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# «Society needs to have a founded opinion, whether on nuclear power, GM foods or yoghurts»

Juan Ignacio Pérez was awarded the Eusko Ikaskuntza-Laboral Kutxa prize for his «promotion of scientific culture in Basque society»

:: **PATRICIA RODRÍGUEZ**

**SAN SEBASTIÁN.** Promotion of scientific culture and knowledge transference to Basque society made Juan Ignacio Pérez, Professor at UPV/EHU, earn the 2019 Eusko Ikaskuntza-Laboral Kutxa award.

President of Eusko Ikaskuntza, Iñaki Dorronsoro, and Director of Communications for Laboral Kutxa, Marije Etxaniz, made known the award-winner of the annual prize to the best curriculum in Humanities, Culture, Arts and Social Sciences, consisting in 20,000 Euros, which went to Juan Ignacio Pérez Iglesias (Salamanca, 1960). As it was the 25<sup>th</sup> edition of this award, a second prize was awarded to the best project presented by youths in the same fields, a prize that was awarded to Aizpea Atxa.

The Jury counted with members of the six universities of the Basque Country and Navarre, together with representatives of Eusko Ikakuntza and Laboral Kutxa, unanimously agreeing to award Juan Ignacio Pérez, among the 13 candidates, for his «dedication to promoting scientific culture, and for his role in bringing university closer to society. He has developed a critical regard that empowers society and rises its knowledge, a crucial condition for a healthy and qualitative democracy». In the same lines, the Jury has praised his work «in favour of the use of the Basque Language at University», highlighting at the same time his «participation in media in scientific dissemination spaces and his collaborations in digital media, blogs, and social networks».

Juan Ignacio Pérez's career is closely linked to UPV/EHU. Researcher and Lecturer in Physiology since 1985 and Professor since 1999. He has held several positions of pre-eminence at UPV/EHU between 1998 and 2009, amongst which the Chancellorship of UPV/EHU between 2004 and 2008.

On a telephone interview, Pérez expressed being «happy» about this recognition to his career in this field, as he «has spent his last ten years devoted to it» through different projects such as the Culture Chair that he started in 2004



Juan Ignacio Pérez. :: dv

and which is today «a reference» in scientific dissemination.

«We are reaching people, and that is what matters. We live in a society where science and technology are very important, but we sometimes are Lacking the knowledge to make good decisions»

Along these lines, he quotes Carl Sagan who stated that «the fact of the existence of lack of scientific and technological knowledge in a society where science and technology were of such importance, is the best recipe for disaster». Therefore, Pérez insists on «putting all his efforts into reaching people and providing the tools for society to build a founded opinion whether on nuclear power, GM foods or yogurts. Sometimes we are not aware that in personal decisions there are science and knowledge involved. Nobody can know a lot about everything, but we can have a sufficiently critical mind to compare information».

**Gazte Sari**

On the other hand, the first edition of the Eusko Ikaskuntza-Laboral Kutxa Gazte award , consisting in 6.000Euros, and addressed to individual or collective projects of people under 35, was awarded to Aizpea de Atxa, an artist from Navarre, for her project `InpostuRA´, a performance that, as the members of the jury appreciated, «proposes a dynamic, interactive, and innovative reflection on the question `Who am I?´».

From the 43 candidatures presented, Atxa received the award for her project that presented a reflection of «a society affected by advertisements and social networks, where our image has become our biggest source of concern».

21-year-old Aizpea de Atxa is in her third year of the Degree in Arts, and her work `Gorputzak´ (Bodies) was awarded the second prize in the Encounters of Young Arts in Navarre 2018.

The award ceremony will be held this summer, in a date not yet chosen.