


# Talent attraction, a competitive variable



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At the Programme of Strategic Projects of the Department of Economy and Finances, today part of the Directorate General of Economic Promotion, we started working on what seemed to be an increasingly interesting competitive variable in 2005: talent management and attraction.

After stating that the currently most relevant driver of competitiveness – knowledge – and the most important Catalonia has – talent and human capital – were becoming a global management and competence asset, and based on the proposals and requests of different bodies and personalities of the economic community, the Programme of Strategic Projects initiated a process that has produced two pieces of analysis and proposals (the one under the leadership of Xavier Marcet and the other under Xavier Testar), a proposal package with policies to attract entrepreneurial and managerial talent as well as a working plan with other Catalan governmental bodies and local authorities.



During the process, trends and flows in global competition for talent have been analysed, and we have looked at some successful experiences in Catalonia, such as ICREA, and in those areas where there still is a lot to do. We have analysed the factors affecting the creation of favourable environments for talent as well as the multiplying effects for creating businesses and wealth in these settings, which also attract international talent. Finally, we have studied possible action lines for a potential programme to attract talent coordinating different public areas.

We believe that Catalonia is able to play an international leading role in this area thanks to its environmental conditions and its strong tradition as a country of entrepreneurs. Current business creation rates are already among the highest in Europe, public support tools for entrepreneurs are consolidated and we have a good deal of successful models all over the territory. We are able to project this at international level to be even more powerful in this competitive variable and become a focus of international talent attraction.

In a wide sense, we perceive talent management as a mix in which universities and business offer opportunities to generate and attract the best talent, where big research infrastructures attract and facilitate projects for the best researchers and the production system is able to take advantage from it by transforming research into business and employment. The creation of innovative environments allows to attract entrepreneurs and talent from all over the world, who see their projects from a global perspective and their professional life full of change to seek the best working and living conditions. This model, which is becoming increasingly that of the most advanced regions and has to do with building a country offering opportunities to its citizens and the best international talent, has another side in that talent created in Catalonia also becomes part of this circuit, thus having the chance of taking over research and economic leadership in any innovative environment around the globe. It is also an asset for Catalonia, perhaps the most important we can offer to the world – our talent

taking over key positions everywhere. Talent circulation, rotation and training at different outstanding centres along the global talent corridors are becoming increasingly a feature of globalisation. To be successful in this model we need to forge citizens ready to develop where the best opportunities are and to be at the same time a place of great opportunities for global companies, entrepreneurs, managers and researchers.

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An outcome of this previous task, our working programme intends to be just another link in a chain of actions geared to creating innovative environments attracting talent. Our action, together with that of other departments, shall be a contribution to disseminating a message and setting up a full-fledged public policy on talent management linked to the others that make altogether the economic policy of the Government.

However, as any good policy on this subject, the creation of environments encouraging talent includes very practical and streamlined measures but it also requires the effect of other policies with no apparent relation, for an innovative environment attracting talent is not created in gloomy urban settings nor in communities with great imbalances or lacking social cohesion. Catalonia is an integrating society, socially stable and advanced, open and with a high living standard that allows to enter the game of global competition for talent with good cards. At the same time, based on a talent management pattern that turns Catalonia into a first-class hub exporting and importing talent, the most relevant environment actions need to focus on education: the quality of higher education needs to improve permanently, we need to stay at the front of post-graduate education and ensure

learning foreign languages for the maximum population. This is one of the problems of our competitiveness – only in a trilingual society will we be able to succeed within the aforementioned model and provide the citizens with employability on the large global market. In this respect we are last, so this deserves an immense and urgent effort. The Government has started to lay the foundations with the English plan by the Department of Education and the commitment to the 2008-2011 Strategic Agreement. But any effort will be insufficient if the whole country does not engage in it.

### **The analysed and proposed action lines on which we will be working in the next months and years focus on attracting entrepreneurial and managerial talent.**

The first study we carried out was done and presented in the context of the Metropolitan Strategic Plan of Barcelona, in which we represent the Government of Catalonia, and at an association studying innovative projects.

Out of this first piece of work, talent management and thus also talent attraction has been introduced into the competitiveness agendas of the different bodies in charge of economic policy. Besides the recognition this *Paradigmes* issue means for all this task, it is worth highlighting two aspects. First of all, it is talent attraction being singled out as an action line with measures of its own – in the academic and the entrepreneurial area – in the 2008-2011 Strategic Agreement on internationalisation, employment quality and competitiveness of the Catalan economy, recently approved by the Government and the main economic and social stakeholders. And secondly, talent is a key driver of the National Pact for Research and the action of the Department of Innovation, Universities and Enterprise.

Although the whole subject is wide and cross-disciplinary, we decided to focus our interest and competence upon taking action. The

analysed and proposed action lines on which we will be working in the next months and years focus on attracting entrepreneurial and managerial talent, based on the following concepts:

- Creating programmes and hotbeds to attract talent at different locations in Catalonia. Talent attraction and the creation of hubs where talent converges, creating patterns multiplying innovation and creativity, is a mechanism to forge international first-class innovative environments around top infrastructures and industries. At another scale, it also serves as a strategy to revitalise a county or city. As a consequence, both the processes created at 22@Barcelona and the Biomedical Research Park of Barcelona, and the capacity of an inland county to become an interesting place to develop an entrepreneurial and thus an urban and social development project are interesting as a source of economic prosperity. Also, we can forge first-class innovation environments in many other cities in Catalonia that, despite taking internationally advantage of the Barcelona brand as a common asset, represent distinctive patterns in any place of the territory. We believe that support by the Government of Catalonia can help to strengthen them and increase their chance to succeed.

- Retaining talent related to students at business schools and other universities with international top quality. The international success of Catalonia in post-graduate education can be used even stronger as an opportunity to attract entrepreneurial projects and create innovating environments for Catalonia to become a place to manage or create a business for many top level students coming over.

### **A part of migrants coming to Catalonia have talent that could be a relevant source of economic development.**

- Detecting and giving value to talent coming from migration. A part of migrants coming to Catalonia have talent that could be a relevant source of economic development. The business creation rate among migrants is higher than

their percentage as of the total population. Hence other environmental factors related to migration shall not hamper their dynamism. Recent studies show that migrant do jobs that are often clearly below their educational level.

► Facilitating the arrival and settling of talent in Catalonia, especially regarding legal issues. In this point lies one of the weaknesses of our system we need to address, especially looking at some countries that are becoming economic powerhouses and have big problems for their citizens to obtain working permits. Impending transfer of attributions to Catalonia on this matter will make this action line even more interesting.

► International promotion of Barcelona and Catalonia as a territory attracting international entrepreneurs. The association generally made of Barcelona and thus most of Catalonia as a dynamic, innovating area with a high living standard is an asset we need to use to increase the critical mass of entrepreneurial projects with an international drive to be developed in Catalonia, no matter the origin of their promoters. We can strengthen our foreign promotion actions while creating coaching programmes to forge contacts between the different existing public and private tools of support.

The development of policies focused on talent management shall be an all-encompassing engagement by different departments of the Government of Catalonia, other public authorities –with local authorities playing a key role– and economic and social institutions in Catalonia. It is an opportunity to improve our global competitive position, probably one of the most solid we have. Therefore, besides the aforementioned initiatives and the continuation of other existing ones, the work done creates new tasks for the future.

These proposals have not been considered a priority or suitable at our unit right now, but other bodies and organisations could take them up in the near future – measures to welcome talent temporarily resident in Catalonia as it is working for projects, programmes related to talent attraction in other fields (quite developed in research but with room for improvement e.g. in culture and arts), creation of new environments attracting talent in connection with universities and technology parks, promotion of entrepreneurial competencies among master and PhD students, programmes for the return home of Catalan talent and programmes to create networks relating resident foreign talent in Catalonia to local projects.

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