

Over the last few days we have been able to listen to the different contributions and papers within this fifth international congress and see that offering solutions for the consequences of generational change-over, developing innovation in companies and specifically in SMEs, alleviating the scarcity of qualified workforce through vocational training centres and carrying out common projects between small companies and these vocational training centres have to be prioritised if we wish to maintain the level of our economy, our companies' competitiveness and our society's wellbeing.

In order to close this Congress, I am just briefly going to offer you a series of conclusions.

The way in which science, technology, the economy and society in general is changing is surprising to say the least. Our new way of living, forming relationships, working, communicating, accessing information and knowledge opens up endless new possibilities, unthinkable until now, although at same time, they also create a series of doubts and uncertainties leading to risks in a significantly complex situation.

This complexity arises in competing from our productive sectors, assuming the speed that the different technologies are evolving, understanding important scientific progress and living in a society which is going to increasingly demand a higher level of knowledge. This knowledge has to let us move through this increasingly complicated and, above all, different world.

Ten years ago, we started to perceive an important change which involved the concept of society moving from an industrial model based mainly on technology to the new information and communication society. This change has brought about a real revolution and its application to daily life, the use of these technologies and the needs which have emerged at the same time mean people have had to operate differently. It has made us see the need to take a further step along the path to progress, transforming this information and

communication society into a new knowledge society, a trained society, with critical meaning, capability to learn to live together, to build relations, to learn, to do and, with the right training, to be competitive in different fields.

Nevertheless the situation is currently taking fast unexpected turns, as a new economy develops and the different productive sectors evolve meaning that our companies have to fight, consolidate themselves and survive in a field where competitiveness is completely open and hard fought.

Responding appropriately to this competitiveness obliges us to introduce new changes and transform ourselves into a society which assumes innovation as a cultural and effectively dominating fact, when faced with a new state of affairs. Innovation is going to be an obligatory staple in our day to day life, because innovating will be a concept which is strongly linked to any process of change, evolution and development.

Now more than ever, vocational training is acquiring strategic importance in terms of competitiveness and progress in our companies and improving our professionals' skills. The prosperity of more advanced countries, their competitive economies and the efficacy of their productive structures depend increasingly on the level of training its human resources receive and that this training can be permanently updated. This statement takes on possibly ever greater importance in the Basque Country, where our human resources are possibly our only and most important natural resource.

In this respect, instead of maintaining a defensive attitude against the possible consequences of a reasonably complex situation, as technological innovation progresses, vocational training must start adopting the necessary measures to make the most of this boost and the wide range of possibilities which these technologies are going to provide, both in teaching-learning processes and in terms of management and organisation, communication and access to information.

By its very nature, vocational training is directly implicated and committed to knowledge, development and applying innovation in different fields, prioritising

technological innovation for training contents, as well as the consequent effects on professional qualifications. You just can't beat running tasks properly and attaining targets which incorporate innovation culture into the training task with a specific emphasis on learning processes.

However, just innovating means we need to work differently, incorporating other goals and targets, organising differently, with a modern vision of the future and the need to look for alternative paths. These new ways should be supported by collaborative work and cooperation among people and organisations, but above all between centres and companies. Collaboration between professional training centres and companies in the Basque Country is a practice which has already built up solid foundations and a broad tradition. These joint projects have basically involved training students in production centres and in certain service exchanges, implemented both by training centres, particularly working with SMEs, and by companies which have specified these services, mainly by providing equipment.

It is essential for these projects to multiply, so as to make the most of all the work done so far and guarantee the chance to create dynamic systems which can prosper in changing environments. This gives us reasonable assurance that training, qualification, productive sectors and the job market are progressing and are being coordinated along the right path.

But if the centres have to change and training must evolve, it is also transcendental to highlight the importance of teaching staff and how they should evolve to incorporate innovation, the new knowledge society and learning. This new type of society requires a very creative type of trainer, who not only uses their knowledge to teach and apply, but also and, above all, uses their know-how to create. Until recently, knowledge was used as a basis to develop and apply technology although now the key technology is the knowledge itself. Teaching staff should be evolving towards a profile targeting people who use their knowledge and experience creatively, who are capable of learning from their experience, who work alongside their colleagues and who are capable of continuing innovating to improve their organisation's results.

However, innovating requires work to be done differently. Although we are aware of having done things properly, the changes and the fast evolution of an ever-changing society and an increasingly globalised economy obliges us to adapt to constant changes, with vocational training centres which, whilst providing deep rooted and traditional values, become agile, lively, dynamic and creative organisations. It will be the type of intelligent, open and familiar organisation which learns, teaches and shares, providing new ideas and the feeling of participating in an exciting future project. Fast-acting centres which are capable of making decisions, aiming to create value through joint projects, which solve problems in advance and assume that a static organisation will never be able to provide the right answers in a changing environment.

In vocational training, innovation must be led by the people implicated in it. It needs people who are capable of disassociating themselves from age-old principles, capable of making constructive criticism, free from built-up bureaucratic prejudices, with a reasonable non-conformist attitude and the capability to think, create, provide and apply ideas from daily life based on an open innovating attitude capable of rectifying and evolving at the right time.

And for all this to really happen and to be assumed as essential and positive and accepted as an appropriate response to new, present and future challenges, we need to make this new situation easy to understand, assume and above all use and apply, searching for a new and efficient way of working.

We also have to be conscious that we are in the process of conceiving a new culture, a digital culture which has created a new way of working, communicating with each other and forming relationships, where an enormous range of possibilities will open up for us which will make us develop other forms of understanding, learning and will open up the path for us to transform concepts which seem impossible right now.

Population aging is also an unavoidable fact which is causing important changes in all social fields and which has become a worrying issue, although

society in general finds it hard to see what the aging issue really means or understand its consequences. Living longer and in better conditions allows us to link aging with the job market through what is already known as active aging.

However, this is not enough. We have to design, establish and develop a new context which allows us to apply a new replacement strategy. We have to attract professionals from other places, find new active population collectives in other countries and autonomous communities, manage immigration from new perspectives, with good organisation and information, selecting immigrant workers in their home countries and completing and adapting their training when they reach their destination.

Women should participate much more in professional functions and developments which have barely been recognised for them up to now, and companies must change their vision to a large extent and reflect and match contracts to the required levels establishing appropriate salaries. The trade unions must also work on agreements from a new, flexible vision with perspectives for an unstable future but with immense possibilities for development.

Administrations must look for different structural changes, facilitate necessary economic aid and look for greater flexibility and efficacy in training.

Youth guidance must also improve and transform itself as a matter of urgency. University is no longer the panacea of social status. Studying any old thing and then sorting yourself out with a job is going to be increasingly complicated. Matching qualifications with occupational fields must be increasingly adapted and there will be an essential need for professionals' knowledge to fit the company demand. Providing clear, exact and effective guidance is a fundamental challenge for the educational system and work field.

And all this means that, to a large extent, vocational training is situated strategically, with centres which must work on applied innovation, becoming leading centres with a sense of shared responsibility, increasing cooperation

with companies and developing their capacity to modify their behaviour and apply regular changes.

As you can see, these are many ways to try and alleviate a close-to-home problem which generates uncertainties but which also opens up great possibilities.

I would like to offer my most sincere thanks for your participation in this congress and I wish you all the best for the future.

And that closes the .....