

SOCIO-ECONOMIC REPORT ON THE A.C. OF THE BASQUE COUNTRY 2006



Eustat presents an x-ray of Basque society in the “Socio-economic report on the A.C. of the Basque Country 2006”

In the framework of a commemorative act for the XX Anniversary of the Euskal Estatistika Erakundea-Basque Statistics Institute

Eustat presented today, November 29, the “**Socio-economic report on the Basque Country 2006**”, at an act that took place in the Euskalduna Palace within the framework of the XX Anniversary of the Euskal Estatistika Erakundea-Basque Statistics Institute. The presentation of this publication was carried out by the Vice-President and Minister of the Treasury and Public Administration of the Basque Government, Idoia Zenarrutzabeitia, the Director General of Eustat, Josu Iradi, and Mikel Zurbano, Report Coordinator.

The **Socio-economic report** is a publication which is updated every five years and whose aim is to offer a vision of the level of development of the A.C. of the Basque Country in different areas of socio-economic interest. It analyses in detail its evolution in time and in relation to the other Communities and neighbouring countries.

The work has fourteen chapters and was written by different university lecturers and experts under the leadership of the coordinators Mikel Zurbano and Jon Leonardo. As they explained, “the **“2006 Socio-economic report on the A.C. of the Basque Country”** represents a rigorous attempt to establish an interpretative framework for the profound socio-economic transformations that affect the Basque society and have made recent history so exciting”.

The **Socio-economic report** covers the following subjects:

Foreign Population, this subject appears for the first time in a report of these characteristics, as a result of the immigration phenomenon which, at present, generates great debates and although still at an early stage has already travelled far. Thus, and with regard to **foreign immigration settled in the A.C. of the Basque Country**, it is explained that south American immigration is growing and is replacing European immigration and at present resides in urban areas and, mostly, in the capitals, which accounts for two thirds of foreign immigration in the Basque Country.

In the chapter on the Basque **Economy** the general framework is established of the recent evolution and diagnosis of the economy in the context of the Economic Monetary and Union of the European Union. According to the author, the A.C. of the Basque Country is facing the challenge to channel a development project in Europe,

combining the modernization of the productive fabric, within the framework of the knowledge society, and the development of social inclusion required for social cohesion.

Living conditions is a chapter that analyses the changes in living conditions that occurred in the Basque population between 1989-2004. It shows a general improvement over recent years; however, it warns of the reality of exclusion and the risk of poverty that quantitatively affects a small part of the Basque population.

In **Distribution of Income** we can see that from 1997 to 2001 average personal income in the Basque Country grew 28%, i.e. significantly and the weight of the different components has remained constant. Thus, the diagnosis stresses the inequalities in income that persist, particularly with regard to sex.

The chapter on **Labour Market** covers the important socio-economic transformations that have taken place in the workplace. In particular the increase in the active population is striking, due to a significant increase in emigration and the incorporation of women, although below the average European figures. Even with this increase in the active population and due to the important recent economic increase, there has been a significant reduction in the unemployment rate, although it has an uneven effect according to sex and the province. With regard to the quality of employment generated, we can see that the typical labour relation until recently (unlimited, full-time and as part of the workforce) has lost ground to a new emerging model of temporary, partial and external labour relation.

The chapter on **Demography** shows the most important demographic transformations, showing not only the most evident changes: increase in life expectancy, reduction in the birth rate and others, but also those that have to do with models related to the division of roles, mobility and similar.

Health. There is a clear improvement in health in the Basque population, but, paradoxically, at the same time as showing an improvement in living conditions in the population there is a growing demand for health resources derived from an increase in life expectancy and the existence of an ageing population that boosts the need for resources to rates that are much higher than the evolution of expenditure.

Housing. A generalized improvement is seen in both quality of facilities and the increase in the average household surface area, an increase in ownership of homes and a constant reduction in the number of empty households since 1981. In addition, the Report shows a differential cost derived from the need to access the housing market in comparison with other Autonomous Communities.

Welfare and Social Integration. This chapter describes one of the most outstanding transformations that has produced a significant improvement in many aspects. In addition, it shows that in the A.C. of the Basque Country the social protection system converges with other countries in the European Union, although there is a differential with regard to others. However, the strength of family structures compensates for situations of need in the case of unemployment, illness, divorce etc. This is the reason why in societies like ours poverty and social exclusion have not grown very much in recent years, unlike in other countries in the north of Europe.

Education. A progressive reduction in the number of pupils, together with the growing feminization of some qualifications and with the reduction of the pupil-teacher ratio.

The chapter dedicated to **Basque language** shows, on the one hand, the excellent results obtained in infant education, above all at school level, where there has been an effective consolidation of the model D over the rest but, at the same time, warns of the need for a structural underpinning to make it feasible for Basque to become a habitually used language in everyday life, beyond the school system.

The chapter on the **Environment** speaks of the approval of the Basque Environmental Strategy on Sustainable Development 2002-2020 as the main landmark in environmental policy in the A.C. of the Basque Country and states that the level of compliance of the strategy is relatively high.

The conclusions highlighted in **Science and Technology** show the effort made over recent years, placing the A.C. of the Basque Country at a considerably higher level than the state average. Consequently, the consolidation of technology centres and their pivotal role stands out, although, as a counterpoint, the failings in the university sector are diagnosed and need be overcome. According to the author, the industrial orientation of scientific and technological activities is not an element that facilitates relations between business agents and the university, whose involvement is one of the most outstanding intervention proposals.

Finally, the chapter on the **Information Society** analyses the situation in five concrete areas: industry, users, infrastructures, contents and setting. In this chapter we can see a process advancing towards the information society which, by comparison with the rest of the Communities in the Spanish state, places the A.C. of the Basque Country among the top places in all the variables analysed, reducing the existing difference with regard to leading regions in the European Union.

For further information:

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