

NanoBasque Strategy: *Basque Country's BIG commitment to the very small*

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The commitment of the Basque Government's Department of Industry, Innovation, Trade and Tourism to nanoscience, micro and nanotechnology as a means of diversifying the industrial framework became clear several years ago and was confirmed with the official launch of the nanoBasque Strategy and the creation of an agency, namely the nanoBasque Agency at Spri, dedicated specifically to the roll-out of this strategy.

The incorporation of nanoscience, micro and nanotechnology as a strategic area for industrial diversification in terms of the Basque Country's science, technology and innovation policies was undertaken with two main goals: to exploit the huge potential applications of these technologies in almost every industrial sector in the Basque Country, especially the car industry, aeronautics, energy, electronics, telecommunications, machinery/tools, steel, metallurgy and household appliances, and to promote the creation of new technology companies with the express purpose of taking full advantage of applications based on such technologies.

The first roll-out phase of this strategy involved laying its foundations with a significant public investment in knowledge generation, basically by creation of the cooperative research centres CIC microGUNE and CIC nanoGUNE. The increasingly important participation of companies together with science/technology agents in R+D projects in these fields, the launch of a support system for the development of new business projects, with the creation of a nanoincubator, and the recently launched initiative, EHS Advance, the Competence Centre for Environment, Health and Safety issues that will support Basque companies in the safe incorporation of nanomaterials in their products and processes, are a clear response to the business development and revitalisation actions proposed in this strategy.

Although it is still too early to be able to analyse its evolution, the scientific and corporate progress achieved in the Basque Country in the fields of nanoscience, micro and nanotechnology suggests that the region's scientific/ technological and corporate capabilities are moving in the right direction towards the stated objectives, such as greater private R+D investment in these fields, an increased technological intensity of the Basque industrial framework and the generation of a greater competitive advantage in the Basque Innovation System.

There are currently 180 companies working in the field of micro- and/or nanotechnology in the Basque Country. The cross-over nature of these technologies is reflected in the identification of companies from more than 15 different industrial sectors, the majority of which have high growth perspectives. Thus, the activity in intermediate sectors such as steel, metallurgy and metallic products, or final sectors such as the automotive industry, health and pharmaceuticals, should be highlighted.

What really gives value to this complete system of research centres, companies and organizations in the Basque Country is its constant coordination and interaction, based on a new model of relations driven by the nanoBasque Agency. A new system in which, as is the case in nanotechnology, each part is ordered in an innovative way and the set acquires new properties.

Without a doubt, this ambitious strategy demonstrates that the Basque Country wants to position itself firmly on the global map of nanoscience, micro and nanotechnologies through its big commitment to the very small.