

SUMMER COURSE 2018

“EL IMPACTO SOCIAL DE LA ACTIVIDAD UNIVERSITARIA”



On the 5th and 6th of July 2018, Unibasq organised a summer course in the frame of the Summer Courses that UPV/EHU offers annually. ([Programme](#))

Coordinated by the Deputy Director of Unibasq, Aitor Zurimendi Isla, and opened by Director Eva Ferreira, this year's edition reunited speakers, both national and international, in an event held in San Sebastian's Palacio Miramar.

Under the title **“El impacto social de la actividad universitaria”** (“Social Impact of the University Activities”), the main objectives of the course were the following:

- Identify and show evidence of the areas in which university activities have a beneficial impact: industrial and economic development, social well-being and co-existence, culture, environment, etc.
- Reflect on the convenience, viability and need for social impact measurement of the university activities for both the university system and the general public.
- Know and analyse the efficiency of the evaluation systems for the impact of the activities of the university in society, establishing a comparison with the European and international methods.

- Identify evidences, activities and indicators that may help assess the social impact of the university activities, both at institutional (university or teaching centre) and at individual (teaching and research staff) levels.

Setting the tone and content of the Summer Course, Eva Ferreira opened the session with her presentation ***“¿Por qué y para qué es bueno medir el impacto social de la actividad universitaria?”*** (***“Why and what for measure the social impact of university activities?”***)



The first presentation ***“Ámbitos en los que impacta la actividad universitaria: intensidad cuantitativa y cualitativa”*** (***“Scope of the impact of university activities: quantitative and qualitative intensity”***), was jointly conducted by:

Eva Caballero Domínguez, journalist, EITB

Eduardo Aréchaga Cilleruelo, General Manager, Confebask

Juan Manuel Balerdi Urdanpilleta, director, Euskal Fondoa

Journalist Eva Caballero started to explain there is a raising interest in topics relating science and technology, particularly those concerning health and medicine. However, the tendency decreases for older ranges of public, and the gender gap is visible, in spite of a decrease of this gap in the last few years.

Regarding the lack of interest, Caballero said it depends on the topics, varies according to professional background and is in general rather positive in the eye of society.

To increase social interest in scientific research, Caballero introduced some projects that have been around in educational centres, such as Semana de la Ciencia, Zientzia Azoka or Ciencia en las Ondas, which is a radio programme with a raising audience.

In addition to these projects, she also mentioned some events that the public has vastly attended, such as Naukas in Bilbao, or the Bizkaia Zientzia Plaza that will take place in September, with the intention of transcending the

capital cities, arriving in smaller towns such as Ondarroa, Getxo or Igorre, with the Jakindurie! Mundue errako dau! Bertsozientzia.

The influence of the internet era was also highlighted, as it has become the new vehicle for the disclosure of scientific knowledge, having taken over the role of the television or the written press for this purpose, although the underlying danger needs to be kept in mind, as the source of the publications that appear in social media is not always reliable or unbiased.

Caballero explained the many difficulties finding media communicators for scientific contents, most often provoked by the scarcity of economic resources, the precarisation of the working conditions, sensationalism-seeking media, commercial interest behind press-releases, and lately, fake news.

Among the areas of improvement, she underlined that interviews should be well-prepared ahead, with a close questionnaire that enables both the interviewer and the interviewee to create a fluid conversation and the answers to be precise, concise and efficient for the general public, and not the scientific community.

“Enthusiasm is contagious” were her words of wisdom to close the presentation.

General Manager of Confebask, Eduardo Aréchaga Cilleruelo, presented **“Ámbitos en los que impacta la actividad universitaria: intensidad cuantitativa y cualitativa”**. (**“Areas of impact of the university activities: quantitative and qualitative intensity”**)

Aréchaga introduced “Strength Ideas” such as **Entrepreneurial vision of the role of university**, which demands training in excellence, balance between basic research and applied research and most of all, knowledge transfer that encourages interaction between enterprises and academics and meets the demands for continuous improvement and boosts the creation of new technology-based businesses.

He also pointed out that the entrepreneurial world should be considered a client of the universities, as they demand people with high profiles and attitudes, research and knowledge transfer.

Another idea that was signalled, was that the cooperation between the universities and the entrepreneurial world is not as significant as it is in the rest of the State, this cooperation being vital.

In his opinion, the First Strategy University-Business, was a milestone that forged the key word COOPERATION, that later reflected in the creation of the new **work-based learning degrees**, that should be implemented based on three areas: University-business, university-vocational training, and university-university.

As for future challenges, Aréchaga divided them in three branches:

- People → reach the highest number of graduates in STEM, higher drive to entrepreneurial values, reach commitment to continuous training for employees.
- Teaching staff → increase in the number of work-based learning degrees, progressive raise in the cooperation between universities and vocational training, and curricular content focus on the demands of the entrepreneurial world.
- Research and knowledge transfer → RISS 3-oriented: energy, advanced manufacturing and bio-health, and university-business cooperation are the keystones.

Manuel Balerdi Urdanpilleta, Director of **Euskal Fondoa**, was the last speaker of this first session, speaking about practicum through cooperation in NGO's.

As an instance of these practicum, he went over what is being done and achieved in the projects of his organisation. Projects such as [Gaztenpatia](#), promoting empathy and solidarity between the Basque youth, and the young population of those countries they cooperate with, through their practicum and End of Degree Projects which are part of the development projects of Euskal Fondoa in Central-America.

Attendants were given the opportunity to watch a [video](#) that illustrated the activities of the cooperation office of the UPV/EHU, that has been operating for three school-years, and aims to bring awareness in future professionals.

One of the main objectives is to teach students to communicate and disseminate contents through social media, through which they will also be assessed.

Balerdi also presented [El Oasis de la Memoria](#), a Project in cooperation with significative professionals from different backgrounds, that has created a documented database that may establish jurisprudence in an attempt to bring certain questions, such as the Saharan case, before international justice.

After the presentations, a round of questions brought the following questions to the table:

The first question to be debated was relating the low volume of economic implication in the Basque Country, and what steps should be pursued to change this reality, to which the answer was that in the Basque Country the presence of the Technology Parks have historically compensated this situation, the focus nowadays being in the achievement of a higher number of graduates to provide the personnel required to maintain them if we don't want to have to continue importing talent from other parts of the state, and the re-qualification of unemployed people so that they can return to the active work-life.

Salustiano Mato, furthermore, reminded that the Basque System is rather strong and presented the question of the STEM world showing symptoms of the loss of values in general society, and the role-gap issue, a point in which all the presenters agreed that evolution was not showing a positive growth.

The incorporation of women to different professional fields, does not show any growing figures, which is another source of concern, to which Eva Caballero added that when asking students about the reasons behind this, they answered that certain careers "don't suit females", who are more affected by the influence of mainstream ideas from social groups. Caballero appreciated the strong personality of those not easily influenced by these pressures.

Eva Ferreira reinforced the positive impact the presence of women could have in research activities and with the implementation of the new work-based learning degrees, although Ester Domínguez reminded the audience that nowadays the main activity of doctors is research due to the lack of entrepreneurial demand for them.

As a final thought, it was mentioned that doctorates— in the same manner that master's degrees are— should be more connected to the world of business, and universities should establish what their purpose is.

The next speaker was professor **Teresa Torres Soler**, from Universidad de Lleida, who spoke about the impact of the demands of universities. Torres presented data corresponding Universidad de Lleida, that supported the different levels of impact of the activities of universities, what generates expenses and demands both directly and indirectly.

Salustiano Mato in his presentation *“Prestigiar, impulsar y premiar la transferencia de conocimiento” (“Enhancing Prestige, boosting and awarding knowledge transference”)*, spoke about what is knowledge transference, and proposed manners to boost it through prestige; the knowledge acquired should be shared with universities, companies and work-generating engines, public institutions, and above all, general society. In his opinion, if done correctly, it will bring about economic and employment growth, improvement of public policies, and social projection. Knowledge economy is at the core of capital subjected to knowledge.

Regarding how to measure and assess transference, he believes that it should lie in a qualitative measurement more than in a quantitative one, as indicators are sometimes unrelated to outcome.

He also mentioned that there is a vast culture of cost control, although the same cannot be said about the generation of profit.

University, in Mato’s opinion, should be an engine for culture-generation, development, growth and innovation for all fields, and not simply for academic purposes.

To put an end to his presentation, he said that economic data are important, but we should have a more humanistic approach to our activities.

The point about indicators was later retaken in the questions from the audience, mentioning that they are “evil” and should be handled with care, relativizing them in order to obtain a less distorted view of each of the universities, and not focusing on the competence between universities to get a higher position in rankings, but to make the best of the possibilities for continuous improvement.

It was also brought to attention that with a decreasing number of students, the future is uncertain for some teaching



staff, that may have to seek other tasks, unless universities are able to reach higher positions in ranking to gain more students.

The future is believed to be in the ability to become agents for social developers, and Mato strongly supports the idea of improvement of each university without falling for the game of competition with others.

The afternoon began with a **Round Table** that was opened with the introduction of the idea that individual contributions should be measured differently from those of institutions; what a single person does or contributes should be assessed qualitatively, in spite of the difficulties this entails, bearing in mind that the means each institution has available are very different, so the impact achieved is rather different.

The topic of impact in knowledge transference is believed to have a variable range of time to be measured, as many research activities cause impact in the long term, but not in the short term, therefore the role of the Agencies when dealing this topic should be different from the approach towards teaching activities.

It was also mentioned that each university should decide what to prioritise, and that different teachers react differently to the requirements for dissemination; there are several who have great teaching skills but do not want to pursue research activities, or take part in dissemination through media, school visits or university activities.

Indicators were again mentioned in the final thoughts, explaining that they could be a good start-point to establish a dialogue in order to unify criteria for the seventeen university models in the state, and to obtain a clearer picture of the present situation of the Spanish University.

Sessions on the 6th of July began with the presentation of Bencie Woll, an American–British linguist and scholar of sign language from UCL London, who spoke about the **History of research assessment: *The research assessment Exercise***.

Woll went over the development of assessment, explaining that one of the most significant things they had to overcome was reticence from the academic and research world.

She detailed the many different things to bear in mind regarding assessment, particularly when comparing institutions that have more resources, both economical and human to achieve better positions in rankings.

She also spoke about how impact achieved by research is not the same as academic impact, and explained that this impact is “an effect on, change or benefit to the economy society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life...”

To measure this impact, she provided five ways:

1. Instrumental impact
2. Conceptual
3. Capacity building impacts
4. Attitudinal or cultural
5. Enduring connectivity impacts

It is also important to mention that she proposed that knowledge exchange is about approach, mindset, personal qualities and research mission. The scope of action should be wider in nature and encouraging and support impact, network, acknowledge expertise, involving, flexible, understanding of policies, collaborative in research, with communities, proven and innovative methods need be used.

Amongst the most significant proposals from Woll, it should be underlined that she defended that to create impact, we should have a strategy beforehand that foresees who will benefit from it and how will they benefit and creates engagement.

In the final round of questions, she pointed out that an economic compensation to evaluators has made participation in these processes more attractive.



The second speaker of the morning was **Isabel Vidal Martínez**, from Universidad de Barcelona, president of Fundación CIES, who spoke about UNIBILITY Project, in her presentation ***“UNIBILITY Project- University meets Social Responsibility”***.

Vidal explained that the objectives of this project are:

- Enhance the commitment of universities in local communities
- Develop strategies how universities can increase their social responsibility actively on student and researcher level
- Develop practical service learning projects impacting the social environment
- Develop training material and train university management and students in “University Social Responsibility” (USR)
- Create learning networks between universities and local business, the environmental sector and the social sector

Four phases were implemented to achieve these objectives: creation of teaching resources, training of the administration and services staff, dialogue with companies and NGO’s, and dissemination phase.

The second presentation of the morning under the title *“Las actividades de repercusión y transferencia a la sociedad desarrolladas por las universidades del sistema universitario vasco”*–(*“Impact and transference to society activities of the universities of the Basque University System”*)– was conducted by:

- **Arturo Muga**, UPV/EHU. – Vice-rector for Technological development and Transfer.
- **Idoia Peñacoba Etxebarria**, Mondragon Unibertsitatea – General Secretary.
- **Cecilia Martínez Arellano**, Universidad de Deusto/ Deustuko unibertsitatea. – Director of the area for Social Responsibility of the University.

The three speakers agreed that collaborative models for research and knowledge exchange are vital, as it also is the growing demand for work-based learning in order to meet the requests of the business world and general society.

The participation of students and the improvement of competitiveness in companies were highlighted, together with the role of social media for the dissemination of the research activity.

A key point the three speakers reinforced, was that university should not be valued in a monetary manner, but as the provider of intangible values that cannot always be translated into revenue, but in the mid and long term provoke social improvement.

As for incentives for the teaching staff, the three universities agree that excellence should be rewarded, although the reward may not always be economic.



The closure of the course was done with a presentation of the perspective of the students, with representatives from the three universities of the Basque University System under the title "*La visión y participación del alumnado en las actividades de impacto social universitario*" ("The vision and participation of alumni in university activities that have a social impact")

- **Adrian Llorente Aginagalde** UPV/EHU – Doctorate student in Public Health.
- **Alex Abuin Yepes** UPV/EHU - Doctorate student in Computer Engineering.
- **Naiara Campo Alba** Mondragon Unibertsitatea – Master's degree student in Industrial Engineering.
- **Andrea Diéguez Vázquez** Universidad de Deusto - Master's degree student.

Students manifested that universities were not taking them into fair consideration, as the lack of articulate plans for the participation of students evidenced, although the representatives of the universities present did not agree, saying that the data about student participation was filed by campus, making the generalisation of the data hard to show.

It was also brought to attention that there was a higher interest in the expenses generated by their activities than in the impact they may have in society, pointing out that practicum was not appreciated as a whole, but only paying attention to those that entailed the generation of patents or income, having a certain predilection for those about technology, but not so for humanities. To this regard, students spoke about inclusive initiatives such as drama clubs, or fundraising activities, that offered a visibilisation of a sector of society, the empowerment of those relegated to lesser focus of attention, and the generation of social network.

Training combined with work experiences were highly valued by all students, who said this has a direct impact in society as it allows the acquisition of additional values that can not be learn in a classroom.

Finally, students mentioned the lack of a sharing point where they could partake of each other's ideas without having to generate an organisation, although they perceive that communication and dissemination of ideas is of vital importance.

In the final conclusions, students expressed a wish for specific recognition of their role in academic life and highlighted the value of training-working experiences and social labour.