

33rd IASP World Conference on
Science Parks and Areas of Innovation 2016

Russia, Moscow

**Technology parks as catalysts of talent: the case of the
Basque Country**

Workshop

Global talent: the coveted treasure

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Technology parks as catalysts of talent: the case of the Basque Country

Executive Summary

People are the driving force behind regional growth. That is why places with a higher number of talented people grow faster and are better able to attract more talent.

In recent years the Basque Country has followed a strategy backed up with decisive coordinated action from the different institutions to become a benchmark in talent management. Here, spaces such as the Technology Parks have played a crucial role, offering areas for excelling in leadership capital and for becoming catalysts of talent in the regions in which they are located.

This article describes how the Basque Technology Parks have taken part in various programmes and initiatives in collaboration with cutting-edge institutions, to promote the attraction, retention, development and connection of talent to the parks. Their establishment has enhanced the creation of bridges between the education institutions, business and the science and technology agents for the promotion of local and global talent.

BACKGROUND: POWERING MANAGING AND CONNECTING TALENT IN THE NEW COMPETITIVE ERA

People are the driving force behind regional growth. Studies find a clear connection between the economic success of nations and their human capital, as measured by the level of education. That is why places with a higher number of talented people grow faster and are better able to attract more talent. More importantly, companies cluster in order to draw from concentrations of talented people who power innovation and economic growth. The ability to rapidly mobilize talent from such a concentration of people is a tremendous source of competitive advantage for companies in our time-driven economy¹.

More open and diverse places are likely to attract greater numbers of talented and creative people, the sort of people who power innovation and growth. But what is the secret of talent and how do we unlock it? There is some controversy as to whether talent is innate or can be developed. However, studies show that talent is not an innate gift, but the result of a slow, invisible accretion of skills developed. And as in any process, it can be developed².

According to the conventional rules of management in the current information age, leaders manage people. They recruit the best talent, provide appropriate incentives, give stretch assignments to develop talent, use emotional intelligence to connect with each individual, review performance carefully and retain those that fit best³.

Leaders must create an environment supportive enough such that people are willing to share their genius, but confrontational enough to improve ideas and spark new thinking. To build willingness, leaders must create communities that share a sense of purpose, values and rules of engagement.

In the way they behave and structure the organizations where talented people work, leaders can draw out the slices of genius in each individual and assemble them into innovations that represent collective genius⁴. Studies show that the Pygmalion effect also applies in management and a manager's expectations are key to talent performance and development.

Research shows that game-changing companies are driven by purpose, oriented toward performance, and guided by principles. And high-performing companies are supported by a cohesive view of their human capital and a common talent strategy.

The ability to manage a global workforce is a crucial part of business strategy for companies today. As companies grow and enter new markets, an organization's success depends on a focused human capital strategy, to foster the most valuable asset - their people.

To build willingness, leaders must create communities that share a sense of purpose, values and rules of engagement⁵.

These places could be called Identity workspaces or talent hubs, places that shape people's identities and work ethics, influencing working cultures, and casting their shadow long beyond the people's membership within them. Science and technology parks can be considered as these spaces, which gather together a large amount of talented people shaping their own identity. Spaces where talent arises and which power innovation and economic growth.

Moreover, the high level of training and talent found in the Technology Parks and in Basque society is a competitive advantage for the regions in which the Parks are located, serving to increase the economy, the development of the firms and organisations in the area, and acting as a magnet for keeping the attraction of talent in the present and in the future.

TALENT AS THE MAIN DRIVER OF REGIONAL COMPETITIVENESS: THE CASE OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY

In the knowledge economy, talent will be the main driver of prosperity⁶. The intelligent management of talent will therefore be decisive in determining the level of competitiveness, prosperity and welfare of a region, for advancing towards the creation of the so-called poles of knowledge or talent hubs. Talent will gradually tend to cluster in an organised manner in those

regions with a high quality of life, regions which promote equilibrium between personal and professional life, and which offer opportunities for professional development for highly qualified people.

On this basis, the Basque Country has, in recent years, opted to move along the pathway of talent, promoting different innovative programmes and actions, placing the region at the head of the European leaders in talent management with a very high level and quality of life.

After all the efforts and commitment to this challenge in the last years, the Basque Country is now the leading developed pole in Southern Europe, with a GDP per capita of 129% of the European average; a regional level of human development comparable to that of the most advanced countries such as Finland or Austria; a high weight of industry, of 23.6% of the GDP; and a priority and continued cluster policy since 1991 with 11 strategic clusters.

It is also a successful wager on R+D+I, that is, a resolute wager to support R+D+I and transfer knowledge to business. Over 120 agents working in an integrated and coordinated fashion, most of them located in the Basque Country Technology Parks:

- Research activity of the 4 Universities
- 9 Basic and Excellence Research Centres (BERC)
- 4 Cooperative Research Centres (CIC)
- 2 Technological corporations that include 10 benchmark Technological Centres
- 5 Technology Sectoral Centres
- 3 Public Research Centres
- Business R&D Units
- Health area R&D Units
- Science-Technology Parks
- Business and Innovation Centres
- Other relevant stakeholders that support innovation

Training and excellence of people is the key strategic factor for the competitiveness of the Basque Country, with 4 internationally prestigious universities. It gathers together over 60,000 university students and 23.000 vocational training students.

So it can be seen how the efforts made in this field in the Basque Country are already reaping the rewards. In the latest publication from the European Commission, **the Regional Innovation Scoreboard⁷ has highlighted the Basque Country** as a “remarkable” innovative region, that is, **as an innovation follower**, standing out from the general tendency in Spain, as the most innovative region in the country (together with Navarre), and excelling in all the indicators. The report places the Basque Country at the level of other prosperous European cities and regions, and it highlights it as the region in the whole of Spain with the greatest volume of individuals with tertiary education, contributing to its position as a territory that gathers talent.

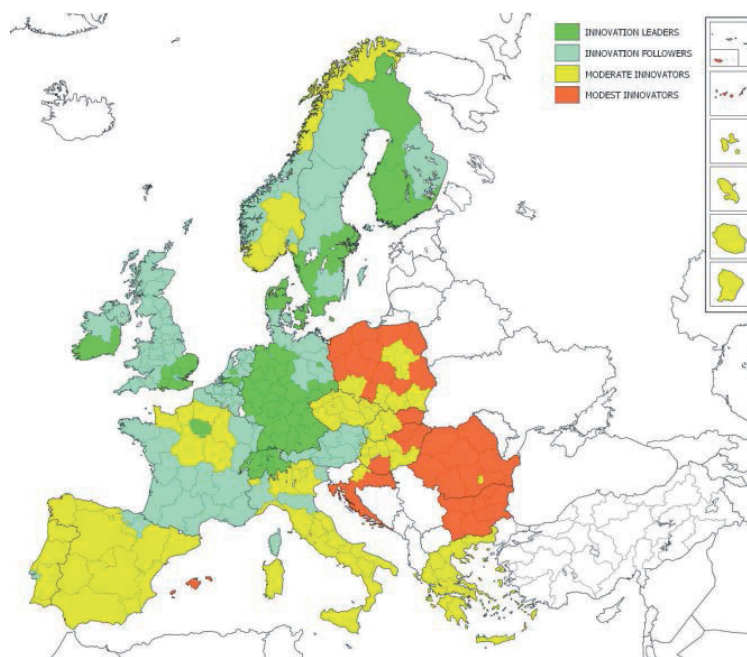


Figure 1: Regional performance groups RIS 2014
Source: European Commission: Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2014.

After all these efforts we can say today that the **Basque Country has become one of the most prosperous regions in Europe**, and the Science and Technology Parks have played a key role to position the Basque Country in the talent race.

Technology Parks as catalysts of talent in the Basque Country

Science and technology parks play a key role in the economic development of their environment through a dynamic and innovative mix of policies, programmes, quality space and facilities and high value-added services⁸. Technology parks act as reference spaces in which talent and knowledge arise.

Apart from the well-known role in managing the flow of knowledge and technology between science and technology agents, the role they play in providing environments that enhance talent must be underlined.

In the Basque Country, the Technology Parks Network is made up of the Technology Parks of Alava, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa. **3 initiatives** with a total of **6 campuses** distributed strategically in the **3 territories** that make up the Basque Autonomous Community and in which, under a **coordinated management**, Business, Research Centres, Technological Centres and innovation promoter stakeholders are located.

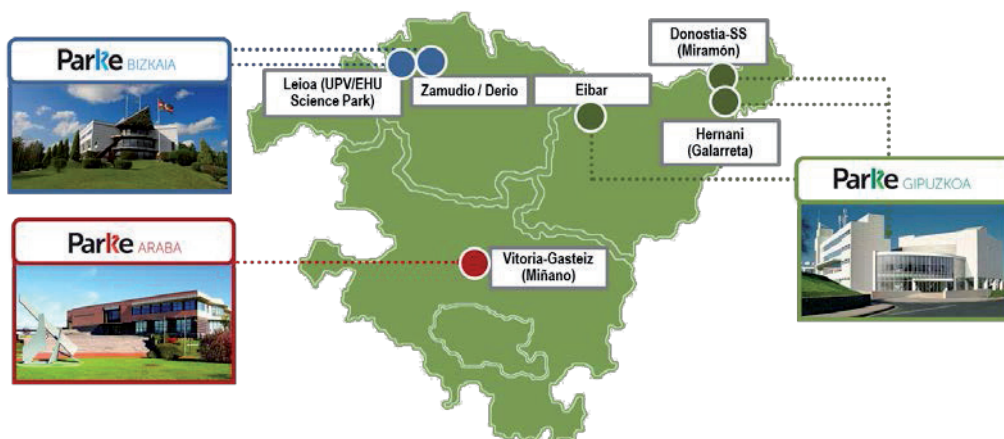


Figure 2: Basque Country Science and Technology Parks. Own source.

The figures below offer an idea of the impact of the Technology Parks on the region in which they are located. Thus, the activities related to the Science and Technology Parks in the Basque Country entail:

- 31% of the total expenditure on R&D in the Basque Country
- 42% of the total business expenditure on R&D in the Basque Country
- Companies earmark 12% of their turnover for R&D

But what makes then the Parks special and what is their competitive advantage with respect to other locations for establishing themselves as true centres of talent?

The Technology Parks have known how to draw together in one single space the leading stakeholders of science, technology and innovation in the Basque Country; working closely, and in many cases signing collaboration agreements with the leading entities responsible for training future talent such as universities, training centres, etc. which are also represented in the Parks; and collaborating with and welcoming the leading stakeholders responsible for the attraction, retention and engagement of talent in the Basque Country with whom they collaborate and maintain close relations.

In addition, the links that the Parks maintain with the leading stakeholders in the Basque system for science, technology and innovation, contribute to reinforcing the position of the Parks as an agent of reference for gathering talent in the Basque Country, contributing moreover to improving competitiveness in the region.

To include the Parks and the Basque Country among these talent-gathering spaces and to be at the level of the leading regions in terms of human capital and talent management, there have been numerous actions in which the Basque Country Technology Parks have participated, placing their spaces of excellence at the disposal of the talent; promoting an awareness and rapprochement of young talent and highly qualified profiles to the Technology Parks and to science, technology and innovation through agreements with the leading stakeholders from the Basque Country world of education; and participating and collaborating with the leading institutions of reference in talent management in the Basque Country adapting the actions carried out, as described below:

1. SPACES OF EXCELLENCE AND HIGH ADDED VALUE: A COMMITMENT TO TALENT

In the Basque Country, the Basque Technology Parks are a key instrument in the Industrial Development and Innovation policies of the Basque Country. They gather together 429 firms, technology centres, promoters of innovation and a good selection of the most advanced and cutting-edge organisations in the Basque Country.

The Technology Parks are major gatherers of talent in the Basque Country. Of the nearly 16,000 highly qualified employees at the Basque Parks, 1,095 hold a PhD and 46% are highly

qualified individuals⁹. They are also a place of reference for researchers from the most prominent industrial areas; a place where approximately 30% of the people devote their time to R&D&I.

Science and Technology Parks are spaces of excellence in innovation, hosting benchmark companies from innovative sectors with potential for development. This is why the main promoters that support business innovation and development and the main agents of the Basque science system, such as the Cooperative Research Centres, Business incubators, technology centres, clusters and business incubators, or universities, (to mention some), are present in the Basque Technology Parks.

Enterprises and agents located in the Technology Parks are surrounded by the best talent in the Basque Country. This is why the Technology Parks are the place of reference for both researchers who want to transfer their knowledge to society and for businesses who want to innovate in the Basque Country. Around 5000 people devoted to R&D and with a yearly average of 100 business projects in incubation.



Figure 3: Main promoters in the Basque science and technology system. Own source.

The great variety of promoters that support business innovation and development is as wide as the talent they gather together and their role in building leadership capital is undeniable.

All these agents include in their mission the reinforcement of the Basque system of science, technology and innovation, hence their role as gatherers of talent. Their ranks include highly qualified profiles, research excellence and recognised prestige, mobilising both national and international talent. Mostly situated in the Technology Parks, these agents work alongside leading institutions responsible for attracting, retaining and mobilising national and international talent in order to maintain positions of leadership in their areas of action.

All these agents work very closely and cooperate continuously to encourage relations between the university, technology centres and other agents and business, fostering the generation of new technology-based businesses and highly qualified jobs.

Although the type of events and the audiences may vary, numerous actions, conferences and training events take place in the Parks. Only last year in Bizkaia Science and Technology Park, there were more than 1331 events and conferences, attended by 28,535 people; all together, the Basque Technology Parks every year hold 1,786 conferences attended by more than 49,559 people to promote the development of the Park's human capital, foster Technology transfer and an approach to science, Technology and innovation.

2. COLLABORATION WITH EDUCATION CENTRES, UNIVERSITIES AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING CENTRES: A STRATEGY TO RAISE AWARENESS AND AWAKEN YOUNG TALENT

- **Collaboration with education centres (Primary and Secondary education):** The objective and role of the main activities promoted at this stage is to raise awareness and inspire young talent through visits and participation in training actions and programmes hosted in the Technology Park to inspire young talent.

The main reference at this stage is BTEK, the Technology Interpretation Centre located in Bizkaia Science and Technology Park, a space directed at students mainly aged from 14 to 18 years old for awakening scientific and technological vocations.

The Technology Interpretation Centre of the Bizkaia Technology Park, BTEK, has become a reference in the Basque Parks. Directed at young people in their final years of training, it offers a unique opportunity to learn about science and technology at first-hand and to awaken scientific and technological vocations. Furthermore, it encourages a rapprochement between schools, educational and training centres and the Park, and acts as a source of inspiration for fostering creativity and inspiration in the Park while also offering young people the opportunity to come into contact with science, technology and innovation from an early age. It receives approximately 4000 visitors every year.

BTEK is precisely the starting point for the Programme “Know in order to choose” promoted by a local institution which introduces students and their families to the world of business and training in a fun and motivating way.

- **Collaboration with Universities, Vocational training centres and other education institutions:** to serve as inspiration and enable a rapprochement between training centres and the reality of business, the Park aims to take business reality to young talent.

This collaboration has been sealed with different collaboration agreements between the Parks and the leading universities in the Basque Country or Professional Training Centres located within the Park itself.

The objective of these actions is to promote a rapprochement between young people and talent and the business world of the Parks, using different mechanisms including guided and/or business visits, different practical experience programmes, grants or placements at businesses in the Parks or at their international offices.

A number of programmes currently under way and promoted by these organisations with which the Parks collaborate, offer an initial contact with the working world through placements ranging in length from a one-day immersion in an organisation at the Park to a six-month placement at the international office of a Basque business, to obtain a more thorough understanding of the business world and the opportunity of an initial international experience.

All these actions and programmes encourage contact between the worlds of business and education in top companies with a high technological component, and in a space of excellence as are the Technology Parks.

It is important to highlight that the Technology Park's collaboration with these stakeholders is not merely limited to activities aimed at young talent, but goes one step further, aiming to make the most of existing knowledge in universities and professional training centres, to continue training human capital from the Park and promoting their talent, by means of specific initiatives directed at the individuals working at the Park.

To inspire talent and the development of the Park's human capital in areas relating to Leadership, creativity or personnel management, among others, the Parks have organized numerous training actions on a regular basis. For example, through a

trailblazing and innovative initiative developed in collaboration with the University business school, called “AULA Parkes”.

This initiative promoted by the Technology Parks and the University of Deusto, is part of the activities jointly carried out since the signing of a collaboration agreement between the two institutions in 2013. The AULA Parkes Deusto covers different areas related to training, access to talent and to other spaces of collaboration and innovation for improving the skills of individuals in areas such as leadership, people management and the development of talent in the Parks.

This customised training, in its first two editions has managed to establish itself as a reference for customised training for top and middle management from firms in the Park and the surrounding areas.

3. COLLABORATION WITH LEADING ORGANISATIONS OF REFERENCE IN THE ATTRACTION AND RETENTION OF TALENT IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY: IKERBASQUE AND BIZKAIA TALENT

To excel in leadership capital the Technology Parks have made huge efforts to seed and take roots to build the talent concentration sought. But this is not a path that the Technology Parks have to follow alone, and because of this, they have cooperated and collaborated with the main institutions of the Basque Country aimed at attracting, and retaining talent, with which the Park collaborates: Ikerbasque and Bizkaia Talent, located in Bizkaia Science and Technology Park.

We will analyse each organisation in more detail, mentioning the main programmes on which they are working to attract, retain and engage highly qualified and talented people:

a. IKERBASQUE, EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Ikerbasque is an organisation promoted by the Basque Government to strengthen science in the Basque Country through programmes to attract and recruit researchers and to foster research, in cooperation with research centres and universities, while remaining committed to excellence.

Created in 2007, Ikerbasque, the Basque Foundation for Science, aims to contribute to the development of scientific research by attracting top researchers and restoring talent to contribute to the reinforcement of science in the Basque Country, establishing itself as a European reference of excellence in the field of research¹⁰.

The activities developed by Ikerbasque include two programmes¹¹ focussed on the attraction and engagement of young talent and highly qualified and experienced individuals called Research Fellows and Research Professors respectively.

Each of these programmes is described below:

- **Research Fellows** directed at young researchers with 2 to 7 years of post-doctoral experience, with outstanding CVs, international background and a promising scientific career. They are assigned to Basque Universities and research centres for a five-year period.
- **Research Professors** aimed at senior researchers with extensive research experience and leadership skills. They are assigned permanently to Basque universities and research centres;

Both programmes are two-fold: on the one hand, they attract people who are carrying out their research abroad, including local scientists who emigrated at some point in

their careers; and on the other hand, they offer opportunities to consolidate their trajectories to those who are currently researching in the Basque Country.

Since its launch in 2007, Ikerbasque's Research Professor Programme has established itself as a tool for attracting talent. In addition, in 2012 the Research Fellow programme was launched. This seeks to promote a source of young scientific talent to become the future leaders of the science system. Since then, the number of applications in both programs is higher at each call and candidates come from some of the world's most prestigious academic institutions.

Throughout the 2014-2017 period 100 new Research Fellows will be recruited, as well as 40 Research Professors, meaning that the number of researchers recruited by Ikerbasque will reach 300 by 2017, moment at which the research staff number will be stabilised. The table below shows the expected evolution of the personnel at Ikerbasque since its creation in 2007.

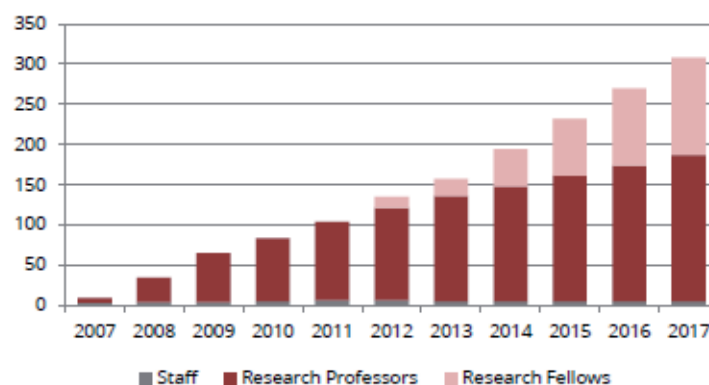


Figure 4: - Expected evolution of personnel at Ikerbasque.
Source: IKERBASQUE. Strategic Plan 2014-2017.

The activity developed by Ikerbasque, has contributed to consolidate the Basque Country as a European reference point for science. Ikerbasque is recognised at international level as an advanced research region, with Basque research groups at international level, where conditions are ripe for carrying out research of international scale.

Proof of this is that the European Commission has chosen Ikerbasque as one of the best European initiatives for the advancement of science among the more than 70 proposals presented from all over Europe.

b. BIZKAIA TALENT: ATTRACTION, CONNECTION AND RETENTION OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED PEOPLE

Located in the Bizkaia Science and Technology Park, Bizkaia Talent seeks to promote and improve the most important factor in the development of any region: human capital. In so doing, it takes action to attract talent with the help of the leading companies and universities in the Basque Country.

Bizkaia Talent emerged in 2005 powered by the Bizkaia Provincial council, as an instrument to harness the drivers and overcome barriers for an adequate ecosystem for talent to foster and facilitate the implementation of the necessary conditions for attracting, connecting and retaining highly qualified people in the areas of knowledge and innovation in Bizkaia and in the Basque Country. The main stakeholders of Bizkaia Talent include key universities, business and science and technology centres in the Basque Country, joining together the Basque academy and industry.

To achieve their goals, they promote Bizkaia and the Basque Country as a whole as a brand among professionals, creative people and researchers in areas of strategic interest to Bizkaia; they offer services and programmes aimed at identifying, contacting and recruiting highly qualified people to work in organisations and carry out projects in Bizkaia; they create and develop social networks and communities in line with their organisation's strategy; and Coordinate and facilitate contact with public or private organisations in actions that share their mission's principles¹².

A decade after its foundation **Bizkaia Talent is a leading model in Europe regarding mobility and the professional and personal support of highly qualified people**. They are striving to become leaders in the Basque Country and a model in Europe for the management of highly qualified people in the fields of science, technology and business.

In an attempt to boost the circulation of talent, Bizkaia Talent has developed a set of services aimed at highly qualified profiles. From all the services provided¹³, we highlight the following included below:

- **International networking seminars:** a service to contact Basque researchers and highly qualified professionals who are working in third countries, with the aim of learning about the present and future situation of strategic sectors and the possibility of developing a professional career or work in projects carried out in the Basque country.
- **Relocation Service and 'Be Basque dual career':** This Service, as the Local Contact Point of the Mobility Network, EURAXESS, of the European Commission, aims to inform and advise highly qualified professionals, researchers and their families settled in Bizkaia (Basque Country) about administrative matters, legal procedures, and supporting the entities when negotiating with highly qualified professionals as part of the contract. Pioneer in the Basque Country and Spain, the Be Basque dual Career service aims to facilitate access to a professional career for highly qualified individuals and their spouses, helping them with the different processes and offering the placement services they may require on accepting a new professional challenge in the Basque Country. It is also important to mention that Be Basque Dual Career is the only program in Europe working in three axes: career guidance, entrepreneurship and volunteering. Bizkaia Science and Technology Park is part of this program through a cooperation agreement with Bizkaia Talent.
- **Talentia services:** Promoted by Bizkaia Talent jointly with the University of Deusto, the University of the Basque Country and the University of Mondragon, the Talentia programme is targeted at the students with the highest potential at the three Basque universities, offering advice and support for insertion in the labour market, career development and engagement with the scientific, technological and business reality around them. Talentia is targeted at undergraduate seniors with an excellent academic record and other skills identified and evaluated by university authorities.
- **Professional support services:** providing a personnel search service whose purpose is to meet the needs of companies and organisations in Bizkaia that are interested in recruiting highly qualified people. The service is characterised by an improved capacity to find highly qualified personnel and researchers, in cooperation and collaboration with a variety of national and international institutions.

Other services would include financial aid, “showing & Knowing” Bizkaia service, or participations in fairs and events.

Recently, the **Global Talent Competitiveness Index¹⁴**, the leading global reference which measures a country's ability to attract talent, prepared by the renowned business school, INSEAD, Adecco and the Human Capital Leadership Institute, accorded **special recognition to the Basque Country and to Bizkaia talent as an example of innovative regional policies for the management of talent mobility at global level in 2015**.

Both institutions, Ikerbasque and Bizkaia Talent, belong to Euraxess, the European portal for researchers in motion. The Euraxess European Network of service centres tries to provide information and advice to those researchers moving from/within Europe; regardless of their nationality or the type of programme they are joining, in order to help them overcome mobility barriers. Highly qualified professionals coming to work in the Basque Country and/or an organization thinking of recruiting such a person, can obtain useful information about accommodation, visas, administrative and social-cultural aspects, grants and vacancies.

The diversification and specialisation required by today's companies and organisations means recruiting highly qualified staff for developing productive activities and designing new lines of business, or very specific investigations.

Aware of the power of science, technology and innovation as main drivers for competitiveness and economic growth, public institutions in the Basque Country have strongly backed business innovation. These two institutions, Ikerbasque and Bizkaia talent have become a reference in talent management in the Basque Country, recognized internationally by their crucial role boosting regional competitiveness through highly qualified people and talent management.

Since the start-up of these two institutions, the organisations and leading stakeholders of science, technology and innovation at the Technology Parks have been working in close collaboration with both institutions, to search for highly qualified profiles focussed on very specific fields of research or on cutting-edge technologies required by the agents of science, technology and innovation.

Therefore, in addition to the close collaboration between both institutions and the Technology Parks, there are many beneficiaries of these programmes who go on to join the top research centres and organisations at the Technology Parks, including universities, CICs (Cooperative Research Centres), or BERCs (Basic Research and Excellence Centres), in order to continue their professional careers and maintain leadership in these spaces.

The circle of talent is therefore closed, through collaboration between the Technology Parks, the leading stakeholders in the Basque Country and the worlds of education, business and technology.

Conclusions

People are the driving force behind regional growth. That is why places with a higher number of talented people grow faster and are better able to attract more talent.

Only a few decades ago it was difficult to imagine the incredible progress and results that have since been achieved by the Basque Country in recent years. However, these results are not coincidental but are due to the institutional backing, constancy, dedication and collaboration of all the stakeholders in the Basque Country in contributing to placing the Basque Country among the most competitive regions in Europe and the Technology Parks as poles gathering talent throughout the Basque Country.

Enterprises and agents located in the Technology Parks are surrounded by the best talent in the Basque Country. This is why the Technology Parks are the place of reference for both researchers who want to transfer their knowledge to society and for businesses who want to innovate in the Basque Country.

Since their creation, the Basque Technology Parks have been committed to the promotion of talent and the projection of their human capital to power innovation and economic growth in the Basque Country.

The location in the Technology Parks of the leading cutting-edge businesses and of a high content of R&D&I has generated a unique ecosystem in the Basque Country, as a gatherer of companies with a high R&D content and of reference in human capital, acting as a force of attraction for national and international talent.

To include the Parks and the Basque Country among these talent-gathering spaces and to be at the level of the leading regions in terms of human capital and talent management, there have been numerous actions in which the Basque Country Technology Parks have participated adapting the actions carried out:

- placing their spaces of excellence at the disposal of the talent;
- promoting an awareness and rapprochement of young talent and highly qualified profiles to the Technology Parks and to science, technology and innovation through agreements with the leading stakeholders from the Basque Country world of education;
- participating and collaborating with the leading institutions of reference in talent management in the Basque Country -Ikerbasque and Bizkaia Talent-.

With the above measures, the parks have fulfilled their role as catalysts of the talent, by stimulating innovation, entrepreneurship and excellence in relational capital in the Basque Country.

These experiences have permitted the construction of bridges between the worlds of education, science and technology and business, the promotion of human capital in the organisations and the strengthening of connections between the different agents operating in the Basque Country and at international level.

This has all contributed to boosting the virtuous circle of Talent in the Basque Country, because talent inspires and attracts talent. And studies have shown that the Pygmalion effect also applies to talent management.

The circle of talent is therefore closed, through collaboration between the Technology Parks, the leading stakeholders in the Basque Country and the worlds of education, business and technology.

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