies. Lastly, such vocational training centre projects must present another set of objectives related to the culture of entrepreneurship, the establishment of stable collaboration networks between companies, the development of personal and social skills in students, and relations with enterprises with a view to promoting the continuing education of the faculty.

In addition to these definitions proposed by the agencies and institutions in the sphere of vocational training, the concepts held by some of the subjects interviewed for this study stressing the successes achieved in orienting the work of vocational training professionals in the Basque Country also serve to clarify the matter. In the area of internships and diverse experiences in different fields of vocational training, some of those interviewed pointed out interesting nuances that help us better grasp what was understood by innovation. In this sense, Jorge Arévalo sets forth different approaches from a more time-based perspective, giving innovation a meaning in terms of his own life path:

Then, in 2001, I began to think, why did vocational training not go into innovation? This was to be the second rupture we created. If quality then was already a big issue, the second leap was to be innovation¹.

In the same way, the introduction of innovation in the centres and the involvement of the educational administration entailed a change of mentality requiring not a little effort:

Then the Second Plan had to cover applied innovation and, within that applied innovation was how we were to work with innovation in the centres and how we were to improve centre operation².

This proposal was reinforced by a solid theoretical approach. It was not about introducing innovation, but rather, defining the most appropriate type of innovation. Hence, Arévalo himself develops his discourse by describing the type of innovation implemented in the Second Plan:

An innovation described as incremental. There are two types: incremental innovation; i.e., based on improvement (if I have something and I improve it, then I have something else). This, then, is innovation, albeit supported by improvement. Or disruptive innovation: I do something I haven't done before and I add it to what I was doing. We opted for incremental innovation, and we chose well, because with disruptive innovation, we might not have been able to achieve that leap ... and we went on developing that entire field, and from there we developed a new field of innovation and we thought, what could we innovate in the centres?³

The practical application of these concepts to innovation was to come with the Second Plan mentioned and the creation of Tknika in 2005. Hence, its creation might be understood on another plane of innovation, with the collaboration of other agents:

A Tknika in which the idea is that of innovation, of the faculty, of anticipating what might foreseeably come as needs from new companies and new technologies⁴.

Thus, this innovation begins by looking to the future, based on three elements:

¹ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

² Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

³ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

⁴ Interview with Iñaki Mujika, Donostia, 18 June 2019.

Technology, knowledge and cooperation. It was necessary to invest in technology, to delve deeper into knowledge, and everything had to pass through cooperation – between centres, companies, etc. That model of competitive innovation in the plan helped us improve inwardly and develop outwardly, such that, based on that plan, we began to develop the concept of innovation routines⁵.

The conceptual richness and coherence of this is evident and show up to what point the concepts used are comparable with the reality of vocational training in the Basque Country and the plans and projects being developed at the start of the 21st century.

On another front, as we have said beforehand, innovation does not just follow along the institutional or administrative plane, but rather, has a methodological side that is acknowledged by the interviewees who were closest to teaching practice in the centres:

The methodological change, about which there is not much talk, but which was doubtless the most important in vocational training as it had always been known —neither dual nor about technological services to companies— the greatest rebellion from my point of view, the most innovative step that was ever taken, was the methodological change, which scores a zero in terms of press because it is not good copy, but which is requiring a lot of effort from the centres and from individuals⁶.

In this process of methodological innovation, the agents who are the most involved are the faculty, since their level of commitment is not solely restricted to the classroom, but also encompasses contact with the companies, the monitoring of the learning process, collaboration in research projects in the centre or in tandem with Tknika, etc. Hence, this also involves the collaboration of both public and private centres, which:

Coexist and collaborate in certain harmony. I believe that its unique features lie here. Collaboration is important in the Basque Vocational Training System; companies, institutions and centres – we collaborate a lot, and that is a unique feature. Another unique feature is the number and types of centres. We have a highly industrialised territory around us. Industry in Euskadi accounts for a very significant percent of the GDP and that concentration of industry and vocational training centres does not exist in many places. Here we have a hundred, or eighty automotive centres concentrated in a very small area⁷.

⁵ Interview with Iñaki Mujika, Donostia, 18 June 2019.

⁶ Interview with Julen Elgeta, Durango, 12 July 2019.

⁷ Interview with Julen Elgeta, Durango, 12 July 2019.

In these matters, a certain consensus seems to exist about the collaboration of different agents forming a specific network that makes it different from other types of relationships in other levels of the educational system. In the light of these contributions, it is possible to talk about a Basque innovation system (Buesa, 2003).

From a more global perspective, Mikel Navarro talks about the concept of an innovation system that:

Covers all the organisations and institutional and corporate agents who, within a given geographic sphere, interact among themselves in order to allocate resources to the execution of activities oriented to generating and disseminating the knowhow on which innovation rests, particularly technological innovation, which drives economic development (Navarro, M., 2004).

In the Basque system, these organisations and agents are: *knowledge-creating institutions*, such as universities, public research institutions, and innovating companies; *service provider institutions*, such as technological parks, innovation company centres, and those administrative offices that manage promotion programmes; and *resource provider organisations*, such as the public administration, the state, or the European Union.

Using these theoretical approaches, we have dealt with the different aspects of innovation in this chapter. For the purpose, we focused on what we referred to as the innovative *lauburu* of the Basque Vocational Training Model, in which quality, entrepreneurship, creativity and internationalisation are the main aspects, all within a collaborative framework of centres, companies and Basque government institutions. That is, we have differentiated the activities in innovation undertaken in a strict sense, while acknowledging that, outside the framework of the companies, the centres and Basque agencies and institutions, this four-leaf model of the *lauburu* would make no sense.

3.2. Innovation from the Institutional Plane

This heading refers to a set of institutions dealing with innovation in vocational training, as well as some associations innovating in terms of organisation and management. Like the centres and the companies, this concerns the official structure facilitating that innovation. With regard to the institutions, we have to agree that their emergence is the outcome of political intention, and that they normally have legal and administrative support. Somehow, the varied institutional strategies we were able to observe evolved into a set of institutions that proposed different itinerar-

ies and paths for developing vocational training in line with the needs of the region from above; i.e., from the viewpoint of government authorities. On the other hand, this was likewise to create a set of coordinating associations or agencies from the base that were much more related to the centres, public and subsidised. In this sense, the creation of the Basque Council for Vocational Training, the Basque Institute for Qualifications, or Tknika itself runs along these innovative criteria or proposals, although they concern themselves with different spheres. In contrast, the emergence of associations such as Ikaslan, HETEL or AICE is marked by another type of preoccupation, much more related to the needs and proposals of vocational training centres in terms of territorial coordination.

3.2.1. *The Institutional Architecture of Vocational Training in Euskadi*

In this section, we want to highlight the role of the institutions and agencies that the government authorities gradually developed. With a view to creating structures that would eventually come to form part of the Basque government Department of Education, authorities started up the Vocational Training Unit of the Course Division of this Department and, within it, the Bureau of Training, to conduct inspection at this educational level. This office was to be the core of what, in the future, was to become the Vocational Training Division (1992) —given the relevance that Vocational Training was gradually acquiring within the educational system— and, at the start of the 21st century, specifically in 2001, the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training. Thus, the creation of a new basic structure, as was the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Professional Training within the Basque government Department of Education, Universities and Research, was a noteworthy milestone, as was shown in both the pertinent testimonials consulted and in the analysis of its activity.

In this sense, 2001 is an important date, since it marks the start of preparations for the Second Basque Vocational Training Plan promoted by the Basque government. Hence, some of the persons interviewed, with their long track record in VT, hold that the creation of the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Professional Training in 2001 was to be a significant driving force for innovation – for indeed, the “great challenge” of the Second Vocational Training Plan (2004/2007) was that of innovation: in technological transfer to the centres, and in learning methods (Mujika, I. & Intxausti, K., 2018). In order to achieve some of these objectives, authorities chose to create an innovation centre in 2005, Tknika, to serve as reference. Hence, the role played by the Office of the Deputy Councillor

for Vocational Training was to be highly relevant in promoting all the activities to be conducted in vocational training and innovation from that date onward. Curiously, the *First Basque Vocational Training Plan, Lanbidez*, dating from 1998, which revolved around other objectives, barely mentions the word “innovation”, albeit it mentions quality, aware of the lack of a “global strategy” and the negative consequences that this would entail (Consejo Vasco de Formación Profesional, 1998).

As was already said in other diverse sections, the legislation gradually generated by the Board of Education affected diverse levels of institutional development. This was a set of regulations creating institutions and agencies, denoting the interest in an institutional architecture that would not just enable the innovative development of a group of institutions but also allow for a certain degree of innovation in types of relations that, up to then, were not habitual. Therefore, when we refer to innovation on this decision-making level, we are referring to the legislative capacity activated to promote, create, orient or coordinate a set of activities for the benefit of the innovation required (Navarro, M., 2017). Some of these institutions created a network of relations and participation at different levels that should be understood as the result of a strategic bid to include all the agents working in vocational training. In the words of Iñaki Mujika: “Euskadi managed to coordinate all the agents involved in Vocational Training” (Ikaslan, 2006).

It is in this sense that the subsequent decrees approved between 1994 and 2015 are to be understood, considering that the Basque Vocational Training Plans are explanatory frameworks for that legislative output likewise reflecting the roles played by the different individuals who occupied offices in the various Boards of Education and the political standpoints of the Socialist Party in Euskadi or the Basque Nationalist Party, not always commonly shared, about whether or not vocational training was preponderant in the educational system. We will next point out some of the decrees that were published on vocational training, observing that there is a period between 2005 and 2015 in which no specific legislation on the matter was promulgated:

- Basque Council for Vocational Training: Decree 100/1994 dated 22 February, creating and regulating the Basque Council for Vocational Training; and Decree 222/1998 dated 8 September, modifying the decree creating the Basque Council for Vocational Training.
- Tknika: Decree 39/2005 dated 1 March, creating the Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning Innovation Centre (Tknika), and Decree 222/2015 dated 9 December, creating the Vocational Training Centre for Applied Research and Innovation of the Basque Country, Tknika.
- Ideatk: Decree 168/2015 dated 8 September, creating the Basque Vocational Training Institute for Applied Creativity, Ideatk.

—IVAC: Decree 169/2015 dated 8 September, creating the Basque Knowledge Institute for Vocational Training, IVAC.

The creation of the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training under the Department of Education, Universities and Research in 2001 was doubtless the catalyst that made it possible to start up a series of strategies in a palpable direction. Testimonials rating this moment as a “milestone” or attesting that the activities it promoted were an authentic “driving force” behind vocational training are plentiful⁸. In this sense, those of Mujika and Arévalo, who lived through the creation of this new structure for educational administration first-hand, give examples of the enthusiasm, the risk and the confidence that a decision of this sort might benefit vocational training. Mujika states it this way:

2001 was the next important milestone, with the Office of the Deputy Councillor, and from there on, a strategy existed, that of the First Basque Vocational Training Plan, the Second, up to the Fifth, and there, strategy exists.

This is to say that, at that moment, a change in direction —a strategy— is understood, which leaves behind a phase of more or less collaborative processes without strategic vision⁹. Arévalo narrates that moment, which could be summarised thus:

Then, on behalf of the centres, the proposal was made to government to form a Deputy Councillor’s Office for Vocational Training for the 2001-2005 legislature, and in 2001, Lehendakari Ibarretxe decided in the affirmative, along with the Deputy Councillor of Eusko Alkartasuna¹⁰. They decided it was necessary to institute that office. Then Director, I was proposed as Deputy Councillor and Iñaki Mujika came on board with me as Vocational Training Director, with Josu Aboitiz, from a subsidised centre in Bizkaia, as Second Director¹¹.

Iñaki Mujika emphasises the role of the individuals involved in this process at the time, specifically that of the Deputy Councillor for Education, from Eusko Alkartasuna, who in some way backed the decisions made to benefit the creation of this office for vocational training. It is thus

⁸ Interview with Julen Elgeta, Durango, 12 July 2019.

⁹ Interview with Iñaki Mujika, Donostia, 18 June 2019.

¹⁰ During the Seventh Legislature of the Basque Government presided by the *Lehendakari*, Juan José Ibarretxe, the Deputy Councillor for Education, Universities and Research was Sabin Intxaurreaga, who belonged to Eusko Alkartasuna.

¹¹ Interview with Jorge Arevalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

possible to talk of a first decade in this century highly in favour of developing a global strategy to benefit the improvement of vocational training quality.

The participation of Ikaslan and HETEL, later to be joined by AICE, soon attested to an organisational structure in which participation and collaboration on a common project coming from the Office of the Deputy Councillor and the vocational training centre networks were possible. This was so much the case that, from this moment on, the beginnings of a professional innovation centre became perceptible¹². Somehow, the leadership of this office is acknowledged: “In Euskadi, I believe that leadership was assumed by the Basque government Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training”¹³, which managed to attract other departments, such as Employment, Industry or the Environment. This situation also seemed to be perceived by others who occupied high positions in the administration, such as José Carlos Crespo:

Since I came into contact with vocational training, there has been a certain culture along the lines of us having to pull together. That is to say that the administration plays a role, but that this role cannot be played without relying on the social agents¹⁴.

In a word, the organisational structure achieved under the Office of the Deputy Councillor facilitated a network of relations and the creation of some new challenges in participation, as occurred with Ikaslan, HETEL and AICE, and in innovation, with the creation of Tknika. From all this, it may be gathered that the collaboration of these three levels has entailed sharing joint projects on many occasions.

3.2.2. *The Basque Vocational Training Council (1994)*

One of the legal requirements in order to avail of an advisory and participatory body was the creation of a General Council, with the representation of the institutions and agencies most proper to the sphere being regulated. In this sense, Spain created a General Council for Vocational Training by law in 1986 through Act 1/1986 of 7 January, modified by Act 19/1997 (BOE of 10 June 1997, no 138). This framework originated from the General Education Act of 1970, creating a Council

¹² Interview with Jorge Arevalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

¹³ Interview with José Ignacio Berrondo, Donostia, 20 May 2019.

¹⁴ Interview with José Carlos Crespo, Santander, 18 July 2019.

for Vocational Training Coordination. The 1997 modification to this advisory and participatory body counselling the government on vocational training issues spelled out a change in its structure, since the autonomous communities were attributed the pertinent competence by virtue of constitutional and statutory provisions.

Between 1986 and 1997 there had been important changes in educational legislation, above all regarding the new framework entailed by the OAGES. Hence, this reference point is indispensable to understanding the creation of the Basque Vocational Training Council, which took place with Decree 100/1994 dated 22 February, regulating its functions and representative composition. In the self-same preamble to this Decree, it attempted to “define” vocational training, understood as “that which trains for the qualified practice of different professions, covering both Initial and Specific Vocational Training, also called Regulated Training”. The strategic function of vocational training in the preparation and quality of human assets, the results of industrial policy, the adaptation of professional qualifications to the needs of the productive environment, and employment policies to act as instruments of job placement had to be taken into account in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country. As a result, it became indispensable to coordinate the various training activities such that, on the one hand, overlaps between the different competent institutions could be avoided and, on the other, available resources were optimised. All these gave rise to an inter-institutional body for social participation denominated the Basque Vocational Training Council, with the following functions, among others: preparing the General Vocational Training Plan for Basque government approval by way of recommendation; monitoring the implementation of this Plan; and advising Basque public administration in those matters concerning vocational training; along with another set of reporting and coordinating functions in relation to different vocational training agents. Likewise, this council would have to prepare reports of its monitoring activities in relation to the General Vocational Training Plan, and a vocational training status report on a yearly basis.

The presence of trade unions in this Council seemed to be a standard assumed by company, administration and training centre representatives. The non-participation of the trade union ELA in the Council was accepted, although its presence on the National Vocational Training Council, but not on the Basque Council, posed an incomprehensible contrast. Administration authorities as well as some Confebask executives, have reflected this surprise, since such commitment and collaboration in the Basque Country should have been predominant¹⁵.

¹⁵ Interview with Asier Aloria, Bilbao, 1 March 2019.

The most relevant resolutions passed by the Basque Vocational Training Council during an initial period entailed a large number of technical committee meetings and studies on coordinating and integrating the needs of companies with regulated and non-regulated education, and occupational or continuous training. The approval of the First Basque Vocational Training Plan, *Lanbidez*, on 24 March 1997, represented a significant milestone in the activities of the Council. In subsequent years, the permanent committee approved a series of reports on the vocational initiation cycles, apart from creating the Basque Vocational Training System Observatory and the Institutes of Higher Vocational Training in 1998, in addition to the Basque Institute for Qualifications. From 1993 to 2003, its principal tasks focused on monitoring the Basque Vocational Training Plan and analysing professional qualifications, approving an important number of such opinions on different projects, training cycles, requirements for obtaining qualifications, curriculum modifications, etc. All these tasks reflect the constant activity of this Council.

On another front, in the series of minutes that we were able to access on the period from 1997 to 2018, the interventions of the various agents who were members of the Council may be appreciated, where the nuances raised about Council proposals show different perspectives. Thus, for instance, in the plenary session held on 24 March 1997, the Basque Vocational Training Plan was approved with 17 votes in favour and two abstentions, reflecting the general agreement and favourable reception enjoyed by the proposal and some interesting contributions on the matter. Likewise, the approval of the Basque Vocational Training Plan for 2004/2007 was an important milestone due to the degree of participation shown and the inclusion of significant contributions from the different agents, with discussion focused on the different strategic areas comprising the plan, as has been seen in a previous heading. As in 1997, this had the blessings of all participants. The approval of the various different Basque Vocational Training Plans was what drew the greatest attention from Council members, as shown by the minutes of meetings which, in addition, featured the annual activity reports. The information gathered in the light of these reports, however, does not enable in-depth knowledge of the work of the Basque Vocational Training Council, which doubtless has been fundamental in preparing the Basque government Vocational Training Plans, as has already been seen beforehand.

3.2.3. *The Basque Vocational Training Observatory and the Basque Institute for Qualifications (1998)*

It was in the area of professional qualifications that the Basque government, via its Department of Education, Universities and Research, took a new step, by creating the Basque Vocational Training Observatory in 1998, the body charged with providing and distributing the information necessary to plan policies for vocational training, human resources, and the Basque Institute for Qualifications. As Arévalo points out:

The Basque Institute for Qualifications was to devote its efforts to preparing all the qualifications for individuals; the Observatory to watching tendencies in employment, industry, and the subject of unemployment; and the Basque Agency for Quality and Qualifications was to take charge of evaluating skills – that is, it had the capacity to assess job experience or informal learning¹⁶.

In terms of the industrial and employment policies implemented by the government, it must be stressed that these coincided with those of other European governments, and that the Basque authorities also considered the Professional Qualifications System a vital element within these industrial and employment policies for training, most definitely indispensable to improve competitiveness and the economy.

This Professional Qualifications System based on the skills required for employment had two fundamental qualities: firstly, a professional qualifications system of this sort accurately determined the levels of occupational skill to be achieved in the different occupational fields of the economy —i.e., it established a clear relationship between the requirements of the economic activity and the skills of the workforce— and secondly, the Professional Qualifications System also had an important social dimension, given its capacity to represent a way of acknowledging and certifying the professional qualifications obtained by youth and adults through any training, apprenticeship or job experience.

Stated in other terms, the essential mission of the Professional Qualifications System was to establish the levels, extent and characteristics of the professional skill to be attained in the different fields of production, such that it could at the same time satisfy job requirements in the production of goods and services, encourage people to build upon and progress in their professional qualifications, and stimulate entrepreneurs and trade unions to acknowledge and ratify the qualifications achieved.

¹⁶ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

This Institute was to be substituted by the Basque Knowledge Institute for Vocational Training by means of Decree 169/2015 dated 8 September 2015 (BOPV of 25 September 2015, no 183), to which we shall subsequently refer, which would attempt to define the strategies, programmes and procedures consolidating lifelong learning and knowledge development from the viewpoint of vocational training, as the preamble to this decree indicates.

3.2.4. *The Basque Agency for Skills and Vocational Training Quality Evaluation (2001) and the Basque Knowledge Institute for Vocational Training (2015)*

Another significant moment in the historic/legislative path of vocational training came in 2001, with the creation of the Basque Agency for Skills and Vocational Training Quality Evaluation by means of Decree 62/2001 dated 3 April. One of the general objectives of the integrated vocational training system that the Basque Vocational Training Plan defined was that of achieving quality vocational training, ensuring levels that were certifiable in the European context, that would facilitate assessment by productive organisations, and that could be generally perceived by society in terms of job access possibilities and occupational and social advancement. Consequently, this raised the need to create a Basque Agency for Skills and Vocational Training Quality Evaluation that would naturally fall under the Directorate of Vocational Training, under the Department of Education, Universities and Research, and that would functionally depend on the Basque Vocational Training Council.

It is needful to underscore two from among its spheres of action: the evaluation of professional skills in the employed and unemployed working population, and the improvement of quality in the vocational training system, provided for in the Basque Vocational Training Plan, by evaluating the subsystems comprising it. Many and diverse were the functions attributed to this agency, for which reason it was divided into three areas: the skills evaluation area, the quality area, and the certification and records area.

The creation of the Basque Knowledge Institute for Vocational Training in 2015 substituted the Basque Vocational Training Institute. The argument behind the decree creating it was the effort to start “a technical body charged with defining strategies, programmes and procedures tending to consolidate lifelong learning and the development of knowledge from the perspective of vocational training”. Hence, the creation of this Institute was preceded not just by the institution it substituted; it also stood for the entire legacy of knowledge accumulated about

innovation, evaluation and quality that had been developing since the Second Basque Vocational Training Plan, the strategic framework of European cooperation, the contribution spelled out by Act 1/2013 on Life-long Learning and, of course, the Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan, the main objective of which was to enhance the employability of all individuals —women and men— in the BAC. It follows that legislators of the time understood that all this stood for an important experiment, making it advisable to strengthen and transform its internal structure and organisation in order to entrench these achievements through ongoing innovation. Therefore, this decree established, in addition, that the Institute “is by nature a research and teaching support unit” ascribed to the Office of the Deputy Councillor competent for vocational training.

The purposes and functions of this Institute were as follows:

- To promote responses to the needs of the economic/production sectors of the Basque Country through curriculum design and a structure of socially adapted occupational profiles and references in vocational training with a high level of quality and social value.
- To develop levels of knowledge, promoting training programmes adapted to the context of needed requirements, incorporating values which, as a whole, heighten employability and individual advancement.
- To collaborate in the procedure of evaluating and certifying the professional skills acquired by individuals through job experience or non-formal training channels.

For the purpose, this decree acknowledges the following functions:

- To support the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training in creating a Basque framework for professional qualifications and specialisations compliant with the regulations in force that will respond adequately to the development of professions in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country.
- To analyse the requirements of certain regulated occupations or those requiring specific certification for professional exercise in accordance with established qualifications and skills, in order to make proposals for approval regarding procedures and professional references necessarily agreed on with the pertinent departments of the Basque government.
- To prepare curriculum designs for the diverse training programmes drawn up on the basis of the system of qualifications applicable for professional references, analysing and researching possible curricular solutions that facilitate an enriching diversification of teaching-learning methods.

- To watch over and consolidate the professional values and attitudes required by business organisations, as well as to strengthen transverse skills —whether instrumental, interpersonal or systematic— in the learning activities of students towards a competent professional exercise of their jobs, participating in the study and formulation of modalities for issuing certification or other training activities, and in the development of student-centred teaching/learning methodologies.
- To develop the skills evaluation and accreditation procedure, preparing the necessary tools and records to ensure subject tracking, apart from the training required to qualify the staff conducting said procedure.
- To support the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training in the certification or, as applicable, validation of educational background and certificates of foreign residents to accord with the certificates of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, in line with governing regulations.

As may be observed, this Institute focuses more on the Basque structure of qualifications, curriculum designs for its diverse programmes, skills evaluation, and certification, without innovation explicitly appearing as a guiding element in its activity.

3.3. Tknika as a Driver for Innovation and Participation (2005)

One of the key moments in Basque vocational training innovation was the creation of the Innovation Centre for Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning (Tknika) in 2005 by means of Decree 39/2005. The centre owes its existence, above all, to the strategic importance that vocational training was acquiring in the Basque Country and the need to coordinate innovation projects in vocational training centres. Tknika therefore responded to one of the challenges of the Second Basque Vocational Training Plan (2004/2007). In this sense, the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning of the Basque government Department of Education understood Tknika as the best instrument to catalyse the situation, with a view to presenting itself as a model in the context of Europe. Tknika in this setting emerged in a situation “where there were already numerous unstructured projects without a regulating programme, but where collaboration existed between them”¹⁷, making networks of centres one of the “most important milestones of vocational training: starting to work together, no longer as islands where

¹⁷ Interview with Jon Labaka, Donostia, 22 January 2019.

each waged a war alone. We united to seek objectives”¹⁸. Tknika is therefore not the product of a specific time, but rather, moves along the path that we have seen in the previous chapter regarding the Basque Vocational Training Plans of 1997 and 2004, along with the creation of integrated centres, the assistance to regional administrations, and the creation of the IVAC.

The personal testimonies in this case are relevant, since we can point out that Elola, Mujika and Arévalo were involved in the first steps that made the creation of Tknika possible. Owing to the mutual trust between them, Mujika took charge of looking for a centre that would make its installation feasible, and when everything was already more or less in an advanced stage, then:

What I told them, in talking to Iñaki, was to set up an innovation centre in our territory: we would think up new things in vocational training – not things about product research, but about what we could do in terms of innovation in vocational training¹⁹.

What is perceptible about those first years is the capacity to anticipate the field of innovation and promote specific centres for developing joint projects. Thus, starting in 2001, when the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training was created, all the opportunities for such a centre were already being structured within the Second Basque Vocational Training Plan.

That Second Plan gave us greater coverage for the sphere of training and opened up a new area agreed on with the social agents, the government and the regions, a new area that before had been inaccessible to us, which was what innovation was then. From that field of innovation, we began to see how we could develop areas together with different companies, improve production processes ...²⁰.

From 2005 to 2009 there is a line of continuity, since Iñaki Mujika would occupy the post of Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training. The return of Jorge Arévalo to the management of the Deputy Councillor’s Office brought about the proposal to appoint Iñaki Mujika to manage Tknika, thus giving the project continuity.

However, Tknika was not always seen as the transformation spelled out by a type of centre revolving around innovation, so that for some years,

¹⁸ Interview with Jon Labaka, Donostia, 22 January 2019.

¹⁹ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

²⁰ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

there were fears about its future, since its relations with the centres seemed to take power away from them. In the words of José Carlos Crespo, “It seems to me well for Tknika to supervise or authorise them, but what does not seem logical is that, in some way, it practically kidnaps the project”²¹, since innovation projects had to be accepted by Tknika, but not taken over. This opinion coincides perfectly with the perception in Tknika at that time about the activities of the Office of the Deputy Councillor, in the hands of the Socialist party (PSOE). The danger that Tknika might be closed existed, and the paralysation of many of its projects was evident. This situation is understood as not motivated by antagonism, but by the interests of the Office, then being oriented to other concerns, accounting for its ignorance of Tknika’s role in the field of vocational training innovation – evident when Mujika relates the visit by José Carlos Crespo at the end of his mandate, who says, when he realises “the potential of Tknika, ‘had I known this’ ...”²². In any event, proof indicates that between 2010 and 2012, “Tknika was on standby”, as Mujika himself declares. Between these dates, the PSOE developed the Third Basque Vocational Training Plan, which we referred to in the preceding chapter.

The reactivation of Tknika would take place on the return of Jorge Arévalo to the Office of the Deputy Councillor. With Tknika under the management of Mujika and the Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan underway, internationalisation was to be one of the objectives the Office marked, and would continue to be so up to new reorganisation in 2015.

Since it was created in March 2005 up to the change in the definition of the centre that occurred in December 2015, it could be said that Tknika focused its efforts on certain objectives clearly stated over the short and medium term (Euskonews & Media, 2006):

- To situate the vocational training of Euskadi in a position of excellence in the international context;
- To promote the relationship of the integrated centres with businesses, technological centres and university research departments;
- To promote the dynamics of mobilising interests and synergies in vocational training and in businesses.

It is nevertheless enlightening to observe the changes occurring between the decrees of 2005 and 2015, whereby practically both the structure and functions of this centre remain in place. However, as may be perceived, the objectives Tknika formulates, sometimes expressed as new

²¹ Interview with José Carlos Crespo, Santander, 18 July 2019.

²² Interview with Iñaki Mujika, Donostia, 18 June 2019.

strategies, tackle a series of significant levels within what innovation is in vocational training – i.e., strategies affecting innovation processes, collaboration, and coordination between centres, other strategies affecting management and, lastly, other training strategies. Thus, what these functions and objectives imply is a complex vision of innovation in the vocational training of the Basque Country.

In a comparison of objectives and functions, continuities and ruptures or innovations introduced made may be observed. In terms of objectives, the provisions affirm that the creation of Tknika responds to the implementation of the Basque Vocational Training Plans, although that of 2015 includes a mention of the strategic plans defined by the European Union. One aspect that changes is that relating to the name. Thus, in 2005, reference is made to a Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning Innovation Centre (Tknika), and in 2015 the name cited is that of a Basque Country Vocational Training Centre for Applied Research and Innovation. The change is substantial, although the projects being developed obey the same criterion of innovation as in 2005, when the field of innovation and everything emerging from it was included. In terms of functions, there are some changes, although the majority remain, even drafted in the same way, as with their headings. These changes adjust to the inclusion of research in 2015, whereas those of 2005 focus more on the management of the integrated centres or the methodologies of learning.

On another front, in terms of organisational structure, variation is also observed in terms of areas of intervention, which rose in number from four areas to five. In 2005, these were: the area of innovation, e-learning, and NICT stimulation in the centres; the area of technological innovation; the area of innovation in management; and the area of specialised training; whereas, starting in 2015, these were to be the area of applied innovation in vocational training; the area of continuing improvement; the area of research in learning methods and processes; the area of entrepreneurship and change management; and the area of internationalisation in vocational training.

The 2005 areas managed projects that attempted to optimise research, innovation and training in technological innovation, with entrepreneurship projects ranging from mechanical manufacturing or welding to aquaculture. The area of innovation in management provided consultation for projects aimed at spreading methodologies in quality system processes. In the same way, the area of innovation in NICT and e-learning strengthened the use of the ICTs in network infrastructure, intranet, and virtual or augmented reality, and lastly, the area of training, which cut across more fields than the other areas, concerned itself with coordinating training plans for vocational training centre faculty and management teams (Euskonews & Media, 2006).

3.3.1. *Tknika Projects and Strategies for Innovation*

The philosophy behind Tknika projects focuses on networking with the best faculty members from the vocational training centres by means of project teams. This sought to stimulate the teaching staff involved in innovation projects not to disconnect from their centre and instead to make their teaching tasks compatible with the projects spearheaded by a Tknika agent acting as a motivator. The idea is for teachers to share a project with Tknika: “for them to continue acting in the centre, albeit with a dedication of more or less half a day to different projects ... with Tknika as the agent obliged to work for the centres” (Euskonews & Media, 2006). In this sense, the network was fundamental to both public and private centres. This manner of working was also transversal when it came to proposing challenges or projects. In this way, a network of collaborating centres serving as the technological nodes of Tknika was created to benefit teamwork. Likewise, the projects conducted were done with a view to results, with general project evaluations, which finally developed into technology transfer projects. Along this line, Tknika offered diverse services:

- Training in innovative areas for faculty and technicians from small and medium enterprises.
- Agreements with institutions and companies for faculty training in technological centres and companies.
- Training counsellors.
- The creation of internship networks or communities between the faculty and specialised corporate technicians.
- Publications (guides, courses, manuals or teaching modules, ...).
- Centre management programmes.
- Coordination of ICT motivators and administrators.
- Training of team leaders and facilitators from the centres.
- Library and technical media archive services.

According to the balance initially submitted, it may be stressed that Tknika represented a challenge serving to drive the Basque Vocational Training Plan for 2004/2007. The Basque Country was also able to avail of a centre devoted to innovation that was without any precedent in Europe. With regard to the pioneering agents who intervened in this phase, faculty participation and the introduction of networking methodologies to share experiences and knowledge represented a quality factor. To the companies in the environment, the possibility of collaborating with Tknika, turning over materials and equipment and participating in combined teams, strengthened the relationship between the entrepreneurial world and the educational environment. Lastly, in relation to society at large, seeing the emergence of initiatives linked to the world of innovation

served as the best resource for introducing innovations into Basque production systems.

However, if we analyse the information that Tknika currently facilitates on its website or in its reports, we will be able to observe that these beginnings for Tknika opened up greater complexity in terms of action networks and fields, focusing on innovation for vocational training centres and the business sector. In this sense, as is insistently shown, the fundamental thrust of Tknika is applied research and innovation for the purpose of pioneering in Europe.

In some strategic Tknika documents (Mission, Vision and Values), it initially defines its objectives, very much in line with quality standards. Thus, in terms of mission, through surveillance and competitive intelligence, it deals in the design, development, implementation and transfer of innovative products and services of high added value to vocational training centres and, from there, to the business sector. This recourse to competitive intelligence was defined by Arévalo when he referred to reinforcing innovation and

starting up competitive innovation, which, as this Plan establishes (in reference to the Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan), is based on three elements: technology, knowledge and cooperation [...]. This model of competitive innovation in the Plan helped us improve internally and develop externally under the concept of innovation routines²³.

Likewise, as regards its objectives, Tknika cites the four areas mentioned in the decree creating it in 2005. Each of these areas represents the development of different processes and projects throughout these last few years, the quality and compliance of which is periodically measured and evaluated, since the commitment to quality runs throughout the whole organisation. In addition, Tknika sets forth its internal training plans aimed at the competitive professional development of the individuals comprising the organisation. Moreover, Tknika is committed to the promotion and use of the two Basque Country languages officially acknowledged.

The innovation strategies in the field of vocational training concerned deal with the entire combination of processes, centres, projects, and the management and training required, and are specified in the following purposes:

- To promote technological innovation processes in the vocational training of the BAC, to make vocational training more competitive and dynamic.
- To collaborate with the centres imparting vocational training in the BAC in developing the society of information and the ICTs in

²³ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

order to create connections with the entire world, maintaining co-operative learning relations with the more advanced countries.

- To develop training projects with new methodological models in anticipation of emerging needs.
- To administer training on subjects related to technological, methodological and management innovation.
- To promote innovation processes in the centres imparting vocational training in the BAC to create more flexible, dynamic and participative structures based on collaboration, personal trust, autonomy and team management capacities.
- To promote and coordinate applied innovation projects between centres imparting vocational training and SMEs to improve production processes and products.
- To promote virtual three-dimensional vocational training environments.
- To coordinate projects to create enterprises among centres imparting vocational training and to collaborate with other agencies involved.
- To offer and impart training in technological innovation and in new technologies as applied to production and services to the vocational training faculty of the BAC, the state and international centres.
- To deal with different projects in the territory of the BAC, the state and abroad.
- To perform all those functions that may be entrusted to it by the Office of the Deputy Councillor competent in vocational training.

Nevertheless, among the fields where Tknika has developed more lately in terms of centre and business sector innovation, the following may be underscored:

- Technology.
- New learning methodologies.
- Internationalisation.
- Biosciences and sustainability.
- Complexity management.
- Services to companies.

With respect to *technology*, Tknika works along schematics based on the research and innovation system applied to vocational training in Euskadi, where the fundamental agents acknowledged in the different spheres have their place, in order to configure and deploy innovation policies.

Figure 1

Research and Innovation System applied to Vocational Training in the Basque Autonomous Community



Source: Tknika

The network nodes appearing in Figure 1 situate the focus on the companies mobilising the community and their future requirements. Coordinating with the companies makes it possible to develop skills and initiatives for the purpose. The operative nodes as of this period concern advanced manufacturing, digital and connected manufacturing, energy, biosciences and bio policies. The allocation of priorities to action lines in centre projects is based on centre capacity and experience in developing such projects. In this sphere, Tknika participates in selecting projects from the centres and assumes responsibility for their monitoring.

In what concerns Tknika areas of specialisation, the projects are oriented to providing services that industry demands and, lastly, in strategic environments, Tkgunes were created to support SME innovation and place the knowledge, media and installations of the vocational training centre network at their disposal through services. Several projects in this field have been and are being conducted, above all in the field of Industry 4.0 and new technology integration.

In the second field related to *new learning technologies*, the main objective is for the research, design and implementation of methodological

models to benefit the learning processes involved in vocational training. To achieve this, the strategy departs from the implementation, design, development and deployment of the Ethazi model (Astigarraga, E.; Arregi, A. & Carrera, X., 2017) and the projects and services developed in the area to deploy it, chief among which are the Ethazi Digital Repository, SET (Skills Evolution Tool) approach and evaluation, the training programmes oriented to methodological change, the development of innovative learning venues, and the construction of collaboration networks and alliances with national and international reference institutions in applying advanced learning methodologies. This model affects the training cycles, and its central element is cooperative challenge-based learning. It is currently in its pilot phase, with 63 vocational training centres, 1,953 faculty members and almost 7,000 students participating. This model is being applied in 279 training cycles.

In terms of the third field on *internationalisation*, efforts were made to work on a culture of internationalising from an integrated system; i.e., from a primary local context that continues to a European level and, lastly, expanding globally. Therefore, collaboration was relevant at the first level, while the second called for participation in European vocational training projects, and at the third level, the transfer of knowledge and the experience acquired at the first level was promoted. The phases for implementing this are underway, from the acquisition of language or intercultural skills to another phase of handling student and faculty mobility, progressing towards an advanced phase of European project participation and coordination up to a phase of excellence that will generate changes and proposals. These projects have mobilised students, faculty, and centres, and have established relations with third countries at different levels. The collaboration with centres and faculty extends beyond the European framework, which was already significant in 2001, and now reaches Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Chile or Mexico, as will be observed in the pertinent chapter.

The fourth area revolves around *biosciences and sustainability*, and is a stake in sustainable human development within a production model based on the efficient use of existing resources to support sustainable economy. That sustainable human development has to be dealt with from different fields: social, environmental, economic and cultural. For the purpose, Tknika works on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals approved by the United Nations, in the different branches of vocational training.

The fifth area deals with *complexity management*. It is tasked with working in the field of continuing improvement, identifying three priority needs in centre management: improvement plans associated to trans-

formation, generational relay management support, and support for centre innovation and management.

Lastly, as regards the sixth field on *services to companies*, a network composed of Vocational Training centres placing their entire infrastructure and accumulated knowledge at the disposal of companies has been created. This innovation and technology transfer network use the TKGUNEs for the purpose, organised into different areas (manufacture, railways, automotives, energy and creative industries), benefiting a significant number of companies.

This entire undertaking on the part of Tknika makes sense in the context of the purpose of applied innovation as an area, since it has to do with “reducing the time that elapses between the emergence of a technology up to the benefit that Basque society can reap from it, and investigating technologies that can allow for new market niches in Euskadi” (Tknika, 2018). It is thus understood that Tknika situates its work within the design such contacts create of the technological innovation system of vocational training in Euskadi, which “aims to support society, particularly SMEs, in the challenge of competing for high added value” (Tknika, 2018). This system cannot be understood without Basque government support in the form of the Basque Vocational Training Plans, Tknika, and the vocational training centres proper.

3.4. Vocational Training Centre Associations

As we have been saying throughout this chapter, one of the most relevant aspects of innovation is the role played in it by the educational centres. The constant reference to the centres shows that the entire fabric of political strategies, methodological innovations, joint programmes or future expectations aim at the collaboration, participation or involvement of the centres. Thus, the vocational training centres are understood as the real drivers of change. So, during a first stage, the centres were involved in the activities and constant preoccupation for improvement of faculty members and centre directors; and during a second stage, it was to be the institutions and their relations with the centres acting as “facilitators of the new processes” (Mujika, I. & Intxausti, K. (2018).

The centres participated through their associations, respectively representing public, subsidised and private centres. The three associations of significance in the country are: AICE, which emerged in 1984 as one of the employers’ associations in the educational sector in Euskadi; HETEL, founded in 1987, which shares out private centre educational projects; and lastly, Ikaslan, an association formed in Gizpuzkoa

in 1993 as an association of public centre directors, which expanded to Araba and Bizkaia in subsequent years. In time, these associations became representative interlocutors in relation to the public administration as well as corporate organisations, with a presence in the pertinent bodies, such as the Basque Vocational Training Council. This way, it can be affirmed that: “collaboration between the centres and between the associations, both public and subsidised, has been a significant, if not decisive element in the development of vocational training since the 1990s” (Mujika, I. & Intxausti, K., 2018).

On their side, despite the inevitable competition between centres and between the associations themselves, the joint participation and collaboration among them was appreciated by our interviewees:

We were all rowing in the same boat, the Ikaslan group as well as the HETEL and AICE groups. Because we have very solid foundations, the vocational training group are a very solid lot; regardless of the fact that some of us defend our own interests, we do have a common objective²⁴.

It is in this sense that Jorge Arévalo talks about the importance and weight of the associations. For instance, on HETEL:

Yes, a lot of weight, above all religious. There were all sorts. It was true that we started with two competing models: I come from the public model, but there was a powerful private system, subsidised and, in a word, distrustful. Of course, when the government plans to set up a system that was going to be run by government for all of vocational training, then I had to meet with all the groups, and there was an association for the subsidised group called HETEL that played a very important part. We were there as government, so first I spoke with the public sector and said, I also have to talk to the private sector so that they can come in, and I can't oblige them to, but the subsidised sector had to be invited to participate in the First Plan and its implementation²⁵.

It was therefore this perception of educational reality as comprised of centres owned by different types of parties that made their collaboration possible.

The status current as of AY 2018/19 regarding number of centres by association and territory is as follows, account taken solely of the vocational training centres in the different courses offered:

²⁴ Interview with Itziar Etxeberria, Gasteiz, 10 July 2019.

²⁵ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

Table 1

Number of centres by territory and type of association 2018/2019

Associations	Bizkaia	Gipuzkoa	Araba	TOTAL
Ikaslan	24	25	12	61
HETEL	15	11	1	27
AICE-IZEA	23	9	0	32
Total	62	45	13	120

Source: Prepared by the authors based on the information facilitated on the respective websites of the three associations.

Many of these centres, whether public, subsidised or private, impart other educational levels that can range from Preschool to the Baccalaureate. What appear on this table are those which, in addition, impart Basic Vocational Training, some Intermediate or Higher cycle, or both, or supplementary education.

3.4.1. *Ikaslan (1993)*

As has been pointed out, from the outset, the educational centres were involved in the changes occurring in the field of vocational training, either through the personal commitment of many centre directors or the faculty, who wanted to push through with innovation projects, relying as well on the blessings of the administration. To enable the conduct of such centre activity with more guarantees and to encourage participation, *Ikaslan* was created in Gipuzkoa in 1993 as a public vocational training “change in paradigm”, in the words of José María Elola (*Ikaslan*, 2013), who chaired this association from its foundation in March 1993 up to 2003.

Ikaslan owes its emergence to the preoccupation of fourteen public centres depending on the Basque government Department of Education who decided to reflect on the situation of vocational training, the transformations occurring in the business world, the programmes of the Gipuzkoa Department of Industry, and the European framework for vocational training from 1991 to 1992. In the end, after these debates, the decision was taken for these fourteen centres to confront a set of challenges detected: Lifelong Vocational Training and Occupational Training, educational quality, technical training for faculty, the availability of teaching materials in Euskera, and participation in European programmes. Endowing them with a single voice through *Ikaslan* seemed the most appropriate path. The

name “Ikaslan” was not a random choice, but rather, synthesises the idea that learning and working tie in together very closely (“learning while doing”), encapsulating the message that a good vocational training received increases the likelihood of success in terms of job access.

In the light of the testimonials, the emergence of Ikaslan was seen in two ways: on the one hand, there were those who saw Ikaslan as an association of centre directors of dubious legal status, given that it was then impossible to create an association of public centres²⁶. This resulted in Ikaslan appearing at meetings together with HETEL or AICE and opting for other levels of financing. There were also those who thought that Ikaslan had turned into a pressure lobby²⁷ in relation to the administration, even justifying its feasibility as a counterweight to the private institutions. On another hand, those present at the founding of Ikaslan express another position justifying its creation at the time:

We then planned an association of public vocational training centres and were not allowed to, because we were not the owners of the centres; so what we did was to set up an association of public vocational training centre directors, and that was when Ikaslan Gipuzkoa emerged, which was a milestone because we managed to give it a format. Some thought it was a trade union of teachers to bargain with the administration, but we have always been a kind of crutch, an aid to the Department in promoting action, which would have been more complicated coming directly from the administration²⁸.

Kike Intxausti also justifies the creation of Ikaslan through its objective of “being able to hire the teachers necessary to impart Continuous Training”²⁹, resulting in trade unions criticising this as a way of promoting faculty overtime. José María Elola, who occupied the chair of Ikaslan for 10 years, was also of a similar opinion, pointing out that public vocational training also required its own organisation, in addition to collaborating with centres and companies. Ikaslan relations with the PSE (Socialist Party of Euskadi) government were not the most collaborative, so it had to rely on other assistance from the regional administration of Gipuzkoa. Elola himself defends the fact that the projects of HETEL and Ikaslan were an example to Europe³⁰. As in so many educational matters conducted in the Basque Country, Ikaslan was born on a razor’s edge.

²⁶ Interview with Joseba Amondarain, Donostia, 28 June 2018.

²⁷ Interview with José Carlos Crespo, Santander, 18 June 2019.

²⁸ Interview with Iñaki Mujika, Donostia, 18 June 2019.

²⁹ Interview with Kike Intxausti, Donostia, 6 May 2019.

³⁰ Interview with José Maria Elola, Tolosa, 9 July 2018.

From its foundation onwards, targets were set with the intention of developing them over the next ten years. Those targets had to do with raising centre management capacity and developing integrated centres; harnessing the projects of association members; or promoting quality permanent training for faculty. It does not escape us that an association of centre directors was, at the time, a risky option, since that form of association had not been legally provided for. In the light of the time elapsed and the benefits obtained from the job done on this imaginative project, we have to acknowledge its success. Jorge Arévalo highlights three of the biggest Ikaslan contributions over the past twenty years: institutional loyalty, the proper operation of relations between centres, and the existence of the association itself and its presence throughout the Basque Country.

Three years after its creation in Gipuzkoa, Ikaslan Araba was founded, and one year later, Ikaslan Bizkaia. It could practically be said that all the public centres are included in this association. Ikaslan Gipuzkoa engaged in joint collaborative work, since it understood that this way of competing was the best guarantee for centre quality. Therefore, Ikaslan during this period embodies the best that became evident in the 1980s and 1990s in terms of the participation of centre directors and faculty. Its efforts reaffirmed that proactive faculty participation, relations maintained with other organisations and associations, and collaboration with companies were the type of relational framework that best propitiated quality in the public centres. During these initial years, a set of projects and programmes such as the following were conducted:

- *Sareka*: a project signed with the Department of Education, Universities and Research in 1996 to continuously improve quality in management, cooperation and services offered by the public centres of Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia and Araba. 32 centres obtained the ISO certificate and 5 centres were “Silver Q”.
- *Garatu*: a project signed with the Department of Education, Universities and Research in 1996 to organise numerous technical courses for faculty to acquire new skills. Students and company workers received proper upgraded training.
- *Laneki*: a programme initiated by Ikaslan Gipuzkoa, Ikaslan Bizkaia, Ikaslan Araba and HETEL, under an agreement signed with the Basque government Department of Education, Universities and Research in order to avail of quality teaching materials in Euskera in all the training cycles.
- *European Programmes*: under the *Petra* Programme, between 1993 and 1996, some 100 students from different vocational training specialisations had the chance to undergo internships abroad, a few of whom eventually settled there. In 1996, the programme

changed its name to *Leonardo*. Currently, almost all the centres implement and participate in European projects.

- *Euskalherrirantz*: an agreement together with HETEL signed with the Basque government to enable students of Basque origins born in Argentina or Venezuela to take vocational training cycles in centres located in Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia or Araba. In AY 2002/03, 40 students came, and in AY 2003/04 another 60.
- *Elkarlanean*: a programme implemented with HETEL, Lanhez, Bihe and the regional government Department of the Economy to coordinate the projects that the authorities wanted to implement. Ikaslan, together with the centres, had a significant share in R+D and other projects such as txekinbide, emaweb, emaweb+, e-sustapen, e-gelak, urrats, premia, etc. A cooperation plan defined by Ikaslan Gipuzkoa with HETEL, Lanhez and Adegí to promote vocational training.
- *Hezkuntek*: a project developed with HETEL, Seaska and a group of entrepreneurs from the northern Basque Country so that students from that area who had finished Baccalaureate in Euskera might have the chance to study higher training cycles in centres of the southern Basque Country.

For his part, Iñaki Konde, who headed Ikaslan from 2003 to 2009, continued along the same line of stressing the strategic dimension that vocational training had to uphold for the development of Euskadi. During his chairmanship, he would remain conscious of the fact that training was a basic instrument for responding to social needs, and that during its first twenty years, Ikaslan had to maintain the work of the 24 centres then comprising Ikaslan Gipuzkoa, pointing out that the joint collaboration with the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training, the institutions and the networks to allow for the greater presence of vocational training in society was the best strategy for vocational training in Euskadi, as political and social agents held. Likewise, the collaboration with the Departments of Labour and Industry, along with the projects undertaken with Tknika assistance, participation in the European, Hezkuntek or Laneki projects already mentioned, as well as the concern for female inclusion into the industrial cycles, were highly rated during that phase. Konde also points out that innovation has always been an element taken into account, along with the transfer of knowledge, signalling an open position in relation to new challenges.

Lastly, Ina Larrañaga, who chaired Ikaslan Gipuzkoa from 2009 to 2013, stressed the importance that innovation had acquired as a line of work, citing projects on which as many as sixteen partners had participated – one university, two innovation centres, educational centre associations,

companies and training centres. The purpose was to create a new innovation model for vocational training and enterprise; moreover, two partners from China and Canada took part in this project, dubbed Rainova. In addition, she pointed out that Ikaslan Gipuzkoa was involved in 42 projects, some of them in the field of applied innovation and knowledge transfer subsidised by the Ministry of Education. Another important point in the Ikaslan projects at that time was internationalisation, with mobility for both students and faculty and the participation of majority of the centres in joint cooperation projects with companies, universities or technological centres in other countries, with special emphasis on cooperation with Latin America in the specific form of Chilean students engaging in post-graduate studies at Ikaslan centres.

As we have said, 1996 saw the founding of Ikaslan Araba and, a year later, Ikaslan Bizkaia. Belonging to the same association facilitated the ready availability of information, activities, news and services, as well as access to the centres comprising it over their respective websites. The Ikaslan Gipuzkoa chair is currently held by Iosune Irazabal³¹, who admits that, as of the present, the existence of three different IKASLANs with differentiated characteristics owes itself to a practical reason, since each historical territory has its own specific features, above all in terms of centres. Nevertheless, she points out the high degree of coordination existing, in all respect for the differences of each, emphasising that their shared objective is joint effort and mutual knowledge. Likewise, she acknowledges the great merit of serving as an interface in many contexts (the Basque government, Confebask, etc.) and the challenges currently posed about continuous training, internationalisation, mobility, etc. On the evolution of Ikaslan, she states that its critical periods have revolved around the group promoting the association, with everything that working together within the public network entailed, when vocational training opened up to centres imparting the baccalaureate and everyone found themselves caught up in a joint project. Every Ikaslan (Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia and Araba) “is a ship with its own way of sailing, rooted to its territory, although all three of them fish with one and the same net”³². Hence, along the lines of this metaphor, these would involve three different ships, each sporting its colour, but fishing together with a single net, and this is the future of Ikaslan, as our interviewee understands it.

On another front, on the occasion of the tenth Ikaslan foundation anniversary, the first number of the magazine, *Ikaslan*, was published in

³¹ Interview with Iosune Irazabal, Bergara, 25 November 2019.

³² Entrevista realizada a Iosune Irazabal, Bergara, 25 de noviembre de 2019.

March 2004, precisely dedicated to the occasion, showcasing work that dealt with diverse organisational aspects of the association. This being the first number, it gives an overview of the concerns of interest at the time, featuring interviews with authorities in the field of vocational training. It also underscores the proposals being implemented in line with the Second Vocational Training Plan 2003/2007 and the projects that were then being forged, above all, Tknika. This first issue featured collaboration or interviews involving Jorge Arévalo, Iñaki Mujika, José Luis Fernández Maure or Kike Intxausti, among others, dealing with issues of their competence.

A review of the articles published in this magazine is doubtless the best way of getting acquainted with the track record of *Ikaslan* for over fifteen years, as well as the status of vocational training throughout that period. The interviews with the key agents in this area that were published were important, not only because of the participation of professionals holding authority in the different governments (provincial authorities, territorial representatives for education, Tontxu Campos, Isabel Celaá, Gemma Zabaleta, Iñaki Mujika, etc.) but also that of other experts in vocational training (an interview with R. Knörr of Confebask, trade union representatives, Itziar Etxeberria of Lanbide) or innovation (Juan José Goñi on the challenge of innovation, Bilbao Ibarrola on emotional intelligence, etc.).

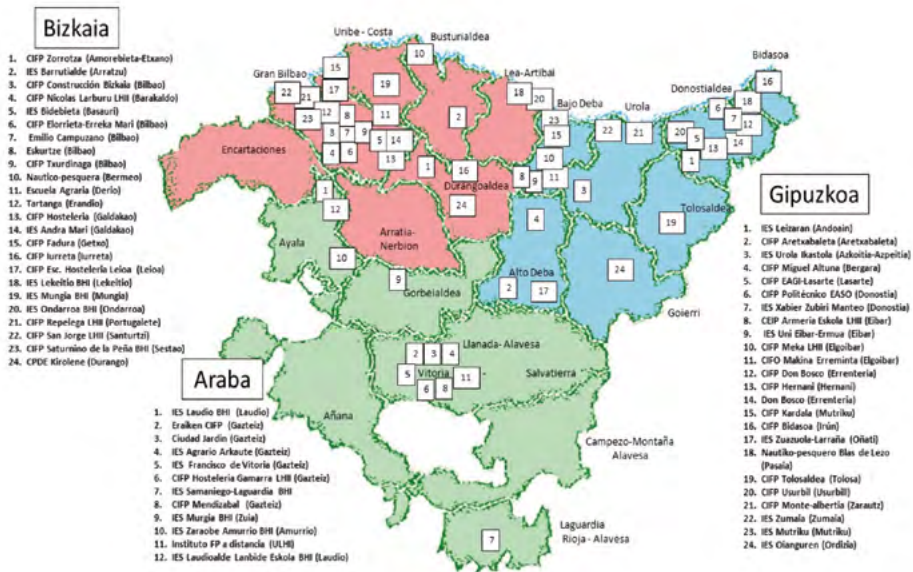
We may observe the more or less monographic issues dealt with from 2004 to 2017. The mere titles of these topics give us a preliminary idea of the concerns and the degree of upgrade pursued by *Ikaslan*, ranging from emotional intelligence to internationalisation, through on-the-job training: the *Ikaslan* Anniversary (2004); Provincial Governments (2005); Emotional Intelligence (2005); Vocational Training: Looking to the Future (2006); The Challenge of Innovating (2006); The Generational Relay (2006); Vocational Training without Borders (2008); Crisis: An Opportunity for Training (2009); Vocational Training: The Key to a New Model of Economic Growth (2010); Active Employment Policies (2011); Training for Employment (2012); Internationalisation (2014); New Methodologies (2017). On another front, starting in 2014, *Ikaslan* began to organise vocational training conferences, news of which are announced in the magazine, in addition to other information about innovative experiences being conducted in different centres.

Since we are dealing with innovation, however, we underscore the interview with Juan José Goñi (*Ikaslan*, 2006) in the 2006 issue, monographically devoted to innovation, which, moreover, reflects several experiences in innovation. In this sense, Goñi points out some of the aspects

dealt with at the start of this chapter regarding the importance of innovation for the future or the problems it poses for knowhow, highlighting the four aspects he considers important in innovating in our environment: an intense connection with the market being served, with internal organisation, with technology, and with people.

Throughout the years, the magazine would facilitate data about the centres coming to join the Ikslan network in the three territories. However, it is observed that, from 2005 up to 2017, practically the same number of centres is reflected: Araba 12, Bizkaia 24 and Gipuzkoa 25 as of the latter date, affecting both cycles of Intermediate and Higher Vocational Training, Basic Vocational Training, and a significant number of occupational branches. On the map below, we may observe the geographic distribution of Ikslan centres in the entire Autonomous Community of the Basque Country.

Figure 2
Centres associated under Ikslan



Source: Prepared by the authors. Data: Ikslan magazine.

3.4.2. *HETEL (1993)*

In the same way the public vocational training centres created *Ikaslan* as an association of centre directors, prior to this, in 1987, there was already another not-for-profit association covering most of the vocational training centres of the subsidised network. Currently, 26 centres of the Basque Autonomous Community come under this association. Its purpose is to contribute to the employability of youth and the competitiveness of companies.

As we pointed out in referring to the institutional architecture that gave rise to the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training, the role of *HETEL* was important at the time, since the contacts established with Jorge Arévalo underscored the need to involve this association in developing a strategy shared with the government spheres as well as other types of centre. This was so much the case that it even has a presence in the Basque Vocational Training Council. The role of *HETEL* in this entire evolution has been acknowledged, and the man who was its director for over ten years, Julen Elgeta³³—with an extensive career in the world of vocational training in Bizkaia, in addition to his period at *Tknika*—admits the differences that have existed between the Deputy Councillors of different governments, praising the role played by Jorge Arévalo in this post, whom he considers a driver exceptionally involved in promoting vocational training, above all in creating the Vocational Training Plans.

Notwithstanding his serving as the representative of an association of subsidised centres, he acknowledges the good relations that have always existed between *Ikaslan* and *HETEL*, due above all to the presence of centre directors with whom he shared concerns. He admits that each type of centre has its specific issues, spelling out differences in behaviour, but that this has not impeded the existence of collaboration between them. Of course, one of the characteristics he prizes is that subsidised centres have the opportunity to hire more freely than the public network, which allows, in his understanding, for a more appropriate type of faculty recruitment.

One of the concerns of interest preoccupying both public and subsidised centres is the presence of women in vocational training, who, as of now, represent 35% and continue to be few in the industrial cycles, despite awareness campaigns that have been conducted, indicating that much still remains to be done to increase this. Another we could cite concerns *Euskera*, regarding which Julen Elgeta perceives that model A is still

³³ Interview with Julen Elgeta, Durango, 12 June 2019.

very much the choice of the majority, indicating a long road towards the standardisation of the language in vocational training. As regards the development of vocational training in the Basque Autonomous Community, Julen Elgeta admits to the “spurt” it has undergone at this stage of the educational system.

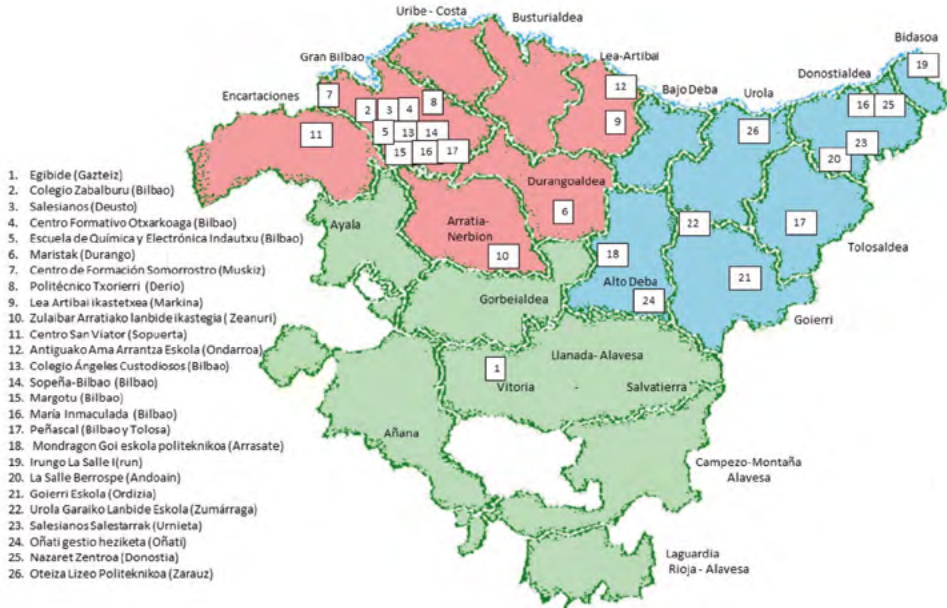
From the information offered on its website and the magazine it publishes, we are able to appreciate the size of this association, the mission, vision and values of which are defined by a clear vision of contributing to the economic progress of the country, and of serving as a guiding light in vocational training, while the values it claims are creativity, enthusiasm, commitment and collaboration. Like Ikaslan, HETEL publishes periodicals about Vocational Training which are printed in Spanish, Euskera and English, starting from 2007 with the magazine *Lanbide*, which later came to be called *Hetelkaria* in 2015. Between 2012 and 2016, it also published *Lanbide Heziketa Arnastuz*. 2012 was a special year for HETEL, since it celebrated its 25th anniversary, although it pointed out in *Hetelkaria* that this was a year that was “complicated and full of uncertainty, a year of economic and social crisis in the globalised world, which in no way resembles the world of that distant 1987”, referring to the year the association was founded. Two years later, in the 2014 editorial of the magazine, Julen Elgeta insists on the

driving force that we necessarily have to deploy in the association, capable of encouraging the healthy ambition of our vocational training centres to improve, advance, and —why not— serve as reference centres.

In this context, HETEL started up a specific plan on creativity within its 2011/2012 management plan. This topic is one of the ever-present features of HETEL, when it refers to creativity, enthusiasm and commitment being three characteristics of the centre members in the 2012 issue. In the same way, innovation is another key element to advancing in competitiveness, understood as the socially-shared sense of change, along with the factor of opportunity and the emotional burden that changes bring. In this sense, the vocational training centres had adopted a culture of innovation in which individuals were respected.

Currently, its centres are distributed across the geography of the Basque Country, as is seen in the map below, where it is evident that Bizkaia is the territory with the most centres, and that there is only one in Araba, Egibide.

Figure 3
Centres associated under HETEL



Source: Prepared by the authors. Data from HETEL.eus.

One of the focal points to which greatest interest has been devoted is internationalisation, relations with centres and organisations in any part of the world, through Erasmus scholarships and a presence in universities and companies aimed at upgrading the faculty, despite difficulties in implementing this area of training, as Elgeta³⁴ confirms, since students taking up internships in European countries have decreased in percentage. Nevertheless, internationalisation has also meant the arrival of foreign students in Euskadi, given the quality of training in the Basque Country. Elgeta also admits that the evaluation and vocational training systems are different in every country that that, therefore, there are difficulties in certification procedures, despite the work of the European Commission.

Lastly, one of the values distinguishing HETEL-Abantean centres is precisely internationalisation, the objective of which is to offer students international experience in European companies, as well as offering higher vocational training and international experience in companies in any part

³⁴ Interview with Julen Elgeta, Durango, 12 June 2019.

of the world to university degree holders from Euskadi, working with vocational training centres, universities and companies anywhere.

3.4.3. *AICE/IZEA (1984)*

The third association grouping together centres that impart Vocational Training is the Independent Association of Educational Centres (*Asociación Independiente de Centros Educativos, AICE / Irakaskuntza Zentruen Elkarte Autonomoa, IZEA*), which is a professional organisation of 47 associated private or subsidised centres engaged not just in vocational training but in other levels of the educational system, such as preschool education or integrated schools, among them centres like Gaztelueta, Colegio Eskibel, the American School of Bilbao or the San Alberto Magno Deutsche Schule. Its centres are located in the territories of Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia, with none in Araba. Of the total number of centres referred to, 31 offer vocational training, covered in secondary. There is also one centre offering Training for Employment and Lifelong Learning.

This association was founded in 1984 as one of the employers' associations in Euskadi education, and its principal trait is pluralism, since it represents both private and subsidised centres. The values it defends are:

- Contributing to quality, equality, innovation and pluralism as values inherent to education.
- Preserving the independence and pedagogical identity of the schools forming AICE/IZEA.
- Defending the freedom of creating and managing educational centres, as well as the right of heads of family to choose the education they want for their children and the educational centre that responds to their convictions.
- Collaborating with the community, provincial and local authorities in the management of the Basque Educational System.
- Promoting youth entrepreneurship and any other field related to youth.
- Promotion, defence and teaching of full social and job integration for the disadvantaged through active training and employment policies, as well as the responsible use of the environment.

The position of AICE/IZEA in relation to the place it occupies among vocational training centre associations is clear to the extent that the other two have a guideline that is clearer, that of accommodating public or subsidised centres, with the corresponding policy positions in relation to the right to education. In the case of this association, the positions are taken by the owners of the centres, who are largely private; hence, a mistrust in the

relation of such positions to certain decisions is evident³⁵. Decision-making in public centres, in the hands of the administration, and in the subsidised centres —largely religious and in the hands of the authorities of the pertinent religious orders or congregations— are not the same as in the private centres, controlled by their owners. This premise is therefore important in the assumption of different positions. Moreover, the management of each centre determines their ways of proceeding and the search of each unit for financing. In this sense, spokesman José Ignacio Hernández, at the time the association chair, considers “that public education always needs to look a little at itself in the mirror of private education in managing resources”³⁶.

However, with the passing of time and the relations that were built up and shared, he now recognises the limitations of each association and their foundation in the country. The centres associated under AICE/IZEA have a very diverse and broad spectrum, with twelve integrated centres and more than twice that number in vocational training centres. In that sense, the bid for equal opportunities is a goal that guides the activity of this association. The challenge lies in the integrated centres, due to the benefits they bring students, faculty and companies, since these centres “have their cycles and because they train for employment. Both for the employed and the unemployed. There is a flow of knowledge generated in each centre, which is indispensable ... in other words, the faculty unaware of what students bring in from companies, whether unemployed or employed, we consider as obsolete for teaching the studentry in the cycles”. In the same way, our interviewee understands that closeness to the companies “is a means to fully develop the studentry”.

With regard to the presence of girls in vocational training, the opinion of our interviewee coincides with that of the HETEL representative: “right now, there are 6 cycles of higher vocational training. And from there, in the marketing branches as well as in administration, gender is more indifferent, although this attracts women more; but in information technology, 9 out of 10 students are boys, while in textile, 9 out of 10 are girls”. The situation of Euskera is also another of the pending challenges, since it forms part of the *Euskalherrirantz* programme, above all in the integrated centres promoting faculty training along the lines of multilingualism. In the same way, some of the centres linked to this association have been developing centre innovation projects: “8 March according to Big Data” in Arangoya; “Innovation and Emotional Education” and “Bringing Classrooms to Companies” in San José de Calasanz, or “Innova HL

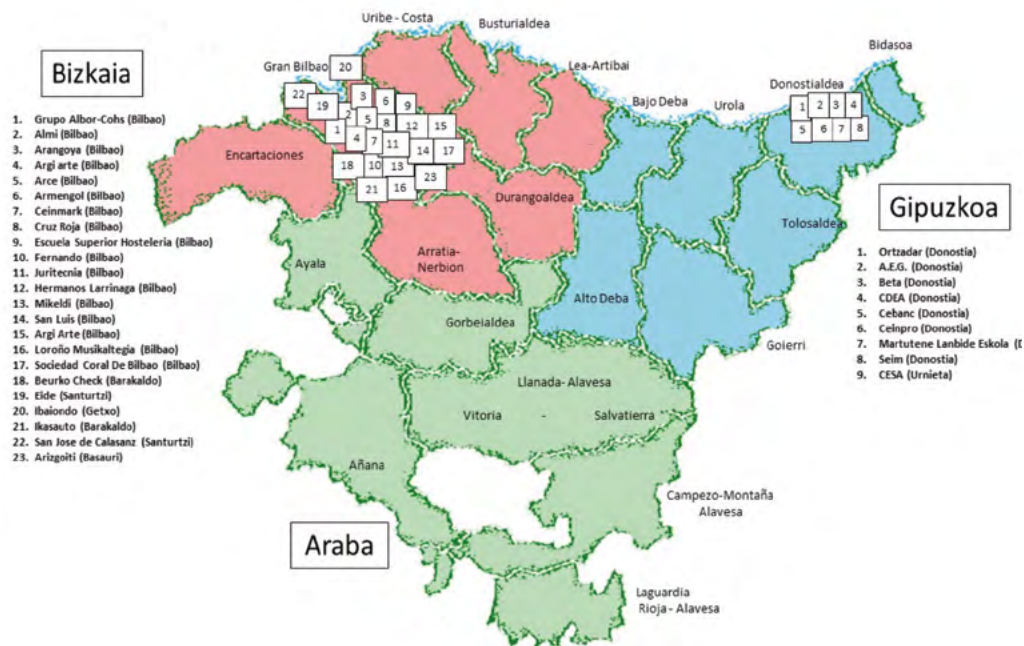
³⁵ Interview with José Ignacio Hernández, Donostia, 11 February 2019.

³⁶ Interview with José Ignacio Hernández, Donostia, 11 February 2019.

2020: Thinking, Sharing, Growing”, in Hermanos Larrinaga College. Similar things may be said about internationalisation.

The number of centres forming part of AICE/IZEA by territory (Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia; there are no associated centres in Araba) is as follows:

Figure 4
Centres associated under AICE/IZEA



Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data* from the AICE-IZEA website.

With regard to the number of centres belonging to AICE/IZEA, it may be observed that, of the 31 centres, 22 are in the territory of Bizkaia and 9 in Gipuzkoa. It is also striking that majority of the centres are located in the capital cities. As José Ignacio Hernández of AEG points out in referring to this phenomenon: “we are very much from the cities”³⁷. There are only 8 centres located in the other towns of these territories. In the case of Bizkaia, majority are located on the left bank and form part of Greater Bilbao. This distribution doubtless reflects a greater demand for vocational training in towns with a long tradition of companies and centres of this sort.

³⁷ Interview with José Ignacio Hernández, Donostia, 11 February 2019.

With regard to the training course offer, its distribution may be observed in the following table:

Table 2

Centres belonging to AICE/IZEA according to training course offer

Basic Vocational Training (9)	Specialised Education (4)
Ortzadar (Donostia)	Argi Arte (Bilbao)
CDEA (Donostia)	Arizgoiti (Basauri)
Cebanc (Donostia)	Loroño Musikaltegia (Bilbao)
Martutene Lanbide Eskola (Donostia)	Sociedad Coral de Bilbao (Bilbao)
Almi (Bilbao)	
Armengol (Bilbao)	
Fernando (Bilbao)	
San Luis (Bilbao)	
San José de Calasanz (Santurtzi)	

Source: <https://www.aice-izea.com/quienes-somos/#nuestrosvalores>

The list of centres by Intermediate and Higher Cycles is as follows:

Table 3

List of AICE/IZEA centres by Intermediate and Higher Training Cycles

Intermediate Vocational Training Cycles (18)	Higher Vocational Training Cycles (20)
Ortzadar (Donostia)	A.E.G. (Donostia)
Beta (Donostia)	CDEA (Donostia)
CDEA (Donostia)	Cebanc (Donostia)
Cebanc (Donostia)	Ceinmark (Bilbao)
Ceinpro (Donostia)	Ceinpro (Donostia)
CESA (Urnietia)	Seim (Donostia)
Almi (Bilbao)	CESA (Urnietia)
Arce (Bilbao)	Grupo Albor-Cohs (Bilbao)
Armengol (Bilbao)	Almi (Bilbao)
Cruz Roja (Bilbao)	Arangoya (Bilbao)
Escuela Superior de Hostelería (Bilbao)	Arce (Bilbao)
Fernando (Bilbao)	Cruz Roja (Bilbao)
Hnos. Larrinaga (Bilbao)	Escuela Superior de Hostelería (Bilbao)
Mikeldi (Bilbao)	Juritecna (Bilbao)
San Luis (Bilbao)	Mikeldi (Bilbao)
Beurko Check (Barakaldo)	San Luis (Bilbao)
Ibaiondo (Getxo)	Eide (Santurtzi)
San José de Calasanz (Santurtzi)	Ibaiondo (Getxo)
	Ikasauto (Barakaldo)
	San José de Calasanz (Santurtzi)

Source: <https://www.aice-izea.com/quienes-somos/#nuestrosvalores>

Except for the centres imparting specialised training, the majority of the rest offer some combination of other modalities, either in the two cycles or in some cycle combined with Basic Vocational Training.

To complete our view of this association, we shall deal with some aspects related to Vocational Training, reflected in their 2016 activities report (*Memoria actividades*, 2016). One of the relevant aspects is that relating to the management concerns promoted, geared towards the communication and internationalisation of good practices in AICE/IZEA vocational training centres promoting the dissemination of a creative management model as “the only way of competing and collaborating in the occupational branches of AICE-IZEA vocational training centre activity” (*Memoria actividades*, 2016).

As set forth in the report, the project was implemented by deploying two lines of action in the vocational training cycles imparted by the Independent Association of Educational Centres of Euskadi: the so-called “inward line”, providing individual centre-to-centre detection and support for entrepreneurship initiatives within each AICE/IZEA vocational training centre, and the “outward line”, together with other social and economic agents of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (companies, institutions, development agencies, chambers of commerce and business associations), whereby attention is focused on vocational training students, to generate entrepreneurial synergies leading to specific, socially profitable projects. This project entailed extensive dedication from the faculty and students of the cycles mentioned in the 20 collaborating vocational training centres. It also reflects some aspects related to innovation projects, some of them already mentioned, in addition to the training courses and participation in internationalising the centres associated.

These activities relate more to the internal objectives of the association proper, but also point to its participation in the development of the Basque Vocational Training System, through the pertinent representation of the private centres that year in the Basque Vocational Training Council, in the person of its chair, José Ignacio Hernández. Activities revolved around legislative development committees, degrees, and certification.

Another important chapter documented in this report is that relating to association activities in its relations with institutions (the Department of Education, Lanbide, the Department of Employment, other associations, the provincial councils of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, or the political parties). Of all these contacts, noteworthy are the beginnings of a new association (*Lhberritzen*) to manage the Juncker Plan, seeking to endow the vocational training centres of the three associations (*Ikaslan*, *HETEL* and *AICE*) with resources, including a share for *Tknika*.

3.5. From Academic Centre Internships to Workplace Internships

Work-linked vocational training was a teaching model originating in the 1980s which was able to combine working with studying, and which therefore responds to some special characteristics throughout the years it has been operative.

At that time at the end of the 1980s, an employment policy coherent with the reality of the Basque Autonomous Community had to contemplate not just training plans, but a continuous occupational training strategy. In this context, corporate restructuring plans and industrial re-conversion would not have been effective if recycling and training had not become one of their foundations; hence, the need to design adequate continuous training projects that were upgraded on a permanent basis.

In reality, what was needed was to start up programmes addressing training for every type of workforce, compatible with technological advances, the demands of society and the adaptation of companies to modern management techniques. In a word, what was sought was to provide certain supplementary knowhow to unemployed workers, thus raising their chances of employment, promoting qualifications adjusted to the needs of the advanced technologies being applied in the companies of the Basque Autonomous Community, facilitating job mobility, and thus putting more flexibility into the job market, ending the obsolescence of certain professions and/or job posts, improving employment rates, increasing relations between the educational and productive sectors to raise the placement possibilities of those who finished the studies, training and motivating executives towards both improved competence in their functions and a more proactive and entrepreneurial attitude, and achieving higher levels of competitiveness among entrepreneurs.

This was how the idea of work-linked training arose, to manage and process which the work-linked internship programme was designed, in turn divided into three subprogrammes:

- The vocational training sub-programme, which included internship projects for second-year vocational training students, and the professional modules, imparted during the last two years of official regulated studies.
- The university centre sub-programme, which included internship projects promoted and organised by university centres for their students enrolled in the last two years of officially regulated university course studies.
- The occupational training sub-programme, which covered internship projects for occupational training students, subsidised by agreement with the Department of Labour and Social Security or the Department of Education, Universities and Research.

After several years with these programmes in operation, Decree 304/2000 came into force, drawn up to regulate the Work-Linked Internship Programme, with the aim of covering the legal gap in non-regulated complementary workplace training. Like other training processes, the monitoring and evaluation of training activities that were subsidised fell upon the Public Corporation for the Promotion of Training and Employment, EGAILAN S. A.

3.5.1. *The Dual Work-Linked System*

In the light of the information that may be collected for these last few years from different communications media, it seems that the Dual Work-Linked System is an educational model, the “discovery” of which has brought success to Basque vocational training:

The current Dual Vocational Training System took off in 2011 at a meeting involving Confebask, the Council for Education, and the present-day Minister of Education and Vocational Training, Isabel Celaá. They were not as concerned about quantity, but rather quality. We wanted to lay firm foundations ...³⁸.

However, the Basque Country had already conducted its first experiments in this sense in the 1980s. Those beginnings met with difficulties:

When I was in Confebask, I set up Shared Vocational Training, which was a copy of what German Dual Training wanted to achieve; but implementing dual training again on apprentice wages was a very complicated task³⁹.

Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, work-linked training programmes were designed that sought to improve professional, personal and social skills in order to obtain an Initial Vocational Training Certificate. These first difficulties were followed by a period of easy sailing, but once more, work-linked training suffered a relapse prior to finally beginning the current successful stage in the second decade of the 21st century, specifically between 2008 and 2011. It is in this context that the *Ikasi eta Lan* Programme was developed, and, from 2012 onwards, the *HEZIBI* programme.

³⁸ Interview with Asier Aloria, Bilbao 1 March 2019.

³⁹ Interview with José Luis García Bengoa, Bilbao, 1 March 2019.

3.6. Lifelong Learning for the Vocational Training Faculty

Faculty Lifelong Learning has been one of the quality indicators of the Basque educational system and, in consequence, has had notable effects not only on the development of centres but also on the professional development of the faculty themselves. “The administration set up Garatu courses. There have been all sorts of courses you could wish for, that has to be admitted. In its favour, there was a lot of training ...”⁴⁰ but “in the beginning, there was no permanent training at all; the administration provided for nothing. Then the technical courses began: above all, they began with computers, the classic Word application, then digital control ...”⁴¹. In this context, three elements came together that required the implementation of a Continuous Training Plan for the faculty; i.e., the implementation of educational reform on the one hand and the demands from the centres and the faculty on the other.

On speaking about this training model, it is easy to remember the so-called Garatu Plan dating from 1996. However, prior to that, permanent training for the faculty had already been initiated in 1989 through the Order dated 13 June of that year, calling upon public and private institutions to collaborate in presenting projects for a permanent faculty training plan. This was an overly ambitious plan, since it addressed all non-university faculty of the Basque Autonomous Community, and therefore required the involvement of all those institutions of renowned prestige and experience capable of taking action in this sphere.

This permanent faculty training model continued to be implemented up to 2002, at which time it was discontinued as the result of the enforcement of Decree 222/2001 of 16 October (BOPV dated 24 October 2001, no 206). Article 18 of this Decree stipulated that it would be the Directorate of Lifelong Learning, which belonged to the basic structure of the Department of Education, Universities and Research, that would take charge of designing, applying and conducting monitoring on a permanent training plan for vocational training faculty and that such a plan would cover both upgrades and specialisations for this group. This meant that, starting from then on, it was necessary to prepare a training plan for the vocational training faculty proper, different from the permanent training plan for the faculty of the other non-university courses, and that this plan should guarantee that its training proposals were in line with the demands felt and expressed by the faculty itself.

This was a radical change. From the first few courses in Business Management imparted for vocational training faculty at the end of the

⁴⁰ Interview with Patri Zubizarreta, Donostia, 4 February 2019.

⁴¹ Interview with José Ignacio Berrondo, Donostia, 20 May 2019.

1980s, it evolved into much more specific training, much more oriented to acquiring new skills, either by upgrading these or delving into them in greater depth, as we may see from the following table.

Table 4**Training Activities for the Permanent Training of Vocational Training Faculty**

ADMINISTRATION — Auditing — Supply Management — Accounting / Taxation	BUSINESS & MARKETING — International Trade — e-Business	CONSTRUCTION & CIVIL WORKS — Topography — Curtain wall types, execution & ventilation — Roads & railways — Execution of development works
ELECTRICITY & ELECTRONICS — Siemens S7 Automaton Programming — Antenna Installation — Renewable Energies — Home Automation: EIB Buses	MECHANICAL MANUFACTURE — Metrology & Calibration — Manufacture by deformation & cutting: Machines and tools used in moulds. — CNC environment programming — FANUC — HEIDENHAIN — FAGOR 8055 — CNC mill programming — FANUC — HEIDENHAIN — FAGOR 8055 — Pneumatics & electro-pneumatics — Hydraulics, Electro-hydraulics & Proportional Hydraulics	HOTELS & TOURISM — Hotel Kitchens: — Nougat, marzipan and derivatives — Vacuum cooking — Tourism: — Computerised management in travel agencies — Tourism market research & the creation of new wholesale products
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY — Advance Linux — Windows 2000 Servers — Oracle Databases — Extensive Area Networks — Analysis & Development of Functions in Information Systems — Visual Basic Programming — Visual C++ Programming	SELF-PROPELLED VEHICLE MAINTENANCE — Colorimetry — Painting Equipment and Methods — Baseplates, measuring equipment & spatial geometry — Hydraulics and Pneumatics in Cars — Electricity & Electronics in Cars: Diagram Interpretation & Multiplexing — Safety Systems & Comfort	PRODUCTION MAINTENANCE & SERVICES — Manipulators and Robots
HEALTH — Basic Nursing Techniques — Geriatric Care	CHEMISTRY-HEALTH — Water Analysis — Laboratory Statistics & Computer Applications — Air Analysis	CHEMISTRY — Metallography

MULTIDISCIPLINARY TRAINING

- Workplace Health, Safety & Hygiene
- Environment & Business
- Labour Laws & Social Security
- Starting & Managing a Business or Profession
- Professional Orientation & Job Placement
- Procedures & Dynamics Applied to Human Resource Management: Quality & Continuing Improvement

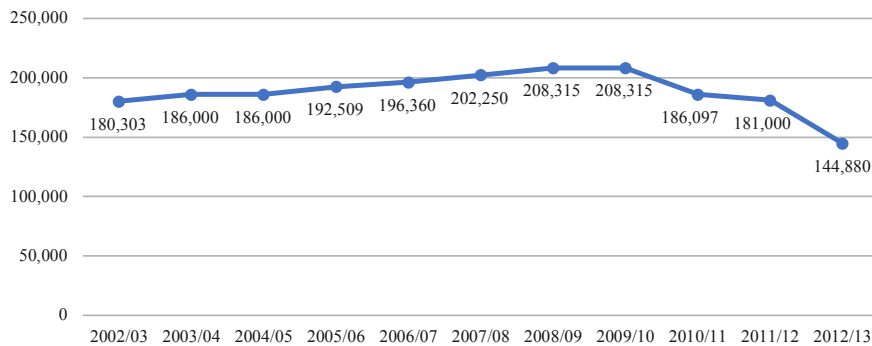
Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data:* BOPV.

The widespread interest shown by vocational training faculty in taking part in this type of activity required an effort in regulation from the academic authorities. Among other measures, it was decided that all working faculty imparting vocational training cycles would be able to take them partially or fully during teaching hours. In addition, however, participation in these training activities gave this group of teachers the possibility of enjoying certain forms of economic assistance if they passed.

Seen in terms of the economic contributions made by the Basque government to public and private institutions for implementing these training activities, the amounts in euro distributed were as follows:

Figure 5

Contributions from the Basque government to the Permanent Training Plan for vocational training faculty, 2002/2012

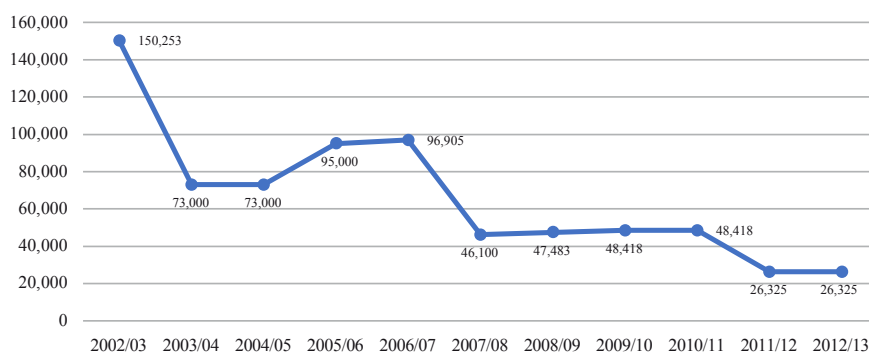


Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data:* BOPV.

There were also certain forms of individual economic assistance distributed to those taking part in these training activities and did so satisfactorily, as well as for those obliged to travel in order to do so. For these cases, the assistance was as follows:

Figure 6

Individual economic assistance in euro distributed among the vocational training faculty taking part in the training activities of the Permanent Training Plan, 2002/2012



Source: Prepared by the authors. Data: BOPV

During those nine years that up to a total of 582 training activities were conducted, three teaching modalities were used, with classes in person involved in the immense majority, although there were also online courses (38), accounting for 6.5%, and a mixture of the two, although these latter cases were somewhat circumstantial. It should also be pointed out that the activities took place in the three Basque territories, albeit mainly around Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, with merely testimonial courses in the province of Araba (19), accounting for a little over 3.2% of the total. Bizkaia took up the greatest part (277), 47.6%, and Gipuzkoa (248), 42.6%.

Two further issues remain for analysis: that concerning Euskera and that of the occupational branches. In the case of Euskera, only 123 of the 582 activities undertaken —21.1%— were imparted in this language, but the disproportion is greater if we observe that, of the 123, 108 were held in Gipuzkoa and only 15 in Bizkaia, 0 in Araba and 0 in the online courses. And if we look at the occupational branches, the 26 courses imparted dealt with 10: Administration, Business & Marketing (these came together starting in AY 2006/07), Electricity & Electronics, Mechanical Manufacture, Information Technology, Self-propelled Vehicle Maintenance (which later became Automotives), Production Maintenance & Services, Construction & Civil Works, Chemistry, Multidisciplinary Training, and Health.

In 2013, the Garatu Plan, which had been implemented since 1996, came to an end and was substituted by a new plan, Prest_Gara. However,

perhaps the best moment in the permanent training of vocational training faculty was still to come, with a proper name: Ethazi.

Ethazi (an acronym for “high-performance centre”) began in AY 2013/14 as a pilot experiment in which five vocational training centres took part, covering five training cycles, 25 faculty members and 100 students. This was a new learning model in which the end recipient is the student, but for it to reach its addressee, the faculty previously had to undergo a training period. It was a model with its serious defenders and detractors:

The notorious ETHAZI, which, in my view, ... puts me to shame, I have said that many times. This is a personal style of X (one of those responsible for starting up Ethazi), yes, I give it a pompous name, and from then on, we begin to set it up, ... moreover, it’s voluntary: this is something I have never understood. In other words, the voluntary centre: it’s Machiavellian ...⁴².

Mujika coincides in the matter of pompous names, although he is a firm defender of the model:

Now we are in ETHAZI, where I also have to admit that in coining names ... The idea is that we assimilate everything of high performance, like athletes, who go to high-performance centres to train for the Olympics. What ETHAZI does is to train in technical and other skills that we have called transversal⁴³.

As we pointed out, this new learning model is a model based on challenge, on complex situations that have to be resolved through previous knowledge by the studentry, like those who progressively build to be able to contribute the best solution to the problem/challenge formulated. Individual work, teamwork, an orientation towards the best possible results, classroom layouts turned into open spaces, the use of all types of material resources, ... these are some of the innovations that Ethazi brings along, and logically, this requires faculty readaptation:

At our centre last year, there was tremendous investment, ... no longer do walls separate the classes and now everything is glazed, and we are working on that, on Ethazi high-performance projects, ... no longer working alone and independently, which spells out a change in the way teachers work. It entails more teamwork, more meetings, changing the

⁴² Interview with Patri Zubizarreta, Donostia, 4 February 2019.

⁴³ Interview with Iñaki Mujika, Donostia, 18 June 2019.

system of educational planning you have when you come into the centre, changing as well the system of the centres themselves⁴⁴.

The flagship of this new experience in the world of vocational training in the Basque Country is Tknika, a centre we have already talked about previously, which enjoys a certain prestige in the world of vocational training.

3.7. The Vocational Training Centre Management System: A Bid for Total Quality

When, in the 1990s, “Quality” came to the Basque Country, there were only few who made a bid for it. Those who did so were the “adventurers” of vocational training, who, guided by Eugenio Ibarzabal and Ricardo Etxepare, and with the help of Robert Winter, set off on a road with a destination impossible to place.

A quality model for vocational training was initiated in 1995 and four centres began implementation. When we began, we did not know where it was leading to or what it was going to become, but it has transformed into the model that has given us the greatest confidence and has been our firmest foundation in developing an advanced vocational training model⁴⁵.

And so it remained, since one of the principal innovations undergone by Basque vocational training in these last few years was the incorporation of Total Quality to its way of working. Since Total Quality became part of the vocational training centres, it has not been free of great pre-occupations for those who had a stake in this change, because, by its new philosophy on how vocational training should be managed, they understood that it was not only the centres that had to change their way of acting—which was true—but above all, also individuals.

The philosophy of vocational training was to grasp at any movement. It was necessary to convince people about everything. Many mistakes were made in some centres, such as imposition, and that created tremendous rejection, but I believe that quality is good, and that it is necessary to systematise tasks, because deep down, this is merely the most logical reasoning⁴⁶.

⁴⁴ Interview with Arantza Niño, Joseba Muñoz & Juan Carlos Diego, Bilbao, 20 March 2019.

⁴⁵ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Erretereria, 13 April 2019.

⁴⁶ Interview with José Ignacio Berrondo, Donostia, 20 May 2019.

Along this line of whether or not it was ideal to incorporate quality into vocational training, Aloria and Arévalo also find a positive aspect:

We had been building on what was already built, and there were three fundamental thrusts: entrepreneurship, applied innovation and internationalisation. But there was also another key that was already there from the First Basque Vocational Training Plan, which was quality. The bid for quality was clear; it was implemented, and we improved from there⁴⁷.

An appropriate model for vocational training was prepared, and from there we proceeded to assemble a quality model to support us in structuring the centres so that they could begin to work in another way⁴⁸.

Under these premises, a project known as “SAREka: Quality in Public VT” was designed, and for the purpose, it was based on three thrusts or stages: quality control, quality assurance, and a focus on Total Quality. In all three cases, the “clients” would be present; i.e., in quality control, an attempt would be made to stop defective products from reaching them; in quality assurance, not only were defective products discarded, but their needs would also be taken into account; and, in the focus on quality, special emphasis would be placed on the continuous improvement of all centre processes and activities, which logically would redound to the benefit of the clients. Seen this way, what was sought—and found—was the continuous improvement of the centres, but what was more important, in the opinion of some of the interviewees, was the continuous improvement produced in the individuals, who were fully trusted and equipped with tools of the quality required to progressively improve their work – work that from here on would be teamwork instead of individual work, as had been done historically before.

Following these first steps, which were initially rather hesitant, the bid for Total Quality Management took off with the First Basque Vocational Training Plan, which, among its many objectives, included that of bridging the gap between vocational training centres and the job market. To do this, it was necessary for all the centres to undergo self-evaluation, such that the system could be assessed in relation to its quality:

We opted in from Usurbil, Martutene, Tolosa and Bergara. We did a few things in training and approached the issue of institutional quality from the angle of individual quality. We drew closer to the EFQM model, conducting self-evaluation in the centres⁴⁹.

⁴⁷ Interview with Asier Aloria, Bilbao, 1 March 2019.

⁴⁸ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

⁴⁹ Interview with Kike Intxausti, Donostia, 6 May 2019.

This evaluation in turn required the analysis of certain elements intervening in vocational training quality, elements such as the adjustment of training programmes, faculty qualification, quality in teaching-learning methods, teaching materials and media, and proper implementation of the training module in the workplace. As a result, system evaluation was done at two levels: at centre level through the self-evaluations mentioned, dealing with aspects such as the quality of the training process in the centre itself, its quality in the workplace, and the validity of qualifications and degrees, among other matters. Once centre self-evaluation had been done, the overall assessment of the system took place, analysing the quality levels of management and performance on targets.

However, to conduct this quality evaluation, two other basic elements were required: i.e., the centres had to provide the necessary procedures and instruments for self-evaluation (internal evaluation) and vocational training had to be evaluated by external agents from an integrated perspective (external evaluation). Both evaluations relied on the model prepared by the EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management). This model was implemented by means of another self-evaluation process that enabled the establishment of a regular systematic overall examination of centre activities and results, which in turn enabled comparison with other centres and, in addition, allowed the centres to clearly discern their strengths and weaknesses, providing them with a chance at improving in their activities. In sum, what the EFQM Model was to facilitate the centres was an accurate basis for improving their management, a real evaluation based on facts and not on opinions, some powerful diagnostic tools, a method of measuring progress made through time ... with all this being managed by the Basque Agency for Vocational Training Quality and Evaluation.

Starting from the enforcement of the Second Basque Vocational Training Plan, there were three agents conducting the evaluation: *the centres themselves*, performing the internal quality evaluations on their management, *the Basque Agency for Vocational Training Skills Evaluation and Quality*, which established objective models and evaluation criteria for the three evaluation levels—training, centre management, and evaluating the vocational training system— and *the institutions external to the system, Aenor and Euskalit*, which took charge of evaluating centre management.

To analyse quality in the vocational training system, the Professional Qualifications System was taken into account. This aimed to integrate the vocational training subsystems (Initial, Occupational and Continued Training) into a single system that would make it possible to certify professional skills consistently in any field, including non-formal channels such as personal experience proper, which in the beginning was not fully consolidated. This resulted in evaluation that relied upon a panel of

outcome indicators, in addition to a needful periodical qualitative evaluation. In a word, what was done was to endow the vocational training system with a quality model for management that consisted in applying a standardised system for process management, ISO 9001:2000, and the EFQM Excellence model for system management. This EFQM model was the standard used for external evaluation by Euskalit, an evaluation agency charged with issuing Gold Q certificates (> 500 EFQM points), the Basque Management Quality Award and the Silver Q (> 400 EFQM points).

Centre certification by ISO 9000 standards proved a useful and appropriate tool in identifying key processes and applying standardised systems to process management (above all in Regulated Training). The revision of ISO 9000 and, in consequence, compliance with the more demanding standards of ISO 9001:2000, entailed new efforts in adapting centres that had been certified by the previous standard. Meanwhile, the EFQM Excellence model enabled centres to adopt a continuing improvement strategy.

As the result of all this work undertaken during those first years of the 21st century, the status of quality management in Basque vocational training as of 2004 was as follows:

Table 5

Status of quality management in Basque vocational training (2004)

CERTIFICATE	INSTITUTIONS
ISO 9001:2000	Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning
Gold Q (EFQM >500 points)	2 centres
Silver Q (EFQM >400 points)	19 centres
ISO 9000	38 centres
EFQM 300 points	14 centres
ISO 14000	1 centre

Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data:* Murua (2015)

The ensuing panorama was attractive, but Basque vocational training could not “rest on its laurels”, and it was necessary to undertake new initiatives while maintaining some of those already begun. In this context, there were different proposals, such as maintaining and im-

proving the final results of vocational training, improving service quality, evaluating the results of the Basque Vocational Training System, promoting programmes and activities addressing the areas of improvement, investing in individual qualifications, maintaining the leading position of the integrated centre network in terms of quality, etc., but above all, leaving a record of what was being done; i.e., preparing reports that reflected what was being done in centre management in terms of the EFQM Model, and adapting systems to the requirements of ISO 9000:2001.

It cannot be said that the Third Basque Vocational Training Plan was an obstacle to implementing all the measures initiated by the previous Plan, but we may observe that this Third Plan was the “weakest” of the four analysed in relation to quality management. The Socialist government, which had availed of People’s Party assistance in accessing the *Lehendakaritza* (the presidency of the Basque government), taking advantage of the Parties Act that illegalised the nationalist left, did not manage to support management quality, and years of uncertainty elapsed for those who had worked for years in this field; but the return of the Basque nationalist PNV to Ajuria Enea (official seat of the Basque presidency) and the placement of many of its executives in the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Education signalled the definitive call to implement quality management in vocational training centres along with the Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan.

This return to the origins of quality management in vocational training once more set off on the road begun eight years back and confronted the new challenge of restoring vocational training to where it had been before the coming of the Socialists and the People’s Party into power. As a result, today we can say that, in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, there is a Basque Vocational Training System, an integrated system with the principal goal of satisfying the different needs of the people in the Basque Autonomous Community in qualifications, for Initial Training, Continuous Training and Occupational Training. This Basque Vocational Training System, different from that of other Spanish communities, enables vocational training faculty and centres to keep upgraded, with close relations to business. It is flexible, adapts rapidly to the needs of students and business, but is also a technically specialised system mainly responding to industry, although it is true that due to the changes being felt in society, its stake in services increasingly grows. It is an innovative system in the forefront of new learning systems, preoccupied about the work and ongoing education of its faculty, with a significant presence in the business world, a decisive stake in Dual Training and a total commitment to quality and excellence, as we may see in Table 6 below:

Table 6

Vocational Training Centres involved in Quality Management (2012)

CERTIFICATE	INSTITUTIONS
Investors in People	13 centres
EFQM > 500 points	9 centres
EFQM > 400 points	51 centres
ISO 9000	55 certified
ISO 14000	21 centres
ISO 18000	6 centres

Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data:* Murua (2015).

3.8. The Challenge of Entrepreneurship: Vocational Training Centres and the Creation of Enterprises

One of the fundamental characteristics unique to vocational training in the Basque Autonomous Community is the importance that entrepreneurship has been progressively acquiring⁵⁰, to the point of becoming one of its basic thrusts, explicitly reflected in the Basque Country Vocational Training Act of 2018. In the context of the combined vocational training model to which this law refers, together with Initial Vocational Training and Occupational Training for Employment, and apart from the area of applied innovation, entrepreneurship training acquires an evident relevance. This fact —i.e., the legal dimension of entrepreneurship training within Basque vocational training as we have already pointed out on more than one occasion— takes place in a period subsequent to that being studied in this research, but is explained in the framework of the development occurring at this stage. This is one particular that it would do good not to forget because, if anything has to be made evident, it is that entrepreneurship, within the evolution that Basque vocational training has undergone, is not a matter of merely declarative importance, something that deserves to be underscored; it has a relevance that must be viewed in the strategic dimension that was being built, in particular, during the first years of the 21st century. The Basque Autonomous Community evidently does not pose an

⁵⁰ In the opinion of Iosune Irazabal, chair of *Ikaslan Gipuzkoa*, the support that BAC Vocational Training has given entrepreneurship is one of the most important turning points of its history. Interview with Iosune Irazabal, Bergara, 25 November 2019.

exception, to the extent, for instance, that there are also other communities in Spain sharing this conviction in the importance of entrepreneurship, which occupies a place in their educational strategies (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 2015). However, it is necessary to point out the relevance of its positioning in the context of strategic overall visions, where diverse institutions intervene – not just the Basque government and other agents, but also educational centres, as in the case of the Inter-institutional Support Plan for Entrepreneurship Activity for 2013/2016 (Eusko Jauriaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government, 2013).

This plan, the precursor of the plan in force as of the moment of publishing our study (Eusko Jauriaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government, 2017), would mark the consolidation of the commitment on the part of all the various agents in the region to promote entrepreneurship by the end of the period studied. If entrepreneurship were to be a priority for institutional agents – apart from the Basque government, the regional administrations and the municipalities— the same could be said with regard to the educational institutions, in which context Basque vocational training was to become one of the “fishing grounds” for activation as a source of entrepreneurship activity, in the context of what has come to be called the “Basque Entrepreneurship Model” (Eusko Jauriaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government, 2017)⁵¹. The 2013/2016 plan emphasises, among other factors, the importance of culture and the values of entrepreneurship, an area that would demand a response from the educational system as a whole, in which context the proven competence of the vocational training centres is stressed, as effective entrepreneurship facilitators, and not just as agents imparting training on the subject, along with the programmes initiated, to which we have to refer: *Ikasenpresa*, *Urratsbat*, etc. (Eusko Jauriaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government, 2013). But as we have pointed out, neither is the preoccupation for entrepreneurship an innovation in the Basque Country, nor has vocational training in the field begun recently, since it has already shown ample evidence of its capacity to innovate.

In effect, as early as the 1980s, in a context of economic and social crisis of colossal dimensions, there was a desire to confront the need to reverse the situation from a strategic approach in which entrepreneurship was to serve as one of the basic pivot points, giving rise to Basque institu-

⁵¹ The defining traits of the Basque Entrepreneurship Model would be its high project survival rate (where project quality combines with solidity, efficient public support and the business context), training for entrepreneurship —effectively tested— the support of public institutions since the formation of the Basque entrepreneurship system in the 1980s, the diversity of project “fishing grounds” —among which would be the vocational training centres— and the fabric of business, finance, associations, etc. that characterises the Country.

tions formulating the so-called Basque entrepreneurial system, for which training was to be one of the props, providing “support in the processes of business project preparation and company incorporation” (Eusko Jaur-laritzza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government, 2013). But it would not be until the end of the 20th century and the start of the 21st that the system—even where its activity was fundamental—went beyond the mentioned support to take the significant leap towards entrepreneurship training in vocational training, as it did, even in the universities. Or it may very possibly be needful to say that it was vocational training itself in the Basque Autonomous Community that “reinvented” its identity to go beyond training for a profession or a job, projecting itself as an agent of entrepreneurship training from an undeniably innovative vision, even redefining its mission (Navarro, M. (2017).

Nevertheless, it must be pointed out that this innovative perspective was not prepared without due consideration: on the contrary, thought was given to the reality of vocational training and the challenges it faces in environments with which it can compare itself, particularly in Europe, from where it can learn, as well as those others it could conceivably teach. It seems a simple matter to see, in the light of the abundant documentation on entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship training generated by the different European Union authorities, the Commission, the Council or the Parliament itself (European Commission, 2013), that this issue is considered a sizable component of economic development and job creation. From the European Charter for Small Enterprises of 2000, which explicitly states that “Small enterprises are the backbone of the European economy” (European Commission, 2000), underscoring the importance of entrepreneurship and formulating lines of education and training as one of the fundamental pillars of action in this direction, to the creation of the European Entrepreneurship Education Network in 2015—situating this within the bounds of the period studied—in which the key beyond a doubt is the significance of training, the task for European institutions addressing its promotion within the educational systems has been constant, although it is also true that, in the opinion of the European Parliament, this is not sufficiently appreciated. Basque vocational training has sought here the mirror in which to contrast the work it has undertaken in the area of entrepreneurship training, offering the possibility of training, as a matter of course, but as well the opportunity for conducting entrepreneurship activities.

It is certain that, in the more immediate educational context of the state, an entire corpus of legislation also exists with regard to entrepreneurship, from the OAE of 2006 where, in addition to Mandatory Secondary Education and the Baccalaureate, entrepreneurship training is also to be found among vocational training objectives, to the OAQIE of 2013, the preamble of which—among other stipulations—states that one of

the main objectives that educational reform sought to promote was “to improve employability and stimulate student entrepreneurship”. However, it is equally true that the work deployed in the field of entrepreneurship training in Basque vocational training is backed by a previous consolidated track record that cannot help but be acknowledged. And if there is anything remarkable about the Basque Autonomous Community, it is the fact that its ecosystem of entrepreneurship⁵² is, at the least, comparable to that of other advanced environments, thanks, as far as our subject is concerned, to the strength that effective acknowledgment of good practices has shown in a continuous process of structuring, in the field of education and, more specifically, in that of vocational training (Eusko Jaurlaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government, 2013), a decisive point more visible than the declared assessments that any law might reflect, recorded, for instance, in the European reports. Such is the case of the European Commission “Entrepreneurship Education” working group of 2014, which, in its final report, applauds the support system for entrepreneurship in the Basque Country, accompanied by the creation of companies (Ministry of Education, Culture and Sports, 2015) or the European Commission document *Entrepreneurship Education: A Guide for Educators*, acknowledging Tknika good practice with regard to “innovative teaching methods and concepts related to entrepreneurship education” (European Commission, 2014).

It is precisely Tknika that spearheaded what could be called a firm and decisive bid for entrepreneurship in Basque Country vocational training, a centre which, as we previously noted, emerged in 2005, where entrepreneurship accounts for a fundamental structural area, even though this entrepreneurship has precedents in both private and public vocational training (Basterretxea, I.; González, A.; Olasolo, A.; Saiz, M.; Simón, L., 2003). The context in which this centre arises, with its activity revolving around research and applied innovation, let us remember, is none other than the start of the Second Basque Vocational Training Plan, which deals with the need to push decidedly for entrepreneurship from a strategic vantage, as we have had the chance to stress in a previous chapter. The start of an initiative that began with a minimal structure conceived with the idea of innovation in the regional vocational training, in the words of Mujika, its director for a protracted period, would end up becoming “a reference point on the European scale” in barely a decade (Mujika, I., 2015). If there is anything to point out, it is precisely the innovative and strategic dimension of entrepreneurship. Innovation was already singled out in the *Lanbidez* as one of the functions of the integrated vocational train-

⁵² It is precisely in that “ecosystem” where the “entrepreneurial ecosystem of vocational training in Euskadi” to which we shall refer later can be situated and understood.

ing system of the Basque Autonomous Community, and it was posited as the thrust around which, as previously said, the Second Basque Vocational Training Plan was to revolve; Tknika is conceived in it in this sense as a “Research, Development and Innovation Centre”, as we said, a reference institution for vocational training centres in which to develop innovation projects, and its policy of innovation, among others, would include entrepreneurship promotion. Thus, Tknika would be the fundamental tool with which to configure, over the years, what Triguero would call the “entrepreneurial ecosystem of vocational training in Euskadi” (Triguero, S., 2015), the basic parts of which are shown below.

Figure 7

Entrepreneurial ecosystem of vocational training in Euskadi



Source: Triguero, S. (2015).

Apart from the backdrop of the work done at Tknika, the shaping of this “entrepreneurial ecosystem” must be understood in the strategic dimension of Basque vocational training that we dwelt on in a previous chapter, the scenario in which the Second Plan was to continue even though the political tides had changed into those of the Third Basque Vocational Training Plan, when entrepreneurship was explicitly acknowledged as an area where Basque vocational training had to position itself in the framework of a cultural change imposed within a context of trans-

formation that called for “successful responses” (Eusko Jaurlaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government, 2011), such that entrepreneurship was to be one of its strategic fields. As we know, before the implementation of the Plan, and following the change of government, the *2015 VT Strategic Agenda* marked, among diverse priorities, the need to spread and increase support for the creation of companies and to continue to promote student entrepreneurship in the vocational training centres, showing that entrepreneurship was a central element already acquiring strength in the process of developing vocational training in the Basque Country. By the end of the period being studied, we stand at the portal to the Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan, precisely the plan, as previously pointed out, that would mark a turning point in the evolution of Basque vocational training: entrepreneurship (“active” entrepreneurship, to be exact, as we have also had occasion to underscore) would represent one of its five strategic areas, an area that sought to strengthen entrepreneurship in vocational training and push for the creation of companies, promoting the culture of entrepreneurship and developing business projects, always showing the central role that the vocational training centres would also play in this regard. This formula, which was to enjoy continuity throughout the years subsequent to the period studied, when the entrepreneurial ecosystem to which we have referred and about which we shall expand somewhat later, had already been formed, is the outcome of a historical path on which daring ventures originated previously had progressively consolidated: we are referring in particular to the programmes, *Urratsabat* and *Ikasempresa*, with a long track record, as well as to *MAE*, a programme complementing, promoting and reinforcing the former two, in addition to a few more innovative initiatives that had been running briefly during the period under study, which would give full form to this ecosystem – Innovative Entrepreneurship, *Urratsbat* CoP de empresas, and Entrepreneurial Centre.

Entrepreneurship is one of the most visible forms in which the innovative capacity of Basque Autonomous Community vocational training once more appears, along that line of continually rethinking and reinventing itself, a capacity that would be impossible without the presence of the vocational training centres. In this sense, we cannot lose sight of the fact that the traditional relationship between these and their business environment—a relationship that would be critical in understanding the evolution that vocational training has undergone in the country (Olazarán, M.; Brunet, I. (coord.), 2013)—can also be extrapolated to the area of entrepreneurship. As Mujika states, the commitment of vocational training centres to business represents a tradition, and it is a fact that “many of our small enterprises have been created by individuals trained in our centres” (Mujika, I., 2015). Hence, it may be said in a certain way that the relationship be-

tween vocational training and entrepreneurship is a reality even prior to the leap to create a company, or the facilitation of that effort, turns into a very clear and explicit horizon. Thus, under the aegis of the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training, from one of the areas into which Tknika is structured, specifically that of “Entrepreneurship and Change Management”, and with the collaboration of the vocational training centres, Regulated Vocational Training and Training for Employment would be able to rely on a new travelling companion along the road to the transformation of Basque vocational training. The premise that, in the words of Mujika, projected the idea that vocational training centres could “create a corporate greenhouse” as early as 2000-2005, would only respond to the need to fine-tune the universe of Basque vocational training to a culture of entrepreneurship proper to the region⁵³, and Tknika would facilitate the leap from entrepreneurship training to entrepreneurial activity.

As we pointed out, Tknika is structured around different areas, one of which is “Entrepreneurship and Change Management”, since it was premised that one of the fundamental economic development thrusts in the country lies in the entrepreneurial capacity that the Basque Autonomous Community has already amply demonstrated. Here, from an innovative viewpoint in which training becomes an essential pillar, it would seek to strengthen entrepreneurial culture and initiative in the vocational training centres, an intention affecting both students and teachers, to achieve which it would be indispensable for all the agents of the vocational training system to collaborate, apart from transforming the centres themselves, an effect that the Tknika contribution would be oriented to promoting as well as facilitating. Guided by a discourse that does not conceal the perspective from which this subject is approached, it is understood that the economic and social development to benefit entails generating wealth and welfare, matters directly dependent on entrepreneurial initiative and the assumption of innovation as a need. Hence, the work Tknika deploys revolves around two propositions: designing and developing initiatives on the one hand and, on the other, working towards the transformation of vocational training centres, a core element in this task. In effect, all initiatives in this sense would call for the participation of the vocational training centres and, in the package, their faculty, since without their collaboration, such a challenge would hold no prospect of success for what was being referred to as an “entrepreneurial culture”, conclusively shoring up the option of initiatives to create companies as an alternative to professional activity holding future prospects for students or —what redounds to the same thing— self-employment as an effective doorway to the job market. This would require a change in the vocational training centres, for which

⁵³ Interview with Iñaki Mujika. Donostia, 18 June 2019.

it would be necessary to promote an evolution in the traditional functions of both initial training and training for employment, while assisting students in this transition in order to ease the way to entrepreneurship

facilitating the implementation of approaches and models in managing innovation through activities in surveillance, creativity, the development of ideas, innovation project management and the transfer of its results.

In this context, as early as the first few years of the 21st century, a programme was begun that enjoyed continuity through the following years and that, even today, is one of the elements vaunted by different vocational training authorities from the Basque Autonomous Community, beginning with the administration itself down to the social agents and centres, as the flagship of the support for entrepreneurship characterising Basque vocational training: we refer to the *UrratsBat* programme. This is the name of the programme which, in a few words, facilitates integrated support for the creation of companies in vocational training centres, addressing not just students of intermediate and higher vocational training centres —specifically, those from the second year— but also alumni and authorities maintaining some relationship with the centres in the field of non-regulated training or online training, which is not a vain matter to the extent that the services of these centres project well beyond their strict bounds. From the outset, this programme has purported to support company start-ups, such that whoever wanted to push ahead with a project in this sense could avail of integrated consultation, apart from some material means to facilitate launching: i.e., equipped offices and even —depending on the features of the project concerned— the possibility of using the vocational training centre workshops.

The key lay in managing to raise awareness in the vocational training centres regarding the possibilities offered by the creation of companies as an employment alternative, such that by assuming a function as motivators, they come to supervise entrepreneurship projects, becoming corporate incubators. If we conduct even just a summary review of the contents of the manual *Tknika* places at the disposal of any interested party for the purpose, we will perceive new melodies in the symphony that has characterised Basque vocational training from a training viewpoint that introduce new orchestrations and variants. Thus, the skills covered in student training for those who so desire —always with centre collaboration and participation— include some as striking as the capacity to assume risks, innovation, project development, identifying opportunities, managing a business, etc. (*Tknika. Manual Urratsbat*). The manual covers the entire process, which begins with an awareness-raising phase, generates an idea that transforms into an entrepreneurship project for monitoring, a process that links up with an entire training sequence that ranges from attracting possible entrepreneurs, preparing them

to draw up a business plan (sector analysis, market study, marketing, organisation and human resources, finance, etc.), and developing abilities proper to the entrepreneur (confidence, creativity, communication, entrepreneurial knowhow, leadership, etc.). To facilitate the tasks of awareness-raising and support within the centre, where someone will assume this function—a motivator appointed by management from among the teachers—the manual also gives different orientations and tools that can make student training, handling and monitoring possible, with everything moving towards materialising a business project. The impact rate of the *UrratsBat* programme is attested by the fact that in 2015, ten years after its start-up, approximately 370 active companies that emerged from it may be counted as the result of a path that could be summarised in the following table.

Table 7
Results of *UrratsBat* 2005/2015

<i>UrratsBat</i>	Starting 2005-2006	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015
Student subjects	44 557	6066	7203	8339
Projects supervised	961	147	199	222
Companies created	450	60	74	85
Participating centres		42	45	80

Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data* from Tknika.

A very significant proportion of the centres provided support for the entrepreneurship activity that was the objective of the *UrratsBat* programme, beyond the volume of students addressed by “awareness-raising” (Triguero, S., 2015), accounting for the show of evident vigour in the area of entrepreneurship training as imparted in Basque vocational training. However, we repeat, it is the centre faculty making that push effective, bringing students closer to that territory of entrepreneurship in which the curricular training module “Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Initiative” is situated. In sum, in the classroom context, the teacher is the facilitator for the creation of companies, making it possible for students to exercise their entrepreneurship potential. It is in this context where the programme *Ikasempresa* is situated itself,

an educational programme developed around the creation of student companies in the classrooms. Among the objectives of this project is that of bringing the business world into the classroom, strengthening the development of entrepreneurship skills (creativity, innovation, teamwork,

decision-making, initiative, leadership, commitment and determination, negotiation, etc.), stimulating them to approach other cultures and social realities, and promoting cooperation between school centres.

In this programme coordinated by Tknika, vocational training students, whether from the intermediate or higher cycles, would find a tool representing the sequences towards the step-by-step creation of a company (administration, marketing, sales, etc.), illustrated through the structuring of a “real” company⁵⁴, enabling them to become aware of the possibilities of entrepreneurship as a job alternative, which in the end could even give rise to the actual creation of that company by swelling the ranks of *UrratsBat*. For the purpose, the need to develop the pertinent skills through experimentation was formulated (enterprise through entrepreneurship), combining specific technical skills with transversal skills, summarised in the diagram presented below:

Figure 8

Ikasnpresa Creation



Source: tknika.eus/cont/proyectos/programa-ikasnpresa-de-cultura-empresadora.

⁵⁴ The product is authentic, albeit evidently, it does not presume guaranteed continuity.

Thousands of students were involved in this programme from AY 2005/2006 onward and the number of “Ikasenpresa” companies created practically approach a thousand, some of which would find continuity in *UrratsBat*; however, it is the extensive number of participating centres that place us in a scenario where around a thousand teachers took part in the programme within the period studied. In this sense, it is evident that the faculty itself, faced with yet another innovation challenge in teaching, required tools with which to confront it efficiently. As the European Commission already pointed out in 2013, that objective would entail the demand to provide faculty itself with an extensive range of skills in the field of entrepreneurship, in addition to a proper environment (European Commission, 2014). It is not in vain that Tknika receives Commission acknowledgment for good practices in this area: it would facilitate vocational training faculty and students a guide, the *Ikasenpresa Manual* that, apart from specifying the objectives and skills they are to develop in the context of *Ikasenpresa*, sets forth all the steps to follow in the process of training, the generation of ideas, market study, legal angles and financial analysis, among other concerns. However, as we have said, it is the faculty itself that is considered responsible for developing entrepreneurship skills. Moreover, in addition to aspiring for entrepreneurship teachers for the final purpose of enabling students to become entrepreneurs, this is understood as a bid for entrepreneurship education in the setting of likewise enterprising vocational training centres, and not an effort to orient their work to the creation of companies.

In this sense, beyond achieving training and job orientation faculty—or *UrratsBat* faculty motivators, to whom we shall later refer—the evolution that Basque Autonomous Community vocational training has undergone purports to expand that vision and spread participation in what has come to be called the entrepreneurship culture to all the faculty members. In that direction, the *Irekin* programme was to be undertaken as a pilot initiative during the period immediately after the years being studied⁵⁵, such that the “entrepreneurial and innovative ecosystem of vocational training in Euskadi” would, in fact, take shape. Combining employability and entrepreneurship in a context where the uncertainty in the labour market is an undeniable reality—the central thrust of this vision— would require training in which the faculty turns into a fundamental instrument for what in turn would be the proper training tools to transform this group into actual agents for entrepreneurship (Gorostiaga, I., 2017). Thus, once more at Tknika, *Irekin* would

⁵⁵ In view of the high involvement rate of faculty and centres as well as good practices, the AY 2016/17 experience would be consolidated as a programme of the Tknika entrepreneurial area.

be designed with the intention of offering vocational training faculty a training itinerary satisfying this requirement. This may be summarised in the following table, which explains a multiple-phase approach to deal with the importance of cultivating entrepreneurial initiative among vocational training students, basic notions enabling sufficient economic-entrepreneurial training for the faculty, and good practices that have to be known and even designed.

Table 8*Irekin*

1. Importance of cultivating entrepreneurial initiative in students	Need for new teaching methods	Design for model of teacher-entrepreneur	Analysis of possibilities for developing an entrepreneurial attitude in centres	
2. Economic & entrepreneurial veneer	Job market	New enterprise model	Business model & plan	Session with companies & entrepreneur
3. Design for good practice in the centre	Model of Entrepreneurial Centre	Good Practices in education	Design of a possible good practice	

Source: <http://irekinfpuskadi.com/irekin>

The different steps contemplated in *Irekin* hold vocational training centres to be the core of good entrepreneurship practice, where the magma of enterprise comes to a boil upon a competitive call for different initiatives in which the key lies in the faculty seeking to “transmit their enthusiasm and entrepreneurship”. In view of the “strong impact” of the faculty role on successful student output, the European Commission called on Member States to make an “absolute priority” of developing faculty skills in the Guide for Educators already mentioned on entrepreneurship education, published at the end of the period under study (European Commission, 2014). In this sense, *Irekin* is just one more example of the capacity of Basque vocational training to create instruments to catapult it to the future from a strategic vision already consolidated at the start of the century, backed by an experience accumulated for over a decade. From the 2003 publication of the Green Paper on Entrepreneurship in Europe (Commission of the European Communities, 2003), which saw education as the central thrust of progress, to the path that, years later, the

reference Oslo Agenda for entrepreneurship education in Europe (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2016) would take, faculty lifelong learning on this matter has also been considered an area requiring stimulation, which the stellar participation of Tknika since its beginnings complements with *Irekin* in the Basque Autonomous Community, a path that has since progressively consolidated itself, as we saw before, in *UrratsBat* and *Ikasenpresa*⁵⁶. We could consider this proof of the maturity that has enabled Basque vocational training to participate in the *IncuVet* project financed by the European Union, which “seeks to support and promote the function of vocational training centres as nodes of local and regional entrepreneurship”, enabling as well the dissemination of its good practices, while also showcasing its innovative spirit in this area. Along this line, the idea would respond to the intention to innovate as regards the creation of enterprises, whereby the vocational training centres would play a traditional supporting role in order to progress towards

spearheading a collaborative process of change where local authorities, companies, entrepreneurs, faculty and students join forces to learn from each other and achieve better integration to promote entrepreneurship in vocational training, giving rise to a positive impact on the centres and their students, as well as on the local environment.

If vocational training centres are understood as being able to have that capacity for leadership, it is a direct result of the shaping of what we have referred to as the entrepreneurial ecosystem of the Basque Autonomous Community, the product of a consolidated historical track record. Even though it has had a relatively short run in comparison with others, that path—in addition to the programmes already mentioned—has been strengthened along the way by the entrepreneurship support programme dubbed *MAE* (an acronym for *Metodología de Acompañamiento a la persona Emprendedora*, meaning “support methods for enterprising individuals”), which existed before *Irekin*, accounting for the force with which this latter took off. *MAE* emerged with the objective of providing the pertinent training and upgrade necessary for *UrratsBat* motivators regarding the experience undergone over the years. In the support tasks that these assumed, *MAE* would provide the technical resources as well as the tools, to make them more effective from 2011 onward, endowing the faculty participating as motivators with a weapon that has proved fundamental, seen from the viewpoint of *UrratsBat* continuity and rein-

⁵⁶ Since it was started up, over forty centres have taken part in the programme, a process in which over a hundred teachers have directly received *Irekin* training, apart from participating in calls for good practices, wherein, of the practically one hundred good practices presented for the call, over half were designed in *Irekin*.

forcement. In a few words, the programme addressed skills acquisition in the areas of awareness-raising, monitoring, dissemination, accommodation, support, and project “launching”, as reflected in the *UrratsBat* manual.

To the degree of involvement of both public and private/subsidised vocational training centres working in the area of entrepreneurship, the formation of *Ekingune*, the “Basque Country Vocational Training Entrepreneurship Community” attests – a project developed by Tknika that groups together those centres committed to entrepreneurship in a collaborative vision. Communication represents a fundamental pillar of evaluation and dissemination and, in this sense, *Ekingune* wove an entire network of cooperation where, apart from the programmes we have mentioned, another series of complementary initiatives were inserted that came to strengthen the ecosystem to which we have been referring. Hence, with the idea of agglutinating the companies that emerged from *UrratsBat* so that they could offer support for future projects being initiated by new entrepreneurs –even strengthening their own thanks to that relationship sought– the project for the *Cop de Empresas Urratsbat* would take form. Thus, in the spirit of sharing, creating and weaving alliances, a tool was created in which several hundred companies (practically 370 during the period studied) paid forward the support received when they were still promoting what once was a project that managed to see the light, in the framework of a strategic vision of constant stimulus for entrepreneurship. Moreover, gathered together around *Urratsbat Sarea*, an “entrepreneurship community” would form where, through networking, experiences were exchanged or collaboration on new projects took place, projecting an exemplary image of reference in entrepreneurship.

Research and innovation as guiding principles complete the entrepreneurship scenario in the context of Basque Autonomous Community vocational training. Innovation viewed from the perspective of entrepreneurship adds up to innovative entrepreneurship in a broad sense, beyond the foundation of companies, where in any case collaboration emerges as a strength of innovation (Triguero, S., 2017), responding to the challenge to create innovating companies. The *Euskadi 2020 Inter-institutional Entrepreneurship Plan* (Eusko Jauriaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government, 2017) stresses the importance of innovative entrepreneurship and the fundamental role that vocational training, among other agents, is called upon to play, a task around which it had already begun to take the first steps a few years before that. So-called start-ups, companies with markedly technological profiles, were to be the clients in consultancy and support on the way to the entrepreneurship it sought to promote as one of the most innovative initiatives that Basque vocational training would

attempt to implement at the endpoint of the period under study. Something similar could be said regarding the promotion of what would come to be called the Entrepreneurial Centre; to wit, that institution “enabling the Vocational Training of Euskadi to ‘sketch’ the future strategy of entrepreneurship in the vocational training of Euskadi” from the viewpoint of applied research (Triguero, S., 2015). Research and innovation are indeed the basic elements structuring the response to the need to forecast, which an unpredictable technological, economic and market transformation imposes—an unstable territory through which any enterprising idea or project has to pass—and therefore, also where the Competitive Intelligence Project begins to make sense. Since 2013, it has been accumulating a good number of participating centres (25 public and private/subsidised centres in barely three years), laying further foundations for the evolution of vocational training in the region (Triguero, S., 2016).

3.9. The Value of Creativity in Basque Vocational Training

Innovation, whether to design the specific architecture for responding to the challenges raised and foreseen in the environment of vocational training, or from an even more daring perspective of transforming the realities faced by faculty with a view to a horizon of renewal and improvement in teaching—including the search for quality-oriented formulas of organisation and management in the vocational training centres themselves, or the stake in entrepreneurship itself—has no source other than creativity. The dynamism shown by vocational training in the Basque Autonomous Community throughout the period we have studied, as we have had the chance to appreciate, its capacity for transformation, its strength when confronted by tremendously complex scenarios, critical in many cases, its ingenuity in facing the challenge of conceiving the new based on a tradition consolidating it, its value—bearing in mind the statements of Arévalo (Arévalo, J., 2016) about audacity as a key to open the doors to a wide world of possibilities, transforming even the idea of the effectively doable up to the point of encompassing unexplored territories—is explained by an evident capacity to imagine and create, without this in any case entailing denial of the fact that errors can be committed and mistakes made. Success finds in error the land through which it inexorably has to pass, as diverse managers and agents who have “written” the history of Basque vocational training acknowledge in one way or another. Creativity thus represents the blood that has flowed through the circulatory system of vocational training in the Basque Country, which, beyond maintaining its vital organs in a run fraught with uncertainty, has shown signs of an optimal state of health and strength, as has been the case, confirmed in multiple environments.

It would certainly have sufficed to talk about creativity as an essential component, a distinguishing trait characterising the evolution of Basque vocational training, as we have done. However, we believed it pertinent to specifically raise it in the sense that it acquires substantive relevance, not merely as a path, but rather as a destination towards which the activity deployed in the context of the vocational training centres is oriented. The examples of creative knowhow are evident in this setting; now is the time to show as well that creativity is a muscle – we daresay, the kind of muscle that requires training if an efficient response is sought. In a long-distance race that has lasted years, where the changes of rhythm were constant and development unfolded along an irregular track, creative tone was spotted as a need at the end of the period under study. And it had its response in the creation of Ideatk, the Basque Vocational Training Institute for Applied Creativity.

Creativity had long been perceived as a subject for preferential attention in diverse fields, some of which we have already referred to. As early as Lanbidez, the First Basque Vocational Training Plan —when underscoring the importance of an overall perspective in production, situating tasks in their respective organisational environment and in labour relations as an inherent part of the technical job, none other than the subject of vocational training and the need to know how to anticipate associated problems and evaluate their consequences— creativity is pointed out as the fundamental element of participation in the continuous improvement of production (Lanbidez, 1998). The Second Basque VT Plan, with a specifically strategic vision, established that the development of creativity, along with initiative and entrepreneurship, were measures combining units of skill to hone in order to improve the competitiveness of enterprises and, in this sense, the economic position of the Basque Autonomous Community, while also improving worker employability and preparation for changing contexts in the modes of production, in which lifelong learning is critical, to which end the implementation of the catalogue of professional qualifications in the country is proposed by way of conclusion (De la tradición hacia la innovación, 2004). This same plan, as we have previously pointed out, stresses that in the scenario of a society of knowledge, creativity has to be one of the basic attributes of vocational training faculty, a creativity they can trust as a sizable part of their students' independent learning capacity (De la tradición hacia la innovación, 2004). Not in vain does this Plan revolve around the idea of the power of innovation, highlighting the urgency of strengthening creativity in the area of vocational training, which would explain the need to create an institution that would later become Tknika, radiating outward to the vocational training centres in this sense as a framework of reference to rely on (De la tradición hacia la innovación, 2004).

Lifelong Learning, one of the fundamental thrusts of the Third Basque Vocational Training Plan —paying heed to the view of this shared between the European Commission and the Plan (La nueva FP, marca de País, 2008)— contemplates creativity as a basic foundation to stimulate the development of that capacity we share as human beings, a capacity also to be acknowledged by the vocational training universe. Therefore, its improvement, along with that of innovation and entrepreneurship, is seen as one of its strategic thrusts (De la tradición hacia la innovación, 2004) to make innovation a reality for assimilation into the context of production as well as in organisation and management, in the framework of the relations to be furthered between vocational training centres and companies, all within the framework of the European ET 2020 Vocational Training Strategy, to which creativity likewise refers as a framework (De la tradición hacia la innovación, 2004). And by the time the Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan was published, illustrating the importance of this question, the Decree to which we referred earlier and to which we shall refer again later, creating the Basque Vocational Training Institute for Applied Creativity (*Ideatk*), had already been approved. The Fourth Plan, continuing along the previous line of preferential attention paid to creativity, emphasises the need to generate working venues that propitiated creativity, while paying attention to a fact as undeniable as the change in business model – a reality to which vocational training would have to respond (Hacia una FP diferente, 2011). Thus, among other concerns, the Plan reinforces networking, the creation of an integrated network of vocational training centres, support to companies, etc. The strengthening of creativity in the context of vocational training centres would constitute one of its preferential lines of action (Hacia una FP diferente, 2011). Once more, the pivotal importance of the vocational training centres appears as a distinct characteristic of Basque Autonomous Community vocational training, with the intention of “advancing progressively towards a new vocational training centre model that develops the areas of value creation, innovation, improvement, strategy and values” (Hacia una FP diferente, 2011). These centres, along with others, would have a fundamental trait: creativity. Their promotion is understood as highly important with a view to the generation and development of ideas against a backdrop in continuous transformation, a transformation that imposes the need to confront new and changing challenges as the inherent fact of a reality that has to be accepted as normal in the work that the vocational training centres conduct.

The cultivation of creativity, as we have shown before, was one of the master keys handled in that plan to open the doors to an entrepreneurial culture seen as vital for the development of the country (Hacia una FP diferente, 2011). The development of creativity was also seen as the optimum formula for the change to be promoted in vocational train-

ing centres with a view to transforming them into “knowledge units” placed strategically in the environment to provide training from a radically renovated point of view, for which the training-research-innovation connection was to be the base. That would require the creation of “a management model for innovation in the centres that may facilitate the development of creativity, establishing creative routines in basic centre processes” (*Hacia una FP diferente*, 2011). Beyond the time limits of our study, creativity once more plays a stellar role in the Vocational Training Act of 2018 and in the Fifth Basque Vocational Training Plan. The former notes that its promotion is fundamental, situating it as one of the priority objectives of the Basque Vocational Training System (Art. 3)⁵⁷ to the end of developing structures for innovation and continuing improvement, contemplating vocational training centres as self-managed networking knowledge units (Art. 32), in the direction set by the Fourth Vocational Training Plan. As regards the latest Plan, creativity was seen as one of the basic qualities for confronting the challenges of a society subject to continuous changes: a reality to be aware of in the development of the country, even in the context of uncertainty this generated (*Eusko Jaurlaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government*, 2015), in a scenario where the objective had to be a training for “creative professions”. In a word, creativity, responding to the consequences and demands that new realities were to generate in the field of production “shows itself as the key factor for future professional development” (*Eusko Jaurlaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government*, 2015). Likewise along that line, it would be essential for the development of fundamental lines of action, such as that of the consolidation and expansion of the high-performance training cycles (*Eusko Jaurlaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government*, 2015), the development of vocational training centres as “smart organisations” with a capacity to adapt, react, anticipate and disrupt in the face of new and changeful challenges (*Eusko Jaurlaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government*, 2015), or the development of “talent” in a context of collaborative learning, from an anticipatory perspective of the future (*Eusko Jaurlaritza / Gobierno Vasco / Basque Government*, 2015) – some of the outstanding orientations of the plan.

It is interesting in this sense to see that, as early as the first decade of the century—an indication of the level of priority that Basque Autonomous Community vocational training gives the issue of creativity—*Tknika*, together with other vocational training universities, centres and associations, as well as European institutions and administrations, would

⁵⁷ Its importance would not be limited to Initial Vocational Training, also being a priority objective in Vocational Training for Employment.

take part in a project that envisioned creativity as the backbone in producing knowledge for practical use in the area of training. The *Creanova* project, as this was called, funded by the *Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP)* of the European Commission, purported to “research into the specific factors, the climate and the conditions that would help in producing creative learning and innovation”, as well as to “push for educational policies promoting that learning” (Creanova, 2011). The development of creative skills and the promotion of a culture of creativity in fields such as vocational training, adult education and the world of employment comprised the project horizon, which looked out onto an extensive landscape covering educational policy and teaching-learning or training strategies in companies (Fernández, I.; Eizagire, A.; Arandia, M.; Ruiz de Gauna, P.; Ezeiza, A., 2012), a landscape in which Basque Country vocational training undeniably found a space. Hence, the direct participation of several vocational training centres in the “Creanova teaching model”, where necessity, freedom, interaction and environment would be keys in opening the doors to creativity as the backbone of a training that would seek to respond optimally to needs imposed in such a sense, is to be highlighted (The Creanova Project: Discovering Horizons, 2008).

It would be well to reflect, even when the difficulties in clearly delineating the difference between innovation and creativity are often complex, that the former is none other than the optimum response to certain social, training, management, entrepreneurship or other needs, whereas creativity consists of the capacity to respond innovatively. As Artola would point out very simply, creativity precedes innovation: “the creative process generates ideas, tests them, and evaluates them to decide which ones will become innovation projects” (Artola, B., 2015). To return to Creanova, evidently, as is stressed in the final project conclusions, “this is implemented in close interaction with its context and is associated to the ability to learn in constantly changing environments” (Creanova, 2011). From this, it may be concluded that the question of creativity is not one that may be left to chance and made to depend on the good fortune of being or not being able to rely on individuals and groups endowed with such capacity. Innovation may be, and in fact is, a necessary horizon, in our case, for vocational training, in the light of the challenges known and that remain to be known imposed by the times; a journey to Ithaca that has to be undertaken. Nevertheless, that crossing—even with the occasional fair wind propitiating optimal navigation—provokes naïve spells of self-complacency and requires preparation, well knowing the unpredictable nature of the sea, which can produce surprises demanding immediate and effective responses. The metaphor serves to illustrate the need to be able to rely on the necessary ability to confront difficult challenges, to risk while knowing, in any case, that this is the only possibility to advance towards the ho-

rizon of innovation. Hence, it can only be affirmed, as in this project, that “creativity has acquired an important value in order to grow in terms of both individual and cultural development in a context of constant change that demands innovative responses” (Creanova, 2011).

To the degree of involvement in this project —and the concordance of Basque vocational training with what has been said up to this point shows as much— the creation of an association, European in character, aspiring to sustain the project over time well attests. In 2011, it grouped together vocational training and lifelong learning centres, creative enterprises, and universities under the same name; i.e., *Creanova*, in a partnership where the leading role of Basque Autonomous Community vocational training through Tknika was particularly outstanding. The association sought to be a meeting point towards a perfectly defined goal: promoting creativity. And it is precisely for that goal, promoting creativity in Vocational Training —account taken of the view of creativity as an undeniable need, as we have previously pointed out— that it would provide an answer: the foundation of *Ideatk*, falling under the Office of the Deputy Councillor, as an essential element to strengthen Basque Vocational Training. As may be read in the decree creating it, the objectives behind *Ideatk* (Art. 1) are the Basque Vocational Training Institute for Applied Creativity, the motivation of entrepreneurship in new creative areas, the development of creative venues, and the promotion of creative thinking among vocational training students. In this context, the creation of the Creative Thinking and Applied Creativity Areas as spheres of action provide an interesting snapshot of the extreme value creativity acquires as the focus of preferential attention in regional vocational training. The former would correspond, among other concerns, to collaboration with the Basque Knowledge Institute for Vocational Training (IVAC) and Tknika; i.e., the Vocational Training Research and Applied Innovation Centre, specifically in the field of applied innovation, creative thought and applied creativity, focusing its attention on constructive thinking techniques applicable to projects in the vocational training environment and the promotion of capacities in the sphere of creativity, for which the pertinent skills would have to be defined, designed and developed (Art. 5.1). In the Applied Creativity Area —also in collaboration with the institutions mentioned beforehand, IVAC and Tknika— and from the joint perspective of vocational training centres and companies, its function takes the form of “researching, designing and experimenting on new venues for open artisan creativity using advanced technologies” (Art. 7.1).

In manifest agreement with the strategic framework of Education and Training 2020 (ET2020), creativity is also one of the fundamental thrusts reflected in the sphere of vocational training (Psifidou, I., 2014). This is a vision to which Basque Autonomous Community vocational

training, like others, has fully subscribed, in line with the European reference, and its institutions have attempted to flesh out this intention by creating mechanisms conceived for such a purpose. In this sense, the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training would adopt the decision to create Ideatk, understanding creativity as a fundamental element in generating an environment populated by innovating companies, for which being able to rely on individuals “with creative capacities, people capable of producing proposals, establishing objectives, evaluating priorities and generating alternatives” (Artola, B., 2015) would be a priority. And Ideatk, in line with what we have been saying, no longer with the sole view of setting a desired goal —i.e., the development of creative capacity— would seek to create the conditions to combine this, as Artola points out (Artola, B., 2015), with constructive thinking, emotional intelligence, and executive intelligence. And once more, it is the vocational training faculty who are called on to play an essential role in training their students, expected to develop such creativity, with their motivation and involvement as essential, and in this case the faculty function is once more rescaled to turn teachers into agents for stimulating creativity instead of traditional teachers – a circumstance that cannot help but require creativity as well from the faculty, a capacity they obviously have to develop. Ideatk, in this sense, would be what endowed them with the pertinent tools as well as abilities, optimising their professional potential in a patently innovative direction, whereby teachers themselves research and explore diverse possibilities. In any case, the vocational training centre itself, based on its specific characteristics, served as the terrain for exploiting that idea. Thus, once more relying on the involvement of centres and faculty, Ideatk opened up a line of work with the objective of each centre availing of a specific plan adapted to its reality, avoiding short-term solutions and initiating a transformation not without its complexities, in the hope that —convinced of its benefits vis-à-vis employability, entrepreneurship and competitiveness— the development of creativity would result in tangible effects.

Artola points out the importance of learning creativity, going beyond what may be a perception in terms of mere natural attributes. Citing De Bono, the former directress of Ideatk from its beginnings notes the existence of techniques enabling its cultivation and development, an objective towards which Ideatk was to orient its efforts, which, in her opinion, is marked by a new element, something that, up to then, would not have been done in the world of vocational training in the context of transforming that vocational training in the country (Artola, B., 2016). What is certain is that, in barely two years, over 500 teachers participated in the process that Ideatk initiated, to enable faculty to acquire skills oriented to promoting creative thought among vocational train-

ing students. Previously, as in other matters, prior experience acted as a motivating element that encouraged more and more teachers to receive training in the creative process. Firstly, training and drills in emotional intelligence, parallel thinking and the creative process conducted by a small but significant group made it possible to showcase the idea, so as to spread the project later to all of Basque vocational training, such that the faculty could embark on training which, in the opinion of Ugartemendia, was “revolutionising” both vocational training teachers and students (Ugartemendia, M.A., 2017). The faculty, for whom Ideatk would create a teaching guide (Ideatk: *Guía Didáctica*), would have the option of relying on a specific individual plan for training and be provided with the possibility of training in the *Sor-Gim*, which, in the Ideatk course catalogue, had been created for the purpose; i.e., creativity gyms in which to practise the plan (Sor-Gim: Training for Creative Thinking)⁵⁸. As a result of training under creative faculty, in the course of their training, students are expected to develop the capacity to solve the problems and needs arising in the world of business, which are difficult to foresee and which must be anticipated creatively, with efficient executive capacity. This would be no more than fleshing out the idea already set forth in the Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan, which noted that, among the personal skills to be developed, the promotion of creative thinking among these latter beneficiaries is an authentic need in the context of transforming vocational training, marked by the requirement to “benefit employability and strengthen competitiveness and social cohesion” (Ugartemendia, M.A., 2017).

3.10. Internationalisation: The Challenge and Horizon of Innovation

Internationalisation is stressed as one of the thrusts characterising the Basque model, specifically serving as a fourth piston alongside innovation, creativity and entrepreneurship, a drive that has evolved step by step since the 1980s, as José Luis Fernández Maure, one of the key promoters of the entire process, would say: “step by step, often unexpectedly”⁵⁹, starting from relations progressively consolidated between the parties, and opening possibilities for new scenarios of cooperation and participation.

⁵⁸ “Urratsez urrats, askotan espero gabeak”. In a word, this is based on the idea that the abilities proper to creative thinking require strengthening backed by planned training that makes it possible to achieve a whole series of objectives: defining and reformulating foci, starting up divergent thinking by generating multiple ideas, evaluating, filtering and selecting ideas, initiating parallel thinking, properly managing feelings, and activating executive intelligence (“Sor-Gim: Training for Creative Thinking”).

⁵⁹ Interview with Jose Luis Fernández Maure, Donostia, 12 March 2019.

An approach to the strategic dimension reflected in the educational policy plans and strategies of the Office of the Deputy Councillor —an analysis is made in the second chapter of this book— may give us a first idea of the importance that the area has acquired and the activities leading to internationalisation within the Basque Vocational Training System. As may be seen, the Third Basque Vocational Training Plan names, among its strategic areas, “making lifelong learning and VT mobility a reality”. In this case, of the five activities projected in this sphere, one directly relates to the area of internationalisation, and mainly focuses on “promoting mobility programmes”. It is starting from the Euskadi 2015 Strategic Agenda where, among the objectives marked out, an explicit bid is made not just to support but to expand internationalisation in VT, above all by promoting vocational training-enterprise relations beyond local, regional and provincial geographic boundaries, thus making a qualitative leap in the manner of confronting the challenge of internationalisation. Two priorities would be marked out: analysing, planning and establishing the processes necessary to support Basque companies with factories located in other countries from the vantage point of vocational training, and promoting international experience abroad for students through internships in companies with their main plants in the BAC and locations in other countries.

In the ambitious spirit of the Agenda, the Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan would include the area of “internationalisation” among its five strategic fields, thus giving it substantial specific weight in the strategic structure of the Office of the Deputy Councillor. In this case, it advocates a strategy of opening to the world and expansion for the Basque Vocational Training System, promoting three types of penetrating action: via response to training and innovation needs in internationalising Basque companies; faculty and student mobility promotion; and the international showcasing of the Basque VT System. The Fifth Basque Plan would also reflect the field of internationalisation within its strategic areas, but its specific weight would be somewhat more diluted in a set of nine spheres.

As also happens in the other fields, the place occupied by the area of internationalisation in the strategies and plans referred to not only show the lines of work authorities want to act on for the future, but also reflect the previous work done by VT faculty, a critical part, about which these guidelines were designed. One of the things that Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training Jorge Arévalo says summarises the goal that guided this entire development very well: “what we sought through internationalisation was to learn, to measure ourselves, and to make ourselves known”⁶⁰.

⁶⁰ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

We shall next see the most important milestones and keys of the dynamics that have characterised this process in relation to the period we are concerned with from a developmental point of view. In this sense, it may be enlightening to distinguish three phases or moments based on the nature of the type of impulse received by the area. Each phase is characterised by a type of action and strategy, spelling out a complement and improvement for processes previously initiated. Hence, we would have a first phase marked by the initial experiences of the centres in international cooperation having to do, above all, with student mobility through the first European programmes; a second phase mainly characterised by the process of consolidating centre participation in European mobility programmes; and a third phase characterised by the expansion of the area of internationalisation itself, both in the geographic sense and in terms of the diverse types of international cooperation promoted.

3.10.1. *First Participative Experiences in European Programmes Mainly Addressing Transnational Mobility*

Let us remember that the common European policy on education began with the signing of the Treaty on the Union in 1992 by the Foreign Affairs Ministers of the 12 EC countries, following the agreement signed in Maastricht in 1991, and that the first step in the European dimension of training was mobility (Homs, O., 2008). In this sense, it would be worthwhile to reflect the recommendations of the European Parliament and Council in 2000 regarding mobility in the European Community for students, individuals in training, youth volunteers, teachers, and trainers (Escribano, M^a L., 2012):

- To take appropriate measures to encourage the mobility —which should never be hindered— of people who would like to undertake a course of studies, a period of training, a voluntary activity, or provide teaching or training (...) regardless of whether this is in the context of a Community programme or not; these measures (...) should also promote language learning as a lack of knowledge of languages is a major obstacle to mobility (...).
- To take the necessary measures to enable those concerned to report on experience acquired in the host country to the relevant authorities, particularly the academic and professional authorities in their home country (...).

Previously, in the 1980s, some Community programmes had already been adopted, such as Comett (1986) in the sphere of training, Erasmus (1987) in education, and Youth for Europe (1988), also addressing the

young. Subsequently, to facilitate university student exchanges, the programmes SocrateS (1995), Tempus (1990) and Lingua (1990) would also be created. On another front, among the programmes earmarked for VT or vocational internships for recent graduates, the abovementioned Comett⁶¹ Programme would become significant in strengthening cooperation between universities and companies in the area of technology; Petra (1988) in vocational training for youth, preparing them for professional adult life; and Leonardo (1995), for contributing to the creation of a European educational venue to benefit the implementation of lifelong education and training and ensure the continuity of community cooperation among those concerned with VT. During the period under study, we also witness two more significant reorganisations in mobility for education. 2007/2013 saw the start of the Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP), which would include the activities previously initiated – i.e., Leonardo and Erasmus, as well as Comenius, Grundtvig, the Transversal Programme, and Jean Monnet. The second restructuring in 2014/2020 saw the launching of Erasmus+, where two activity subprogrammes would be included with regard to vocational training: one addressing Higher Education, Higher VT, Dual VT, etc., and the other for Intermediate VT, Basic VT, etc.

In the case of the BAC, the first attempts to participate in these European programmes would begin with the venture into Comett through the MGEP Centre (Mondragón Goi Eskola Politeknikoa), backed by the Council of Gipuzkoa⁶², initiating a history of participation in the different programmes funded by the European Community towards promoting practical corporate training in companies for students in mobility programmes. Data that can give an idea of the dimension of these beginnings includes the fact that, for instance, under Comett II⁶³, the BAC received 3.28 million ecus for the 23 projects conducted with European assistance in the 1990/1994 period. The bulk of this aid was earmarked for student mobility, an aspect that would be considered of fundamental importance “to facilitate relations between the different European regions and, in this specific case, to further stimulate the significant growth that research and development activities have undergone over the last few years in the Basque Country” (Nieto, J.A. & Utrilla de la Hoz, A., 1998).

⁶¹ The Comett I programme started in 1986, to strengthen cooperation between universities and companies working in technology.

⁶² Interview with Joseba Amondarain, Donostia, 28 June 2018.

⁶³ Under Comett, 15 university/enterprise training partnerships (UETPs) were set up in Spain, 11 of them regionally based and 4 based on sectors. Participating in the implementation of this programme were the Communities of Catalonia, the Basque Country, Valencia, Andalusia, Asturias and Madrid.

In parallel, the Council of Europe initiated the Petra I action programme in 1987 to train and prepare youth for adult professional life. This programme, which in principle was adopted for five years, was extended up to 1994. It was in this last stretch that some special centres in particular, based on their contacts and resources, began to access the mobility grants on offer. For 1993/1996, it is calculated that around 100 students in different occupational branches from four participating Ikaslan schools underwent internships in European companies through Petra (Elola, J. M., 2004).

We have the testimony of one of our interviewees with regard to the Elgoibar centre as an illustrative example of this type of particular initial participation. In 1992, this school submitted a mobility project for its students, mainly driven by the economic crisis then existing and the hardships that students encountered in finding work, above all in the machine tool sector, which had been hit hard. Making use of the section on “youth employment” under Petra, several groups of students from this centre were sent on internships to companies abroad after their studies. Specifically, this project consisted of six-month internship stays in companies working with Manchester City College. In that case, there was co-financing by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, since these students participated in the programme as “emigrants” on corporate internships as “young workers”. Starting from this first experience, participation in Petra was to become regular, with six individuals studying administration sent each year to Manchester City College. Participant qualifications would gradually be increased (6 individuals more from the Health and Environmental Health sectors), and the number of contacts would likewise grow, “snowballing” from those initial contacts and expanding the range in countries and centres collaborating in mobility programmes: Manchester, Scotland, Finland, etc⁶⁴.

The Elgoibar centre case is a paradigm of the evolution that many VT centres experienced whereby, thanks to the initiative and tenacity of faculty and centres, a full-scale mechanism was gradually established to promote student participation in mobility projects. The case of Elgoibar also acquires relevance since one of the faculty promoting the exchange programmes in the centre, José Luis Fernández Maure, was to become a reference authority in developing the Basque VT internationalisation policy.

It is in this context of practically being family that the first steps in coordination between centres regarding internationalisation were taken. During the 1994-1998/99 period, with Leonardo already in motion, coordination around the Elgoibar centre began to take shape, with some

⁶⁴ Interview with José Luis Fernández Maure, Donostia, 12 March 2019.

5/6 centres participating, sharing partners, countries, and exchanging information about the procedures for presenting programme candidates, etc. Thus, the centres developed their own coordination projects, based on which they began to send students for curricular internships to work for three-month periods in centres abroad. The host countries at the time were Italy, Finland, England and Scotland, and the participating occupational branches covered the industrial, clerical, environmental health, automotive and nursing assistance sectors. Some 12 students per centre were sent over this channel, accounting for around 72 students a year⁶⁵.

Confebask, the Basque Employers' Confederation, also ventured into mobility with Comett II, collaborating in the projects of a university/enterprise training partnership (Euskal Herria UETP)⁶⁶. In 1996, it began as a Leonardo Mobility Project Promoter with a project for young university graduates, and afterwards, in 1998, its first project for vocational training students was approved by the Agency.

This was how, alongside the promotional work initiated by Confebask, another model for mobility programme management/promotion revolving around VT centres would see the light. Both models were to develop and evolve very distinctively throughout the period. These were the beginnings of a new culture in internationalising training, when still not much importance was given to the study of a foreign language, and there was as yet no clear awareness about the possibilities this would open up to both the students and the centres. Specifically, mastering some foreign language was to be a recurrent problem/deficit in VT throughout the entire period studied. From a quantitative point of view, the presence of Basque centres/students in these mobility programmes was not very significant, but qualitatively, these first experiences represented a great step, to the extent that they were the cornerstone in the building of a strategy that was to gain in structure, consistency and strength.

3.10.2. *The Establishment of European Mobility Programmes in Basque VT Centres*

The process of coordination between centres begun in the 1990s was to acquire a new dimension from 2000 onward, within the frame-

⁶⁵ Interview with José Luis Fernández Maure, Donostia, 12 March 2019.

⁶⁶ The objectives of the “Euskal-Herria UETP” would be to promote Comett objectives in the region, particularly through increased numbers of students sent abroad and project coordination in prominent technological sectors.

work of the association of public vocational training institute directors, *Ikaslan Gipuzkoa*. The association would officially orient mobility coordination through the agency of a European project manager (J.L. Fernández Maure), covering those public centres that were moving along this initiative. What at first was formed as a group of some 15 centres in Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia and Araba became a set of 25 centres by 2004 that would meet every week to prepare and implement projects linked to Leonardo.

In parallel, faculty mobility projects also began to be promoted within the same programme, Leonardo. In the words of the area manager of the association at that time, “if you want an educational centre to have its network of contacts, that person must know other educational centres abroad and will decide the best way of establishing relations, how to create them, how to strengthen them. This is why we began to send teachers as well to other centres in 2000”. The purpose is for centre faculty and directors to get acquainted with other experiences, strengthen relations, and also make the practices of Basque VT known. Both *Ikaslan* and *HETEL* would allocate part of their efforts to promoting this type of mobility.

The new Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning (2005) would also progressively promote, on the one hand, the increase in the number of centres involved in mobility programmes by enriching the offer in the number of mobility grants for both public and private centres (200), very much higher than what had been usual up to that point. That was a challenge which *Ikaslan Gipuzkoa* was to confront within a common strategy of broadening participation in Leonardo, adopted jointly with *HETEL* and *AICE*. On the other hand, another objective just as important would be to promote centre autonomy with regard to international relations and help them cultivate their own references and partners. “However, it was very clear to us then that what was most important at that stage was not to send students abroad, but to manage to have each educational centre cultivating its own contacts, gradually developing other strategies”. Without posing obstacles to the private initiatives implemented by the centres, the aim was to promote more options, above all for those centres that did not have them, facilitating them the contacts necessary to manage their own grants.

This fact stands at a considerable distance from the model that is, so to say, more classic in management and promotion, that followed mainly by *Confebask* in relation to the thrust around which mobility programmes were to be structured. A new model would be strengthened, mainly spearheaded by the association, *Ikaslan*, in close and on-

going collaboration with the other two centre associations, HETEL and AICE⁶⁷, in view of the need for centres to approach internationalisation globally. Mobility activities thus take place within a more general framework of building a strategy of centre internationalisation, the fundamental thrusts of which were to be the autonomy and coordination of VT centres proper. This sought to ensure greater project quality and a control that would be more adequate to resources and the development of experience.

Proactive initiatives of similar scope would be clearly reflected in the number of projects submitted, either through consortia or through the centres themselves, and, in the last analysis, in the number of mobility grant beneficiaries throughout the entire period.

Table 9

Number of projects promoted by Ikaslan and beneficiaries, 2001/2005

	2001	2002	2003
Projects	8	16	10
Students	60	84	120
Host countries	4	6	6

Source: Fernández Maure, 2005.

As may be seen from the data on the table above, the numbers in terms of projects submitted, students participating, and host countries involved increase as Leonardo programme implementation advances, doubling and, in some cases, trebling in value. After the experience of these first years in the programme, the Ikaslan European mobility manager concluded that:

The level of training of Ikaslan centre VT students is on a par with that of European countries more advanced in this field. Acknowledgment of the tasks they have done in companies indicates this. The interest of students in participating in Leonardo has grown in such a way that it has become increasingly harder to satisfy the demand each year. The

⁶⁷ In addition to participating in the key workplace training (WT) programmes in contexts of transnational mobility, the associations would participate—in many cases, jointly—in other international relations programmes, such as SOCRATES, GLOBAL TRAINING grants, VETpro, etc.

involvement and motivation of Ikaslan centres is serving as an important reference in the Leonardo Programme.

In terms of the objective of promoting centre autonomy and self-management, it is observed that, during the last years of the programme, “more than half the centres have partners that can assure them quality internships in foreign enterprises”.

It seems evident that it is possible to talk about a turning point in the implementation of the mobility programme starting in AY 2004/2005. This development in the outcome of Ikaslan management as mobility motivator would be reflected in the overall mobility values for the entire BAC, as may be observed in the following tables (10, 11 and 12).

Table 10

Mobility grant beneficiaries, Leonardo da Vinci Programme, 2001/2006

Call	Total		Youth in Initial Vocational Training		Working youth and recent graduates		Human resources managers, trainers, tutors	
	Spain	BAC	Spain	BAC	Spain	BAC	Spain	BAC
2001	2449	475	1938	374	346	92	165	9
2002	3466	505	2231	444	879	54	356	7
2003	3709	286	2199	192	1287	94	223	0
2004	3500	359	1893	217	1296	138	311	4
2005	4693	849	2411	682	1730	147	552	20
2006	5370	949	2655	669	2064	239	651	41

Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data:* MEC. Statistics Office.

Barring one exception or other, the constant increase in the values of national participation seems evident in the three subject categories (Initial Vocational Training for youth, young workers and recent graduates, and human resources managers, trainers and tutors). In the case of the BAC, the values for the three groups maintain a rhythm of growth similar to that of Spain during the first years of the programme, but manage to double during the last years.

Table 11

Mobility grant beneficiaries in the Lifelong Learning Programme,
Leonardo da Vinci, 2007/2013

Call	Total		Youth in Initial Vocational Training		Personas en el mercado de trabajo		Human Resources Managers, Trainers, Tutors	
	Spain	BAC	Spain	BAC	Spain	BAC	Spain	BAC
2007	4515	113	962	68	2927	45	626	0
2008	4462	528	1129	176	2765	266	568	86
2009	4715	506	743	161	3391	272	581	73
2010	4743	470	1109	183	3306	233	328	54
2011	5219	591	1086	181	3588	265	545	145
2012	5535	638	1474	208	3552	301	509	129
2013	6111	571	2351	193	3251	266	509	112

Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data:* MEC. Statistics Office.

The data on participation in Leonardo show stable values of Intermediate VT student participation from the BAC at around 200 beneficiaries per year. Also striking are similar values in the participation of individuals on the job market and the significant increase in the number of faculty and management beneficiaries from educational centres. To these data must be added the numbers corresponding to Higher VT student participation, which, in the new structure, was managed through Erasmus (see Table 12).

Table 12

Number of Higher VT student movements in the Lifelong Learning Programme, Erasmus Internships, 2008/2014

	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Spain	3006	2161	2737	2850	2739	2973
BAC	639	550	760	707	680	606

Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data:* SEPIE.

The most striking data in this case are the numerous movements of Higher VT student programme participants, which average between 600 and 700. The number of Initial VT student movements increases considerably in comparison with previous years. However, it might be pointed out that the number of movements from the BAC is the highest among all other communities, almost comprising—and even exceeding, in some cases—a quarter of the movements being managed by the state.

Starting from these years, the profile of the centres in managing their mobility and their internationalisation strategy might be reflected in the following terms, in the words of current Ikaslan chair Iosune Irazabal⁶⁸:

Each centre is autonomous. It might be said that internationalisation is important to all the centres, and that there is a person responsible for it. Some manage their entire mobility programme through Ikaslan, others take sole responsibility, and the majority functions along both options. They privately manage a specific number of grants, and in addition, resort to the grants managed by Ikaslan.

This sketch also applies to the private centres under HETEL and AICE.

Along these lines, we want to stress the extremely high participation rates posted specifically by the Basque VT centres themselves as promoters within the Spanish total in the data provided by SEPIE. This seems to be a constant from AY 2010/2011 onward. A further item illustrating the capacity and autonomy that centres avail of in managing mobility grants is the fact that around 120 BAC centres (Integrated Vocational Training Centres and Secondary Education Institutions and Colleges) would achieve the Erasmus+ Programme Charter for private mobility for the 2014/2023 period.

Another aspect that deserves to be taken up in SEPIE statistical analyses is that relating to the weight that centres and consortia acquire in promoting these grants. According to this institution:

In 2010/11 Spain continued to administer the highest number of consortia (21), followed by France and Germany (14 each), with Spanish consortia having the highest number of participating higher learning institutions (266). However, by number of movements managed, Spanish consortia, with 1,469 movements, come in second to German consortia (2,170). Movements organised through consortia in AY 2010/11

⁶⁸ Interview with Iosune Irazabal, Bergara, 25 November 2019.

accounted for 31% of the total number of student internship movements, a percentage notably higher than the European average (14%). By autonomous community, Basque Country consortia had a greater number of movements in comparison with the total managed by consortia (36%), followed by Andalusia (14%), Castile and Leon (12%) and Catalonia (12%).

Similarly, for AY 2011/2012, it underscores the importance of the number of participating institutions and the weight of the consortia:

Analysing the different channels of participation in student internship mobility by autonomous community, we observe that the communities with a higher number of participating institutions were the Basque Country (89), the Community of Madrid (77), Andalusia (70), Castile and Leon (62), and the Community of Valencia (60). In three of them, it was observed that a high volume in institutions coincides with the existence of consortia (the Basque Country, Castile and Leon, and Andalusia), while in the other two, the number of institutions participating through consortia is very small, with the institutions organising all their internship movements. In 2011/12, Spain continued to administer the highest number of consortia in Europe (23), followed by France (19) and Germany (14), with the Spanish consortia having the greatest number of educational institutions participating (290). However, by number of movements managed through consortia, Spain, with 1,375 movements, occupies third place behind Germany (2,373) and France (1,745).

In the Basque vocational training sector, the group of consortia promoting the mobility grants was to be formed mainly by Confebask and the associations, Ikaslan, HETEL and AICE. Among these, Ikaslan was the consortium running most of them. The data provided by SEPIE for AY 2007-2008 serves as a sample in terms of proportion regarding the number of movements managed through consortia: Confebask, 94 (VT-Artistic Occupations 4, VT 81, Mixed 9); Ikaslan, 144 (VT 139, Mixed 5), HETEL, 63 (VT 50, Mixed 13), AICE 18 (all VT).

Not only does the number of mobility grant beneficiaries grow, so does the number of host countries and partners collaborating in these projects. The data provided by Ikaslan for AY 2014/2015 serve as a sample of the range of European countries that have been and are hosting VT students from the BAC.

Table 13

Number of students from Ikaslan VT centres participating in the Erasmus + mobility programme with regard to host countries, AY 2014/2015⁶⁹.

Countries	Ikaslan	Countries	Ikaslan
Finland	1	Bulgaria	7
Netherlands	1	Portugal	21
Norway	1	Malta	18
Romania	1	United Kingdom	28
France	6	Poland	49
Germany	5	Italy	79
Ireland	10	Denmark	2
Czech Republic	6	Greece	1
Austria	11		
TOTAL			247

Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data:* Fidalgo, 2015.

By 2015, Ikaslan had 17 host countries and over 50 different European partners covering extensive environments in terms of geography and sector, as the Ikaslan mobility coordinator said, “to ensure that internships are the best-suited to the student’s vocational profile”.

One factor among so many that has helped in establishing international relations and searching for European partners has been participation in international associations. Such, for example, is the case of EFVET (European Forum of Vocational Education and Training). Since 1999/2000, Ikaslan Gipuzkoa has been a forum partner as a vocational training centre association. HETEL has also been an EFVET member since 2002. Participation in this network was to substantially open up the range of relationships and possibilities for student and faculty mobility project exchange and participation. Relations with Finland, Denmark, England, Italy, Portugal, Germany and The Netherlands would progressively be strengthened, and this would turn out significant in enabling Euskadi VT to introduce itself to appreciation in European circles.

We cannot complete an analysis of the mobility levels achieved without reporting as well on the difficulties or obstacles found along the way. One of the hurdles stressed from the outset has been the degree of foreign language mastery, not just by students but also by centre faculty and staff.

⁶⁹ There is a total of 247 participants from public VT centres affiliated to Ikaslan, 90 of which are in KA120 activities and 157 in KA102 (Higher VT).

This gives rise to centre insufficiency as foreign student/faculty hosts, as the HETEL chair, Julen Elgeta, points out:

Internationalisation is not only that students from here travel to Europe; it also entails being hosts. It entails others coming here. So, they come from Chile, Mexico, Namibia, Austria, Poland, etc. But in the centres here, there are already enough problems with English. Much remains to be done. We are not a receiving country; we do not have the mentality for hosting, either, because we do not master the language, English, or because we have no logistic infrastructures. We lack a lot of that kind of culture and have a lot to learn⁷⁰.

Apart from the language issue, another, more social aspect which, from what our interviewees say, may pose a stumbling-block to internationalisation is the existence of full employment. There is the impression that the high employability levels currently enjoyed by VT students undergoing workplace training (WT) in their own territories, and who later continue to work in the same companies, slows them down in deciding to leave the territory: “Why go abroad?”, they tell us⁷¹. In this sense, dual training is seen as a possible obstacle to mobility, since, as has been perceived, “the increase in dual training has lowered the number of foreign company internships”⁷².

Apart from these aspects for improvement, the data analysed lead us to affirm that international mobility programmes have generally managed to integrate and establish themselves in the educational culture of BAC VT centres. The impact in quantitative terms shown by these data would justify a positive statement. As important as this, however, is their qualitative value in terms of training/innovation, as pursued by a project of this sort and scope. In this sense, internationalisation represents an added value in relation to the main objective of the training project: let us once more take up the *Ikaslan* proposal, which consists of “improving the individual aptitudes and skills of youth taking up Initial Training through a work-related pathway to promote and strengthen employability and professional rehiring”. The mobility project seeks to cover a series of general needs, such as:

- Adapting the educational offer to the expectations of youth and the needs of the job market as a method for facilitating their inclusion into production sectors.
- Responding effectively to new changes in technology and production through updated training.

⁷⁰ Interview with Julen Elgeta, Durango, 12 July 2019.

⁷¹ Interview with Jose María Elola, Tolosa, 9 July 2018.

⁷² Interview with Julen Elgeta, Durango, 12 July 2019.

- Establishing closer relations between the productive environment, mainly SMEs, and the educational sphere to achieve interaction that may facilitate the periodical upgrade and validation of skills, responding to needs as these arise.
- Promoting association and cooperation among EU VT centres.
- Involving VT centres in international project implementation.
- Increasing the motivation to learn other EU languages.

Similarly, there is an effort to respond to a series of sector and regional needs, prioritising those occupational branches related to strategic sectors of the Basque economy, such as: Automotive Vehicle Maintenance; Electricity, Electronics and Telecommunications, Mechanical Manufacture; Chemistry; Information Technology; Production Maintenance and Services; and Tourism. Consideration would in turn be taken regarding other sectors deemed to be in continuous development, such as: Graphic Arts; Image and Sound; Administration; Environmental Health; and General Health. The needs to which the project seeks to respond in all these sectors are:

- Adapting to the technological innovation and development arising in all sectors.
- Bringing training centres and enterprises, particularly SMEs, closer together.
- Adapting to the tendency towards specialisation required in enterprises.
- Providing broad opportunities of employment and the capacity to handle changes.
- Achieving the integration of workers into teams.
- Facilitating the assumption of responsibilities or the development of individual autonomy in workers to enable them to respond more effectively to the needs of the job market.
- Knowing the production processes of other countries in order to improve homegrown skills as far as possible and, in addition, facilitating the exchange of technologies and processes.
- Improving the conduct of internships in enterprises through a quality control system.
- Improving VT quality as a method in order to motivate the youth to consider VT studies in these sectors.
- Making trade unions participants in the mobility strategy promoted by Ikaolan, as well as in the steps being taken in this direction throughout Europe.
- Developing continuous improvement strategies through collaboration with partners from all the EU countries.
- Facilitating youth access to the production system through the issuance of the Europass for training.

In the last analysis, the impact of the experience being promoted and facilitated will have a value that will be felt on different planes, due above all to its inclusive character and territorial dimension:

- In terms of results, students will obtain the Europass certificate, in addition to the Ikaslan qualification certifying the WT module.
- Sector impact: enterprises from the sectors know about Leonardo programme activities and rate the work done very positively. They gladly receive youth from other countries.
- Growing partner networks.
- Regional impact: the project forms part of a strategic plan to internationalise VT, in which all BAC VT centres, the provincial authorities of Araba, Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia, the trade unions represented in the educational sector, and the Basque government Department of Education's Directorate of Lifelong Learning collaborate.

When calibrating the dimension, impact and quality of the mobility experience, it seems indispensable to highlight the importance of two aspects already noted above, which are constants in the history of Basque VT in the 21st century, without which it would be difficult to grasp the evolution of the whole process. One aspect is that of the constant communication and collaboration between the centres, above all through their associations – Ikaslan, HETEL and AICE. Group work, partnership, and networking have been extremely valuable tools to the centres in being able to confront innovation processes successfully, as well as internationalisation in this case, as explained by current Ikaslan chair, Iosune Irazabal: “If changes are done collectively, you are stronger. In my opinion, that is the strength of networks. It is much easier and much more effective to make changes as a network, in collaboration with others”⁷³.

The other fundamental aspect is the involvement and proactivity of the Basque government, above all through the Directorate of Lifelong Learning and the provincial authorities of Gipuzkoa, Bizkaia and Araba, mainly through their departments related to innovation, the society of knowledge, and economic and territorial promotion, all pushing for mobility programmes and the shared strategy of internationalisation. The involvement of the provincial administrations has been constant since the start of the period under study. Support types have adjusted to the European, state and regional regulations current at any given time, as well as to the needs and local characteristics of the centres. Along this line, recourse was taken to diverse budget formulas, such as co-financing in the grants promoted by European agencies, the signing of collaboration agreements

⁷³ Interview with Iosune Irazabal, 25 November 2019.

with promoting institutions, the direct offer of mobility grants, and international collaboration. This variability denotes flexibility and adaptation to economic and political needs. Still, at heart, majority of the interviewees coincide in affirming that there has been a continuity in the political line, along the strategy of continuing to promote innovation and internationalisation, which has made it possible to talk about an evolution.

If, as Homs points out, the majority of autonomous communities “with some exceptions, do not take sufficient advantage of the European programmes to develop a coordinated policy of promoting innovation and quality in their training systems”, the case of the BAC would fall within such exceptions. What the process of establishing the mobility projects reflects is the clear result of a good job of coordination and networking, which, far from understanding coordination as a homogenising process, has proceeded by respecting the idiosyncrasy of each territory and centre and has promoted independence in management and projection where internationalisation was concerned, exceptionally enhancing the innovative potential of each centre and, as a result, of the entire system.

3.10.3. *Expanding the Area of Internationalisation*

Parallel to the promotion of the European mobility programmes, an entire series of activities were to be implemented from the different departments of the Basque government concerned with implementing quality and innovation, which would generate increased contact with other countries as well as demand from outside in relation to Basque VT. In this context, and in consonance with the policies of the Basque government through the Office of External Activities, the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning would decide to open up a new field: internationalisation, focused on the management of external relations, mainly with South and Central America.

As the advisors for SME innovation and VT internationalisation at the time, José María Elola and Victor Arias explain that these are the objectives VT would set to promote international cooperation and strategic alliances with third countries: to exchange good practices with other countries in relation to training people and applying knowledge to production; to promote the participation of VT centres in international networks; and to propitiate integration with other countries in the fields of culture, training, talent promotion, and technological development. The activities to be conducted for the purpose would be as follows: facilitating the training and improvement of faculty from other VT systems; providing training activities for foreign students in Basque centres; exchanging experts to implement activities and to work in areas of institutional

interest for VT; promoting the design and development of knowledge transfer projects in specific technological areas of the different occupational branches; exchanging successful collaboration experiences between VT centres and the entrepreneurial sector; collaborating with other countries on the joint development of innovative technological, pedagogic and learning management models based on active methodologies; and helping shape third-country collaboration agreements with the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning.

The area of internationalisation was created at Tknika⁷⁴ in this new strategic context in 2008, with objectives focusing on: advice to VT centres in deploying internationalisation strategies; collaboration with international associations; collaboration with the Directorate of Lifelong Learning in terms of the strategies defined within EARLALL; and advice to centres from other countries in their search for useful partners in Euskal Herria, besides the internal objectives set for the institution itself.

The perception at the time was that the phenomenon of mobility “is underway; it works, Leonardo and Erasmus are up and running”⁷⁵. Even then, the need to further internationalisation is perceived. To this end, an action plan would be designed based on the study of centre status in terms of international relations. In 2010, a survey of 38 public and subsidised centres was conducted. The survey aimed to investigate the reality of centres in terms of internationalisation, “paying special attention to the human and economic resources that each centre avails of in order to be able to develop short, medium and long-term plans contemplating the involvement of the different centre sectors, plans based on shared responsibility (...)”. The panorama drawn up based on the survey data analysis is as follows: the number of centres involved in relations with other centres from other countries (75%) is significant. As regards student mobility, the age of such relations must be highlighted, since 43% have been participating in Leonardo for five and ten years (13 centres) and 33% more for ten years (10 centres). A total number of 30 centres participated in this programme. In terms of participation in Erasmus projects, 32 centres acknowledge their participation from the outset, in 2007.

As we have pointed out, the next step would be the creation of a pilot plan for AY 2011/2012, in which thirteen VT centres from the Ikaslan, HETEL and AICE networks would participate. The purpose of this pilot experiment consisted of working on areas of interest and receiving training in technological surveillance. The preparation of an internationalisa-

⁷⁴ José Luis Fernández Maure, up to then the internationalisation coordinator at Ikaslan, assumed the post of international promoter.

⁷⁵ Interview with José Luis Fernández Maure, Donostia, 12 March 2019.

tion plan in each centre is projected for the next phase, containing aspects that “interpret internationalisation, not as the sum of its activities, but as the assumption of a new way of acting that entails changes in the day-to-day activities of the centres”.

It is in this context of a new culture that the promotion of faculty mobility acquires relevance, both for Ikaslan and for Tknika. Every year, 100 teachers are sent abroad in groups of 5-6, with the aim of providing opportunities for professional upgrade and becoming agents of change and innovation at the centres:

Over 100 teachers working on projects for innovation, entrepreneurship, internationalisation, continuous improvement, the design of new learning scenarios and ICTs get the chance to visit enterprises, technological centres, and reference research and university centres in order to improve project development where possible and, as applicable, transfer the good practices they have accessed to the rest of the sector.

The objective of such mobility is to provide help so that faculty can get acquainted with experiences to refer to in those areas considered critical, and can analyse the possibilities of their inclusion and/or adaptation to the Basque context. The work coordinated among the different departments of Tknika facilitates the identification of such areas of interest, the search for international contacts, and the subsequent selection and organisation of groups of teachers who participate in mobility projects. This way, the area of internationalisation becomes an active agent of innovation.

This new way of acting has also spelled out the promotion of initiatives to participate in international projects related to knowledge transfer, research, and innovation. Indeed, VT centres have been participating in international projects throughout the period, individually or in partnership⁷⁶. The quantitative and qualitative leap would come from the impulse resulting from the period of expansion in the policy of internationalisation within the overall policy of the Office of the Deputy Councillor starting in 2013, more specifically, from Tknika, where, like local innovation projects of international scope, a series of management projects funded by the European

⁷⁶ The activity reports of centre associations, as well as the journals these publish yearly, give extensive accounts of the national and international projects these participate in. Likewise, the centre websites offer detailed information about those projects that they participate in individually or in coordination/partnership with other centres, institutions and administrations. In the case of Ikaslan, for example, we may mention “Europemobility” (2008-2010), the main purpose of which was to stimulate both quantity and quality in VET mobility, promoting awareness as well as the methodological tools and solutions available. In the case of HETEL, its participation in the “Network of Networks”, HERAS, or “dualteachingsystem” projects, among others, may be mentioned.

Union would be promoted. By way of example, a list of the management projects backed by the European Union include: Rainova (2011/15): the design of an innovation management model; Edison (2013/15): faculty training in entrepreneurship; Elvete (2013/15): measuring satisfaction level in the dual system; Dicoimpess (2014/16): digital skills for students; Incu- vet (2014/2016): support for classroom entrepreneurship; and Compasses (2015/2017): skills evaluation and development.

Fields and forms of action as well geographic scope would be expanded. As we have noted at the start of this section, one of the aspirations of the new internationalisation strategy would be to strengthen the radius of collaboration beyond European borders – specifically, with South America. One of the first training experiences at this level were to be the “Technical Grants for Chile”, signed in 2007 with the Chilean Ministry of Education to train graduate students and faculty. Another example of South American collaboration —this in the area of collaboration with Basque enterprise abroad— is the agreement signed with the Mexican state of Guanajuato.

International projects are generated largely thanks to relations and contacts taking place in the context of international networks and partnerships. These become new horizons for learning, collaboration, and acknowledgment. It is a field where centres, centre associations, and subsequently, Tknika have worked in particular. In its job of promoting internationalisation processes, Tknika, together with Ikaslan, also came to form part of EFVET as a partner, and, on its proposal, held its annual International Conference under the banner of “Creativity and Innovation in Vocational Education and Training” in Bilbao in 2009, with 282 participants from all over Europe. In the words of one of the event organisers, it was a milestone from where the Basque VT system was to initiate its path to recognition in Europe: “The event was a milestone in terms of both quantity and quality and once more showcased Basque Country vocational training to all of Europe; it was a reference point in that launching process”⁷⁷. That same year saw the organisation of the seminar on the internationalisation of Basque VT under the title, “Basque Vocational Training Open to the World”, on 4 and 5 February.

Further on, it would join two new networks, which were to spell out new leverage for international projects. One of these was TA3 (Trans-Atlantic Technology and Training Alliance), where some 15/20 institutions in Europe and 35 in the United States participate. Tknika is the only member from Spain. Another important milestone was to be its participation as partner and board member of the World Federation of Colleges and Polytechnics. This federation has been another important showcase

⁷⁷ Interview with José Luis Fernández Maure, Donostia, 12 March 2019.

for the recognition accorded Basque VT as a significant reference. One example of this acknowledgment and the importance gained by Basque VT in the international context is the fact that this federation intends to organise its next international congress in Euskadi for 2020.

Apart from serving to “make us known”, as Deputy Councillor Arévalo pointed out, participation in these networks has made it possible to establish relations on five continents and promote student and faculty mobility projects (Namibia, Turkey, etc.), to support Basque enterprises established in different parts of the world training their workers (Mexico), and to participate in international innovation projects (Minnesota).

At Tknika, the process of developing and optimising a culture of internationalisation is seen from the perspective of a roadmap, going from an “initial phase” (working at language, intercultural and specific skills) through an “elementary phase” of managing mobility for students and faculty, making contacts, travelling to and hosting visits from foreign organisations, to reach an “advanced phase” of European project participation and coordination under the umbrella of Erasmus+, with the intention of arriving at a “phase of expertise”, as professionals in project proposal preparation and management, as speakers at conferences and workshops, and as internationalisation trainers and consultants on a local, European or global scale, to finally reach the destination of becoming an organisation of excellence, where Basque VT professionals become leaders in transformation, generating changes and proposals that improve VT.

Figure 9



Source: Tknika website.

The system of internationalising Vocational Training in Euskadi is illustrated (see Figure 9) —as of the end of the second decade of the 21st century— by three main reference points, as are the policies and strategies of the Basque government and the Office of the Deputy Councillor for VT (the Euskadi Strategy, the Basque VT Plans, and the New VT Act), Tknika (Technologies, Methodologies, Continuous Improvement, Sustainable Development and Entrepreneurship), and the European VT strategies (Riga Conclusions, the Agenda, and the Erasmus + Programme), from where student and faculty mobility programmes, participation in international programmes, and training and consultancy for VT centres and enterprises were to be conducted. Marked as lines of work in internationalisation are: Internationalisation, Relationships with Third Countries, International Network Management, and Regional Internationalisation.

What began as a challenge would gradually become one of the thrusts of the integrated Basque VT system, which, in its bid for quality and innovation in the teaching-learning process and in centre management, is pulling towards the excellence of the Basque educational and training system in the Europe of 2020.

3.11. Enterprises, Vocational Training and Innovation

The interdependence that has historically existed between Enterprise and Vocational Training in the BAC leads us to formulate the following hypothesis: who gave more to whom? Enterprise to VT, or VT to Enterprise? The answer given by Jorge Arévalo⁷⁸ is quite clear in that regard:

Basque society has invested a lot of money in VT, under different government administrations. Corporations have given us a lot: because they trusted us, we had their confidence, and what VT did was, provide a response. I can tell you that, in crises as terrible as we have suffered, VT played a spectacularly important role.

And our work has consisted of trying to ratify that mutual contribution, so much so that throughout this chapter, we shall analyse some of the aspects that have contributed to it, the development of continuous training, occupational training, and entrepreneurship initiatives as service delivery foci. Some of these entrepreneurship initiatives have come from the enterprises themselves, but on other occasions, they have come from the Basque government. In both cases, they have contributed much to VT because, as Labaka says, “we cannot complain about the support of Adeg,

⁷⁸ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

Confebask, companies in general”⁷⁹. In this aspect, we also have to remember the words of Aloria, who defines a certain profile for these grants:

The Confebask contribution goes a bit towards seeking competitiveness. On the issue of training, we have to improve, we have to bring the training provided in the centres closer to what companies demand. We have to update the training imparted in the centres to be what companies need⁸⁰.

However, past and present do not coincide in his narrative since, in the past, not all companies bothered to work at providing their workers with training: “There was a time when companies waived the training option, understanding it as an expense and not an investment. Apprenticeship schools were being closed and there was very little training”⁸¹.

3.11.1. *The First National Agreement for Continuous Training*

Labaka⁸² points out that “Training has always begun with need”, and so it is ratified by the Economic and Social Agreement signed between the General Union of Workers (*Unión General de Trabajadores*, UGT) and the employers’ associations, CEOE⁸³ and CEPYME⁸⁴, in the 1980s, who reflected the preoccupations shared among the social agents about the weaknesses of the Spanish job market. One of those weaknesses perceived alluded to the “distance of VT in relation to labour needs”. This gap represented a serious problem in terms of improving the competitive capacity of companies, a burden to economic growth and to the creation and maintenance of jobs. On another front, there was the phenomenon of free worker circulation and the implementation of the single European market, two realities that obliged both companies and workers to undertake profound economic and technological restructuring. In this sense, there was a change in the attitude of Spanish government authorities who, if up to then they had not taken these factors into account, would consider that such measures spoke in favour of investing in worker qualifications from that moment onward. These then became active policies for employment.

⁷⁹ Interview with Jon Labaka, Donostia, 22 January 2019.

⁸⁰ Interview with Asier Aloria, Bilbao, 1 March 2019.

⁸¹ Interview with José Luís García Bengoa, Bilbao, 1 March 2019.

⁸² Interview with Jon Labaka, Donostia, 22 January 2019.

⁸³ CEOE: *Confederación Española de Organizaciones Empresariales*, the Spanish Confederation of Entrepreneurial Organisations.

⁸⁴ CEPYME: *Confederación Española de Pequeñas y Medianas Empresas*, the Spanish Confederation of Small and Medium Enterprises.

It should not be forgotten that the Spanish state was still paying the consequences of 40 years of iron dictatorship, and that Europe was still reluctant about its inclusion as a country into the European group.

Nevertheless, after the death of Franco in 1975 and first Socialist electoral victory in 1982, the so-called political—but likewise economic and social—“transition” was already well underway and, in anticipation of immediate incorporation into the European Economic Community, the Spanish state signed the Economic and Social Agreement in 1984, which, from the perspective of VT, envisioned, among other measures, the creation of the General VT Council. This Council was established as an advisory body for institutional public administration participation in counseling the government on VT issues and was assigned innumerable functions, among which we highlight that of preparing and proposing the National VT Programme to propose to the government for approval (within the emerging new political structure, autonomous communities with the competence—as was the case of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country—were able to regulate its specific characteristics in their territory). Given the size of the Council, to facilitate working methods and decision-making, the idea of creating a permanent committee was adopted in 1991, which was to be a working committee with the capacity to negotiate in order to deal with the specific issue of continuous training. That negotiation protracted up to 1992, at which time the First National Agreement for Continuous Training was ratified. This gave rise to the idea of creating FORCEM (Foundation for Continuous Training), a charitable private educational foundation that, early on, began to talk about a “Spanish management and financing model for continuous training”. This model basically sought to place an instrument at the disposal of enterprises and workers that would link the training offer to actual needs in qualification.

The First National Agreement for Continuous Training was already underway, and from it would emerge the First National Vocational Training Programme in 1993, which began to promote the integration of the three subsystems: Regulated Vocational Training, Occupational Training and Continuous Training. When the foundations for this First National Programme had been laid, the need was seen to create a second programme that would continue and complete its predecessor. And so it came to be. The first step consisted of specifically defining Continuous Training, and the next, preparing diverse training plans under the National Agreement for Continuous Training, such as Corporate Training Plans, Group Training Plans and Inter-sector Plans, in addition to others such as Measures for Training Supplementation and Support, and the Individual Training Permits. To initiate them, these five plans had to justify their respective objectives and contents and propose activities, as well as identify their respective target groups, classified by professional categories or groups and num-

ber of participants, their calendar for implementation, the estimated cost of training activities broken down by activity type and group, the annual amount of the vocational training fees to be paid by the company or companies, and the venues where the training activities were to be imparted. With the launching of these five training plans, it could be said that Spanish state-sponsored Continuous Training had become operative.

3.11.2. *Employment and Job Placement*

After the signing of the National Agreement for Continuous Training of 1984, the Spanish government Council of Ministers approved the National Plan for Training and Job Placement in 1985, while regulating occupational vocational training courses, which the employment institute, INEM, would take charge of imparting.

Under Felipe González (PSOE) as government premier, the Spanish state found it needful to intensify efforts to expand VT, occupational recycling, and qualification systems, since up to that date, there had been no sufficient or necessary instruments for the purpose. Hence, to achieve these objectives, such activities as were being undertaken on the issue by the different public and private institutions had to be coordinated, relying upon the participation of the trade unions and employers' associations. What the government sought was to immediately confront a series of expansion and modernisation programmes for all VT systems, and what it did for the purpose was to implement the National Training and Job Placement Plan, which covered the following programmes: *Vocational Training Programmes for the youth and long-term unemployed* addressing three age ranges, 16-20, 20-25 and, 25 years onward, all three managed by the INEM or its collaborating centres; *Job Placement Programmes for youth seeking their first employment*, which ensured a six-month internship contract for those over 25 and under 30 seeking their first job and holding sufficient qualification; *School Recovery Programmes* addressing two different groups – youth under 16 who had not finished Basic General Education; *Work-linked Educational Programmes* for second year VT students, through contracts or agreements with companies or groups of companies; and lastly, the programme called General Occupational Vocational Training for Vocational Recycling, implemented in the rural setting, a course type financed by the Ministry of Labour and Social Security to professionally recycle or supplement training for farm workers or adapt them to new techniques of agricultural and livestock exploitation, organised by the INEM among sectors or companies under industrial reconversion. It was also the INEM itself, in collaboration with the Employment Promotion Funds, with companies, or with associations of companies, which organised this type of courses for workers covered by the Funds cited.

This National Training and Initial Job Placement Plan was continually upgraded to strengthen training and job placement activities to the maximum and improve their organisation, as well as to adjust these changes to the orientations of the European Social Fund (ESF)⁸⁵. Thus, among these upgrades, we find new VT Programmes addressing other groups: *Occupational Vocational Training for company staff and self-employed workers*, *Vocational Training for cooperative members and limited companies run by labour*, *Occupational Training for the handicapped*, *Occupational Vocational Training for emigrants*, *Vocational Training for socially discriminated groups and ethnic minorities*, *Occupational Vocational Training for other groups*, all provided by the INEM. On their side, the educational authorities showed a clear decision to improve gradually and fine-tune this kind of national training and placement programme, adding the *Occupational Vocational Training Programme for women in activities where they are under-represented*. This is to say that the INEM, in the collaboration agreed on with the Institute for Women or the most representative employers' organisations and trade unions, developed courses for unemployed women with the intention of encouraging their professional placement or return to those sectors, activities or occupations where women were underrepresented.

As the years passed, small changes continued to be made to adapt the Plan to job market transformations and to improve the management and quality of the course offers in Occupational Vocational Training. Thus, amid these small changes, a new plan was initiated, the Specific Priority Action Plan for Vocational Training, Placement and Orientation, which addressed the most underprivileged groups on the job market, and provincial committees for monitoring occupational vocational training were created, which acted as provincial bodies for the institutional participation of the National Institute of

⁸⁵ In 1986, the Spanish state joined the European project. Since then, it has not ceased to be the biggest ESF aid recipient from among the Member States. The final beneficiaries of this assistance are individuals: young entrepreneurs, the unemployed, persons with special difficulties, minorities or discriminated groups, who were and continue to be the biggest ESF preoccupation and the assistance targets, since the ESF was and is the financial instrument of the EU created to support and strengthen the employment policies of the States belonging to the European Community.

- The ESF continued to invest in this and, in 2007, opened a new period for applying assistance, which was implemented up to 2013. Its thrust is structured into five areas for action:
- Encouraging entrepreneurship and improving the adaptability of workers, companies and entrepreneurs.
- Promoting employability, social inclusion and equal opportunities between men and women.
- Increasing and improving human capital.
- Promoting cooperation between nations and regions.
- Technical assistance.

Employment General Council and the General Council for VT, the composition and tasks of which we have already spoken in the preceding section.

3.11.3. *Measures to Stimulate Occupational Training*

Within this section on Continuous and Occupational Training focused on the BAC, it must be pointed out that economic assistance played an important part in the context, sometimes coming from the companies themselves. “Companies have even put up the money to create centres: the premises of MEKA, Elgoibar, were paid for by the companies from the area”⁸⁶. At other times, it came from the provincial authorities. “In the beginning there were many short courses, because everything required training. And there was much money, that is true. I believe it began during the time of Imanol Murua; he made endowments for materials and short courses”⁸⁷.

It is evident that the quantitative and qualitative development of an economy and the growth of a society entailed upgrading its human resources, such that a policy of employment coherent with the reality existing in the Basque Autonomous Community inevitably had to contemplate not just training plans but continuous occupational training. Overnight, the Basque government found itself assuming a lead role, designing, conceiving, supporting and stimulating training plans through projected, structured and coherent policy that confronted the needs existing among the people. In Gipuzkoa, it was not particularly hard to push for this experience since

among the centres that had worked with companies on continuous training in the Basque Country, there were centres imparting training for the unemployed. We already had the experience. What was it? Well, pick it up and spread it around.”⁸⁸ However, there were those who did not find this activity as simple or as positive. “Where I am concerned, the problem is that Continuous Training was not mandatory”⁸⁹.

This “protectionist” Basque government policy took the form of a series of programmes addressing training for all types of working population: programmes which, in many cases, were very similar to those that the state had been adopting. The programmes contemplated workplace internships, which entailed the distribution of different subsidies for both the students do-

⁸⁶ Interview with Jon Labaka, Donostia, 22 January 2019.

⁸⁷ Interview with José Ignacio Berrondo, Donostia, 20 May 2019.

⁸⁸ Interview with Jorge Arévalo, Errenteria, 13 April 2019.

⁸⁹ Interview with Patri Zubizarreta, Donostia, 4 February 2019.

ing them and the companies accepting these students. The assistance oscillated between 4,400 pesetas (\approx € 27) and 13,200 pesetas (\approx € 80) a month for students, depending on whether the internship entailed transport expenses or upkeep, on having to be undertaken away from home. In the case of the companies, the assistance was between 14,000 pesetas (\approx € 87) and 41,000 pesetas (\approx € 246) a month, depending on the students accepted by the company, the number of which could not exceed 20 per company. In addition, there was another financing model – the grant-salary, for cases in which the term extended for more than two months, in which case, there was access to a grant with up to a maximum amount of 120,000 pesetas (\approx € 720) a month.

In order to conduct these activities, it was evident that the participation of the centres was needed, and a great part of them lacked the equipment and human resources that the new experience required. Given this situation, the promotion and strengthening of training structures was considered critical, and specific economic allocations for new technological equipment were encouraged.

The position was that if you wanted resources, your vocational training centre offered Non-Regulated Training. Hobetuz, the INEM or Lanbide would give you money for Vocational Training, you gave your teachers overtime and they imparted those courses, because if you hire teachers from outside, you have to pay Social Security, plus the salary, and then you would have no money available. So you make your teachers do overtime and with what you earn you can buy machinery; therefore, the more overtime you do ...⁹⁰

As a result, the activity of educational authorities consisted of an attempt to structure a network of continuous occupational vocational training centres that could answer for the courses that were emerging from training needs with sufficient guarantees, and for the purpose, the different geographic areas and the job market demand were taken into consideration.

In this task of promoting and strengthening training infrastructure, priority was given to the need for equipment, and the so-called “warded centres”⁹¹ were created; i.e., occupational vocational training centres that collaborated under the Department of Labour and Social Security occupational training policy.

⁹⁰ Interview with Patri Zubizarreta, Donostia, 4 February 2019.

⁹¹ “The great change came with the OAGES, and, on another hand, with Continuous Training. The involvement of administration with Continuous Training was intense, but not only in what was done for Gipuzkoa, because later the provincial authorities of Bizkaia also invested. The Department of Labour put much money into the warded centres.” Interview with Kike Intxausti, Donostia, 6 May 2019.

For “traditional” centres to become warded centres, there were certain requirements; however, as may be supposed, not all the centres met all of them. Moreover, the status of “warded centre” was only granted to one per region, unless in such a region, another centre requested it and the needs of the area so advised; then, the creation of a second centre with those features was allowed. This policy controlling the “warded centres” underwent small changes over time, and a year later, they were required to “be full members of the Regional Training and Employment Committee” to be able to opt for the status. Afterwards, the requirement became that of being “public or subsidised Regulated Vocational Training Centres”, although Aloria had another view of this demand.

I coincided with ELA on the State Council, where it is represented. They backed a model in which all vocational training in Euskadi was to be imparted in public centres, as against others among us who had a clear view that Continuous Training should be imparted in the best centres, whether public or private⁹².

This position on the part of Aloria, the Confebask representative, ran totally contrary to what the national unions UGT and CC.OO. or the abertzale unions ELA and LAB defended.

In the realm of the unions, ELA and LAB have always clearly held that it was needful to take advantage of the public vocational training centres for Continuous Training. But then, UGT and CC.OO. had their centres, their own centres for their imparting Continuous Training, since part of the money for Continuous Training goes to the unions⁹³.

Along this line adopted to stimulate vocational training, Decree 114/1994 came into force in March 1994, intending to raise the possibilities of youth employment. The need was seen to strengthen the links between VT, university education and enterprise, intensifying the relations between the educational and the production systems, with the aim of providing valid practical work-related experience as well as studies to those students about to access the job market, thus completing their training and increasing their future employment possibilities. This was how the programmes for Work-linked Training and Junior Enterprise arose.

Under this full Basque government “protectionist umbrella”, the recipients of such programmes were the groups with special hiring difficulties on the job market, unemployed individuals with inadequate or insufficient professional qualifications for the requirements existing on the

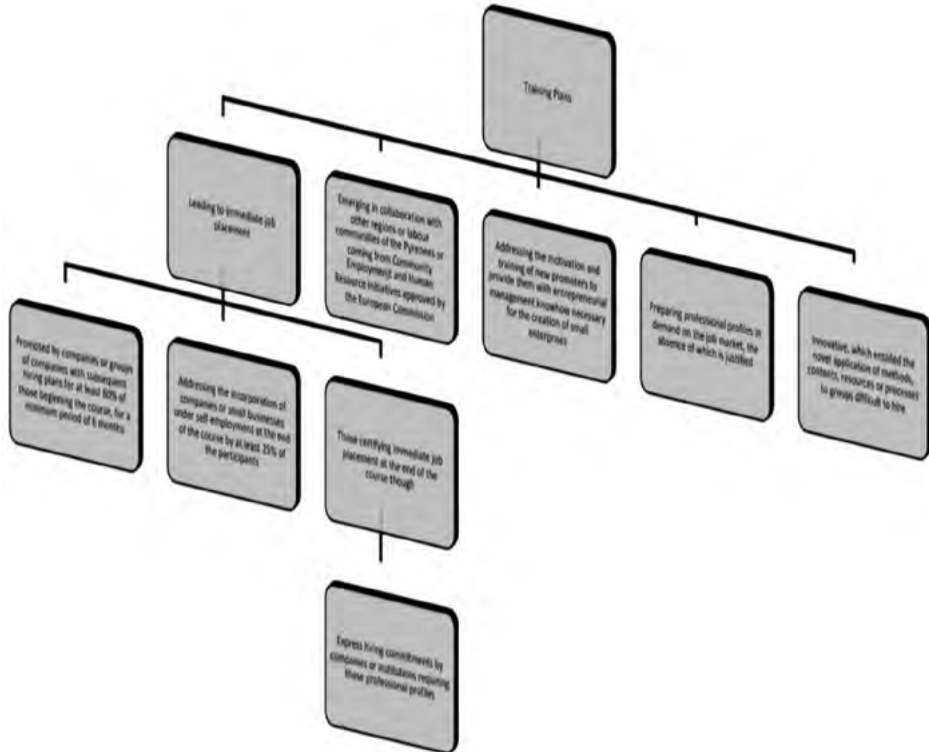
⁹² Interview with Asier Aloria, Bilbao, 1 March 2019.

⁹³ Interview with Kike Intxausti, Donostia, 6 May 2019.

job market, potential new entrepreneurs and self-employed professionals. These Training Plans were as follows:

Figure 10

Training Plan designed by the Basque Government in 1997



Source: Prepared by the authors. Data: BOPV.

Once the Training Plans had been designed, the beneficiary institutions to award their implementation had to be decided; i.e.:

- Companies and groups of companies to execute the training plans addressing the unemployed, coming with a subsequent hiring commitment.
- Warded Occupational Training Centres.
- Public and Subsidised Vocational Training Centres and Career Initiation Centres (*Centros de Iniciación Profesional*, CIP).
- Municipalities, Labour Brigades and Pools of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country.

- Legally constituted associations and Professional Colleges, for their members.
- Schools and university colleges.
- Public or private institutions of significant technological level and resources imparting unique training courses.

In sum, it may be observed that, since the start of the occupational training programmes, regulations would become increasingly more demanding of those who were going to take part in training activities, which occurred with Decree 302/2000, regulating the Occupational Training Programme and modifying Decree 83/2000, and the new Community Initiatives⁹⁴ framework established for 2000/06. Put another way, Decree 302/2000 served to financially cover the programmes of the Basque Autonomous Community in the sphere of employment and human resources that were approved by the European Social Fund, specifically, in the framework of the EQUAL Community Initiative.

3.11.4. *Continuous Training and Occupational Recycling*

The activities to mitigate the unemployment existing in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country put into practice up to 1988 had fundamentally aimed to establish inevitable contingency measures, given the situation of risk that the labour demand in the country⁹⁵ posed at the time. These measures had no prospects for extending into the future; hence, gradual steps had to be taken until a line of action making it possible to close the gap between the variables of the job market—that is, supply and demand, based on the qualification of the individuals demanding jobs—was achieved. Likewise, an attempt was made at consolidating existing economic activities, and, above all, other activities much more innova-

⁹⁴ The Community Initiatives for 2000/06 were:

- INTERREG, which pursued cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation intended to promote harmonious, balanced and sustainable development throughout the entire community area.
- URBAN, which supported the economic and social revitalisation of cities and suburban areas in crisis, with a view to promoting sustainable urban development.
- LEADER, which promoted rural development.
- EQUAL, which implemented transnational cooperation to promote new ways of combating discrimination and inequality in all types of labour market relations.

⁹⁵ “The 1990s were one of the key periods in Continuous Training during the first agreements. I believe this is a subject that has not been given special importance, but it was the first time that, in labour matters, vocational training was put into the hands of the social agents and trade unions, and the situation of Euskadi in relation to the rest of the Spain had nothing to do with it.” Interview with Arantxa Martínez (CC.OO.), Bilbao, 20 February 2019.

tive in concept had appeared, requiring increased training from the human resources used, as did the training activities themselves, in turn requiring greater input in resources, as was being done in other European countries.

To make all this possible, the Department of Labour and Social Security took on the aim of promoting the recycling, re-professionalisation and continuous occupational training of the BAC workforce. Some proposals were made, such as the *Integrated Plans for Recycling and Continuous Occupational Training*, which were allocated to the regional, sector and business spheres. A second proposal involved the *Programmes for Orientation and Training Activities*. The third was *Support for Skills Recycling Activities by companies or groups of companies* and, lastly, the *Programmes to raise employment possibilities for graduating youth and improve qualifications among teaching professionals* were also created, which in turn were divided into three groups: Work-linked Training Programmes, Enterprise Experience Programmes for faculty, and Junior Enterprise Programmes, addressing members from the universities or technical schools of the BAC.

In any case, any employment policy approached at that time in Euskadi, under whatever government administration assuming the task, had to depart from the analysis of some basic paradigms profiling the reality of the job market and the qualifications of the moment. Moreover, it was a phase when, over the preceding months, unemployment and the threat of several thousand more job posts lost because of the industrial crisis were growing, while on the other hand there were also the effects of entry into the European Internal Market⁹⁶ and its repercussions on Basque entrepreneurial competitiveness.

Having analysed the situation, the Basque government began by conducting different training activities for a significant number of individuals in many centres or institutions, although what this really affected were the criteria governing priorities and the awarding of responsibility for such training activities. Hence, supporting activities for those training activities dealing with a qualitative and systematic treatment of the project were given a special priority. Such was the case with the *training plans promoted by companies* intended for the unemployed that came with a subsequent commitment to hire, the *intensive plans with specific treatment* of the phases of motivating, orienting and placing participants in jobs, the *training plans for individuals of entrepreneurial capacity and skills* aimed at the creation of small enterprises under the system of self-employment, the *activities for individuals of both genders supplementing proposed occupational training*, etc. It should be pointed out that all these activities un-

⁹⁶ The European Internal Market was, and continues to be, an area of prosperity and freedom, providing 500 million Europeans access to merchandise, services, jobs, business opportunities and the cultural wealth of the 28 Member States.

dertaken were evaluated and monitored by the Public Corporation for the Promotion of Training and Employment (Egailan S. A.)⁹⁷.

Under that premise that “investment in training was good investment” we see how, over time, the political authorities gradually grew more aware of the need to progressively implement and increase training activities. In this context, considering the training on offer enabling different agencies or institutions to take part in them, municipalities, labour pools or institutions related to these got involved.

3.11.5. *Municipalities, Labour Pools and related Institutions submitting educational or vocational initiation training projects*

At the Department of Labour and Social Security, it was also understood that, apart from the warded centres, another type of institution could join the fight against unemployment, and it was believed that some of these institutions could be created by municipalities. To analyse the work of the municipalities and labour pools or the institutions created by these with regard to the submission of educational or training projects in the field of vocational initiation, it must be pointed out that something similar had been going on since 1988, when the establishment of local corporations and co-operatives was approved, so we could say that the Vocational Initiation Programme had been running for several years and in that period had managed to institute itself practically throughout the regions of the BAC. Thus, with the experience accumulated, it was understood that the time had come to adapt this to the Social Guarantee Programmes contemplated in the OAGES, which establishes in Article 23.2 that:

For students not achieving the targets of Mandatory Secondary Education (MSE), specific Social Guarantee Programmes shall be organised, to provide them with a basic vocational training to enable them to join the workforce or pursue their studies in the different regulated courses, in particular, in Intermediate Specific Vocational Training.

These Social Guarantee Programmes were inter-institutional in nature since they could not be considered solely educational, not having formed part of any of the levels, stages, cycles or grades into which the educational system was organised. Moreover, they required collaboration agreements with public institutions, particularly the local administration, and

⁹⁷ Egailan: Its objective was to help the Basque government Department of Justice, Labour and Social Security improve the outcomes of active employment and training policies by evaluating programmes and managing LANGAI, the Basque placement service and vocational training system observatory.

sought to promote increased skills, personal and social capabilities, and job placement for youth who had abandoned the educational system without obtaining any degree whatsoever. As a result, they addressed youth over 16 with a dual objective: on the one hand, to facilitate placement in the workforce through mastery of the techniques and knowhow in a professional trade at a level prior to that of Intermediate Specific Vocational Training and, on the other hand, to prepare them to rejoin the educational system, particularly the intermediate levels of vocational training.

Table 14

Subsidies for the Social Guarantee Programmes

INSTITUTIONAL BENEFICIARIES

Municipalities, Labour Pools or Institutions created by these Not-for-profit institutions

Programmes Eligible for Subsidy

- First year of Vocational Initiation
 - Second year of complete Vocational Initiation, consisting of in-depth exploration of the first-year course, consolidation of lessons learnt and, as applicable, preparation for access testing to the training cycles
-

End-users of the Vocational Initiation Programmes

Youth older than 16 and younger than 21

Applications

- | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Certificate of budget to implement the project — Document attesting the representative capacity of the person representing the institution — Certificate of non-receipt of other types of assistance signed by that representative — Sworn statement of no relation to any specific agreement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Certificate of the secretary of the institution applying for the subsidy setting forth purpose and amount thereof — Authenticated copy of tax identification card — Attestation to fulfilment of current tax and Social Security obligations — Institutional Memorandum of Incorporation — Authenticated copy of Institution Bylaws — Sworn statement of no relation to any specific agreement |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
-

Programme Project

- Justification of the need for the programme
 - Characteristics and estimate of the number of end-users
 - Criteria for student selection
 - Educational budgets
 - Diagram of Training Plan
 - Professional profiles proposed and adaptation to the socio-economic environment of the area
 - Infrastructure, human resources and materials available
 - Expense budget
 - Job placement plan and adaptation to the socio-economic environment of the area
-

Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data:* BOPV.

This Employment and Training Programme served to regulate the assistance to be granted for the placement of unemployed individuals and represented an integrated treatment that began with information, orientation and motivation for the individuals addressed, continued with occupational training and work experience, and ended with lessons on job-hunting techniques and placement support.

3.11.6. *The Role of Hobetuz and the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa*

October 1995 saw the signing of the “Interprofessional Agreement on Continuous Training in the BAC” by the employers’ association, Confebask, and trade unions ELA, CC.OO. and LAB. The signature of UGT remained pending, awaiting the pronouncements of its national executive bodies, although the continuous training model that had been operative up to that point now began its transformation.

This Agreement⁹⁸ set forth that one of the fundamental challenges to the economic and social progress of Euskadi lay in achieving advancements in the training of its men and women, since improving human resource skills contributed to the effectiveness and competitiveness of enterprises and to job creation and maintenance. Such adequate training for the human factor would be decisive and unquestionable in a country such as ours, with scarce natural resources, which in a certain way was obliged to sustain its productive system through factors like constant technological advancement and the ongoing improvement of quality, marketing, services, etc.

Paradoxically, this met with two special circumstances. On the one hand, both the Basque government and the provincial councils were obliged to provide funds for Continuous Vocational Training and, on the other, the competence on Non-regulated Vocational Training had still not been transferred to the Autonomous Community of the Basque Coun-

⁹⁸ There were two Agreements: the Interprofessional Agreement on Continuous Training by Confebask (Basque Employers’ Confederation), and the centralised trade unions ELA, LAB, CC.OO. and UGT, and another Agreement between the Basque government with Confebask and the trade unions mentioned. Hence, a call was published regulating the assistance for the conduct of continuous training activities for employed workers of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, addressing both the improvement of skills and the upgraded qualification of these workers.

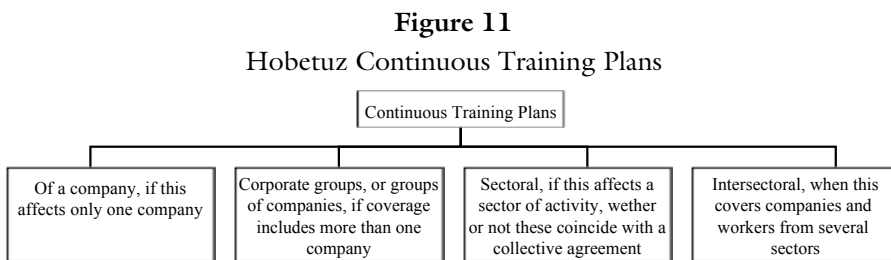
From this moment onward, companies and workers employed by third parties in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country were able to participate in the subsidised activities, except for public administration personnel. Workers under the special agrarian Social Security system (REASS) could also take part, along with the self-employed and those who, while unemployed, were in any of the following situations: part-time (discontinuous permanent) workers during their free time, workers who came to form part of the unemployed while in a training period, and workers under employment regulation during their periods of authorised job suspension.

try. In a word, the INEM took charge of Occupational Training, whereas the FORCEM (Foundation for Continuous Training, 1992/2004) took charge of Continuous Vocational Training.

As a result, what happened was, that government and the signatory organisations set up an institution, Hobetuz, to cover the entirety of Continuous Training for employed workers conducted in the BAC. This entity assumed the administration and management of Continuous Training and the overall responsibility for promoting interest for Continuous Vocational Training among enterprises, workers and educational centres, as well as the conditions to enable this activity to achieve maximum coverage and effect. In March 1997, the “Hobetuz Foundation – Basque Foundation for Continuous Vocational Training” was entered into the foundations register of the Basque Country with the approval of Ramón Jauregui (PSOE-affiliated Councillor for Justice, the Economy, Labour and Social Security), Baltasar Errasti (Basque Employers’ Confederation), José Elorrieta (ELA), Luis Miguel Pariza (CC.OO.), Santos Indakoetxea (LAB) and José Ramón Lopategi (UGT).

Hobetuz had been born, purporting to make the vocational training of employed workers more effective, to bring it closer to its users and to link it to the requirements of enterprises and the training needs of workers⁹⁹. With the creation of Hobetuz, Continuous Training had to respond to needs that were progressively identified by means of an ongoing prospection in enterprises. However, if Hobetuz was to be characterised by anything, it was for paying special attention to SMEs. It was true that this type of company lacked efficient training structures, so it was Hobetuz, among others, that assumed responsibility for such a task.

The training plans set in motion were as follows:



Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data:* BOPV.

⁹⁹ “On the issue of training, Hobetuz presumes that Basque workers have the means to recycle themselves professionally, which up to that time had been managed by the state, and it began to be managed by Hobetuz in a fashion much closer to home”. Interview with Arantza Niño, Joseba Muñoz, Juan Carlos Diego (UGT), Bilbao, 20 March 2019.

For all this to have been possible, there is no doubt that a significant financial contribution was required and, in 1996, after the signing of the Interprofessional Agreement, and before the Hobetuz Foundation was instituted, the Basque government launched the first call to tender on assistance for the implementation of the Continuous Training activities for employed workers of the BAC. Other new calls were made and new groups were able to participate in the training initiatives, such as workers under the Special Agrarian Social Security System (REASS), self-employed workers, and those who, while unemployed, were in any of the following situations: part-time (permanent/discontinuous) workers during their free time, workers coming to form part of the unemployed while in a training period, or workers under employment regulation during the time of their authorised suspension.

We therefore see that the incorporation of the Hobetuz Foundation to develop the Continuous Training of workers meant somewhat more than the mere presence of an assessment agent or consultant, since it ended up being the body exercising control at all the levels of this training model, and it is also evident that the Hobetuz Foundation operated along the same criteria in the three territories of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country; however, without wanting to offend either Araba or Bizkaia, reality tells us that Gipuzkoa was the true “ideologue” in all these initiatives being set in motion for vocational training, and that it was precisely the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa encouraging a great part of these initiatives.

In 1985/86, the Department of the Economy of the Council of Gipuzkoa conducted a diagnosis that confirmed the worrisome capacity of the educational system intended to respond to the needs of enterprises. This diagnosis specified four weak points:

- At the territorial level, there was neither planning nor coordination of the Continuous Training activities which, in themselves, were not significant either quantitatively or qualitatively.
- There were few continuous training centres, with no distribution that would correspond to the reality of the economic fabric in terms of either sector or region.
- There was a total separation between initial training centres and the companies, with neither being aware of the other.
- The continuous training activities implemented were not adapted to the real needs of the economy, present or future.

Given this situation, the Department designed a plan purporting to close the gap between supply and demand in terms of training, in which the initial training institutions assumed the continuous training activi-

ties, seeking activities based on social, economic and institutional co-participation. This activity served to produce a rapprochement between all the agents involved and gave rise to the training institutions, institutions in general, or social and economic agents assuming certain challenges or drawing certain conclusions about their ways of acting. Thus, the Council's Department of the Economy formulated the need to design new training activities based on productivity and competitiveness, but which in turn addressed underprivileged groups on the job market, groups like unemployed youth or women. As a result, these were the most interesting projects designed:

- HEZILAN: non-regulated training programme aimed at recycling employed personnel from Guipuzcoan enterprises, under the formula of modular open-concept courses shared between the centres certified for vocational training, the design of which took account of sector and regional criteria;
- HEZITEK: technology and entrepreneurial management training plan designed for the specific continuous training of graduates, qualified executives and management personnel, implemented in technological centres, schools, university colleges, and training institutions of rated experience;
- EMAKUMEAK: job orientation and training plan for women which purported to implement training activities such as self-esteem, specific training, vocational orientation, job-hunting techniques, and internships in companies that facilitated workforce placement for women who had worked before.

Later on, a new activity arose, denominated "*Gipuzkoa etengabe hezitzen*". This as well was a joint initiative (union agents, employers, training institutions, the administration and entrepreneurship agents) targeting the fields of education, labour and society in general. Its main objective was sensitising and awareness-raising in education and continuous training through information and the different spheres and dynamics of action for joint reflection on the importance of education and continuous training.

3.11.7. *Lifelong Learning (1999)*

In the process of developing occupational training, a new plan of action known as "Lifelong Learning" was set in motion at the beginning of the 21st century. This new action plan had its origins in the Inter-institutional Employment Plan arising from the Coalition Agreement to form government for the 1999/2002 legislature and was contained in the cal-

endar of significant plans, programmes and activities of the Basque government for that legislature as a factor for coordinating action between the government, the regional councils and the municipalities. Its objective was to integrate and coordinate resources and public policies in achieving a common employment strategy, drawing direct inspiration from the European Employment Strategy and Employment Guidelines, and specifically attending to problems in the Basque job market, adapted to its socio-economic reality.

At that time, the action taken by the Basque government with regard to active employment and training policies in the context of the job market required flexible regulations capable of adapting to the new European guidelines, particularly those referring to this *Lifelong Learning* model. Hence, after analysing the situation, financial assistance was brought in for those activities aimed at useful learning in any field of knowledge to increase employability and improve professional qualifications, skills, and horizontal and transversal capabilities in individuals over 25 who were unemployed, employed, or inactive.

These lifelong learning projects were the target of inter-institutional action, enjoying the participation of social agents, and responding in terms of learning initiatives, actions or specific activities that interested individuals could join. However, other types of learning project also existed which implemented and promoted learning initiatives, activities or actions in local or regional settings that had to be submitted by the orientation services, which in turn were classified as employment centres with the obligation to provide a proactive offer in the supply and demand for this type of learning. Bearing these aspects in mind, the Commission of the European Communities recommended the adoption of initiatives revolving around *Lifelong Learning* or permanent learning to the Kingdom of Spain, among others, accounting for the launching of these learning processes and, with them, the first forms of economic assistance.

In the BAC, these funds were allocated to the regional councils, municipalities and municipal labour pools, the local and regional development agencies, municipal corporations, the universities of the Basque Country, not-for-profit foundations and associations, and trading companies. The assistance purported to increase employability, improving professional qualifications, skills, and horizontal and transversal capabilities of individuals over 25 who were unemployed, employed or inactive, and consisted of non-refundable grants, the amount of which, added to other institutional contributions, could not exceed 100% of the budget approved for the activities falling under the specific reference of *Lifelong Learning*. In any case, monitoring for all these activities, as on other occasions, was undertaken by Egailan S. A., the public corporation to promote training and employment.

3.11.8. *Entrepreneurship Initiatives as Service Delivery Foci*

In a “Youth Encounter” run by the Mapfre Foundation, young people pointed out that there were three factors in the enterprise-student relationship that could clearly be improved: promoting the demand for qualification and specialisation among companies¹⁰⁰; ensuring that the training offered by the companies in any case complied with the curriculum; and propitiating the participation of entrepreneurship experts in classroom teaching activities¹⁰¹. In this latter regard, it must be said that Basque VT over the last few years has been conducting a process where not only has there been rapprochement between experts and students; rather, these are sharing the training being acquired from different innovative initiatives such as the following.

3.11.9. *“Driver” Enterprises and NODE-s*

In the area of the innovation shown by entrepreneurship initiatives, one of the elements we should speak of are the “driver” enterprises; i.e., those large companies which, in addition to promoting high-level growth and development, act as important supports to SMEs. This type of enterprise does not only create employment in local economies, but also usually has the capacity to do so on the national and international scale.

Some of their characteristics are as follows: *size* (they are considerably large), *endowment in resources and capacities* (they have significant assets and capacity and usually avail of their own R+D+i resources), *knowledge and information* (they avail of knowledge and information about markets, costs and technologies), *international reputation and presence* (their consolidated track records always speak in their favour), and *leadership* (apart from being leaders in their sales sectors, they also exercise leadership functions in their industries). As regards our autonomous community, some of these “driver” enterprises are Mercedes Benz in Araba, Iberdrola in Bizkaia and CAF in Gipuzkoa, although evidently, these are not the only ones. In a certain way, this function of “driver” companies is largely similar to that phenomenon of

¹⁰⁰ “When a large company comes and asks for a specialisation programme, they want student mechanics who know about electronics and I don’t know what else. When a small company comes, it is different; a small company asks for a small part it can’t find, they ask for help because they need a person, that’s another type of assistance ...”. Interview with Jon Labaka, Donostia, 22 January 2019.

¹⁰¹ “You have to go back a bit to the core of what professional vocational training is, which is apprenticeship: the relations between the apprentice and that person who, regardless of his timetable, devotes himself to teaching the apprentice; and to that chemistry arising between both, which I believe is the foundation of what has enriched the system”. Interview with José Ignacio Hernández, Donostia, 11 February 2019.

the 1950s called “diversified monoculture”; i.e., many industrial subsectors depending directly or indirectly on a sector of larger size, which in that period, in the province of Gipuzkoa, was metallurgy.

Within the field of VT innovation, another important, recently created element are the NODE-s, or, to define them, a group of centres working on one and the same specialisation, characterised, if by anything, by the ease with which they adapt to market needs. The NODE-s are designed to orient the so-called Basque vocational training innovation system. These NODE-s also fulfil other tasks, such as technological surveillance or maintaining close relations with the Basque Science, Technology and Innovation Network, the SMEs, the “driver” enterprises mentioned, etc., although they are also charged with formulating initiatives that make it possible to anticipate the needs of companies and prepare the conclusions they consider suitable.

As of this writing, the active NODE-s are those of Advanced Manufacturing, Digital and Connected Manufacturing, Energy, and Bio-sciences. For a close-up on the operation of a NODE, we shall take the example of Advanced Manufacturing set in motion by Tknika and applied at the Machine Tool Institute of Elgoibar.

Table 15
Advanced Manufacturing NODE

Classification	Participants	Functions	Actions
Strategic level	Vocational Training, Basque government, Basque Network Enterprises & Agents	Detect needs & establish priorities	IMH/MTI & Centres: propose activities
Strategy implementation level	Centres participating in the NODE	Design responses to needs detected	Define the specialisation of each centre to respond to priority matters & design activities
Operational level; deployment	Centres participating in the NODE expanded to collaborating centres	Impart specialisation courses, implement projects & services	Develop and initiate action

Source: Prepared by the authors. *Data:* Murua (2015).

3.11.10. *Non-Traditional Services*

In a society marked by continuous changes and technological advances, “the question of technology transfer and the construction of technological clusters and poles is a key element in designing the science and technology policy”. In what concerns BAC VT centres, it would seem so, because over the past few years, different proposals to create research poles in the Basque provinces have emerged to the point that the Basque Country is being considered an international pole of innovation, and an absolute leader if Spain is taken within its category among the high-innovation regions in Europe. This is acknowledged by the European Commission in its Regional Innovation Scheme (RIS), which has just been published, measuring innovation performance in 214 regions of 22 Member States.

Despite the fact that the most innovative regions in Europe are in the most innovative countries —i.e., those belonging to the leading group— in those States belonging to the moderate group, there are four regional innovation poles excelling over the rest, among them the Basque Country (it would also seem that Gipuzkoa is the Basque province most involved in this task), aside from the poles of Piedmont and Friuli Venezia Giulia in Italy, or Bratislava in Slovakia.

As we point out, significant work in this context is being done in Gipuzkoa and there are different initiatives arising in the territory, such as Goierri, Meka, IMH, Lortek, etc. In this case, we shall analyse the task done by the Goierri Innovation Pole. The “Goierri” Innovation Pole developed at the installations of the vocational school and university campus of Ordizia (Gipuzkoa). It was created for the general purpose of initiating and motivating a permanent innovation process oriented towards an exchange of ideas, projects and activities among the companies of the region, the university and the technological centres of the province, with the specific aim of helping to convey these ideas, projects and activities to all the training levels, facilitating the creation of new technology-based companies.

In this context, it must be stressed that the project has deep roots in the productive fabric of the region, the needs of which it seeks to address and for which it takes two lines of action – one responding to enterprise, and the other to the university campus, offering these *developed ground* for hosting enterprises of high technological value, and *spaces for R+D+i* for already-existing companies, along with a population of *enterprising individuals* who can develop their businesses.

This “Goierri” innovation pole for them to exercise their activities in observes a working philosophy that we may summarise in terms of the following points:

- It is oriented to *cross-fertilisation* through knowledge transfer between companies, technological centres and the university, and to *permanent innovation* through long-term dynamics.
- It is also at the service of the *needs of the territory*, responding to the real need for innovation in the environment with a determined *vocation to transform*, promoting the creation of new enterprises in new sectors *scaled to measure* – i.e., realistic, credible projects designed to the measure of the needs and resources existing, and based on *public/private sector collaboration*; that is, private companies and public institutions working together, given the experience of Goierri in this type of collaboration.

What Goierri wants along these principles is to conduct its work along five priorities:

- *Promote collaboration* to improve the competitiveness of companies.
- Select joint research projects, *multi-agent projects*.
- Attract *new R+D+i units* that can give rise to new technology-based enterprises.
- Be able to *transfer professionals* between companies/university/vocational school, taking advantage of experience and *propitiating innovation and entrepreneurship*.
- And establish a *permanent forum* between regional organisations to promote innovation and entrepreneurship.

3.11.11. *A New Initiative: The BerIndu Programme*

The Basque entrepreneurial sector, which has historically maintained close relations with VT, has continued to observe this philosophy of closeness to the centres in which this educational model is imparted, and has undertaken initiatives such as that designed by the association of Guipuzcoan entrepreneurs, Adegí. One of these initiatives takes the form of the BerIndu Programme, aiming to encourage the closeness of entrepreneurial reality to the educational system in order to transmit this knowledge to the classrooms. Some of the most significant companies in the province have taken part in this programme, such as Eroski, Danobat, Salto or Orona, among others.

At the end of 2009, Adegí set the BerIndu Programme mentioned in motion for the purpose already given – i.e., to bring the reality of companies to the educational world to enable it to get acquainted with their needs and thus strengthen those training courses that best adapt to them. This programme targeted the Guipuzcoan vocational training faculty, school centre orientation counsellors and vocational training students,

who conducted prepared ad hoc tours of different companies. These visits were arranged to make specific aspects about the management of the companies known – an updated view of corporate reality, its values, the management of some specific area, the most innovative technologies of production processes, etc. Some 100 teachers and 50 students took part in the experience, visiting 15 companies.

In the case of the teachers invited, the programme sought to show—apart from the reality of the companies—innovative experiences in production processes and management models that they could get acquainted with on site. Asked about their experience, the students positively rated their encounter with practical experience in companies, because they considered that this could ease their future entry into the world of enterprise.

The third target group of the BerIndu Programme were the orientation counsellors from the baccalaureate and mandatory secondary school, as Adegí considered it fundamental for the career advisors in secondary to have a first-hand knowledge of the reality of companies and the possibilities of professional development offered by vocational training in aspects such as professional careers, levels of compensation, working conditions, installations, etc., to fulfil this task of dissemination. For that reason, with the aim of improving its dissemination function, Adegí designed a pilot programme of visits to companies specifically for these career advisors from the baccalaureate and secondary school centres.

In view of the participation and reception that BerIndu enjoyed among vocational training faculty and school centre career advisors, Adegí has proposed to continue and refine the programme at greater depth, and in this sense, was closing the company tour programme to study the feasibility of expanding it to universities and to students from baccalaureate centres, to facilitate their knowledge of entrepreneurial reality.

Conclusions

Throughout this work, chapter by chapter, we have noted down the most relevant aspects of the subjects dealt with, in order to be able to appreciate the results they have led to. The purpose of all this was to draw up a set of conclusions about the Basque Vocational Training Model. It is thus needful to briefly review the results obtained and flesh out an overview based on the different sections that have gone into the entire study. To facilitate such a view, we shall observe the order of the chapters that have comprised the structure of this study, expressed in the form of different points.

Firstly, the conclusion on historical background consists of a review of the evolution of vocational training in the Basque Country during the last century and a half, which highlighted a set of critical points that may serve to clarify the present-day success of this educational modality. The historical factor, shaped by the participation of a group of agents who facilitated lines of collaboration on the institutional, industrial and educational planes, must be stressed. We refer to the enterprises, the local and provincial corporations, the educational centres and the collaboration of public and private institutions.

The creation of the Schools of Arts and Trades during the late 19th century—both those located in the capitals of Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa and those of other towns in these two territories—are the first example setting this group of social players in motion. These schools arose in a context of industrialisation for which the state had not made any type of legal regulation on the petition of local and provincial institutions, in relation to the entrepreneurial demand. The centres got involved here and developed on the fringes of the ordinary educational system. The success of these schools was such that, in some cases, they were known as “the university of the poor”, in allusion to the fact that they were the best occupational

solution for labourers' children. In their day, they coexisted with the vocational training schools, above all trade schools, founded by some religious congregations.

During that period, the scarce interest in developing laws about vocational training accorded with the low level of economic development. Only during the 1920s did some statutes on vocational training begin to emerge, which would remain practically undeveloped in terms of proposals up to the 1950s, upon the onset of Francoist developmentalism. The state did not feel concerned about this level of education; consequently, up to that time, it did not begin to include vocational training in the educational system. The General Education Act of 1970 would lay the first milestone in modernising the educational system, along with improved standardisation for this modality of learning. Throughout this entire period, vocational training was to have diverse levels of dependence, on ministries and institutions as well as trade unions. Enterprise, the Church—the grand beneficiary of the Franco regime—and the Falangist unions would string together a network of centres with diverse modalities of Initial or Continuous Training.

The achievement of political autonomy for the Basque Country, with the transfer of educational competences since the start of the 1980s, meant acting and deciding from within the region. In the beginning, the activities conducted were carried out in a poorly structured manner, with feeble participation commitments in the hands of teachers and enthusiastic centre directors, and prospects of improvement in vocational training at a time in which disrepute seemed inherent to its nature. With the passing of the years and, above all, since the start of the 21st century, it began to develop strategies in which marked differences began to be perceived in the joint task of seriously reforming this educational level, emanating from the Office of the Deputy Councillor and the educational centre associations.

But speaking in terms of legislation, 1990 marked yet another milestone in the reform of vocational training. The OAGES, an organic act—as is also the Statute on Autonomy—sets the limitations and possibilities in developing regulations from that date onward up to the present. In this context, we were able to strike a balance in the law-making process observed: between, on the one hand, the organic provisions of the state, of mandatory compliance, and on the other, the different laws on public schools or vocational training dictated by the Basque government. It is in this legislative process that we find the framework for developing vocational training in the Basque Country, fully knowing that, as had been occurring since the 19th century with the Schools of Arts and Trades, it was the players from the region who managed to set high levels for voca-

tional training, working from the institutions as well as from the centres, as may be observed in the succeeding chapters. Viewed from the historical perspective, the critical key that could not be abandoned was fidelity to its principles: adapting to the social, economic and educational needs of the territory in which the centres emerge, and relying on the involvement of all the agents involved. This is the reason we speak of the defining traits of this vocational training as keys that help us understand their development down to the present.

In terms of centre evolution, the concluding data show that Basque vocational training has improved considerably over the past five decades, to the point of becoming a training with its own unique identity and nature, seen by other communities as an example to follow and as an international reference. This improvement took place thanks to the solid collaboration between different agents and institutions from the political, social, educational and business spheres.

This labour of continuous and constant collaboration is considered a strength that has yielded better infrastructures, material and academic resources, and new internship, employability and collaboration possibilities in the production sectors. Even so, we can find some point for amelioration, such as the presence of Euskera in Basque vocational training, which—although it is true that enrolment in linguistic models “B” and “D” has increased over the past five years—still leaves a good margin for improvement. Another weak aspect traditionally attributed to vocational training is the fact that, in the enrolment of some occupational branches, one gender predominates over the other. There has been an improvement in the sense that this is no longer as pronounced as it was decades ago, but such differences still exist in some few branches. Lastly, the employment rates of Basque vocational training students are high and, for that reason, studying and obtaining a degree in Basque vocational training, today, is synonymous with better chances at employment and at entry into the world of productive labour.

Hence, from a reading of the data provided, we can conclude that vocational training has improved remarkably from the 1970s down to the present, with Basque vocational training becoming a reference point on the international scale.

Secondly, the conclusions on strategic dimensions were dealt with in the second chapter, in which the transfer of educational competence to the BAC based on the Statute of Autonomy gave greater control over vocational training to the region itself, facilitating decision-making and the opening of a strategic dimension from the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training. This took the form of all the strategic Vocational Training Plans from 1997 up to the present. The existence of each

Plan gave an indication of the framework from which vocational training developed, whereby each Plan outlined the challenges for the future to be faced.

Moving on from the contents of the first chapter, the last decade of the 20th century marks the starting point for the blossoming of vocational training in the Basque Country. It does not in any case flower spontaneously, nor is it a fruit of chance. A combination of diverse factors is to undeniably fertilise the land in which the seedling of what we could define as a Basque Vocational Training Model was to germinate. On the one hand, a consolidated historical tradition enabled vocational training to enjoy favourable acceptance by institutions, social agents and Basque society, even at critical times. On the other hand, the political transformations that resulted in the BAC having its own constitution within the framework of the Gernika Statute of Autonomy made it possible for Basque institutions to have a direct hand in the orientation that vocational training in the region was to take. As the prime authority, the Basque government was to assume the competence in this matter, and went about progressively organising such structures as would enable it to orchestrate and steer its course. However, in an extremely difficult economic context, other Basque institutions, particularly the regional councils, could also constitute themselves as agents appreciating and, for that same reason, promoting the development of vocational training in the context of their competence, particularly from the standpoint of funding and equipment endowments, to the extent they understood it as a factor for economic development. To what has been said must be added the vocational training centres' own capacity for initiative, which would make their talent for collaborative work an unequivocal sign of identity, able to foster relations with the business world, seek management instruments that would make them more effective, open channels that would link work with study, even beyond the bounds of regulated training, or explore the renovation of methodological alternatives. These factors —without which the future evolution of vocational training in the Basque Country cannot be understood, already perceptible in the 1980s— acquire increased magnitude in the 1990s in a context marked by the reorganisation of the entire educational system and the transformation that vocational training would undergo within it as a result of the OAGES. To this must be added the approval of the Basque Public School Act, above all due to its relevance with regard to the renewed organisation of vocational training centres and their capacity for autonomous initiative and management.

On this well-fertilised land germinated a new reality, as we were saying, the fundamental trait of which was the strategic dimension where, from now on, the evolution of vocational training in the BAC was to be understood. In this sense, the First Basque Vocational Training Plan

would mark a turning point in which, as the result of the work of institutional and social agents and education professionals, the construction of the new vocational training in the region began to be recognisable. In the framework of an integrated system of vocational training, from a viewpoint that combined education, economics and labour, where the centres were projected as basic protagonists, it sought reinforcement and quality in initial training, in order for this to converge with training for employment, and for the result to adapt efficiently to the economic context and scientific and technological evolution where it was to take its place, offering an actual alternative in terms of training for employment. The transformation of vocational training is to be understood as an unavoidable task that had to include the involvement of institutional as well as social agents, in addition to those who were directly involved – centres and faculty. It would be decisive for these to act in the framework of a network of vocational training centres, both public and private, on the organisation of which would depend the yield of their involvement. The fundamental thrusts of the Plan were, among others, a Vocational Qualifications System, combining qualification and competitiveness, to which a modular catalogue would be linked; a bid for training quality, in addition to quality in management; establishing a link between training and the development of the environment; the endowment in equipment, teaching material and venues; and workplace training.

The new century would begin with strengthened vocational training as the result of the transformation it underwent over the previous years. If, apart from the clearly recognisable effects of the First Basque Vocational Training Plan in terms of solidity and skills, amid the scenario of building organisational structures throughout the preceding decade, we add the creation of the Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training at the outset of first ten years after 2000, we would be delineating one of the distinctive traits that would mark Basque vocational training for the future. This figure would be exercising undeniable leadership from a strategic point of view, immediately resulting in the approval of the Second Basque Vocational Training Plan. By way of continuing and reinforcing the basic strategic lines of the previous plan, this in turn would make a clear bid for innovation. Along with upgrading the Integrated Qualification and Training System, the bid for quality and the bid for the new technologies in the vocational training of the of the region, the promotion of innovation would represent the strategic sphere that most evidently characterises this period. And in this context, the strategic objectives with which vocational training begins to operate cover, among other concerns, a broad spectrum that ranges from the management of its centres, the transfer of technology and knowledge between these and the companies —technologies applied to training and the promotion of new forms

of learning in innovative fields— up to the creation of what was to become Tknika, a research, development and innovation centre in the sphere of vocational training that was to become a fundamental reference point throughout the following years.

The Third Basque Vocational Training Plan, already proper to the second decade of the century, would seek to approach vocational training modernisation as a mechanism necessary to continuously strengthen it. Along this line, it would combine the use of qualifications systems, an integrated information, counselling and orientation system, the increased professionalisation of teachers and trainers, and the improvement of the image and attraction of vocational training. The strategic areas dealt with in the Plan were: to make permanent learning and vocational training mobility a reality, to improve the quality and effectiveness of the training, to promote equity and social cohesion within it, and to increase its creativity and innovation. Once again, innovation appeared; and it would become disruptive as constant reinvention in Basque vocational training, uniquely characterising the Fourth Basque Vocational Training Plan, which was to follow a few years later.

This would be seen as a priority sphere of action, given its strategic nature in the BAC, and would be the first among the priorities cited in the Euskadi 2015 Strategic Vocational Training Agenda. Its core thrusts were integrated training, applied innovation, active entrepreneurship, internationalisation and the renovation of vocational training centres, in which the development of a new centre model, its transformation into units of knowledge and advanced management, and the creation of a network of specialised centres, were to be fundamental, all aimed at advancing the Basque economy, improving the competitiveness of companies in the region, and increasing the employability of its citizens. The Plan that most greatly revolutionised vocational training in the BAC with a view to its strategic development and the consolidation of a Basque Vocational Training Model was afterwards to call for a new Plan, the Fifth, to supplement it and to enable progress along the lines of the vision that it had initiated around innovation. Moreover, in response to a requirement for its own implementation—even before the Fifth Basque Vocational Training Plan was approved—the challenge of formulating a legal framework arose as undeferrable, resulting in the Basque Country Vocational Training Act.

Thirdly, the conclusions on innovation as a pivotal point of vocational training identity are, without a doubt, what mark a reference point in the Basque Vocational Training Model. Innovation is one of the thrusts that run throughout the entire evolution of vocational training. From the first years of the 21st century, it has been the thrust towards innovation which has had cross-cutting effects on the different planes in-

tervening in this sphere. Hence, innovation in vocational training is one of the themes that has taken up the most attention during the past few years, due to the extent to which it affects both the teaching and learning processes, with the application of new methodologies, and the processes of quality, management, research, and even internationalisation. In this sense, we have differentiated two planes of innovation: firstly, the institutional, in its capacity to make decisions and legally regulate all the aspects related to vocational training; and secondly, the participation of centre associations in the decisions and activities of the centres, which have managed to establish a network of collaboration.

It is in this scenario that the emergence of Tknika in 2005 as a Vocational Training and Lifelong Learning Innovation Centre is pointed out, in a relevant role that structures the core of relationships between companies, centres and the administration. Its reform in 2015, under the denomination of Vocational Training Research and Applied Innovation Centre of the Basque Country, was to situate innovation on the agenda of all the agents involved in vocational training. Hence, on stressing the value of the role played by the administration, we highlight the innovation represented by the autonomous administration in creating a set of institutions motivating and connecting all agents at diverse levels of participation.

To explain this entire process, it is needful to stress the institutional architecture affecting diverse agents by level of participation. The process that, in 2001, led to the creation of an Office of the Deputy Councillor for Vocational Training within the Basque government Department of Education is an important milestone because it confers visibility to this modality of training and differentiates the unique path it treads between the educational sphere and labour. From that time onward, strategic policies were established through political decisions, while at the same time pushing forward all the processes implemented. One expression of all this is the creation of the Basque Vocational Training Plans, as has been mentioned above.

On another front, the Basque Vocational Training Council, the activity of which has fluctuated at certain times, was established to unite the efforts of the diverse agents, from the educational centres to the entrepreneurial organisations or the administration. On a different plane, by exercising functions of consultancy, control or evaluation, the bodies that were created have fulfilled an outstanding role in upgrading quality or professional qualification processes. These are the series of agencies comprising that node of institutional relations.

Within this sphere, in terms of the firm intention to renovate vocational training from within —i.e., with the participation of faculty and

centres — as well as from without, through external collaboration or internationalisation, the creation of Tknika represented a success, since it was what the field of innovation required. Tknika thus became the flagship of all the innovation moving at diverse levels. The idea that innovation was to be conducted in the centres, and that the faculty upgraded and expanded its knowledge at Tknika, was a great achievement in terms of getting all the agents involved in processes which, otherwise, could not have been successful without their mutual collaboration and cooperation. This idea is very powerful in relation to the proper conduct of innovation. Hence, the most striking aspect of the situation is the level of relations existing between the different participants, relations not restricted to the regional or national sphere, but rather, were also established internationally. The implementation of projects and the development of constant innovation strategies is another striking value.

In what concerns the second plane of innovation, the role played by the three centre associations is likewise relevant and once more stresses the value of participation as a critical element of innovation – in this case, on issues affecting the centres and their management. The associations Ikslan, HETEL and AICE/IZEA are distinguished by their networking, in addition to their joint participation on diverse projects and their collaboration with administration in defending their respective interests, as well as their spirit of establishing points of collaboration in projects and sharing common objectives such as innovation, internationalisation, the inclusion of Euskera in their centres, or in balancing the training they provide. What is important here is the mutual respect between the three associations and their readiness to collaborate. All this is an indicator of the quality of relations between them and their awareness of rowing in one and the same direction.

It is precisely in that shared task of rowing in the same direction where enterprise, student body and faculty act together, powered by “quality management”, bringing Basque vocational training to an international recognition that, years ago, would have been unthinkable. In this context, we feel it should be pointed out that, although the issue of Dual Workplace Training is very much in fashion these days, such educational practices had already been implemented in the Basque Country in the 1980s, where they became the seed of what they are today in reality.

The operative start-up of this teaching/learning model required an effort from everyone concerned – from the companies, the students, and of course, the vocational training faculty, who, if at first reluctant about Life-long Learning, turned about-face at some point in relation to this manner of thinking and threw themselves full-scale into the process. It was spearheaded by these “adventurers” who got deeply involved in quality man-

agement and ended up pulling along practically all the vocational training centres and faculty.

Entrepreneurship is also another key in innovation that has been growing in relevance in Basque Country vocational training, to the point of becoming one of the elements that best represent its innovative character. Its importance has to be understood in the context of a strategic vision in which different agents intervene, but in particular, the leadership and competence of the vocational training centres have to be underscored, as they become what might be called the Basque entrepreneurship model. Along a path leading back to the 1980s, when entrepreneurship acquired significant value in order to face the crisis, giving rise to the need for vocational training to respond in the form of entrepreneurship training at the end of the subsequent decade and the start of the 21st century, the BAC once more signals its innovating vocation in the form of a consolidated path to building its own ecosystem of entrepreneurship. Thanks to the leadership of Tknika under the umbrella of the different Basque Vocational Training Plans, the traditional relationship between vocational training centres and their corporate environment would transform, not only into the training required for entrepreneurship, but also into the creation of enterprises. To such an end, different programmes and resources would be set in motion (UrratsBat, Ikasenpresa, MAE, Irekin, etc.) and the vocational training centres committed to entrepreneurship would group together in collaborative networking towards an innovative vision which, breaking with the traditional view of training, poses the possibility of entrepreneurship as an employment alternative.

The innovative character distinguishing vocational training in the BAC is none other than the result of the creative capacity it has continually vaunted. Imagining and creating are the pillars on which rests the ability to respond to critical contexts in continuous transformation, turning innovation into an unmistakable trait of Basque Country vocational training, and this particular innovation into a distinctive sign of the centres comprising it. In a process that must be understood from an evolutionary perspective, creativity would be conceived as a fundamental element for continuous improvement, competitiveness, employability, independent learning, lifelong learning, entrepreneurial capacity, and the like. Over and above being a means for achieving the appropriate responses to challenges posed (economic, social, etc.), creativity is understood from the viewpoint of training no longer as a medium, but as an end. And for this purpose, Ideatk would be created, as the Basque Vocational Training Institute for Applied Creativity.

Similarly, another key to innovation is the development of the process internationalising the Basque Vocational Training System, initiated in the

1980s/1990s with the first attempts to promote mobility, particularly of students, through their participation in the first European programmes. With the help of promotional work, initiated as well by Confebask, the first steps would be taken in building a mobility model revolving around the vocational training centres. During the subsequent decades, student and faculty mobility programmes would gradually become part of the culture in the centres, and there was to be a tendency to expand the area of internationalisation, both in geographic terms and in terms of diverse types of international cooperation. The favourable results achieved clearly reflect an excellent job of coordination and networking, promoted and spearheaded by the centre associations, mainly Ikaşlan, the Basque government and Tknika, who, far from understanding coordination as a homogenising process, set out from the premise of respect for the idiosyncrasy of each territory and centre, promoting independence of management and projection in the area of international relations, substantially increasing the innovative potential of each centre, and, in consequence, of the entire system.

In all the preceding conclusions, we cannot help but appreciate another innovative key element, such as the relationship between enterprise and vocational training. After analysing the relationship between the world of business and vocational training centres, we can discern several aspects. First among them would be that the relationship established since the beginnings of the Schools of Arts and Trades, which continued between companies and vocational training centres during the Francoist era, not only has been maintained, but even strengthened. Initiatives such as the latest we have seen reinforce that hypothesis we raise: that vocational training has placed itself at the disposal of enterprise for its development, or that it has been enterprise which has required the continuous evolution and improvement of vocational training.

A second aspect to highlight would be the multitude of initiatives that have been occurring throughout this period, initiatives where not only has the educational model of vocational training taken part as such, but different agents have also been co-participants of every measure implemented, sometimes from the vocational training centres themselves, at others from the state administration (INEM, FORCEM), from the autonomous administration (HOBETUZ), from the provincial administration (the councils), or from the local administration (municipalities and/or labour pools). The trade unions have not held back either, nor have the employers' associations or the companies, etc. We therefore see that the relationship between enterprise and vocational training has been, and continues to be, very close.

There is yet another aspect we do not want to ignore. It is the great interest that all the agents involved in this enterprise/vocational training

relationship have shown in not leaving anyone “outside the system”, offering opportunities to the entire population, with training activities that target employed workers, the unemployed, the rural setting, women as an excluded gender group, students from various levels and stages, youth who have not finished primary schooling and so forth. This broad spectrum of groups addressed by Continuous or Occupational Training give a sample of that attention paid to all of society by this educational model.

In a word, the relationship between enterprise and vocational training in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country has been a constant throughout its history. One only has to look back and see how, in the middle of the last century, different Biscayan and Guipuzcoan companies ran their own apprentice schools. *Altos Hornos*, *La Naval*, *CAF* or *Unión Cerrajera* are some examples of this.

This phenomenon changed radically when the General Education Act of 1970 came into force, conclusively lifting the reliance of vocational training on the Ministry of Labour to fall under the Ministry of Education and Science, as actually befitted its functions. Still, it was with the approval of the OAGES that the foundations of vocational training were finally laid, enabling it to become what it is at present, which, moreover, in the case of the Basque Autonomous Community, is a resounding success.

To reach this point, however, vocational training also underwent its moments of weakness: nationwide and worldwide economic crises have repeatedly wrought havoc on its development, but the transfer of educational competences from the Spanish state to the Basque government in the 1980s and a decided bid for this educational model have served as the pillars from which Basque vocational training drew support. Nevertheless, although these are very important, they have not been the only factors that contributed to the success we speak of.

Another factor of significant relevance originates from the First National Agreement on Continuous Training signed in 1984. This factor consisted of dividing vocational training into three categories: Regulated, Occupational, and Continuous Vocational Training. Still, we cannot forget what spelled out the change in entrepreneurial culture on the part of educational authorities with regard to worker training; i.e., from considering training as nothing more than an unnecessary accessory, to decisively supporting qualified training for the working class. In that change of entrepreneurial culture, the contribution of the Council of European Communities was critical. This contribution was based on three premises: creation, development and stimulus for training.

From the signing of the First National Agreement on Continuous Training onward, numerous proposals followed, all towards a clear objec-

tive: improving worker qualifications. In this context, different training plans and programmes succeeded each other in Spain, addressing the entire population. Hence, we find that there were training programmes for youth and the long-term unemployed, for young people seeking their first jobs, for school recovery, for occupational recycling, for company staff and for the self-employed, for members of cooperatives and labour corporations, for the handicapped, for migrants, and for the excluded, ethnic minorities and other groups.

A large part of the programming for these activities was managed by the INEM, although it is also true that, to do so, it relied on the collaboration of numerous public and/or private institutions, on the vocational training centres themselves, municipal participation, labour pools, schools, and university colleges, etc.

Continuous Training was one of the three categories of vocational training that had become a priority not only for the educational authorities but also for economic authorities, since it opened a multitude of possibilities for ascertaining the health of regional and state economies with sufficient certainty. Moreover, it was an opportunity offered to workers for occupational recycling, and not to be missed. Different regional, sector and/or entrepreneurship proposals were formulated; the conduct of orientation and training activities in public and private institutions to recycle their personnel, whether or not these were qualified, was also proposed. The possibility of letting the enterprises themselves impart such training to their workers was also provided, and possibilities of workplace training or participation in junior enterprise programmes were offered to graduating university students.

Throughout this process, in what concerns the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, a situation that was normal enough as early as the Franco era was repeating itself: the direct participation of the Basque municipalities and territorial councils in developing vocational training. In the case of the municipalities, this participation was more intense, if possible, given their closer proximity to the social reality of the populations concerned, whereby the municipal institutions became the "managers" of the Social Guarantee Programme originating from the OAGES, which, as was already pointed out in the previous chapter, had a dual objective: inclusion into the workforce for participants, and recovery in order to return to the educational system, for those who were interested.

On the other hand, we must once again underscore the importance of the 1980s transfer of educational competence and the possibilities that the Statute of Autonomy offered the Basque citizenry. If, in Madrid, authorities had signed the First National Agreement on Continuous Training, the Basque Autonomous Community saw the signing of the Interprofes-

sional Agreement on Continuous Training in 1995 between Confebask and the trade unions ELA, LAB and CC.OO. The UGT remained outside its scope, pending the orders that had to come from Madrid; still, despite this signing, there remained a couple of somewhat delicate questions to resolve – i.e., that both the provincial councils and the Basque government had to provide funds for Continuous Training, and a second question on the management of Continuous Training and Occupational Training, since at that time, both depended on state organisations. The INEM was responsible for the former and the FORCEM for the latter.

HOBETUZ, the Basque Foundation for Continuous Vocational Training, emerged in response to this complex situation. The main objective of HOBETUZ was very clear in this regard: “*to make Continuous Training more effective*”. Taking part in this task were the Basque government, the entrepreneurial confederation and the trade unions; however, to facilitate operations, they created a Board that became the highest foundation organ. Once this had been instituted, the launching of different training plans addressing enterprise began, which were grouped (for groups of companies), sectoral in some cases and intersectoral in others. HOBETUZ had become operational.

These conclusions, therefore, end up confirming the importance of innovation in the Basque Vocational Training Model, sustained by the participation of Basque government administration institutions and agencies and the associations of all sorts of companies. The signs of identity of this innovation in such a participative context have to do with the fundamental role of *Tknika*, entrepreneurship, creativity, and internationalisation, in which workplace training in companies or continuous faculty training have played fundamental roles. The balanced weight of these elements is what enables us to speak about a Basque Vocational Training Model which, by its own merits, is dynamic and remains open to new innovations in the future, never losing sight of the objective of adapting to social, economic and educational needs, with projects that face the technological challenges of the future, albeit as well the needful social and educational inclusion.

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Governing legislation

- Spanish Constitution of 6 December 1978.
- Organic Act regulating the School Centre Statute dated 19 June 1980.
- Organic Act regulating the Right to Education dated 3 July 1985.
- Act 1/1986 of 7 January creating the General Vocational Training Council.
- Act 19/1997 of 9 June modifying Act 1/1986 creating the General Vocational Training Council.
- Organic Act 5/2002 of 19 June, on Qualifications and Vocational Training.
- Organic Act 2/2006 of 3 May, on Education.
- Organic Act for Quality Improvement in Education of 9 December 2013.
- Act 4/2018 of 28 June, on Vocational Training in the Basque Country.

This work seeks to present some of the factors that have accounted for the present-day success of Basque vocational training.

To understand what occurred in the course of history to shape the vocational training developed in Euskadi, we have to go back to the 19th century, when the first Schools of Arts and Trades were founded, to the Francoist period, with the involvement of different political, social, economic and other agents... and of course, to the change that transpired in the 1980s, when the Basque Government assumed the competence in educational matters.

The most important key to understanding this success lies in the constant process of innovation, in which quality, creativity, entrepreneurship and internationalisation progressively began to mould this process, which has contributed to the success that Basque vocational training is acknowledged worldwide.

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