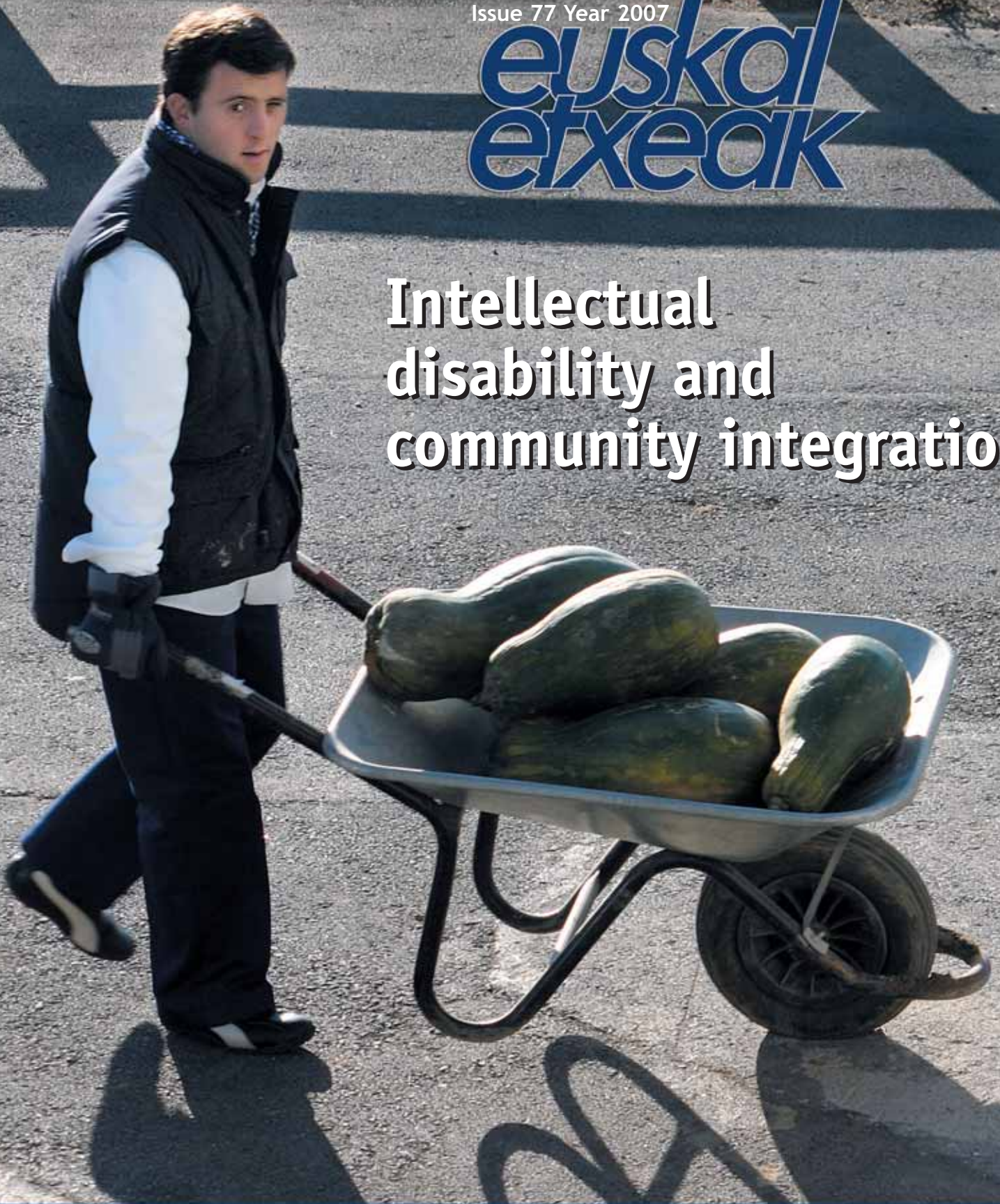


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euskal etxeak

Intellectual disability and community integration



Baketik,
in search for peace



AURKIBIDEA / TABLE OF CONTENTS



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- 3 • Aurkezpena** Breaking down barriers and stereotypes.
Txus Monreal, Director of Employment and Training

GAURKO GAIK / CURRENT EVENTS:

Major change of direction in recent years

- 5 • Atzegi (Gipuzkoa):** pioneer in family involvement
7 • Gorabide (Bizkaia): promoting quality of life
8 • APDEMA (Alava): the challenge for integration
9 • ELHABE: Helping people with intellectual disabilities find employment
11 • GRUPO GUREAK: Three decades commitment to building capacities
13 • Iñaki Abaurrea, member of the Lehendakaritza office staff
14 • Small group living
16 • Recreational activities
18 • People who break down barriers



- 20 • BAKETIK.** In search for peace

22 • Euskal gazteak munduan / BASQUE YOUTH:

Martín Iparraguirre, Pablo Sánchez Quiza

OFFICIAL ACTIVITIES ABROAD

- 24 • San Francisco Basque Cultural Center's 25th anniversary**
26 • 20 citizen forums for peace created in Argentina
27 • Movies and music in celebration of 100 years of Mexico City Euskal Etxea

EUSKADITIK

- 28 • The Euro-regional Conference is born**
29 • Iñaki Azua, Honorary Consul of Mexico

JESÚS MONREAL



Director of Employment and Training of the Basque Government

The right to work is a right that should be enjoyed by all citizens. It is one of the primary factors behind integration into society, and that includes integration of people with intellectual disability. Finding employment and being able to keep it is not only a means of remuneration but also a way of building self-esteem, autonomy, a feeling of belonging and social relationships.

In the Basque Country we realized a long time ago how important it is for people with intellectual disability to become integrated into society, and for this reason several associations, organizations and companies have been created over the years to address these particular issues. The number of groups and the level of public involvement show the heightened sense of social responsibility in our community. Moreover, the government acts as a promoter and defender of the rights of this group of people.

Major efforts are made by public agencies to provide guidance and training for people with intellectual disability in view

Breaking down barriers and stereotypes

of facilitating integration into the workplace. To a large extent, these efforts are materialized through Lanbide, the Basque Employment Service.

Lanbide works on a daily basis to improve the management of resources in the area of professional training and intermediation services aimed at integrating persons with disabilities into the labor market. Lanbide offers personalized service in the way of so-called "personal integration plans" or itineraries for accessing employment suited to the characteristics, skills and competences of each individual with intellectual disability. To meet this challenge in the Basque Country we are developing a wide range of resources, including occupational training aimed at qualifying people with intellectual disability for employment. A

number of factors must be taken into consideration in order for these efforts to be successful: demands of the labor market, economic subsidies for regular companies that hire personnel with disabilities, and programs set up to support people with disabilities at the workplace.

Thanks to these efforts a growing number of men and women with intellectual disability are feeling more fulfilled in their lives and able to work in regular jobs. At the same time, there is an increasing amount of Basque companies that are exercising social responsibility and hiring people with disabilities. We know that there is still a long road ahead. But as the readers of Euskal Etxeak magazine will discover in the following pages, the foundations on which to build a better future for these people are firmly in place. Both public administration and society itself will continue to move forward along this road, creating the resources and means needed to break down the social barriers and stereotypes which limit access to employment opportunities.



Intellectual disability is not something you have, like blue eyes, or a bad heart. Nor is it something you are, like short, or thin. Intellectual disability is a particular state of functioning that begins in childhood and is characterized by limitation in both intelligence and adaptive skills.”

(Extract taken from the manual of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities)

Major change of direction in recent years

Although there is still a lot of ground to cover, the situation facing people with disabilities has taken a major change of direction over the past few decades. For years the disabled were marginalized, kept at home or housed in institutions, generally due to lack of awareness and fear of the unknown. But since the 1960s, thanks to the hard work of many parents, businessmen and women, public agencies and selfless individuals, a network of associations and programs has emerged in the Basque Country to provide support for people with intellectual disability. Programs include protected workshops, supervised residences or apartments with support services, recreational activity groups, and other services geared towards improving the quality of life of the disabled and gradually raising public awareness.

The first associations were created by concerned mothers and fathers who had no idea what would become of their children after they completed their schooling. The program of protected workshops, promoted by industrial development in the Basque Country at the time, was a step in the right direction.

In 1982 the Law of Social Integration of the Disabled helped to develop regulations for services

for people with disabilities. After the law was enacted, special education schools were replaced with a policy of integrating people with handicaps into the regular school system, supported by special programs and resources.

One of the goals set forth in employment policy was to integrate people with disabilities into regular companies, or to use ‘protected’ work scheme formulas.

Companies such as Gureak, Lantegi Batuak, Talleres Usoa and Indesa underwent a period of expansion. People with intellectual disability, who until that time had been forced to stay at home, finally began to see more opportunities to join the workforce.

Over the past 15 years the various programs have been refined, work conditions for people with intellectual disability have vastly improved and social services have multiplied.

As the programs have developed, new needs have also appeared, such as premature aging and retirement among persons with intellectual disability, developing individualized plans and personal work itineraries, or establishing and furthering the duties of support-oriented foundations.



Atzegi (Gipuzkoa): pioneer in family involvement

Orain dela 47 urte, adimen urritasuna ezkutatu beharreko tabua eta lotsa soziala zenean, Gipuzkoan arazoa gertutik bizi zuten hainbat guraso mobilizatu egin ziren eta Atzegi fundazioa sortu zuten. Indar handia eginez, egun dituzten hobekuntzak lortu zituzten eta 1.900 familia dira taldeko onuradun. Babestutako etxebizitzak, aisialdi taldeak eta gaixo hauekiko onarpen soziala izatea aitzindari horiek egindako lanari esker da neurri handi batean.

The slogan used by Atzegi in its most recent awareness-raising campaign, "Me miras mucho, pero no me ves" (You look at me a lot, but you don't really see me) was an advertising success and sums up the Guipuzkoa-based organization's philosophy. Atzegi, founded in 1960, was the first organization of its kind to provide support for the families of people with intellectual disability. The slogan describes what tends to happen when we see a disabled person – we notice the differences but not the things we have in common with that person.

Mitxel Lakunza is the head of the family support department at Atzegi, where he has been working for 20 years. Over the past two decades he has seen how society has changed in terms of general attitudes towards people with intellectual disability. "47 years ago, when the first families began to get organized, there was nothing in place. It was an embarrassment for those mothers and fathers to take their kids out, and I'm not only talking about children with Down Syndrome, which

accounts for 20% of people with intellectual disability. Most intellectual disabilities can appear throughout our lives, and these are the types of problems that haven't decreased since the sixties. There are fewer cases of disabilities from birth, but the rate of unforeseeable disabilities hasn't dropped. Today 1,899 families with at least one intellectually disabled member are associated with Atzegi. The organization also has 2,929 collaborating members and 5,336 "atzegizales," people who support us in our efforts to normalize the situation as much as possible.

Participation and involvement

The families that wanted to become involved came up against major stumbling blocks in the society. They contacted the Caja de Ahorros Municipal savings bank to see whether their social services department would be willing to help. Little by little different services were set in place, including apartments with support services and recreational, cultural and sport activities. Atzegi is now in charge of the housing service, recreation and free-time activities for 500 youngsters throughout Gipuzkoa, and a service that provides apartments with support services for independent living. In addition to membership dues, further financial support is provided by Kutxa, as well as agreements signed with the Office for Social Policy of the Provincial Government and most of the local councils in Gipuzkoa, plus funding from private businesses and other organizations such as ONCE (Spanish National Organization for the Blind).

"The families that visit us at Atzegi," explained Mitxel Lakunza "don't come with the idea that their problems are going to be solved by paying a monthly membership



fee. We try to make Atzegi members understand that it's not just a matter of getting something out of the organization, but actually becoming part of a support movement. Through the efforts of these families we've seen a number of improvements: a heightened awareness in society, work possibilities in different towns, campaigns being organized Atzegi's goals aren't limited only to providing people with special apartments or getting them involved in social activities. The families have fought long and hard and now we have to make sure we can provide them with quality services."

To meet these goals, Aztegi has a staff of 78 professionals and a large group of volunteers. There is a total of ten local committees throughout Gipuzkoa, made up of family members who take part in local activities, organize lectures, promote awareness-raising campaigns, and make note of the needs of their particular communities. This information is then brought to the central office in Donostia to see what can be done.

Integration in the schools

Atzegi is a firm believer of integration in the classroom. "It's easy to say," added Mitxel Lakunza "but actually doing it is another thing. We have a theoretical framework, but it has to be improved. I think it's an enriching experience for people without disabilities to share the classroom with people who have impairments. This kind of coexistence is another form of personal integration, but it has to be done right, with support and help from education experts. I realize that in some cases, where major disabilities are involved, integration is impossible. That's when special classrooms have to be created, but always within the framework of inclusion.

Atzegi's social integration program includes keeping families up to date on available resources and the rights of



Mitxel Lakunza: «I think it's an enriching experience for people without disabilities to share the classroom with people who have impairments.»

their children at school. It also helps families with the arrangements and paperwork needed to take advantage of support services and other rights. The organization also works on raising awareness among educators and society in general so that students with disabilities are more readily accepted and have a better chance at becoming fully integrated in the classroom. To achieve this goal, Atzegi works closely with different educational entities, including schools, Berritzegune Centers (centers designed to provide support, advice and new ideas to the education community) and the Department of Education.



COMMUNICATING ONLINE

Atzegi's website www.atzegi.org features section called "Atzegi eskuetara," where people with intellectual disability can find specially adapted interactive information. It is an interactive computer tool adapted to individual skills, needs, preferences and tastes. Atzegi eskuetara features five different sections Music (listen to music, animal sounds and even compose your own tunes with the help of a piano); Information (news, current events and cultural events going on in towns throughout Gipuzkoa); Games (with different levels of difficulty); a chat room and video-conference to communicate with others. Atzegilio, the online mascot, helps guide visitors though the website.

Recent Atzegi awareness-raising campaigns



2007



2006



Gorabide (Bizkaia): promoting quality of life

In November 1962 a group of parents and friends of people with intellectual disability created the "Asociación Vizcaína Pro-Subnormales," the organization that would eventually become Gorabide. Its main concern was to raise public awareness around families and social issues connected with intellectual disability and to create support centers, which at the time were non-existent.

During the first phase Gorabide was run exclusively by volunteers, growing from a private charity in 1963 to an official entity of "public interest" in 1970.

Today basic goal of Gorabide is to "promote quality of life among people with intellectual disabilities and their families."

To achieve their goal, the association works in four areas: exerting influence on society, promoting individual support services required for each case, creating comprehensive community-based and direct services, and defending the rights of citizens with intellectual disability, regardless of cause or origin.

Personalized support

A key aspect of this association is the personalized attention it provides based on the needs, tastes and interests of each individual.

«An additional aim is
the integration of
individuals in regular
community recreational
activities»

As a service-providing organization, Gorabide knows that focusing on individuals, bringing new people into the association and continuously working towards improving all aspects of the organization are essential to effective management.

Therefore, Gorabide has adopted the European Foundation for Quality Management EFQM Excellence Model and

elaborated and approved its Strategic Plan for 2004-2007. (The purpose of the EFQM Excellence Model is to help business and other types of organizations to better understand their own management systems and, as a result, enhance their performance. It is sponsored by the European Union).

Among its residential services, Gorabide has residences for people who need generalized, guaranteed support; apartments for semi-independent groups and the so-called "Ola" residences for temporary time periods.

Gorabide also organizes fun and satisfying free-time activities designed with a view to promoting autonomy and self-organization and to developing social skills and interpersonal relationships. An additional aim is the integration of individuals in regular community recreational activities. For this program Gorabide has recruited over 400 volunteers and six professionals.



APDEMA (Alava): the challenge for integration

Alava is home to APDEMA, an organization whose mission is to improve the quality of life of people with intellectual disability in Alava and their families.

Most important among their member services is the area of family services, i.e. helping families in their life projects, attending to their wants and needs, offering them support and guidance, following up on their specific situations and ultimately striving for a better quality of life for disabled persons and their families.

The different committees and groups work to improve the living conditions of people with intellectual disability, based on early intervention services, occupational support and special transportation services for the severely disabled people associated with the center.

Residential services are managed through a cooperation agreement signed with the Provincial Council of Alava. The aim is to provide a home or other types of support so that people with intellectual disabilities can live on their own. This is the idea behind the so-called group homes, accommodating a maximum of twelve people; smaller, intermediate homes for up to four people; support homes for four people, which include limited services for semi-independent living; and a family support respite schemes, which provide a rest for families with school-

aged children with behavioral or other added problems (sensory, motor, etc.).

Public presence

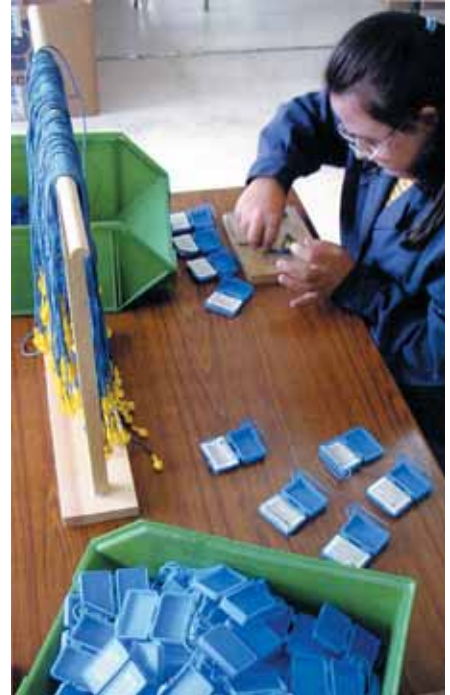
APDEMA also wants to reinforce its presence in public opinion and in this way promote its image as an association. Every year the association selects an objective and organizes a series of activities. One year, for example, a 'solidarity picnic' brought together over a thousand people, and special workshops organized by Pantha Rei focusing on children's theater and integration brought in a total of 1,200 participants.

The association also took part in the solidarity telephone marathon organized by Euskal Telebista and Radio Euskadi-Radio Vitoria, in which a series of reports were broadcast on the different services provided by APDEMA. Families, collaborators and volunteers took part in the gala closing event. Members from the APDEMA swim team joined athletes from other associations to take part in the "the challenge for integration."

The recreational service is essentially made up of leisure and recreational groups of Vitoria, Llodio and Amurrio. The offer depends on the age and needs of participants. Services cater to two types of activities: social activity workshops that take place during the week, and special weekend activities, including outings, fiestas and celebrations.



1987an, adimen, gorputz eta zentzumen urritasuneko pertsonei eta gaixo mentalei lana emateko sortutako EHLABEko (Euskal Herriko Lan Babestuaren Elkarte) presidente den Iñaki Alkorta, hiru lurralde historikoetan dauden 93 zentroetan garatzen duten jarduera azaldu du.



ELHABE: helping people with intellectual disabilities find employment

Iñaki Alkorta has the honor of being the first president of ELHABE, an umbrella association founded in 1987 made up of non-profit organizations. He is now occupying the rotating position for the second time. "Our job, said Alkorta, "is to oversee the job search for people with disabilities. Eight agents or companies work autonomously in the three historical territories through 93 work places. We also work in conjunction with the Basque Government with national and international partner organizations such as Workability, which serves as a forum to detect new sources of employment and share knowledge and

experiences with members from around the world. In short, what we do is bring together 90% of the organizations in Euskadi whose mission is to promote initiatives for people with intellectual disabilities."

According to law, in order to be eligible for a job of this type, individuals must have a 33 percent disability. Once disability is ascertained, there are different ways for applicants 18 years or older to enter the system depending on the province they live in. In Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia arrangements are made either through the local governments, the social services attached to the provincial governments, or through parents associations. Depending on the type of disability, individuals from Gipuzkoa sign up with either Gureak or Katea/Legaia – and people from Bizkaia sign up with Lantegi Batuak, Usua or Ranzari. In Alava services are provided through the provincial government under the auspices of the Institute of Social Welfare, which works with a network of centers called INDESA.

«In any type of economic activity
there are job opportunities for
people with difficulties or
disabilities»

"There's a waiting list," explained Iñaki Alkorta "Negotiations are carried out on the number of people that can enter the workforce each year,

«Our main objective is to train people to produce increasingly complex products»



Iñaki Alkorta.

depending on the annual budget and the subsidies earmarked for this activity. The government agencies provide subsidies for salaries and allowances for Social Security payments. We are also given discounts on the cost of each worker we hire but as companies we have to find customers to make things for.”

These ‘customers’ come from a wide range of sectors – from the automotive industry, to electronics and electromagnetic assemblies, paper and board processing, gas stations, aluminum work, industrial laundering, carpentry, hotel and catering business, gardening, industrial cleaning, advertising and marketing.

“The cooperatives belonging to the Mondragón Group are some of our best customers. Some of their hiring criteria is based on purely commercial factors, while others contracts include an element of promoting solidarity and social conscience. We also have a presence in the automobile industry, for example, where our customers are multinational corporations and disability is not a factor. In other words, they give us work because we do good work for a good price and deliver the job on time.”

Some of the work, such as assembling components by hand, is generally reserved for people with severe disabilities. But, as Alkorta pointed out, “people with other types of disabilities are able to work with more complex parts. The more value we can add to an item, the more marketable we are to our customers.

Our main objective is to train people to produce increasingly complex products.”

Lifelong training

EHLABE has set up a system of ongoing training because the nature of the work changes and people do not perform the same task throughout their lifetimes. “Training doesn’t usually take place in a standard classroom using chalk and blackboard. It’s the kind of training that focuses on the idea of daily work and the task at hand, instilling competence and improvement.”

Alkorta is aware that it is the market that determines the particular circumstances. “It gives us what it gives us, not necessarily what we’d always like to have,” he added. But he insists that the experience has led them to believe that in any type of economic activity there are job opportunities for people with difficulties or disabilities. “Our ongoing challenge is turn those opportunities into real jobs filled by people who work with us.”

EHLABE DATA 31-12-2005

	OC*	MENTAL WC**	TOTAL	PHYSICAL & SENSORY	MENTALLY ILL	ALL PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY	ALL PEOPLE W/OUT DISABILITY	TOTAL
KATEA-LEGAIA			63	742	85	890	33	923
LANTEGI BATUAK	751	570	1,321	477	98	1,896	265	2,161
USOA	41	164	205	40	14	259	28	287
GUREAK	738	837	1575	1,001	366	2,942	524	3,466
INDESA	328	352	680	141	45	538	39	577
RANZARI	48	125	173	0	0	173	30	203
	1,906	2,048	3,337	2,401	608	6,698	919	7,617

*OC- Occupational Center // **WC- Work Center



Grupo Gureak: Three decades commitment to building capacities

Hogeita hamar urte baino gehiago igaro dira Gureak Taldea jaio zenetik Gipuzkoan, eta bere ibilbidean zehar helburu bakar bati jarraitu dio beti: lanbideratzearen bitartez, adimen-urritasuna duten pertsonen erabateko integrazio soziala lortzea. Gaur egun, 3.668 lagunek egiten dute lan bertan eta horietatik %85a urritasuna duten pertsonak dira.

The experience of Grupo Gureak has demonstrated that without question there is an endless number of tasks and economic activities (agriculture, industry and services) that could be carried out by people with some degree of disability. These activities include producing electronic circuits, injecting plastic components, cleaning and maintenance tasks, restaurant and hotel responsibilities, gardening, marketing activities, graphic arts, and reception and telephone services. These are some of the wide array of activities targeted by Grupo Gureak, a broad range of job possibilities suited to individual needs, skill levels, motivations and wishes.

«Since its inception, Grupo Gureak has dedicated its efforts to promote the fundamental principles and values behind the real integration of people with disabilities»

Grupo Gureak embarked on this adventure with two small workshops created in 1972 by Atzegi, the Gipuzkoa association for persons with intellectual disability. The initiative – which many thought was madness – consisted in finding employment for people with mental disabilities who could not enter the workplace after completing school. In 1976, after two new workshops were opened, Talleres Protegidos Gureak was founded, today known as Grupo Gureak.

Today the group has a growing network of workshops spread throughout Gipuzkoa, which has made it possible for people to work within a 20 kilometer radius of their place of residence and in this way maintain contact with their families and communities. The diversification of activities and the expansion of the group are the result of the growing demand for jobs among people with disabilities, who are seeing the possibility of finding employment adapted to their needs and abilities.

To provide employment guidance to these people a highly qualified team is in charge of designing and promoting a training and employment itinerary perfectly



«Grupo Gureak concentrates its efforts on individualized attention, services and support»

suited to every individual with disability. For years Grupo Gureak has based its efforts on individual attention and support, a vision which constantly strives for the full participation, respect, self-determination and empowerment of people with disabilities. The goal is to create channels of communication so that people can make their own decisions and chose the path they wish to follow according to their own interests and concerns.

New times, new needs

Since its inception, Grupo Gureak has dedicated its efforts to promote the fundamental principles and values behind the real integration of people with disabilities, placing particular emphasis on employment. But times have changed, as have the needs of this group of people. Last year two new programs were set into motion that allow for the development of new skills in different environments. "Pausoak" is an alternative to the regular work scheme. Set up on a farm, the participants learn agricultural and livestock related skills; "Zabala" is a

program which uses a variety of activities to develop motor, cognitive, sensory and social skills, giving men and women with disabilities the capacity to live more independent lives. In addition, the Goyeneche Foundation, a network of day care centers located throughout Gipuzkoa, sees to the needs of people who are because of their age are unable to continue working in Grupo Gureak partner centers.

Opening the door to other groups of people

As Grupo Gureak has diversified its activities over the years and consolidated itself as one of the largest companies in Gipuzkoa, it has generated hundreds of new jobs. Virtually all of the vacancies have been filled by people with intellectual disabilities. However, little by little people with other types of handicaps, such as those with physical or sensory disabilities or individuals with mental impairments, have been able to join the workforce.

By opening its doors to serve the needs of other groups of people, Grupo Gureak has managed to provide new opportunities to enter the job market to help people with all types of disability. Although most of the individuals working with the group have intellectual disability (44%), people with other types of disabilities fill a significant number of positions: people with physical disabilities (el 23%), people with mental disorders (12%), people with hearing impairments (5%) and people with visual impairments (1%). People with no disabilities make up 15% of the group's workforce.

Thanks to an agreement between Lehendakaritza and Gureak-Araba

Iñaki Abaurrea, member of the sorting office staff

Iñaki Abaurrea works as a mail sorter at the Office of the President thanks to an agreement signed with Gureak Araba. He is the third person to benefit from this scheme. The agreement was signed a year ago based on giving as many people as possible the opportunity to acquire social and work-related skills.

Josune Rodríguez, who works as a job training coach for Gureak Araba, supervises Iñaki's work. At first she kept an eye on everything he did during his four-hour work shift, but now she only has to monitor him sporadically. "I was pretty much by his side all the time while he was learning the social skills needed at the workplace, ranging from punctuality to simply greeting his workmates," she said. "But now I don't have to be there constantly. I keep an eye on him to correct any possible mistakes but little by little I'll cut back until he's completely self-sufficient and can take on more responsibilities. That's what these hiring agreements are all about."

Iñaki has caused no problems since he has been working in the sorting room. In fact, his workmates have become quite fond of him. "He's an easy-going guy, a bit shy, but he's loosening up over time and gaining self-confidence. He's really grown on us. It'll be sad when he has to leave," said Josu Menéndez, who works in the same department as Iñaki and shares a lot of down time with him.

The work is mechanical, but it must be done in an orderly fashion and requires close attention. "I deliver all of the mail to the people in the different departments. I also help deliver the press dossiers and when people come to visit the Office of the President I show them around the different offices," said Iñaki at the end of his morning work shift, which had begun at nine o'clock. Three days a week he works in the afternoons for a small photocopy business. The morning of this interview, he was feeling a bit nervous about missing the bus. And he also had to buy bread for lunch at home. Iñaki lives with his parents and brother. "I help however I can," he added. After lunch he goes to work making photocopies, and on his afternoons off he usually stops in at the Asociación Isabel Orbe, of which he is a member. There he meets up with some of his friends.

Although he did not tell us himself, one of Iñaki's biggest penchants turns out to be bulls. His friends know it and bring him bullfighting magazines. He shows them his photo album filled with pictures of famous bullfighters. He also likes going for walks and is a soccer fan. "My favorite teams are Alavés and, as of this week, the Bilbao Athletic club too. I used to root for Barcelona and Sevilla's Betis, but not any more because I don't like it when the players fight with each other. I sort of like Osasuna, but not Real Sociedad. I won't go see them."



«He's an easy-going guy, a bit shy, but he's loosening up over time and gaining self-confidence. He's really grown on us. It'll be sad when he has to leave»

Before his current job, Iñaki worked for a do-it-yourself multinational, but he said that he likes what he is doing now much better. When asked what it was about this job that he liked, he quickly glanced at his watch and said, "Everything." We got the message loud and clear and decided not to press it any further.

Before Iñaki, Idoia and Rubén had held mail sorting position, both of whom left a good impression on their co-workers. "In fact, it's been a wonderful discovery to work with these people," concluded Josu Menéndez.

Small group living arrangements

Etxebizitza zerbitzuak ongizatea, parte-hartze sozialerako aukerak, intimitatea eta segurtasuna ematen dizkie familiarik ez duten edo familiarekin bizi ezin diren adimen urritasuneko pertsoneri.

Housing services set up for people with intellectual disabilities, including apartment sharing arrangements, have been in operation since 1978. This type of living scheme has provided a valuable alternative to traditional large-scale residential facilities, which are often located far from the resident's home and family environment. The experience has proven to be successful, although it is limited to people whose disabilities are not considered severe.

"The program involves three main types of living schemes, depending on the type of support services required: intensive, intermediate and light. In general, the apartments are part of a larger apartment building within the community," explained Patxi Izulain, head of Atzegi's housing department. The apartments are shared by groups of four or eight people, although there are also two residences with twelve people each, divided into smaller shared-living core groups. Altogether, there are twenty apartments with space for 135 residents.

An eight-person apartment, for example, comes with a support team of four professionals, an *etxeakoandre* (literally, a housewife), who sees to household duties, and three advisors or coaches who take turns providing support services for the residents. All of the residents are occupied during the day, mostly of them participating in occupational workshops or holding regular jobs.

A FOUR-MAN FAMILY

Juan José, José Luis, Miguel Ángel and Luis share an apartment in Gros, a neighborhood of San Sebastian. They live in a seventh floor apartment, complete with a large terrace with fantastic views in a prime location near Zurriola beach. Miguel Ángel and Luis are particularly shy, so José Luis, being the most talkative of the group, serves as the spokesperson for the four-man family.



José Luis, Miguel Ángel, Juan José and Luis.

It's eight o'clock in the evening and the first thing that greeted us was the smell of home cooking, which Pili the cook prepared just before we got there. The menu tonight is vegetables and steak. Everything is on the counter and ready to be heated up in the frying pan. When asked if Juan José needs a hand, he answers with a resounding "yes," which makes his roommates laugh. José Luis is the best cook in

the group. He is from Zarautz and has the longest experience living in apartments of this type, 21 years altogether. "I feel at home here. If not, I would've left," he says laughing. "It's impossible to outdo Pili, but when she makes homemade *sanjacobos*, for example, I help her layer the cheese on top of the ham and roll them up. Or peel potatoes for her." He once took a cooking class but, in

his words, "It was too sophisticated. I like stuff like beans and garbanzos."

They do help out with other chores, such as washing the dishes and setting the table. And so that no one forgets whose turn it is, there's a schedule of who and when clearly posted in the kitchen.

We all go to the living room, where we find the regular furnishings one would expect to see in this part of the house: a couch, a television, shelves, cabinets and a table. At the age of 56, Juan José is the oldest of the group. Born in Ibarra, he has lived in other shared-living apartments in Tolosa and Ikaztegieta and has been here in Donostia for two years. "I'm pleased because I already knew my housemates before coming here." He shares a room with the youngest member of the group, Luis, because the two of them have to get up the

The groups are as homogeneous as possible. "We try to match the characteristics of the different people and keep them as close as possible to their family settings," said Patxi Izulain, adding that most of the participants in these programs can be categorized into one of two major groups. "First, there's the 18- to 20-year-olds who generally have a weak family support network and in many cases have already been involved in other types of care-giving schemes. On top of their intellectual disabilities, these people tend to have difficulties adapting socially. Then there's the 40- to 45-year olds, who've lived with their families and have been Atzegi members for some time, but whose parents have passed away or are ill and therefore can't give them the support they need. Right now we have two people over 65. We've found that the best solution, much the same for so many families, is for people to live at home as long as possible. That has been our conclusion so far."

«Programs are funded by the provincial government and contributions from the residents»

These programs are partially funded through agreements with the provincial government. But the residents themselves contribute a certain amount, depending on their pension benefits, salaries or occupational incomes, which account for 70, 50 or 30%.

There are also different shared housing schemes based on gender: apartments for women or men only, co-ed housing and even couples who live with other groups of people.

Since everyone requires a certain type of support, the people in charge try to adapt their services depending on individual skill levels and degrees of self-sufficiency in performing daily tasks. In order to provide proper care to cover such a diverse range of support services, a comprehensive study is first conducted focusing on individuals and groups. The studies lead to the creation of a so-called Individual Work Plan, which is then agreed upon by the affected party and his or her family. The plans define specific objectives relating to different areas of interest, and are updated and revised annually.



The four roommates around the dinner table

earliest. "I work for a heating company in Ordizia from 7 in the morning till 3 in the afternoon," says Juan José.

Miguel Ángel was born in the neighborhood of Gros and is thrilled to be back in his *txoko*. He shares a room with José Luis and they both work at the Gureak-associated workshops, in the area of automation. Their workday is the same as at any other workshop or business, and even longer than some

places: from 8:15 to 5:27, except for Fridays, when they head home for the weekend at 2:45. "And for Easter holidays we have the whole week of Easter."

They've been getting to know parts of Catalunya and Galicia but José Luis would love to go to Andalucía or visit places in the Basque Country they've never been to. "For example, in summer I'd happily go work on a farm in exchange for room and board," says

José Luis. Juan José doesn't feel the same way. "My parents had a farmhouse and I already know what that kind of work is like." But he would like to have been able to celebrate Carnival in Tolosa, a town known for hosting the most traditional and long-standing Carnival in Gipuzkoa. He should know, since he was born right next door in Ibarra. "The weather was bad so I only managed to go on Fat Thursday in the afternoon to eat some chorizo with my friends."

They are all followers of the Real Sociedad soccer club, but prefer not to talk about it. They say that they get depressed every time they go to the Anoeta stadium and watch their beloved team lose over and over again. Juan José doesn't think that Real will be relegated to second division, but José Luis has been convinced for some time that they will. "But I think people should keep going to the games. A lot of people have stopped going and you can see a lot of empty seats in the bleachers. That can be really discouraging for the team."

Recreational activities

Gipuzkoan, adimen urritasuna duten pertsonen beren aisialdiaz goza dezakete Atzegik antolatuta duen Aisia Zerbitzua eta Gizarte Partaidetzari esker. Oskar Carcedo, zerbitzu honen buruak, beste bi profesionalekin eta 150 begirale boluntario gogotsurekin batera gaixo horiek bizitza atseginagoa izatea lortzen du.

The Leisure and Social Participation Service at Atzega is dedicated to enhancing the lives of people with intellectual disability by improving their personal relationships, encouraging them to take part in free-time leisure activities and, in short, successfully integrating them into society.

A number of programs have been set up to meet this goal, in addition to coordinating efforts with other organizations and institutions to build public awareness and promote free and integrated participation, focusing on the area of recreation and free-time activities. A third area is to work with families in the socialization process.

"A very important aspect," said Oskar Carcedo, who runs the service, "is that all of our work is carried out by volunteers. Today all of our programs are led by 150 dedicated volunteers, and three paid staff who

provide support and deal with the paperwork." Most volunteers stay with the project for only a short time, usually around two to three years, although some are longer term volunteers. Therefore, one of the ongoing tasks is the recruitment, training and follow-up of volunteers, whose job is a combination of dedication, enthusiasm, solidarity and commitment.

Most of the programs organized by Atzegi are geared towards people over the age of 14 with intellectual disability. "We're now organizing a program for younger children, but it's a one-off initiative, since there are other institutions and organizations that cater to younger groups," added Carcedo.

Full house on weekends

There are twelve recreation clubs for people over the age of 16 in Gipuzkoa, strategically located so that the 525 participants can choose the one closest to their place of residence. At the centers, which operate on the weekends, the members get together, decide on the activities they want to do, and with support from the volunteer counselors, either carry out the activities at the centers themselves or elsewhere in the community. Sometimes they will go as a group to the movies, or for a swim at the municipal pool. Other groups decide to go for walks or outings in outlying areas. "There are a lot of things to choose from, but as we see it, the most important thing is that the activities give people the chance to make friends





develop their social skills," explained Carcedo. "This program, which is called 'Txolarte,' is the more traditional program. Last year we started a new one called 'Neurrian (leisure activities made to measure)' as a complement, since there are people who aren't as comfortable with group activities and would rather take part in more individually oriented pastimes.

Programs made to measure

The latest offer is "a la carte" programs. "We channel the requests and find volunteers who will accompany individuals in their made-to-measure activities, which include things like playing racquetball, bike riding, running or going for a walk, either on weekends or during the week. It's a lot of work putting a program like this together, mainly because people are so spread out geographically, but the results so are positive. Right now we have five very small groups of between two and five people who can do whatever activities they like."

Cultural activities are usually scheduled for after work on weekdays, and are oriented toward people over the age of 14. The choice of cultural activities depends on the participants themselves and whether there is a volunteer and a venue available. Sometimes they are carried out at the recreation centers or other specialized facilities, and always with assistance from a volunteer. Activities include such things as surfing the Internet, cooking classes, movement or tropical dance classes, handicrafts, and so on.

The sports programs are similar in terms of organization. They are offered after work on weekdays and also on Saturdays. The choice of

activities includes: soccer, swimming, gymnastics, track and field, horseback riding, surfing and multi-sport activities, among others. All of these activities are carried out in municipal or privately run centers, depending on the location, schedule and available facilities. Competitions are organized from October through June, including the indoor soccer championships of Euskadi, the Week of Adapted Sports aimed at people with intellectual disabilities or popular athletic events such as the Behobia-San Sebastián 20k run.

Holidays away from home

In August members of the "Txolarte" clubs can sign up for two-week getaways to a variety of interesting destinations. And for people who are not able to get away in August, other trips are organized during Christmas and Easter. "We try to make the environment as 'normal' as possible, staying in hotels or hostels," said Oskar Carcedo. These holidays away from home are some of the most valuable experiences in terms of promoting self-sufficiency and they also a good way for people to socialize with the rest of the group.

There are also vacation programs conducted in collaboration with other organizations. One of these is the camp program sponsored by the Basque Government for people aged 15 to 22, in which participants perform some sort of project that benefits the community, such as reconstructing or excavation. In 2006 two young people with intellectual disability took part in programs of this type through the "Udaleku" summer camps organized by the provincial government of Gipuzkoa.

PEOPLE WHO BREAK

Not everyone is able to do what they really want to in life, or have the chance to develop their natural skills and talents. It's the fortunate people that do, and if they've had to struggle along the way to make themselves heard, all the more credit to them.

Rowing against the current is not easy, especially if it's society that writes the rules, sets the pace and the defines the goals. Here are three examples of personal success stories, people who have broken down social barriers.

GORKA ZUFIAURRE

actor

He's been in four short films, two television series and several plays. His work received Best Actor Award at the Youth Video Festival in Ciudad Real and Best Actor at the short film competition sponsored by Atzegi. He speaks both Euskara and Spanish and loves cinema, reading and swimming. Gorka Zufiaurre was born in Urretxu, where he is a warehouse worker for a private business and acts in a theater group called Karmakros, where he is considered another member of the troupe.

His mother, Elena Niño, is convinced that Gorka develop his skills because he works very hard at it, but also because his family has always been there to support him and help build his self-esteem. At the age of 28, Gorka has a curriculum that would be the envy of any person his age: he completed EGB (Basic General Education) and two years of REM (Secondary Education Reform) at the high school in Legazpi. He took a course in upholstery and another in building maintenance.

"When I was 14 they called me from Atzegi and asked me if I wanted to be in a movie. I immediately said yes because I like cinema a lot," said Gorka. That first phone call was about making a short film called "Aquel mundo de Jon" by Aitor Manchola. The film was awarded a prize from the Basque



Gorka Zufiaurre.

Film Archive. Later came "La caja de croisanes" by Koldo Losada (1996), and "Bernar" by Jon Andueza (1998), the latter of which took the award for Best Video at the International Short Film Festival of Elche and the Best Actor Award at the 5th edition of the Youth Video Festival in Ciudad Real. Gorka's most recent work was the lead role in "Bilintx" (2006), by the same director. He has also appeared in several chapters of the popular and long-lived ETB serial, "Goenkale" and another series called "Gure familia eta beste batzuk" broadcast on ETB1. In 2003 he took part in an educational musical production, a tribute to poet Gloria Fuertes, with Kontxu Odriozola and the Basque National Orchestra.

Gorka doesn't hesitate to say that he likes movies more than stage productions. One of his favorite

directors is Almodóvar, because, "he's good," but he also praises all of the Basque directors he's worked. "They're all my friends," he added. He's made good friends with some of the actors, and says that Aizpea Goenaga, Gorka Otxoa and José Ramón Soroz encouraged him the most. He learns his lines by heart and says that it's easy. "I'm used to repeating." In "Bilintx", however, he didn't have to learn a single line, since it was a silent film and therefore the work involved more body movement. He plays the role of the caretaker of an old theater who silently watches a young ballerina as she improves her dancing skills. The character's eagerness to get ahead and his artistic restlessness is not unlike the story of Gorka himself, who has had to break down more than one barrier in life to demonstrate his skills.

DOWN BARRIERS



IÑAKI ECHANO Artist

He was never taught the secrets of perspective or how to combine colors. No one has ever told him about materials or techniques, but Iñaki Echano paints with watercolors like nobody's business. There's hardly a building in Donostia that escapes his eye. Every morning he sets out with his yellow metal easel, and his partner Mariaje for inspiration. "I copy what I see, what I like. First I use this pencil to draw and then I fill in the colors." The outcome of this creative process is three or four paintings a day, which he gives away, sells, or puts on display. "My paintings have been on display at the provincial government building and the Kutxa exhibition gallery. People congratulate me for my work."

Iñaki Echano's natural talent was discovered by his teacher, Lucas Alberdi, in Eibar, where Iñaki was born and raised. "Lucas Alberdi used to tell me I was good at painting and when he saw my drawings and caricatures he'd say, 'that's quite a talent you have.'" Besides painting, Iñaki also worked with metal etchings: "I was really good at it," he said. People he knew would give him sheets of paperboard, watercolors and other supplies, so he started painting outdoors, first in Eibar and later in

Zarautz. After his mother passed away, Iñaki moved to San Sebastián, where he met his girlfriend, Mariaje. The two of them have lived together for over four years at Txara, a residential facility in the neighborhood of Intxaurreondo. Mariaje brings him a sense of calm and order when he talks about all the ideas he has swimming in his head

They went on vacation together to Benidorm, where they celebrated their own special sort "wedding." They've also been to Hondarribia and Zarautz. "In Zarautz we made friends with Carlos Arguiñano, who invited us for coffee and gave us a cookbook that says "*rico, rico, rico.*"

Little by little Iñaki has become a very popular urban landscape artist. A number of passers-by purchase his work and local shopkeepers hire him to paint pictures of their storefronts so they can display them inside. Some of his paintings can also be seen in some of the Kutxa branch offices and at the Intxaurreondo out-patient clinic. One of the art supply stores in Donostia gives him discounts on all of his purchases since he is such a good customer, and his residential facility used one of his illustrations on their Christmas card.



Ander Alberdi and Andoni Egaña

ANDER ALBERDI

bertsolari

He's 25 years old and he's a bertsolari. One of his teachers at the *ikastola* in his home town of Azpeitia noticed that he had a natural talent for Basque poetry improvisation, so at the age of ten he began practicing the art as part of his extracurricular activities. Ander Alberdi also works at one of the Gureak sponsored workshops located in the nearby town of Azkoitia, and will most likely enroll next year in the School of Bertsolarismo in Azpeitia. A few years ago he was awarded a special prize by a competition jury, who recognized his talent for well written rhymes.

- "How did you get started?"

- "I've always been fond of *bertos* and used to pay close attention when bertsolari programs were shown on ETB."

- "A few years back you used to go from town to town performing your bertsos. Do you still do that?"

- "No. I'll perform now and then at a fiesta, or at a friend's wedding or when I get together with a few friends. Now I mostly just write them. I also sing when we make pilgrimages to Lourdes."

- "Do you write down bertsos when they come to you?"

- "Yeah. I write them down in a notebook. I have so many now, I could write a book."

- "What sort of things do you write about?"

- "Springtime, love, maybe a girl I like ..." (laughs shyly)

- "Who's your favorite bertsolari?"

- "Sebastián Lizaso."

- "What about Andoni Egaña?"

- "Hmmm ..."

baketik

In search for peace

Herritarren erantzunak soberan gainditu ditu Baketik-etik sortutako parte-hartze aurreikuspenak. Zentro plurala, laikoa, ez konfesionala eta autonomoa da, eta urrian jarri zuten martxan Arantzazuko monasterioarekin batera, bakea bilatzeko adiskidetze sare soziala.

Last October a center associated with the Monastery of Arantzazu (Gipuzkoa) opened its doors for the sole purpose of promoting peace. The center is called Baketik ("coming from peace" in Euskara) and is promoted by the Franciscan Arantzazu Foundation. Its most immediate objective, which was to train a thousand so-called "reconciliation partners" by 2008 in order to create a "social reconciliation network," has been far exceeded, with nearly 2,000 people signing up for a course on the Ethical Conflict Management.

The center is open to people from all walks of life; it is non-secular, non-denominational and autonomous; its sphere of influence includes the family, schools, university, business, emerging social conflicts, internal

politics and external strife. It is a school aimed at teaching and promoting ethical ways to face all types of conflicts, using tools for prevention, mediation and reconciliation, based on courses and other activities.

The initial program and core of the center's proposal is the "Bider Mila" Project (multiplied by 1000), oriented towards educating society in peaceful co-existence and reconciliation. In this way, Baketik aims to reach out on a massive scale to teach the "basic notions of destructive conflict prevention, mediation and reconciliation by designing courses on ethical conflict management and creating a broad network of reconciliation agents." The people working with Baketik underscore that when they speak of conflicts, they not only refer to major political, international or religious disputes, but also – and very particularly – closer conflicts encountered in our own daily environment.

Snowball effect

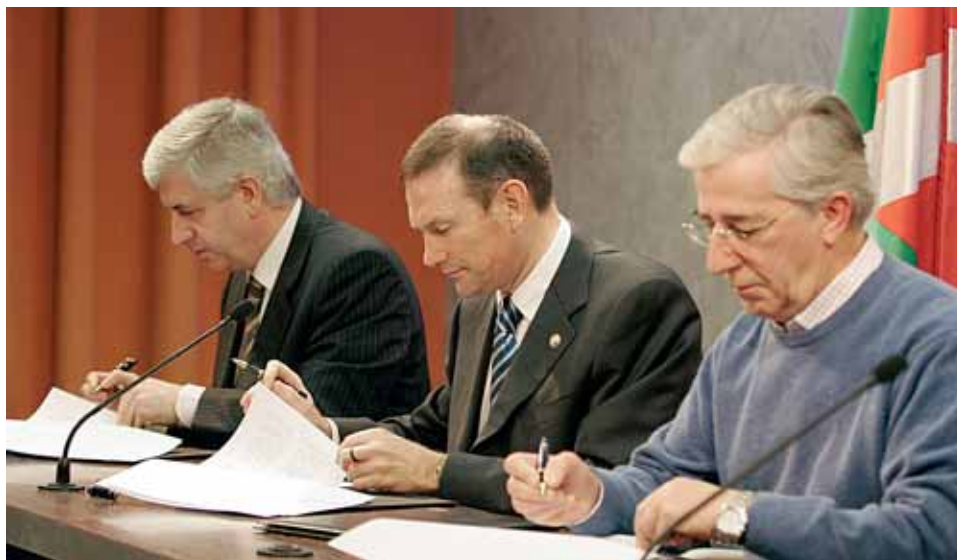
Bider Mila is hoping to create a "snowball effect for coexistence," according to the center's director, Jonan Fernández, in addition to "giving more and more



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Inauguration of the new Baketik Peace Centre in the Gandiaga Topagunea auditorium at Arantzazu.

Representatives of Baketik, the Basque Government and Eudel sign the agreement.



people the chance to acquire basic training in reconciliation." The training program consists of six- or ten-hour courses on the ethical management of conflicts distributed in three modules: prevention of conflicts, mediation, and reconciliation. Upon completion of the course, students are accredited by the center as "reconciliation agents." Fernández explained that after finishing the course and earning the diploma, "participants and others making up the network are not required to do anything extraordinary, other than making an effort to resolve conflicts ethically and staying connected to a network of information, documentation and experience sharing for the purpose of creating a culture of peace in their environment."

The initiative is planned to cover four large sectors. In education, for primary and secondary school teachers; in the university, both instructors and students; in local administration, aimed at mayors, councilors and municipal technical personnel; and in the scope of civil society, aimed at people who make up the network of associations. In the same way that it is good as many members of society to know how to properly render first aid in an emergency, the Bider Mila project sets out to provide a growing number of people from all walks of life with basic training in peaceful co-existence and reconciliation.

Baketik is offering a series of activities for 2007: In January and February, a pilot experience in the prevention of violent and racist behaviors in the school setting, using theatre as a tool; In March, a series of seminars on emerging conflicts; From June 4-10, a Week on Africa, the invisible continent, and in

July, a World Congress on Peace Education, in collaboration with the Columbia University Teachers College, New York.

Experts in dialogue and the culture of peace

Jonan Fernández, who for 13 years spearheaded Elkarrri, the Movement for Dialogue and Agreement, is now the director of Baketik. He is convinced that citizen participation in the search for peace is not only a matter of "having the right to give our opinion and make decisions," but that we must also "to learn to deal with conflict in an ethical manner and to commit ourselves to creating a culture of peace." Also involved in this project as members of the Advisory Committee are former General Director of UNESCO, Federico Mayor Zaragoza, and President of the Culture of Peace Foundation, author, and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, José Saramago.

This year the Peace Center signed an agreement with the Basque Government and Eudel by which they will receive 60,000 euros and 20,000 euros respectively. The agreement also includes "reconciliation" seminars geared towards mayors, councilors and local management authorities to address formulas for resolving conflict in their respective communities. The agreement was signed by Lehendakari Juan José Ibarretxe; the President of Eudel, Karmelo Sáinz de la Maza; the President Fundación Arantzazu, José María Arregi, and the Director of Baketik, Jonan Fernández. The initiative is connected to the agreement signed in January by Eudel and the Basque Government to promote public participation in building peace and achieving political normalization in the Basque Autonomous Community, Navarra and Iparralde, with an eye to reconstructing social dialogue following the end of the ETA ceasefire.

www.baketik.org

MARTÍN IPARRAGUIRRE

Associate degree in Tourism and Hospitality

Iparragirre koblakariaren ondorengo hau bere jaioterri Mendozatik Euskadira etorri zen "Euskal Herrirantz 2003" bekari esker. Euskadin bere arbasoak zer eragin duen deskubritzen ari da pixkanaka, eta Donostiaz maitemindu dela azaldu du; orain, gainera, ezin du bertatik mugitu bizi proiektua norekin partekatu aurkitu baitu, bere neskalagun Larraitz ezagutu baitu, ostalaritzako lanaren bitartez.



«I found out that my ancestor is a symbol for the Basque people»

Martín didn't have to flaunt his surname Iparragirre to open up opportunities for him. "I've pretty much kept it to myself. Part of the reason I left Argentina was to assert my own independence and make a life for myself. It's not my style to namedrop to get attention." But the fact of the matter is that when people at the restaurant Martín works at in Donostia find out that he is related to the famous bard, they are quite impressed.

"People have shown me documents, photographs, old newspaper clippings, medals, books Vicente Lasa, a fervent admirer of Iparragirre and man who designed the new Iparragirre mausoleum in Urretxu invited me to go and see it with him. People are really interested in the man. They remember his romantic ballads and so many of the songs he wrote about the Basque people, their language and their desire for freedom. I've learned what an important symbol he is for people here." Since Martín has been in the Basque Country the stories he his family used to tell him about his great-great-grandfather have all been brought to life.

Martín holds an Associate Degree in Tourism and Hospitality. On September 21st 2003 he came to Donostia on a

grant from the Basque Government to take part in a training course in tourism marketing at the Zubiri Institute as part of the Euskal Herrirantz program. After completing his studies he did a hotel internship followed by several jobs in the hospitality industry. Two years ago he began working at a well-known restaurant in the historic quarter of Donostia. "San Sebastián has a way of captivating your heart. When you finally manage to get a few things in your life in order, all of those other things that once kept you tied to where you used to live begin to unravel. And all of a sudden you realize that this is your home. For a while you have one foot in each place, but you end up calling this place home.

Martín's mother, sister and two grandmothers are still in Argentina but his father and another sister have remade their lives in Euskadi. "We're half here, half there."

Martín became an adult here. "I learned in the school of hard knocks. Back in Argentina I lived with my parents and was completely dependent on them. The country was going through some rough times but my family managed to maintain a certain amount of economic stability. But it was a radical change when I came here and

had to learn to carry my own weight." When he compares himself to the 27-year-olds he has met in Donostia, he feels he is a few steps ahead of them. I have all the responsibilities of an adult, such as making sure my girlfriend and I can pay the mortgage. Here it seems that the years of adolescence stretch on for a longer period of time. Proof of this is the banking plan offered by the Kutxa, geared toward 'youths' of up to 30 years of age. I'm not saying that young people don't work here. It's just that in Argentina there are certain responsibilities people have to face much earlier."

In Martín's opinion, the Basque people are very much like the people from Mendoza, Argentina. "At first it's hard to make friends. There's a feeling of distance and it takes people a while to accept you. But we Argentineans have something that seems to attract people. Maybe it's the accent or the way we speak. Someone once told me that I didn't have any particular natural skills: I wasn't good with my hands, I couldn't sing or play music, and I was lousy at sports. He said that what I had were social skills. Over time I realized that he was right. I have a way with people, but I have to work hard at all the other stuff."

PABLO SÁNCHEZ QUIZA

*Photographer,
picture editor for Reuters
in Singapore*

Hamar urtez Euskal Herrian Reuters agentziako argazkilaria izan ondoren, Pablo Sánchez Quiza Singapore Malasiako hegoaldeko uharte txikian dago, aipatutako agentziako bulego nagusiko goi editore gisa.



«Working in Singapore means being in contact with all of the photographers on the planet»

After ten years working for the Reuters news agency, and a photograph archive of around 400,000 images under my belt, I had to start thinking about future career options. For a couple of years I traveled around India, Africa and South America and then in July 2006 I was offered a job as senior photograph editor at the Reuters central office in Singapore," said Pablo Sánchez Quiza. Pablo has now been working on the small southern Malaysian island of Singapore for three months.

Since 2005 the global photography office in Singapore has been the hub for all of the pictures taken by some 700 Reuters professionals around the world – around 1,500 pictures a day. "The office operates on a system of three shifts of 50 photo editors divided into two departments: magazines and global photography."

At first, he had to think twice about accepting the job. "It mean laying my camera down for a while and sitting in an office, something I'd never done before and hadn't planned on doing," said Pablo Sánchez. But the change also presented a series of

advantages and opportunities in the long run. "Working in Singapore would mean having direct contact with all of the Reuters photographers around the planet and with the Reuters chief photography editor. Above all, it meant living in a place that has always fascinated me, and where it's easy to find inexpensive flights to a number of nearby countries. I'm just a stone's throw from Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia, Korea, the Philippines, Indonesia ..."

Sánchez is still trying to get used to his new home. "I suppose it'll take some time to feel fully integrated and comfortable in a country as different as this one, and I'm bound to have some uncomfortable moments. But I'll do my best to keep them to a minimum."

Singapore is a city-state off the southern tip the Malay Peninsula with a population of four million – including 50,000 millionaires. Up to eight different languages are spoken and virtually every religion is practiced amongst the population. According to Sánchez, "you can get lost in the huge shopping centers located all over the

city. It's a rich city surrounded by poor countries, and where the population is strictly controlled. You might even call it an economic dictatorship. Everything revolves around money, money and more money."

"All over the city you can see surveillance cameras and signs prohibiting this and that. The death penalty is prescribed for a all sorts of offences, especially drug related; alcohol and tobacco prices are outrageous and an everyday car costs three times as much as it does in Europe. The climate is extremely hot and humid."

Pablo Sánchez Quiza began working as a correspondent for Reuters in Euskal Herria in April 1997. His work included a wide range of areas: politics, sports, assorted stories, and just about anything fit to print in any type of magazine around the world. "In my first years working for the agency my photographs were published in 'The New York Times,' 'Life Magazine,' 'Libération,' 'The Times,' and 'Corriere della Sera.' At the same time I also worked for different Basque media outfits."

Basque Minister for Culture Miren Azkarate joins the celebration

San Francisco Basque Cultural Center celebrates its 25th anniversary

The Basque Cultural Center of San Francisco, California, one of the largest Euskal Etxeas in the United States, celebrated its silver anniversary from February 13th through 18th with a wide array of events.

The celebratory occasion got underway with an emotional flag-raising event at the San Francisco City Hall, where the ikurriña hung from the balcony for the entire week.

Numerous members of the San Francisco club joined members of Basque clubs from all over the United States to take part in traditional dance, music and sports events. The program began on the 13th with a video on the 25-year history of the Basque Cultural Center presented by Elizabeth and Jean Paul Barthe.

On the 15th and 16th participants enjoyed cesta punta exhibition games featuring the champions from Joko Garbi of the Kapito Harria Basque Pelota federation of Uztaritz, France. Equally as exciting was the dance performance offered by Aintzindariak Taldea from Zuberoa, France, and entertainment by bertsolaris Gracien Alfaro, Martin Goicochea, Johnny Curuchet and Jesús Goñi, presented by San

«Cestapunta champions from Joko Garbi of the Kapito Harria Pelota Federation in Uztaritz entertained the audience with a display of their skills»

Francisco Euskal Etxea director, Frantxoa Bidaurreta.

Bilbao to host next meeting

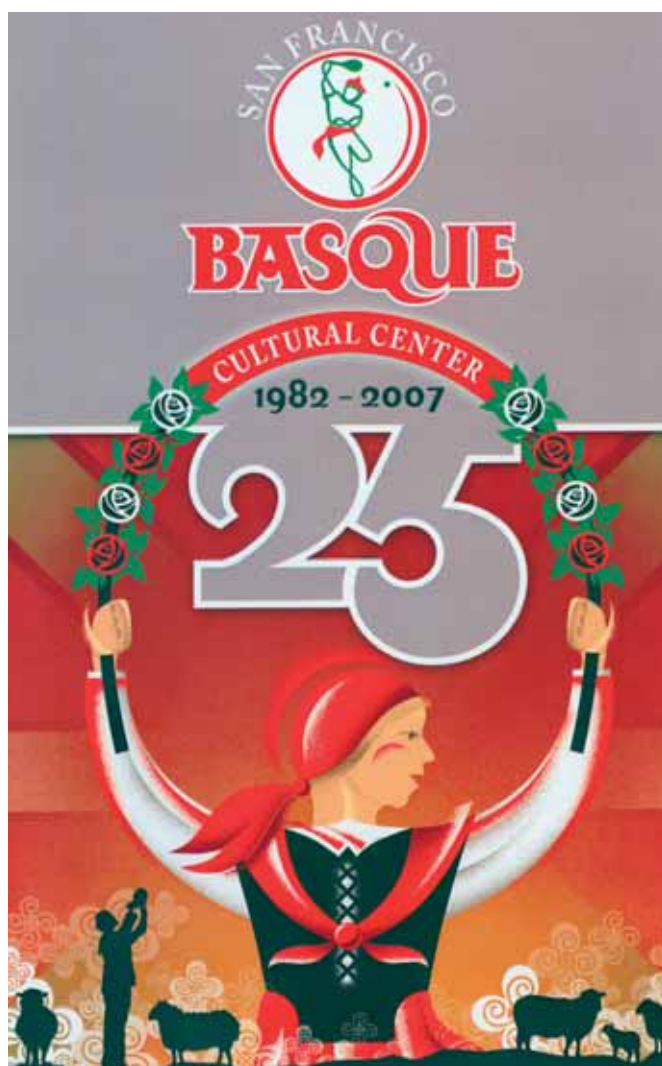
In this festive environment, the North American Basque Organizations – NABO – held one of its annual meetings, which was attended by special guests Miren Azkarate, Basque Minister for Culture, Josu Legarreta, Director of Relations with Basque Communities, and María Luz Artetxe, President of the Federation of Argentinian-Basque Entities.

Among other items, NABO presented to its member clubs the management report, the list of names chosen to represent NABO at the 4th World Congress of Basque Communities hosted in Bilbao next July, and the projects planned for the next four years.

The Minister for Culture presented the program for learning Euskara developed by HABA, the Institute for Basque Culture, Language and Adult Literacy. Josu Legarreta provided details on the 4th World Congress.

Between sessions, the meeting attendees went to see the “Kantuketan” exhibit on Basque song in four languages: Spanish, Euskara, French and English, presented by exhibit director Pantxoa Etchegoin.

Afterwards, María Luz Artetxe gave a presentation on the programs currently



being carried out by the Argentinean-Basque Federation.

Special focus on Euskara

The first hour on Saturday the 17th was set aside for a meeting between Euskara teachers working with the different Euskal Etxea language programs – *irakasleak* – and J.F. Zinkunegi from HABE. The Minister for Culture and the Director of Relations with Basque Communities were also present at the meeting. The materials created by the Institute for Basque Culture, Language and Adult Literacy (HABE) aimed at teaching Euskara online were presented, and an agreement was made to organize intensive courses for the *irakasles* in the United States and Argentina. The morning session ended with a discussion on the current situation in Euskadi led by Spokesperson and Minister of Culture for the Basque Autonomous Community, Miren Azkarate.

**«Hoita bat garren mendea eta, zazpigarren urtea,
Eguna hemezortzi garrena, bigarren ilabetea,
Gaur zure ganat etorri gira, Euskaldun Etxe Maitea,
Guretzat ezin baitaika izan nihun bertze bat hobea»**

Johnny Curuchet

«The ikurriña flew over the City Hall building for the week-long celebration»

Saturday afternoon entertainment included an entrance parade featuring the Benafaroa Cavalcade, performances by Sue Elicetche, the Elgarrekin Choir, the San Francisco Gazteak dance group and a pelota exhibition featuring the Joko Garbi pelotaris from the Basque Pelota Federation – Euskadiko Pilota Federakuntza.

After Sunday mass, celebrated by the chaplain and former chaplain of the U.S. Basque community, Aita Tillous and Aita Cachenaute, the 25th anniversary celebration was brought to a close. The President of the San Francisco Basque Cultural Center, Xabier Berrueta, the Basque Minister for Culture, Miren Azkarate, the Lieutenant Governor of California, John Garamendi, and NABO President, Mary Gaztambide, presented NABO's "Bizi emankorra" lifetime contribution awards to Joe Castanchoa, Bill Etchegoin and Jean Jauretche.

Basque Minister for Education presents UPV programs in Colombia



Basque Minister for Education, Tontxu Campos, with Colombian Education Minister, Cecilia María Vélez.

The Basque Minister for Education, Universities and Research, Tontxu Campos, visited Colombia, where he was welcomed by Colombian Education Minister, Cecilia María Vélez White. Campos presented the Minister with details on the Basque Education System and on cooperation and research programs through the Basque Public University.

The Basque Minister traveled to Colombia with members of his team to meet with Colombian education authorities and discuss ways to support online teacher training and telecommunications subjects. The team from the Basque Department of Education, Universities and Research also presented the "Coexistence in the Classroom" programs, widely recognized by the educational community.



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María Belén Girasole and Alberto Ignacio Philip during their visit to Euskadi.

20 citizen forums for peace created in Argentina

Alberto Ignacio Philip, member of the governing board of the Bahía Blanca Euskal Etxea, and María Belén Girasole, teacher of Euskara and Basque culture, both feel very positive about the twenty groups that have been created in the pursuit of peace. The number of groups is expected to reach a hundred. "Konpondu" is an initiative that was initially promoted last October by the Lehendakari himself. At the first meeting, held in December, fifty of the sixty officially recognized Basque Centers took part and the first twenty forums were created in Argentina. Alberto and María Belén both agree that the basic groundwork for building the road to peace is peaceful dialogue. They also recognize that this is the first time the Basque population abroad has been invited to take part in a process of this breadth. In their opinion the most important thing is that now people have discovered

they can sit down and have a decent discussion without breaking into argument, that there is room for everyone's ideas to be heard and discussed.

The forums are open to everyone in the community; participants need not be a member of a Basque club. The underlying philosophy for this initiative came about through participation from the diaspora: gather all opinions and viewpoints coming from different circumstances and situations in order to achieve a single goal.

María Belén is aware of the importance of the viewpoints of people living outside Euskadi. "We don't live the day-to-day details, only the overall effects, the most relevant aspects. That's why we can bring a fresh outlook to the situation. We're not saying that the diaspora is always right, but with the hundred forums we plan to set up, we can make interesting

contributions and provide ideas that will help improve the current situation. Alberto added that "when there are problems between two sides, it is always good to have third-party input. I'm not saying that the diaspora is actually a third faction in the dispute, but sometimes taking a step back and looking at things from a distance can be very helpful."

Together with the twenty groups, an online forum was also created. Seven Argentineans and Venezuelans took part under the supervision of a moderator from Euskadi. The pilot experience was organized as a chain of e-mail messages in which each participant gave his or her opinion on a predetermined topic. A round of questions was then kicked off and participants voted on the most positive ideas. The organization is now looking into creating a website where people can post information on a more user-friendly format.



Movies and music in celebration of 100 years of Mexico City Euskal Etxea

Various events will be held throughout the year of 2007 to celebrate the Mexico City Basque center's 100th anniversary. Members have been planning the event for several months. A Basque film festival was held in February featuring a number of recent productions: "Aupa Etxebeste," the successful feature film made by Asier Altuna and Telmo Esnal, shown in Euskara with Spanish subtitles, and "Éramos pocos," a short film by Borja Cobeaga, nominated for an Oscar.

The festival was organized in partnership with the Alliance Française and the movies shown were selected by the Basque Film Archive among a variety of feature films, documentaries and short films. The idea came from one of the members of the Mexico City Euskal Etxea, José Manuel Ugarte, who contacted the Basque Film Archive director, Mikel Arregi.



Also included in the festival program were "Frío sol de invierno" directed by Donostia-born Pablo Malo and starring Unax Ugalde, and "El final de la noche" by Patxi Barco. The films featured on the closing night were Montxo Armendáriz's award-winning "Secretos del corazón," a documentary film called "Au Pays des Basques," and "Navarra." A similar Basque film festival, the "Muestra de Cine Vasco" sponsored by the Film Archive of Chile in collaboration with the Catholic University, is already in its fourth year.

March was the month of music,

specifically the txistu, represented by the Txistulari Band of San Sebastián, which gave two performances – first a concert and next a parade through the streets of the ancient Aztec city. The bandleader was José Ignacio Ansorena, the first person to head a university txistu department, who showed the public the many facets of this instrument, including its role in symphony music. The concert, which was held at the National Conservatory of Mexico, took the audience on a journey through Euskal Herria, complete with dantzaris from the Kukai Dance Company and singing featuring the Basque club choir and the Colegio de las Vizcaínas choir.

The program opened with "Le Basque-Le Biscayenne," composed by Ansorena himself, which reflects the image people outside Euskadi have of the Basques. Next came pieces from Bizkaia, including "Sagar-dantza" from the town of Durango and dances such as the masquerade of Zuberoa.

The first performance ever given by the Donostia Txistulari Band for the Basque community abroad was suggested by José Luis Ugarte, also a txistulari, who wanted to show his fellow countrymen the real possibilities of the instrument.

Aitor Sotes, appointed Basque Government delegate in the United States

The Basque Cabinet of Ministers named Donostia native, Aitor Sotes Elustondo, Basque Government delegate in the United States. Economist by training, for the past six years Sotes worked as director of the Chicago office of SPRI – the Corporation for Industrial Promotion and Reconversion – under the auspices of the Basque Government Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism.

On February 21st the Basque Government signed an agreement to open a Basque Office in the United States. Aitor Sotes' priorities in the forthcoming months will be to organize and give



shape to all of the aspects and tasks of the Basque Office.

The City of New York served as the previous seat of the Basque Government Office – and Galíndez one of the delegates. The Big Apple was also the residence-in-exile of Lehendakari Aguirre in the bleak years after the Spanish Civil War of 1936 and during the political persecution against Basque culture, language and identity instigated by General Franco.

The new Basque Office in the U.S. joins the other offices already in operation in Brussels, Madrid, Santiago de Chile, Mexico City and Buenos Aires. With the exception of Brussels, seat of the European Union, this is the first Basque Office to open outside of Latin America.

The Euro-regional Conference is born

On March 1st the Lehendakari signed a cooperation agreement to set into motion the Euro-regional Conference, a body aimed at reinforcing European cross-border cooperation. The goal set for 2007 will be to find solutions to problems related to transportation, health and education affecting people on both sides of the Bidasoa River.

The agreement creating this new forum was signed at the office of the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa by the Lehendakari and the General Deputy of Gipuzkoa, Joxe Joan González de Txabarri; the president of the Regional Council of Aquitaine, Alain Rousset, and the president of the Regional Council of Pyrénées-Atlantiques, Jean Jacques Lasserre. The prefect of the Pyrénées-Atlantiques, Marc Cabane, and the president of the French Conseil des élus du Pays Basque, Alain Lamassoure, witnessed the signing of the agreement.

The Euro-regional Conference is construed as a non-legal entity aimed at promoting coordinated public policies in the region straddling the border. The Conference sets out to contribute specific practical solutions to common problems encountered by people living close to the border area. The idea is to provide a new forum for dialogue and to search for ways to solve problems caused by legal and institutional stumbling blocks and by the diversity of stakeholders involved.



Although there are many points of common interest, for the time being the challenges will center on cross-border mobility and cooperation in the areas of health, social services and university studies.

Transportation, health care and education

In the area of transportation, efforts will concentrate on collaboration between public services and operators (information systems, tolls, crisis plans, etc.) to improve the efficiency of road traffic flow. With regard to health care, cooperation will be geared mainly towards hospital services, in particular emergency services on either side of the border, as well as finding ways to coordinate

public health care systems. Another project will be to conduct an epidemiological analysis of the cross-border region aimed at preventing drug addiction, and to apply systems for preventing gender violence and for providing support for victims.

As for university studies, collaboration initiatives will include the possible implementation of double or common degree programs; developing exchange programs for teachers, researchers, administrative staff and students; encouraging cooperation in the area of business research and coordination; and teaching French, Euskara and Spanish.

"We are moving forward in European policy innovation," said Ibarretxe, adding that "if this initiative is successful, it will make the daily lives of citizens easier, while at the same time showing Europe that borders can be used to solve problems together instead of marking differences."

The Lehendakari stressed that in order to have greater capacity and opportunities to overcome problems, it was important to work together. "This is especially true at a time when Europe is undergoing difficulties in defining its constitutional framework," he said. "Here is a group of authorities that want to contribute to building Europe by transcending border constraints."



Iñaki Azua, Honorary Consul of Mexico

As of last December, Iñaki Azua is now the Honorary Consul of Mexico in the Basque Country and Navarra. His official mission is to protect the interests of Mexican citizens in the Basque Country and Navarra and to promote economic, commercial and cultural relations. In other words, from the consulate's office he will represent the economic interests and cultural activities of Mexico and safeguard the interests of the thousand-some Mexican nationals living in these two regions.

The consulate's office will also support for people in the Basque Country and Navarra with plans to move to Mexico by providing them with information and helping with legalities and paperwork.

Iñaki Azua is perfectly familiar with Mexican society. He is one of six children born in Mexico to a family of Basque exiles. He lived in Mexico for 20 years before coming to Euskadi in 1976 with the fall of the dictatorship.



As a member of the Basque club of Mexico City, with which he maintains an excellent relationship, he took an active part in a wide range of cultural activities.

His father, Alberto Azua, was the last delegate of the Basque Government in Mexico when Jesús María Leizaola was the Basque Lehendakari. Three years ago, the Honorary Consul wrote a book about his father called "Alberto Azua," in which he travels back in history through the various posts his father



Scene from "Éramos pocos"

A good bill of health for Basque short films

Nominated for an Oscar for the Best Live Action Short Film, "Éramos pocos" by San Sebastian native Borja Cobeaga once again laid claim to the success of Kimuak. Two years ago the Basque Government sponsored film promotion program was also behind another Academy Award nominee, "7.35 de la mañana," directed by Nacho Vigalondo, partner, friend and onetime roommate of Cobeaga. Neither of the two managed to go home with the coveted statuette but the international movie-making acclaim brewing in Euskadi is beginning to bear fruit. In fact, this year fifty film festivals, mostly in the United States, have requested the new Kimuak short film catalogue.

In addition to the presence of Oscar nominees, several Basque short films have been showcased in international venues, including the International Short Film Festival of Clermont-Ferrand, France, where Kimuak had its own stand, and where "Máquina" by Gabe Ibáñez took the Special Jury Award in "Labo," a section dedicated to experimental filmmaking.

Films from the 2005 Kimuak catalogue have already reaped over 200 awards, and nearly 800 over the past seven years. Kimuak is present in all types of festivals, large and small, with very positive overall results.

First Basque astronaut Leopold Eyharts to fly aboard the Discovery this autumn

Leopold Eyharts, from the Labourd region of France, is the first Basque astronaut to travel in space. Eyharts, a member of the European Space Agency (ESA), been assigned to fly onboard the International Space Station (ISS). In this new mission, slated for autumn, Eyharts, from the French Basque town of Arcangues, will be responsible for the delivery and commissioning of the European Columbus laboratory. The



Basque astronaut is set to fly on Space Shuttle Discovery mission STS-122 and will return home with the Endeavour STS-123 crew some two months later. Eyharts will be a member of the so-called Expedition 16 crew, sharing this space mission

with five North American astronauts and one German. In December 1996 he was selected as cosmonaut for the scientific space mission Pegase, which was successfully accomplished in 1998.

27 MAY 2007 - MUNICIPAL AND

Below is the schedule of events surrounding the elections in Euskadi. All Basques residing abroad who are eligible to vote will find the various deadlines and other such information on the steps involved in the election process.

LOREG NATIONAL and LAW 1/87	ACTIVITY	MONTH																		
		DATE																		
		DAY OF WEEK																		
		DAYS LAPSED																		
		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19		
		T	W	T	F	S	S	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T			
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16		
		APRIL																		
42.3 / 7	Call for elections published in BOE/BOTH																			
14.1	JEP and JEZ initially constituted with judicial members																			
186.1	Parties designate general reps. of the list of candidates to the JEC and JEP 20/3/2007-20/3/2007																			
186.2	General reps. designate reps. of the list of candidates to the JEP																			
186.3	JEP notifies JEZ of reps. of the list of candidates																			
186.4	Reps. of the list of candidates appear before JEZ to accept designation																			
78.1	Reps. of the list of candidates designate election scrutineers																			
78.2	Reps. of the list of candidates remit election scrutineers to JEZ																			
7.1	Uneligible candidates present resignation to JEZ																			
187	Presentation list of candidates to JEZ																			
47.1	List of candidates published in BOTH																			
47.2	JEZ notifies reps. of list of candidates of irregularities																			
47.2	Deadline for remedying irregularities																			
47.3	JEZ announces list of candidates																			
187	BOTH publishes announced list of candidates																			
49.1, 2 and 5	Deadline for filing for recourse before Court of Judicial Review or Supreme Court																			
49.3	Court ruling regarding recourse																			
49.4	Appeal for protection before Supreme Court																			
49.4	Court ruling on appeal																			
51.1 and 2	Election campaign																			
190.1	Citizens residing abroad apply to DPOCE to vote by mail (1)																			
190.3	DPOCE sends vote-by-mail documents to citizens residing abroad																			
190.4	Votes by mail of citizens residing abroad sent to polling station																			
84 / 8	Vote																			
103.1/107.2	Vote count by JEZ																			

(1) NOTE:

Citizens wishing to vote by mail must register through one of the voter registration offices in Euskadi:
 * If you are from ARABA-ALAVA contact: Delegación Provincial de Alava, c/ Eduardo Dato, 44-bajo, 01005 VITORIA-GASTEIZ
 * If you are from BIZKAIA contact: Delegación Provincial de Bizkaia, Plaza del Ensanche, 3-bajo, 48009 BILBAO
 * If you are from GIPUZKOA contact: Delegación Provincial de Gipuzkoa, c/ José M^a Soroa, 23, 20013 DONOSTIA-SAN SEBASTIAN

OTHER ACTIVITIES OF INTEREST:

- JEZ announces elected reps.: June 1 - 11 (art. 108 LOREG).
 - City councils formed and mayors elected: 16 June - 6 July in case of petition for review of elected councillors (arts. 195 and 196 LOREG).
 - General Assembly constitutive session: Deadlines: Araba-Alava, 22 June; Bizkaia, 19 June; Gipuzkoa, 28 June. (Gen. Assembly regulations).

GENERAL ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS

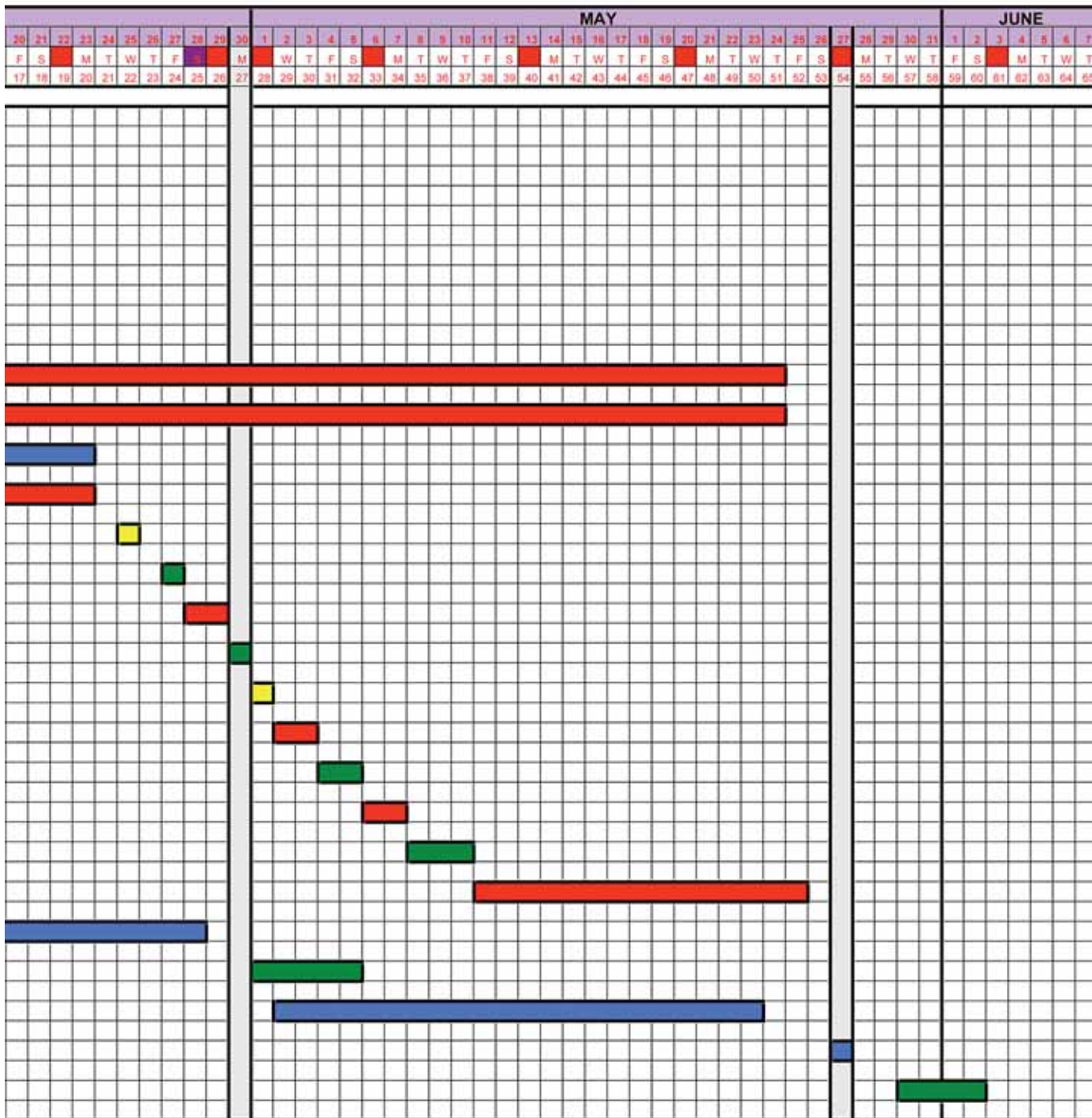
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PHONE 00 34 94 403 13 43
OR VISIT THE WEBSITE www.elecciones.net

ABBREVIATIONS:

DPOCE Provincial Voter Registration Office
BOE Official Spanish Gazette
BOTH Historical Territory Official Gazette
JEC Central Electoral Board
JEP Provincial Electoral Board
JEZ Local Electoral Board
OCE Voter Registration Office
LOREG General Electoral Law
LEY 1/87 Basque Law on Elections to Hist. Terr. Gen. Assembly

LEGEND:

- Publication in Official Gazettes
- Activities of Electoral Boards, Courts of Justice and Public Administration
- Activities of Political Parties
- Activities of private citizens
- Holiday in Alava



EUSKO JAURLARITZA  **GOBIERNO VASCO**

HERRIZAINGO SAILA
Herrizaingo Sailburuordetza
Hauteskunde eta Dokumentazio
Zuzendaritza

DEPARTAMENTO DE INTERIOR
Viceconsejería de Interior
Dirección de Procesos Electorales
y Documentación



Athletic club in 1942. Photography courtesy of the Zurdo family of Valladolid.

DO YOU HAVE A PICTURE TO ADD TO THE ALBUM?

If you do, and would like to see it published here, send it
by e-mail to: euskaletxeak@ej-gv.es