

## Presentation

# Going for talent

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*To have the best scientific, entrepreneurial and innovating talent.* This is the first of eight challenges posed by the National Pact for Research and Innovation (NPRI) approved on last 21 October. It is Catalonia's bet for talent as the main focus for the future of its economy and welfare.

The NPRI states the will that Catalonia becomes part of the leading countries in two specific areas by 2020:

- ▶ Quality of competencies, adequacy of profiles and the rate of scientific staff, innovators and entrepreneurs.
- ▶ Capability by public and private organisations and the third sector to use this talent for their own benefit and for the overall research and innovation system.

## Objectives

The NPRI follows three main action lines to meet these goals:

1. An educational system and a professional environment providing, fostering and maximising scientific, innovative and entrepreneurial skills.
2. Reaching a critical mass of skilled creative professionals, scholars and knowledge and innovation managers.
3. Recruiting, bringing back and retaining more and better scientific and innovating talent in the research and innovation system as well as fostering its mobility.

It is within this setting that this new *Paradigmes* issue devoted to talent management is published.

The monograph relates to concepts and mechanisms to identify, foster, seize and retain talent. As some of the authors point out, talent is an emerging concept traditionally restricted to arts and sports. When talking about talent we rather think of the likes of Leo Messi or Ferran Adrià. However, it is not such outstanding individuals who provide truly relevant talent for the progress of a country but that 10 or 30% of the population with above-average skills. What is interesting is to see how this individual advantage can be cultivated to get the most out of it, both from and for the community.

The first block of the monograph provides thoughts on the role of talent within the mechanisms to create wealth in the knowledge society. The relationship between talent and enterprise is tackled in the second block of the monograph, which ranges from the intimate relation between talent, innovation, entrepreneurship and risk to talent management within an overall human resource policy.

The relation between the educational system and talent deserves special attention in this monograph. There are highly valuable conceptual contributions, including an overall analysis of the educational system based on the way talent is dealt with, talent and ICT as well as the specific issue of the overgifted. The articles shed new light on and contribute to a general discussion in which fostering scientific, entrepreneurial and innovative competencies becomes one of the priority tasks of our educational system. The *Paradigmes* monograph completes this approach to education and talent with a description of a whole set of experiences ranging from secondary school to university and business schools.

The tools we have to promote, seize and retain talent take another big block. Here we have long-standing tools such as the ICREA. Initiatives to foster scientific

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and technological vocation of students such as the EnginyCAT programme are also analysed. Related to secondary school we build on the long and successful history of the CIRIT awards.

As to the creation of the European higher education space, we gather different top experiences in seizing and recovering talent – on the one hand, the new policies to combine a university career and the attraction of talent that succeeded notably in setting up the Autonomous University of Barcelona; on the other, the double degrees in engineering and mathematics created at the Polytechnic University of Catalonia. The University of Reykjavik experience is also very interesting. Its rector explains how they work to get Iceland to host talented youth to develop innovative entrepreneurial projects.

Barcelona's leading role as a hub attracting talent from all over the world is another subject vastly dealt with. In this respect, the role of business schools as a prominent mechanism to attract talent is analysed, in a field we enjoy an excellent standing in.

I would like to point out the importance of the initiatives taken from the civil society to detect and foster talent and scientific and technical vocations. Such initiatives like the Youth and Science programme from the Social Work department at the Caixa Catalunya savings bank need to become more embracing and ambitious.

Although I already referred to it at the beginning, I would not like to finish without mentioning the articles and interviews dealing with talent in what is sometimes called experience activities or even industry, which are paramount to generate quality of life and to build up the ability of a city or a country to attract talent. In this case, we have dealt with fashion, music and sports, in which Catalonia has always

been at the forefront thanks to its individuals. This combination of creative and organisational talent is precisely a challenge we have as a country in an area in which we already enjoy a favourable position.

Catalonia's bet for talent obviously does not mean that progress towards a fairer society is challenged. Nevertheless, we need to avoid that an excessive zeal for egalitarianism makes us despise the mechanisms able to stimulate the biggest capabilities wherever available. Within the current economic crisis and rethinking of our growth and welfare model, going for talent as a key driver of the knowledge society becomes indispensable.

I would finally like to thank all authors for their willingness to disclose their knowledge and experiences. I also thank the Publishing Council, the Editing Council and all the technical and administrative staff headed by the director of the magazine for having made possible the publication of this *Paradigmes* issue.



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