

# BASQUE TALENT EVOLUTION & TRENDS

2021

REPORT ON EVOLUTION AND  
TRENDS IN THE MANAGEMENT OF HIGHLY  
QUALIFIED TALENT IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

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# TALENT IS AND WILL REMAIN THE KEY TO THE FUTURE

2020 has been a difficult year for everyone. The pandemic has accelerated many of the changes that were slowly creeping in and, overnight, has led us to a world that is even more volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous.

Despite the difficulties, everyone has tried their best to adapt as quickly as possible to this new scenario which has affected all spheres of society. In particular, as far as talent management is concerned, Covid-19 has practically paralysed the mobility of people and this has had a major impact on efforts to attract international talent. Nor should we forget the effects that Brexit is already having in this area.

Various studies have shown that each high-skilled job generates an average of five additional supporting jobs. That is why a clear talent management strategy is so important. For this reason, a small but innovative territory such as ours must make use of all the tools at its disposal to support the development and sustainability of its society, as well as the competitiveness of its companies and the well-being of its citizens. In our case, the tax measures that are being introduced for this purpose may provide an incentive for international professionals to choose to further their careers here, and the commitment to developing the skills of young people during their university years is intended to sow the seeds that will bring a good harvest in a few years' time

This year's report brings these and other issues to the table, accompanied by the views of professionals and organisations that experience them on a day-to-day basis, as well as data that reflect both the current picture and the performance of previous years. We hope you enjoy it.

Bizkaia Talent.

# COVID-19: TALENT MANAGEMENT WILL CHANGE FOREVER

The impact of Covid-19 on talent management and also on the employer branding of organisations has become evident. Throughout the week commencing 2 March 2020, posts related to the coronavirus accounted for 4% of company posts on LinkedIn. In just two weeks, this percentage rose to 24% on average (even reaching 50% in the case of organisations in the legal sector) and terms related to health, help, working from home, employees, health authorities or public health stood out from the words that had previously been most frequently used on this platform: innovation, management, digital marketing, technology and entrepreneurship, among others.

Below are some of the main aspects which the pandemic has affected and will continue to affect in our lives in general, and particularly in the area of people, providing, as far as possible, global recommendations so that Basque organisations can continue to take steps towards strengthening their position as quality employers.

## **Policy and legal issues to be considered**

The pandemic has accentuated the need to address the different territorial settings (global, European, state and Basque), at both the political and legal levels, in terms of talent management.

No one is unaware of the impact that Donald Trump's policies have had and would have continued to have had if he had been re-elected in the last elections in the United States of America. Nor the change to a Europe of 27 countries, following the UK's exit from the EU on 31 January 2020. China, for its part, also seems to be starting to take steps to attract international talent and, although proportionally its figures for attracting university students at a world level are not yet worrying, it is the country that sends the most students to study at international centres. At the national level, and in the light of the demographic challenge and the current, almost inverted population pyramid, the law on foreigners or the legal framework for the recognition of qualifications should also be improved in order to encourage the attraction of international talent that would make it easier to recruit highly qualified professionals into the labour force.

Yet the pandemic has brought with it an increase in protectionist measures by states, new regulations that are affecting the various manufacturing locations, the disruption, in some cases, of global supply chains, as well as restrictions on mobility. In short, we are faced with a scenario that increases the tension and difficulty in implementing a shared strategy for attracting and recruiting highly qualified professionals from outside the Basque Country, as well as an appropriate territorial positioning at an international level.

### Issues to be taken into account in the economic context

According to the International Monetary Fund's World Economic Outlook as of January 2021, despite the economic downturn in 2020, projections for the following years should start to look positive. Even so, the uncertainty is enormous, and that is why, despite the difficulty that this may entail in the short term and the financial pressures that it may imply, organisations must unambiguously focus on people as a fundamental element for the successful development and strengthening of their brand (also as an employer) for the future.

From 1980 to 2018, Spain increased its population by 25%, while the Basque Country increased its population by only 2% during the same period, according to INE and Eurostat data. It is beyond question that, if we want to maintain our social welfare system, it is vital that we have the ability to reinforce our workforce with candidates that help our companies to generate and increase their competitiveness at a global level. In doing so, we must not lose sight of the big picture nor of the role we play compared to other metropolitan areas or regions of the world. In this connection, we must also not forget to pay attention to future projections and to the risk we expose ourselves to if we do not work in an orderly, consistent and coherent manner. The opposite would lead us, as a small region, to become increasingly removed, in competitive terms, from the large cities and metropolitan areas where most of the economic activity is concentrated (such as Madrid, Amsterdam or Dublin) and from being a relatively stable economy to an economy in decline.

At this point, we have to take into account the impact that burnout has in this new scenario of the pandemic. The World Economic Forum recently put the cost of the disease at £225 million globally. Burnout leads to low employee engagement and, if we want to translate this into financial terms, it is estimated to "cost" companies around 34% of their annual employee salaries, as well as between 20% and 50% of staff turnover.

All this should lead us to think that, if we want to maintain our competitive position, the Basque business ecosystem as a whole must focus on the acceleration of new ways of working, as well as on flatter and more flexible organisational structures that allow for a faster flow of information, without forgetting to explore new ways of working via cross-functional teams, as well as optimising internal talent and knowledge in order to tackle strategic projects.

### **Social and environmental issues to be considered**

A recent Gartner survey showed that after Covid-19, 48% of employees would like to work at least part of their working day remotely, compared to 30% who said the same before the pandemic. Either way, in the face of this new trend, companies will have to look for innovative solutions to the difficulties that physical distance can add to the smooth running of business, such as cross-silo work practices and the breaking-down of corporate culture.

But remote working will not just affect how things are done in the company. It will also have an impact on the employment market and on the way digital nomads (people who work remotely, allowing them to live and work while travelling) are taxed for their services. Once again, the coherent international positioning of both the Basque Country and the employer branding of Basque organisations (and not from a merely advertising perspective but based on the experience of a professional from his or her phase as a potential employee until he or she leaves the company) will make all the difference in the future scenario.

New generations, such as Millennials and Gen-Z, will be the main ones to embrace these new ways of working. To begin with, 35% of them already have a predilection for entrepreneurship. At the same time, this segment of professionals is also very attracted to companies with strong employer branding. This also has to do with how they consume information, with two out of three young people admitting that advertising on social networks has influenced their purchasing decisions and, in this respect, large corporations are much more active on digital channels than our SMEs and are, therefore, much more visible to younger people.

Lastly, work will no longer be just the place where a certain product is produced or a certain solution is designed. Nowadays, and increasingly more so, work (and the companies that offer it) is valued in terms of the social impact it has, starting from its own activity through to the commitment and additional actions that organisations carry out to improve their community, their immediate environment and care for the planet. Alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals, management based on social impact or movements such as Me Too, Black Lives Matter, Occupy Wall Street, LGTBIQ+ or Fridays For Future, are also reflected in the values required of the company.

### Issues to be taken into account in the technological context

Technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning have taken off during the pandemic and will continue to grow from now on. Some organisations plan to continue to invest in such tools, a fact that could create a wider gap between the organisations that go down this route and the majority of companies that are still struggling to capitalise on such technology. However, it seems that, at least in the human resources domain, organisations will tend to track employee productivity or engagement in order to better understand the employee experience.

In conclusion, we should not forget that technology comprises an important aspect of the company's branding, not only as a supplier of goods and services but also as an employer, particularly for professionals specialising in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) disciplines.

So, by way of summary, we would like to highlight three main ideas:

We must understand that the pandemic will probably mean a turning point in the world economy and, therefore, Basque companies must accelerate their development and correctly communicate this change in their way of doing things, which they have done so far through positioning and networking sessions or events outside the Basque Country (either remotely or face-to-face when the health situation so permits).

From now on, simply offering a job will not be enough. Neither attendance nor work hours will be the focus. Organisations will therefore need to work on becoming more open and flexible in order to meet the expectations of their current and potential employees. The inclusive "Be Basque" strategy, through which we also address professionals who we want to encourage to become part of our community, whether or not they were born in the Basque Country, should evolve and become known for this new style of work.

Technology operates at three different levels: as a factor in attracting talent, as a tool for monitoring talent-related issues (recruitment, retention, development, etc.) and as an element that will soon be hybridised with the work carried out by our employees, meaning that company structures will have to adapt to this new reality.

# ATTRACTING AND RETAINING TALENT

## ATTRACTING INTERNATIONAL TALENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

The positioning of the Basque Country as an attractive region, both to live in and to pursue a career, continues to be key despite the fact that the markets have been hit by a global pandemic. In a globalised world, places are increasingly competing to make themselves known and position themselves as attractive places to live and work. In such a competitive environment, a successful place branding strategy helps to build a shared identity that impacts positively on the perception that highly skilled professionals have of the location in question as an important hub. The aim is to create a sustainable competitive advantage by building brand value in relation to the identity of a specific geographical area.

Although the future looks very uncertain, the need to recruit qualified people has remained a priority for certain organisations. Although employment has fallen by 1% in 2020 according to the Adecco Group Institute, the destruction of employment has not affected people of different educational levels equally. While 8,800 people with primary education and 22,900 with secondary education have lost their jobs, 23,000 people with higher education have been recruited. The challenge, beyond identifying the professionals who can be found around the world, continues to be raising awareness of the opportunities offered by the Basque scientific-technological and business ecosystem for highly-qualified professionals. According to the Basque Talent Observatory, a tool that analyses offers in the Basque labour market that require high qualifications, the most sought-after profiles are management roles, software developers, salespeople, systems analysts and industrial and production engineers. This demand for the most sought-after professionals can be extrapolated to global trends. According to a LinkedIn study, some of the most sought after are: software developers, sales, project managers, IT administrators, digital marketers and data analysts.

With regard to international mobility, in the surveys carried out annually by Bizkaia Talent, professionals mainly highlight the following issues when making the decision to join the Basque employment market: salary and opportunities for career development in companies, followed by job flexibility and the international culture within the organisations. It is worth noting that the change in the way people work has been accelerated by the pandemic, so remote working and flexitime are increasingly in demand. Many of the above-mentioned professionals, such as software developers, see this as a prerequisite. And lastly, there are issues related to the work-life balance, as well as work for the partner and the family.

Organisations have a major role to play in shaping their employer value proposition to attract the people they need to incorporate into their teams. However, this attraction must be accompanied by a regional strategy in which the policies implemented con-



**Degree of importance of the barriers to returning/going to the Basque Country**

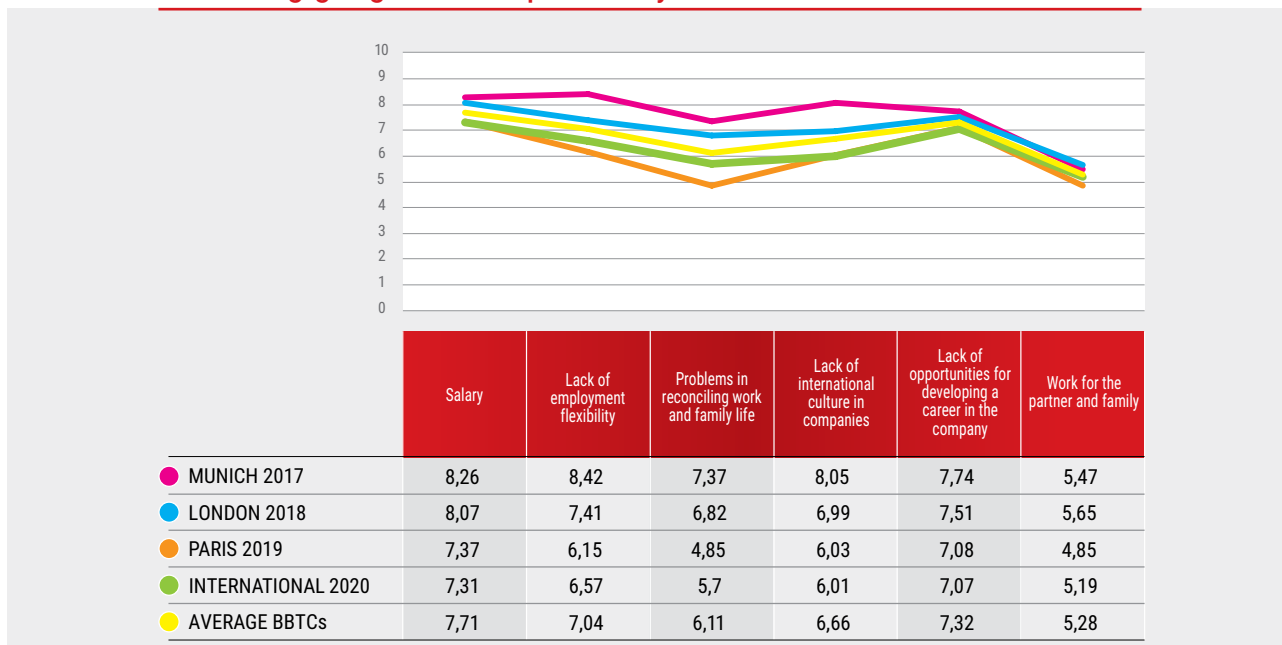


Illustration 1. Source: Bizkaia Talent, own creation, 2020.

tribute to building such an image, such as the Special Taxation Regime for Displaced Workers, which will also be referred to later in this report. This, together with clearer and more accessible information on salary levels in the Basque Country, helps international professionals to make their decision.

However, both the organisational culture of the companies and the opportunities for professional development are critical when it comes to whether someone decides to come or return to the Basque Country. For this reason, it is important to count on the involvement and collaboration of agents in the ecosystem who have a more accurate view of market trends, as well as recruitment consultancies or head hunters who can identify the employment concerns of professionals

It is clear that the pandemic has changed the way people relate to each other. Now more than ever, technological tools and an online presence play a key role in the dissemination of information required by professionals, as well as in the way in which organisations make themselves known to potential employees. However, we must not forget that it is just as important to build or strengthen the relationship between organisation and professional as it is to use all the digital media at our disposal. It is impossible to build a relationship without trust. Therefore, the entire ecosystem must be aware of and take as its main focus the needs of the professionals that organisations want to attract, and from there, adjust their value proposition (also at a regional level) and communicate it, establishing real relationships, where the value of people is demonstrated.

# Be Basque Talent Network



Bizkaia Talent aims to promote and encourage the regional management of talent. From developing the skills of Basque university students to attracting, binding and retaining highly qualified people to Bizkaia/Basque Country with international experience. Bizkaia Talent has the largest network of highly qualified professionals who are or want to be connected to the Basque Country, with more than 15,000 professionals in more than 100 countries who can connect with more than 450 Basque organisations that form part of the Be Basque Talent Network. All users can benefit from the following services and programmes:

## 1. International Networking Events

- [Be Basque Talent Conference](#): Annual event held in a European city with the aim of positioning the Basque Country as a place for professional development and helping organisations to strengthen their international employer brand and create links with professionals.
- [Be Basque Talent Meeting](#): International events held together with clusters and recruitment consultancies with the aim of publicising the opportunities offered by the country for professional development. In addition, it takes part in leading international fairs with the aim of attracting both postgraduate students and professionals in order to position masters, PhDs and job offers.

## 2. Customer Relationship Service

Maintaining a fluid relationship with organisations is key to understanding their talent management needs. The response to these needs is channelled through this service with tools such as:

- [Headhunting Support Centre](#)
- [Job Offers](#)
- [Basque Talent Observatory](#)
- [Basque Talent Map](#)

## 3. Relocation & Be Basque Dual Career Centre

- Advice is provided via the [Relocation](#) service to both companies and professionals to facilitate the negotiation and recruitment processes. In addition, an orientation programme is provided to assist the arrival of the professionals in terms of accommodation, social security, schooling, etc.
- [Be Basque Dual Career Centre](#) offers guidance to the partner of the international professional recruited by the company, to help them in their career development.

## 4. Talentia Service

- The aim of Talentia is to contribute to and respond to the sustainable future of our environment by minimising the gap between the skills, especially technical skills, that young people acquire at university and the more transversal skills that will be critical for the development of a successful professional and personal career. This work is carried out by means of 3 programmes:
- [Talentia Skills](#): Bizkaia's most promising undergraduate students.
- [Talentia Challenge](#): young graduates working as a team to provide solutions to real challenges faced by organisations in Bizkaia.
- [Be Basque Ambassadors](#): international students settled in Bizkaia.

## TAXATION, A REGIONAL TOOL TO HELP ATTRACT TALENT

An appropriate tax strategy can benefit the degree of attractiveness, as well as the sustainability of a territory's living standards, insofar as it promotes the mobility of highly qualified people in positions that generate high added value, and which in turn have an impact on the creation of supporting and secondary jobs in the surrounding area.

The Provincial Council of Bizkaia has been working in this area for some time, aware of the importance in the medium and long term of attracting highly qualified people who can develop their full potential in our region, with a view to advancing our standard of living.

Accordingly, the Special Taxation Regime for relocated workers, approved in 2018, introduced a series of tax benefits for those who come to carry out specially qualified work in research and development, scientific, technical and financial activities, among others.

The following infographic provides a visual overview of the main aspects to be considered. In any event, in light of the fact that the tax issue may raise questions, Bizkaia Talent periodically organises webinars in collaboration with the Tax Department of the Provincial Council of Bizkaia where, in addition to explaining the regulations in force, it also answers the most frequently asked questions that may arise in this area.

**UP TO**  
**35%**  
**DEDUCTION**  
IN YOUR INCOME TAX  
FOR **6 YEARS** AFTER  
YOU COME HERE

**It doesn't matter  
where you are from**

... **What are the advantages on offer?** .....

1. **15%** of work output **TAX FREE** during 6 years\*.
2. Up to **20% DEDUCTIBLE**:
  - On your and your family's travel expenses and relocation costs
  - Up to 2 return trips per year to the country which you are moving from
  - Rent expenditure on your habitual home in Bizkaia
  - Schooling expenses for your children
  - Expenditure on Spanish and Basque language courses for you and your family
  - Contract and supply expenses for your habitual home in Bizkaia
3. Income deriving from patrimony abroad is **EXEMPT OF TAX** as long as it is taxed abroad (including partner)




\* If you arrived after 01/01/2018 the special regime application period is five years plus the year that you acquire tax residency in Bizkaia. If you came before 2018 to Bizkaia, you could also partially take advantage of this regime (check it with the Tax Office & Finance Department).

..... **What conditions must i satisfy?**

1. You cannot have lived in Spain in the last 5 years before coming to Bizkaia.
2. Reason for moving to Bizkaia. **CONTRACT FOR CARRYING OUT WORK REQUIRING SPECIAL QUALIFICATIONS** related to the following activities:
 

  
R+D

  
SCIENCE

  
TECHNICAL

  
FINANCE

for a resident company or establishment permanently domiciled in Spain.
3. At least **85%** of the work must be carried out in Spain. <sup>(1)</sup>

<sup>(1)</sup> 70% if the work you do is for another company of the group outside State territory.
4. Acquire tax residence in Bizkaia.

## ADMINISTRATIVE-BUREAUCRATIC AND LEGAL ISSUES WHICH AFFECT THE MOBILITY OF TALENT

Covid-19 has not slowed down the need for Basque organisations to recruit professionals with international experience. Both research staff and other highly qualified professionals, with diverse experiences, have been key in enabling our technology centres, research centres, universities and our industry to carry out projects that have allowed us to face, from a better position, the difficult economic situation in which the pandemic has placed us.

In 2020, our scientific-technological and business fabric was notably affected in terms of recruiting these international professionals to their teams. Organisations in need of international profiles have encountered and continue to encounter mobility restrictions and difficulties arising from this situation. In order to advise these Basque organisations, Bizkaia Talent identified the need to set up a workspace to respond to the difficulties encountered, share experiences and create a community among the organisations concerned.

During the working sessions, in addition to responding to the particular issues of each of the organisations, updates resulting from health restrictions, new regulations published, as well as changes in policies related to matters concerning foreigners, always coming from official sources, are shared. Accordingly, the following are the administrative-bureaucratic and legal issues that have had the greatest impact on the mobility of highly qualified professionals.

### Common administrative-bureaucratic issues

Habitualmente, las organizaciones tienen que gestionar una serie de cuestiones administrativas y burocráticas a la hora de contratar a ciudadanos extranjeros. Por un lado, para los ciudadanos de la UE – EEE – Suiza se mencionan cuestiones tales como Número de Identidad de Extranjero (NIE), afiliación a la Seguridad Social, el certificado de registro de los ciudadanos europeos o la tarjeta de familiar de ciudadano europeo, entre otros.

Typically, organisations have to manage a number of administrative and bureaucratic issues when recruiting foreign nationals. On the one hand, for EU-EEA-Switzerland citizens, issues such as the Foreigner's Identity Number (NIE), social security affiliation, the registration certificate for European citizens or the European citizen's family card, among others, are mentioned.

On the other hand, for professionals from other countries, issues such as the processing of authorisation requests for [temporary residence, studies, residence, family reunification, residence and work, and others regulated](#) by Organic Law 2/2009 on

the rights and freedoms of foreigners in Spain and their social integration (processed by the Foreigners' Office or Consular Services), or by Law 14/2013 on Support of Entrepreneurs and their Internationalisation, handled by the Large Companies Unit. In addition to the processing of the Foreigner's Identity Card-TIE, and obstacles and solutions encountered in certain embassies when it comes to processing entry visas.

### **Brexit: new scenario for British citizens**

Due to the pandemic and Brexit, 2020 has brought new developments that have made it necessary to take into account aspects such as the following: the change when it comes to requesting online appointments at both the Foreigners' Office and the police to process the NIE or TIE; restrictions on non-essential travel from third countries to the European Union and Schengen associated countries due to the health crisis caused by Covid-19; and new requirements to recruit temporary or permanent relocated workers by remote means.

In addition, British citizens and their family members, holders of a registration certificate, had to apply for the new card associated with the withdrawal agreement by 31 December at national police stations. In the case of British citizens who arrived between 6 July and 31 December 2020 and who do not have a registration certificate, they must apply for a residency document at the foreigners' office.

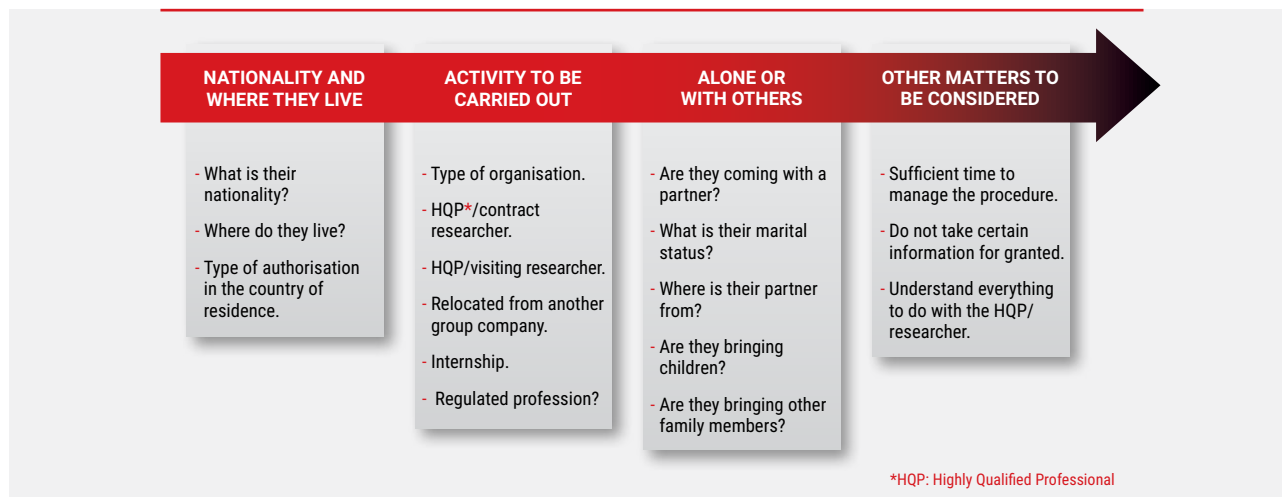
From 1 January 2021, in the post-Brexit era, there have been changes to international mobility. British citizens will need authorisations and visas to be able to work, reside and study in the Basque Country.

### How does Bizkaia Talent support organisations?

Lastly, having up-to-date information and knowledge of procedures helps organisations to make decisions when it comes to including these professionals in their teams. Therefore, Bizkaia Talent supports the organisation in three phases:

- 1) When candidates have been selected, they are informed of the implications (time, resources, etc.).
- 2) During the negotiation process, clarifying all the questions of the professional to be recruited.
- 3) Once the professional and their family have arrived in the Basque Country, providing information on the procedures as well as on their integration.

### Considerations when recruiting an international professional:



## INTERNATIONAL PROFESSIONALS: BENEFITS AND DIFFICULTIES FOR ORGANISATIONS WHEN MANAGING DIVERSITY

The attraction and subsequent recruitment of international talent is not only necessary from a demographic point of view, but should also be considered appropriate because of the many benefits it brings to our organisations in terms of global competitiveness.

The most obvious advantage could be that bringing such profiles into our ranks helps to improve communication and our image with our customers, as well as to open up new markets (very important when a high percentage of sales are made abroad).

But it is not only about communication with our customers or suppliers; internally, we can also achieve significant improvements in internal communication thanks, mainly, to bilingual professionals.

In general terms, the appointment of international professionals brings diversity and new knowledge, as well as complementary experiences that did not previously exist in the organisation, contributing, to a large extent, to knowledge of the industry outside the Basque Country.

Professionals from other parts of the world who decide to join a Basque organisation generally do so with a high degree of commitment to the project and help to generate an international company culture. And we must not forget that international talent attracts international talent.

However, the path is not an easy one when it comes to recruiting this type of talent. There are issues that influence this process, not only at a regional level but also at an organisational level and, of course, at a personal level.

To begin with, in many cases, our organisations, mainly SMEs, are not known outside our borders and, sometimes, it is difficult to convey the unique value that both the company and the region provide when we present ourselves to the world.

Differences in labour regulations, such as longer notice periods in other countries, salary differences, which in certain sectors are considerable, and also the fear that, after all the effort made to recruit the person we have been looking for so long, they may leave before giving us a chance to adapt to each other, all play an important role in the fact that, in many cases, we do not dare to take the plunge. It is precisely this last point, that of enabling us to get to know and trust each other, where we probably have the most work to do.



On the one hand, it seems that not only international professionals, but these in particular, are demanding greater clarification of the career plan, the professional project and the career development offered to them by the organisation that they are considering joining. Logically, not meeting the expectations we raise in the professional is not an option. We must pay special attention to realising the career plan we have promised.

On the other hand, sometimes we do not take into account or do not know quite how to deal with aspects that go beyond the professional project, such as family, housing, schooling for the children (if applicable), etc., and which, sooner or later, will undoubtedly tip the balance towards a longer or shorter period of employment.

Nevertheless, understanding the needs of employees (including those of potential employees) and designing a robust strategy, a value proposition, accompanied by a series of concrete actions aimed at understanding and satisfying the needs resulting from the employee experience, is essential.

### **Dual Career couples**

According to Rapoport and Rapoport dual-career couples are individuals that have “jobs which require a high degree of commitment and which have a continuous developmental character.” They define a dual-career family as “one in which both heads of household pursue careers and at the same time maintain a family life together.”

The dual-career lifestyle has created a unique set of challenges, many of which related to socialization and role expectations, work role conflicts, and family role conflicts. The home environment is a special challenge to the dual-career couple as two people try to meet the demands of careers and build a family life together. Most couples try to share the load. Even so, the fact remains that in the majority of dual-career families, the responsibility for the domestic sphere lies with the wife.

Bearing all this in mind, we can assume that these challenges are accentuated in the case of international professionals.

It is clearly important that, after the relocation, the partner also has career development opportunities, not only to contribute his/her area of expertise, but also to ensure that the professional who was recruited in the first instance and who has prompted the relocation of his/her family, does not leave our organisation earlier than desired.



**LIDIA ALMAZÁN** (Tarragona), Data Analyst, who will soon be joining Lantek.

**Lidia, what was the first thing that came to your mind when your partner accepted an offer from Ikerbasque and you knew you were moving to Bilbao?**

At first, very happy, the Basque Country seemed like an ideal place to start our new life. Bilbao has everything we were looking for; it is a cosmopolitan city with an international airport, surrounded by nature and also next to the sea. We are a family that loves sports and outdoor activities, nature and travelling. We couldn't ask for more.

Then later, I was a bit nervous about having to prepare for an international move in the middle of a pandemic with a little one year old and ending ten years of our life in Germany.

**What attracted you the most and what was your main fear about moving to the Basque Country?**

On a professional level, I was attracted by the fact that the Basque Country is firmly committed to technology and the promotion of talent. On another level, I was concerned about how I would be able to find opportunities in an unfamiliar job market and continue to develop professionally.

**You have not yet arrived, but you have already signed up with Lantek. How important was it for you to have help with this process?**

As I said, the Basque labour market was totally unknown to me. I was clear about what I was looking for, but I didn't know where to start. This is where Bizkaia Talent's help was crucial, as I not only obtained information about the region's business fabric and promotion of my professional profile, but it also provided me with a direct channel of communication with the companies most closely related to data science and its applications.

**“The Basque Country is firmly committed to technology and the promotion of talent.”**

**“Bizkaia Talent provided me with a direct channel of communication with the companies most closely related to data science and its applications.”**



**NAIARA MANZANARES BASTIDA**, Head of HR at Lookiero.

**Lookiero is an international company with offices in a number of cities, but it also has international staff in its Bilbao office. What does having people of other nationalities contribute to the company?**

Having people of different nationalities brings us talent from all over the world, greater creativity, more innovation and, above all, a variety of perspectives and approaches.

**At Lookiero you will find IT professionals who are in high demand in the job market. To what extent is it part of your value proposition to offer support to the partner of the professional that you hire in their search for employment in the Basque Country?**

This point is vital because we add value when it comes to recruiting talent from abroad, and this is something that tends to be a major concern for those who come to the Basque Country. We convey confidence and concern for the candidate and their personal situation, and they greatly appreciate it.

**“We convey confidence and concern for the candidate and their personal situation, and they greatly appreciate it.”**

# DEVELOPING TALENT

## ACCELERATING THE ENTRY OF YOUNG TALENT INTO THE LABOUR MARKET: TALENTIA SKILLS

A transversal skill-base is a characteristic of the person that surfaces when responding to requests from the organisational environment and which is considered essential in the workplace in order to transform knowledge into behaviour. The term is used to indicate broad-spectrum abilities, not specific to a profession or organisational environment, and is applicable to a variety of tasks and contexts.

Therefore, learning these skills has to be experience-based and practical: is the only way for human beings to transform knowledge into behaviour. This learning is especially important at the formative stage, when young people acquire the knowledge base that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

If we add to this the fact that, according to a survey carried out by Bizkaia Talent among more than 180 high-potential undergraduate students in Bizkaia, 85% of the students did not know most of the companies in the surrounding area, we can conclude that it is particularly important to boost the number of meeting points between organisations and students, especially in the early stages of training.

This is why, in addition to thematic skill-based workshops or group coaching sessions, Bizkaia Talent encourages collaboration between organisations and students by means of numerous gatherings in which they work to tackle common issues. Also, in this way, the students get to know the companies around them and their professional possibilities, and at the same time, the organisations get to know potential candidates for their teams.

One of the best examples of this type of initiative is the Skillathon, a meeting in which, through gamification, young students designed solutions to the challenges of various companies, thus contributing to the positioning of Basque companies among university talent, while they in turn develop transversal skills and provide real solutions. This experience had a very positive impact on both companies and students.

Providing students with spaces for creativity and experimentation, where they can simulate situations that they will have to face in the future while developing transversal skills, is of vital importance in accelerating the transition process between the university and the professional world. In this respect, taking as a basis the transversal skills most in demand in the job offers analysed in the Basque Talent Observatory (see page 31 of this report) Bizkaia Talent wanted to measure how these skills are really reflected in day-to-day work, and to do so, we asked more than 150 profes-

sionals with up to 5 years of professional experience to assess how important they consider these skills to be in their work experience. The results were as follows:

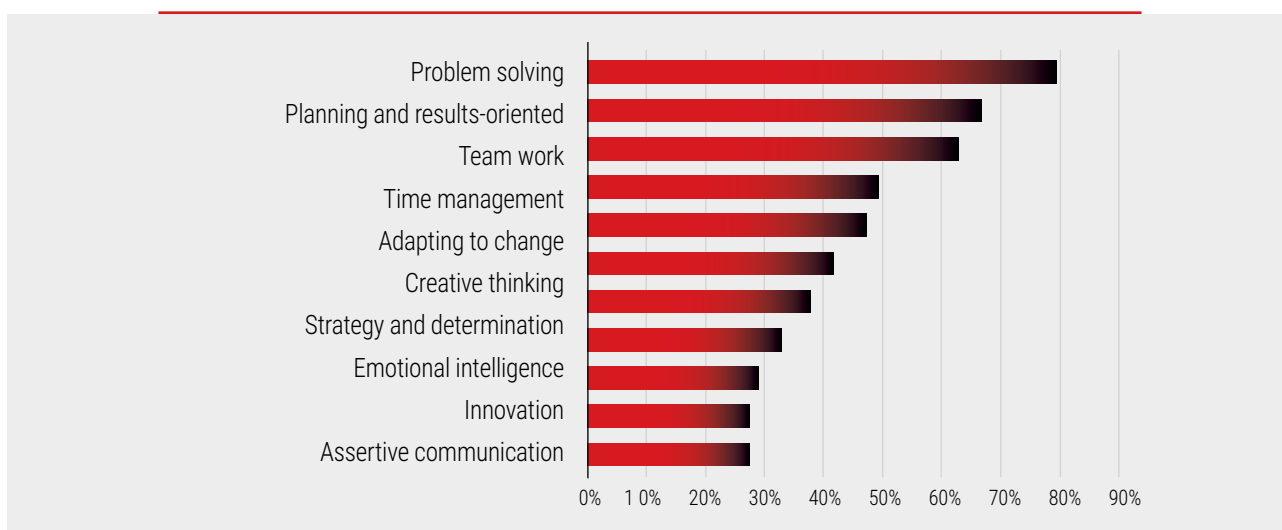


Illustration 2. Source: Bizkaia Talent, own creation, 2020.

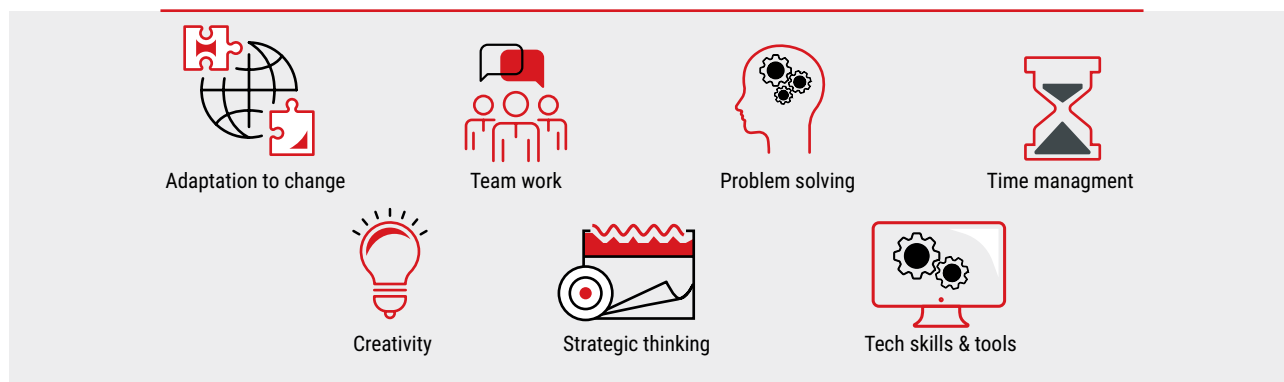
The ability to be a problem solver is most highly valued, along with planning and being results-oriented and a team player, followed by time management and adapting to change.

In this regard, it is vitally important to understand the development of these skills in their entirety, i.e. not to limit it only to individual learning, but also to make young people actively take part in and be responsible for their professional development (understanding that this can and should begin even in the academic stage, for example, through projects, work experience or degree final projects), as well as actively promoting collaboration with the various agents in the ecosystem, whether from the academic or business environment, in addition to clusters, professional associations and other social organisations.

**GERMÁN ZUBIAUR**, Global Athlete Marketing at Red Bull

We shared the results with Germán Zubiaur, a participant in Talentia in 2015 and a specialist in Global Athlete Marketing at Red Bull, and in his view, there are three skills that make a difference: “communication, especially the ability to express oneself verbally, preferably in more than one language; organisation, understood in its broadest sense, including objective-based planning; and adaptation to change, both at the macro level, i.e. being willing to change situations, to move out of one’s comfort zone, and at the micro level, being able to adapt to very different situations or environments in a short period of time, for example from leaving a meeting that has not gone well to having to make a presentation to a third party.”

**“The three skills that make the difference are communication, organisation and adapting to change.”**

**7 key skills:****Case study: SKILLATHON**

90% of companies cannot find the candidates they need and the demographic pyramid exacerbates the struggle for junior talent. At least 50% of Basque companies do not carry out any Employer Branding activities, which means that 85% of students are unaware of them.

Given the difficulty companies have in making themselves known among GenZ, Bizkaia Talent has designed the Skillathon, which, through gamification, contributes to the positioning of Basque companies among young people, while the students develop transversal skills and provide real solutions.

**Before:** An analysis is made of the openness to employer branding of various types of companies and the career priorities of young people. They receive the ToolBox consisting of communication and content creation tools and training on 7 key skills: adaptation to change, teamwork, communication, problem solving, time management, creativity and strategic thinking.

**During:** The challenge is presented as an expedition (virtual map based on Design Thinking), which starts by presenting the company's people management strategies. For 2 hours 243 participants, divided into 61 teams, design a proposal to improve the positioning as an ad-hoc employer for the participating companies.

**After:** Each company gives feedback to the teams on their solutions and chooses a winning team, who receive a visit to the company as well as personal branding advice.

**Impact:** On the one hand, the companies not only made themselves known among the more than 240 participants at the event, but also increased their impact in terms of outreach fivefold: After the event, on average, each participant talked about their experience with the companies in the Skillathon to five people in their circle and 22% of the participants shared it with six or more people.

The participants, for their part, particularly highlighted the development of two transversal skills through this experience: 84% of the participants highlighted having developed their skills of "teamwork" and 76% "creativity", two skills that they generally said they do not usually work on in their daily lives.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE IN DEVELOPING TALENT

More and more young people are embarking on the adventure of completing their education abroad in an increasingly global world. The reasons are multiple, academic reasons for undertaking the adventure and the need to enhance their CV, enrich their professional profile and improve their employability or career development are just the beginning of a long list of advantages. Further training after graduation is nowadays a wise choice and is becoming increasingly popular with both young people and companies. It allows students to undergo an international life experience, which opens the mind and broadens the horizons. Academically, the experience may determine a before and after in the development of a professional career, but on a personal level it will undoubtedly make a difference.

Studying a postgraduate course at a university with international prestige allows our young people to specialise in the areas with the greatest potential for the future, to be introduced to other ways of working and to be trained in a different educational system, also increasing their personal autonomy and critical skills. The experience forces our young people to immerse themselves in new cultures, to get to know a new country and its citizens, and thus to expand the network of contacts of the participants, which will undoubtedly enrich them personally and/or professionally.

In terms of learning or improving the level of a foreign language, living for a year or two in a country with a different language and studying in that language is a guarantee to really learning it. Daily communication with other students in a foreign language leads to more knowledge than any formal course. This is one of the reasons why the UK and other English-speaking countries are among the most popular destinations for young people. English proficiency is essential in the professional development of young people, especially in technical candidates that generally lack the appropriate level when they enter the labour market. On the other hand, doing a postgraduate course in Germany will allow you to learn the language of one of the most powerful economies in the world while also establishing a network of contacts in the country which, depending on the sector in which the future professional is working, can significantly increase the chances of success, such as in one of the strategic sectors of the Basque Country, the motor industry.

The contribution of universities, as well as other teaching, research and knowledge centres, is decisive in building a better and more prepared the Basque Country to face the future with certainty. The role of universities and education, research and



knowledge centres is essential. They contribute to the development and future prosperity of the Basque Country, since they represent a crucial asset for its economic, scientific and cultural development, as well as for its international promotion as a centre of science, technology, innovation, creativity and talent.

The cornerstones of competitiveness are considered to be those measures that have an impact on the professional training of young people and high-achieving university students for better learning and better professional integration and future career development.



**ITZIAR LOSA MIGUELA**, with a double degree in Mechanical Engineering + Industrial Design Engineering from the University of Deusto, is doing a postgraduate Astronautics and Space Engineering MSc at Cranfield University (UK). Once she has completed her training, she will return to Bizkaia to join SENER.

#### **Why did you decide to do an international postgraduate course?**

When I finished my bachelor's degree, it was clear to me that I wanted to take a master's degree abroad, not only to specialise and acquire more specific knowledge, but also because I believed that the experience could be enriching on a personal and professional level, and I was right.

#### **What aspects would you highlight from your experience of studying an international postgraduate course?**

Studying a postgraduate course in England, as was my case, has also provided me with the obvious advantages, such as acquiring a much more technical language and improving my pronunciation and fluency in English, as well as the opportunity to face everyday challenges and learn from each one of them. Living abroad while studying for a Master's degree is a transition to adulthood, and a process of adapting to independence, in which you learn to fend for yourself in all areas, from the simplest, such as shopping and preparing meals, to the more complex, such as managing payments, access applications, and so on...

I have also been lucky enough to make friends with people from many different backgrounds and nationalities, with all the richness that this entails:

learning different languages, opinions, cuisines... It's amazing how much you can learn from people, but even more so when you realise how much more there is to discover.

If you have the opportunity, I think it is essential to be exposed to this experience, and I would definitely recommend it to anyone who is thinking about it.

**“it was clear to me that I wanted to take a master's degree abroad because I believed that the experience could be enriching on a personal and professional level.”**



**LEIRE HORMIGO HERRERO**, Finance and Human Resources, Development, Training and Recruitment, Talent Attraction and Recruitment at Iberdrola.

**With regard to young people trained internationally, what are the qualities you value most when selecting and attracting young talent?**

At Iberdrola, talent is the energy that drives everything else. We are looking for future professionals capable of forming part of a global, multicultural, committed and qualified team that contributes, with their work and talent, to the creation of sustainable value.

Mobility programmes, training and professional development schemes and cultural exchanges are the mainstays of our model. Therefore, at Iberdrola, we value talent that has taken the opportunity to benefit from an international experience very highly. This type of experience as well as enriching the curriculum and improving the level of foreign languages also forces young people to face new challenges. They are prepared young people who do not take the easy option, stepping out of their comfort zone and facing new situations, developing the necessary resources to handle them.

**“Mobility programmes, training and professional development schemes and cultural exchanges are the mainstays of our model.”**

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**“Our aim is to train professionals in strategic areas for the energy sector, with a commitment to international educational excellence”.**

**What are the main activities you offer in terms of talent development through international training?**

At Iberdrola we have numerous training and talent development programmes for all our employees, but we also help talented people develop their full potential even before they start their career. We have an International Iberdrola Scholarship Programme for postgraduate studies. Our aim is to train professionals in strategic areas for the energy sector, with a commitment to international educational excellence. We also work with external agents on International Training Programmes. It is a sign of our commitment to promote talent, excellence in training and research as the cornerstones of employability and knowledge.

## SKILLS MANAGEMENT, A KEY TOOL FOR TALENT DEVELOPMENT



**RIKARDO BUENO ZABALO**, General Manager of the Basque Research & Technology Alliance (BRTA)

In 2015, the Basque Government published the decree regulating the agents of the Basque Science, Technology and Innovation Network (RVCTI) and providing for the professional careers of research personnel in the Basque Country. More than five years after its launch, Rikardo Bueno, General Manager of the Basque Research & Technology Alliance (BRTA), shares with Bizkaia Talent the experience of the technology centres in terms of professional development.

This decree is published with the aim of defining the objectives and specific positioning of each agent in terms of specialisation, excellence and position in the R&D&I value chain, based on the experience acquired. This framework assesses the activity of the stakeholders according to the level of compliance with the required results. In this context, career plans for research staff positions are divided into four levels, from G4 (Junior Researcher) to G1 (Principal Researcher).

All the technology centres in the Basque Country have implemented this model for defining professional careers, each one to the extent allowed by its structure and the work experience of its research staff. Rikardo Bueno emphasises “the advantages of applying a common scale to all the centres” and stresses that “the model allows the levels of professional development of a person to be measured in an objective way”. The fact of “having a classification based on objective criteria increases the chances of speaking a common language, so international mobility comes more naturally,” he adds.

**“The model allows the levels of professional development of a person to be measured in an objective way”.**

Despite this, technology centres have encountered two obstacles in implementing the professional development practices. Firstly, the mismatch of profiles in terms of experience: this is the case for those people who already had significant experience before the implementation of this decree, but whose experience was not reflected in the new model, as they did not meet some of the requirements for the higher levels (G1 and G2). Secondly, within the field of research, the professionals who are closer to the transfer of knowledge to industry, and whose professional development is not governed so much by the criteria of the publication of articles or patents, find it more difficult for their careers to be included in the model provided by this decree.

Nevertheless, given that not only researchers work in technology centres, initiatives such as this decree also help to foster the loyalty of management-oriented personnel. It should also be noted that in Europe and the USA, professional development is a very common practice and, consequently, an aspect that professionals with international experience value when considering the Basque Country as a professional destination. In any case, Bueno argues that “important steps forward have been taken in the Basque Country, and that the objective is to implement the model proposed in the decree in order to make the relevant improvements in the future”.

Looking to the future, the director of BRTA suggests that, in order to attract the best professionals to our centres and companies, “although it is not an easy path, it would be very positive to transfer this type of practice to the different areas that make up the Basque scientific-technological and business fabric, taking the organisational culture as the focus, as well as the resources of each company”.

**“Having a classification based on objective criteria increases the chances of speaking a common language, so international mobility comes more naturally.”**

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### **IÑIGO DIEGO GAYDE**, Head of People Development at Ingeteam Power Technology

Iñigo Diego, Head of People Development at Ingeteam Power Technology, has extensive experience in the field of people management consultancy. Below, he discusses the role of skills in the professional development of talent.

Iñigo states that “the shortage of talent in relation to STEM profiles means that organisations have to be sharper in their strategies for attracting and retaining talent”. In order to achieve these objectives, it is “essential to lay the foundations” in terms of talent management. For this reason, “the definition of both hard and soft skills is of great importance in order to respond to the people area processes”, he adds.

A good skills description establishes a common language within the organisation, thus allowing coherence between the different phases of the people department processes. Among others, the recruitment and selection phase requires skills to be identified and classified so that the recruitment of people is consistent with the needs of the company. Skills-based assessments help people’s professional development.

Iñigo argues that “the key to avoiding that, once a catalogue of skills has been developed, it stays in the drawer, is to involve workers at all levels, both in the definition and in the implementation of the use of these skills. For this reason, a correct implementation and support in modules or ERPs for people management (Success factors, Talentia, Cornerstone, etc.) is fundamental”. Aware that it is sometimes more difficult for SMEs to carry out this practice because they have fewer resources than larger organisations, Iñigo believes that the level of development of this type of policy “depends largely on the organisational culture”, and adds that Basque organisations “are in line with European trends”, although he acknowledges that in the United States “they are a step ahead, as far as the application and development of this type of management model is concerned”.

**“The shortage of talent in relation to STEM profiles means that organisations have to be sharper in their strategies for attracting and retaining talent”.**

**“The key to avoiding that, once a catalogue of skills has been developed, it stays in the drawer, is to involve workers at all levels”.**

## LABOUR MARKET TRENDS AND EVOLUTION

This section contains a more quantitative analysis related to the Basque highly qualified labour market. This is an own elaboration based on data compiled on the one hand by the Basque Talent Observatory and on the other hand from the trends section of the Career Development Centre of Bizkaia Talent, in the latter case obtaining the data from the labour market census survey and Lanbide - Basque Employment Service. After showing the trends up to 2020 in vacancies, skills and highly qualified occupations in the Basque Country, it will be possible to check the trends up to 2019 by sectors of activity, academic branches, as well as the adjustment of university graduates to the Basque labour market.

### Basque Talent Observatory

The Basque Talent Observatory (BTO) is the world's first publicly accessible tool for monitoring the Basque Country's highly qualified labour market and obtaining information on specific professionals through the analysis of Big Data from multiple on-line sources. The BTO analyses occupational profiles on the basis of the European Commission's Occupations ESCO classification.

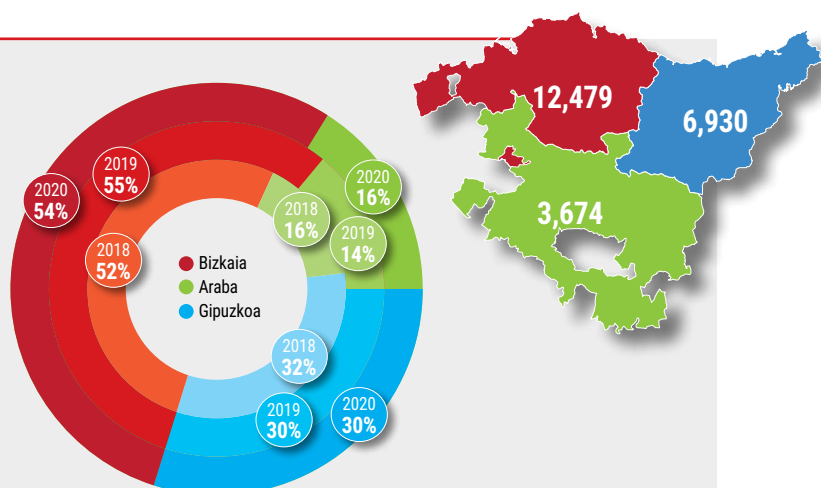
31

### TRENDS IN VACANCIES IN THE BASQUE AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY

From 1 January 2020 to 31 December 2020, 23,092 highly qualified job offers requiring a university degree were analysed.

Analysing the location of the vacancies, Bizkaia is the historical territory where most vacancies are published (54%) followed by Gipuzkoa (30%) and in third place Araba (16% of the vacancies).

	2018	2019	2020
Offers Analysed	31,437	46,902	23,092
<i>Geographic Areas</i>			
Bizkaia	16,467	26,158	12,479
Araba	4,915	6,639	3,674
Gipuzkoa	10,076	14,034	6,930
Assigned to more than one region	1	71	9



## EVOLUTION OF THE MOST IN-DEMAND HIGH-SKILLED OCCUPATIONS IN 2020

We can see that the 10 most sought-after occupations in the highly qualified labour market are:

### Most sought-after occupations in 2020



32

## EVOLUTION OF THE MOST IN-DEMAND SKILLS IN 2020

The most sought-after skills in 2020 are:

### Most demanded skills in 2020

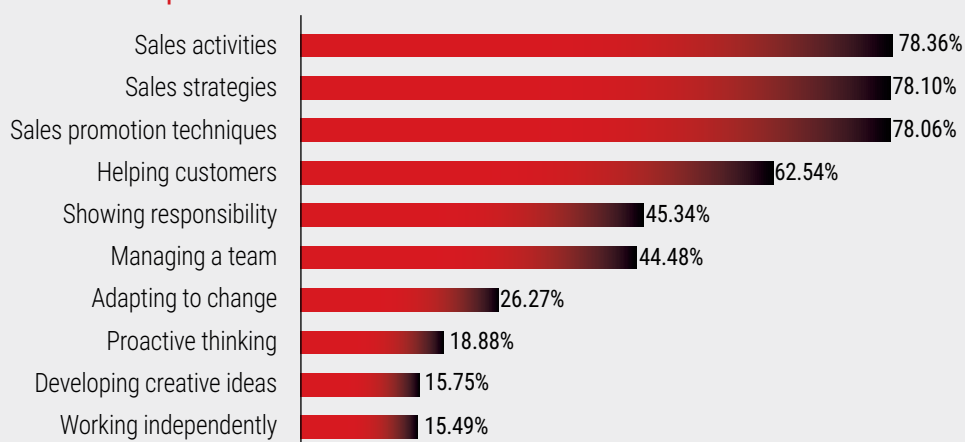




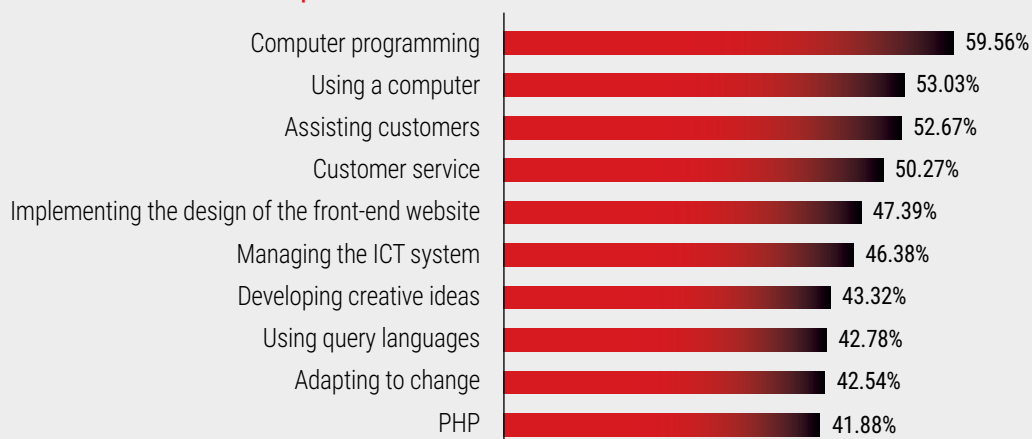
## EVOLUTION OF SKILLS ACCORDING TO THE MOST IN-DEMAND OCCUPATIONS IN 2020

In this case, the percentage represents the number of times that skill appears in the occupations.

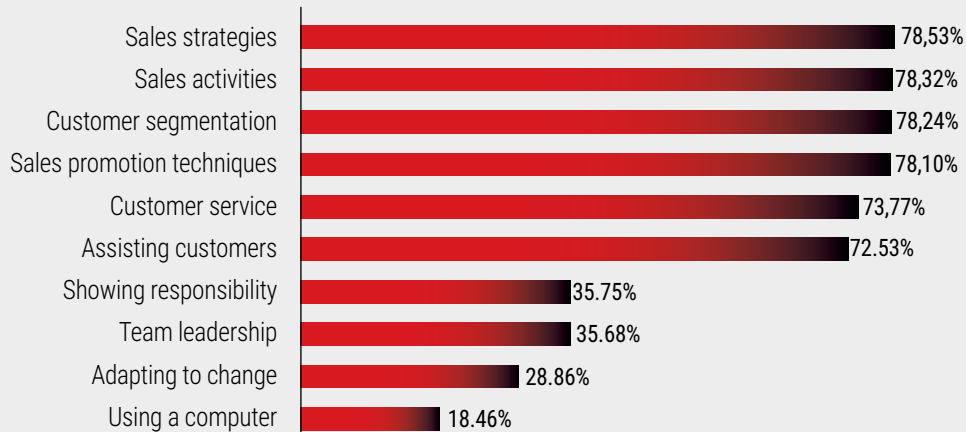
### Commercial service operators not elsewhere classified



### Software developers



### Commercial sales representatives



### Industrial and production engineers

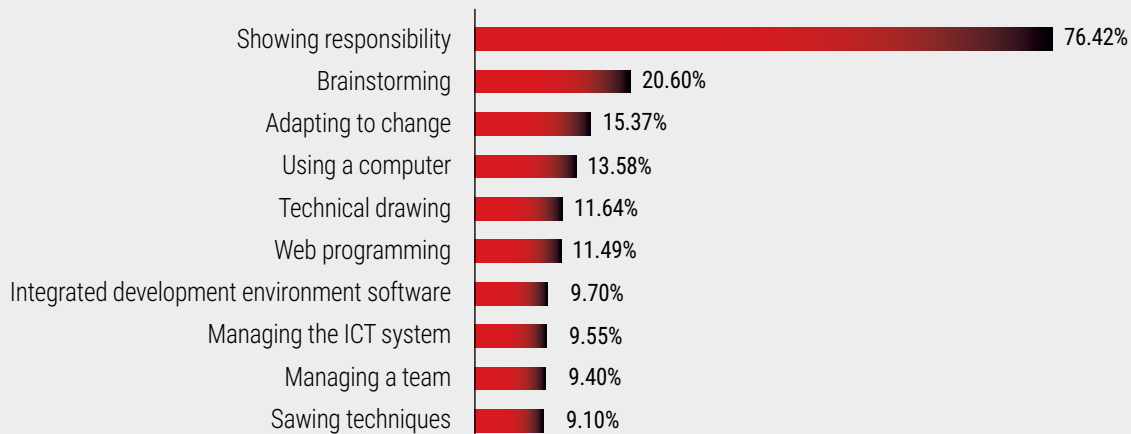


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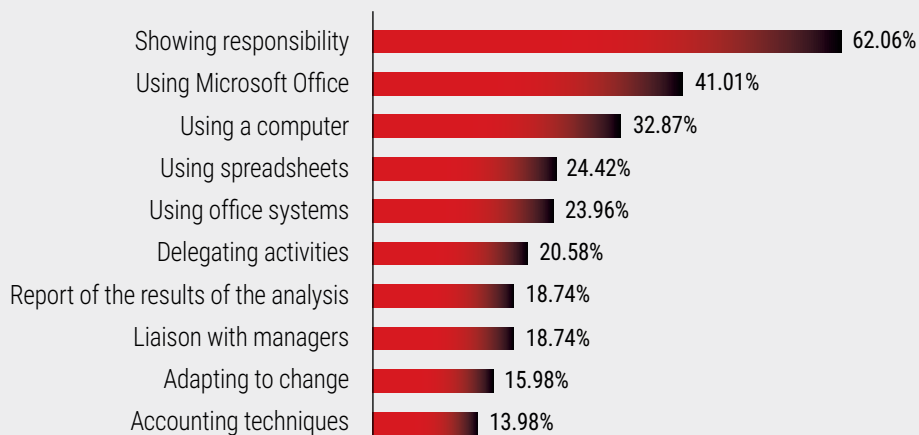
### Systems analysts



### Teaching professionals not classified elsewhere

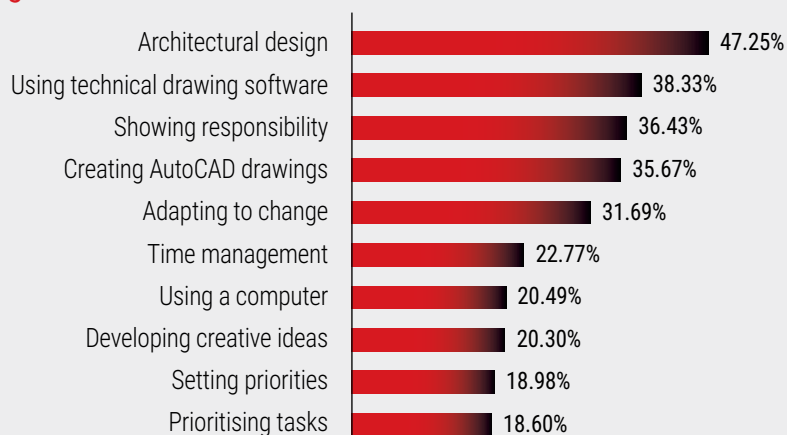


### Administrative and executive secretaries

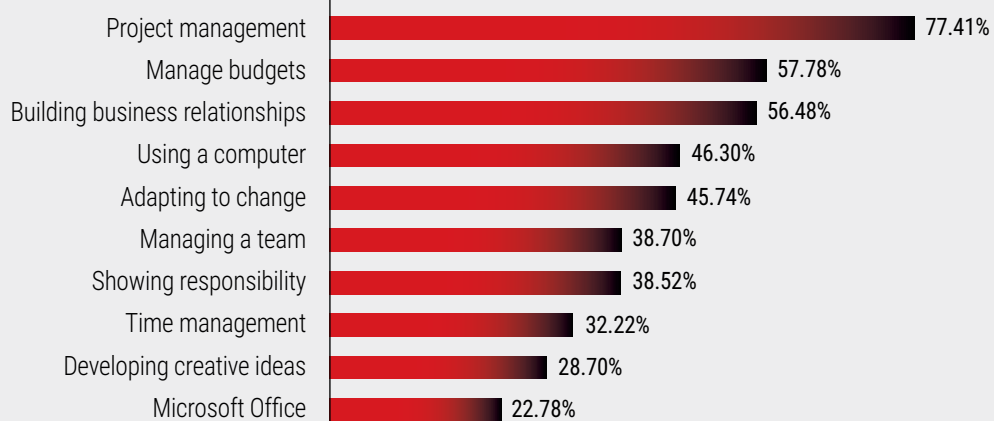


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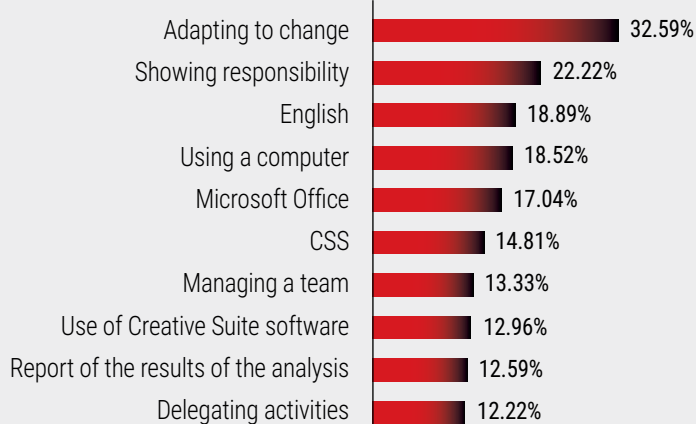
### Draughtsmen/women



### Research and development managers



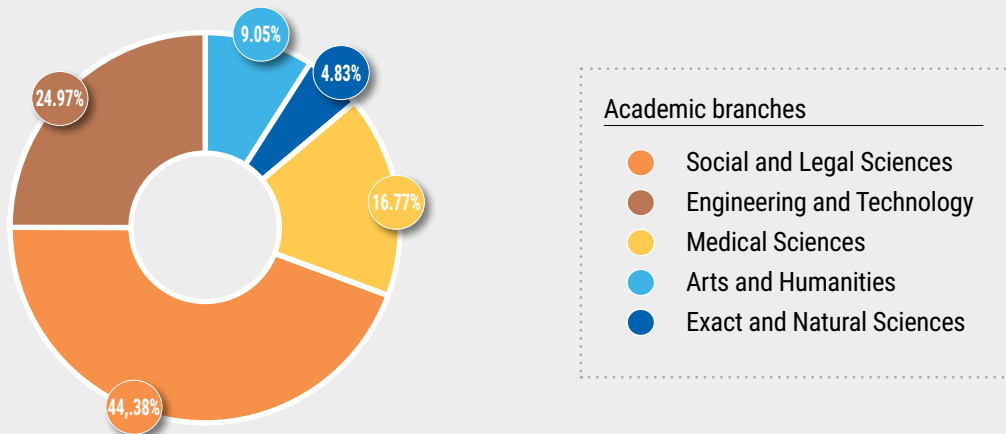
### Training and employee development professionals



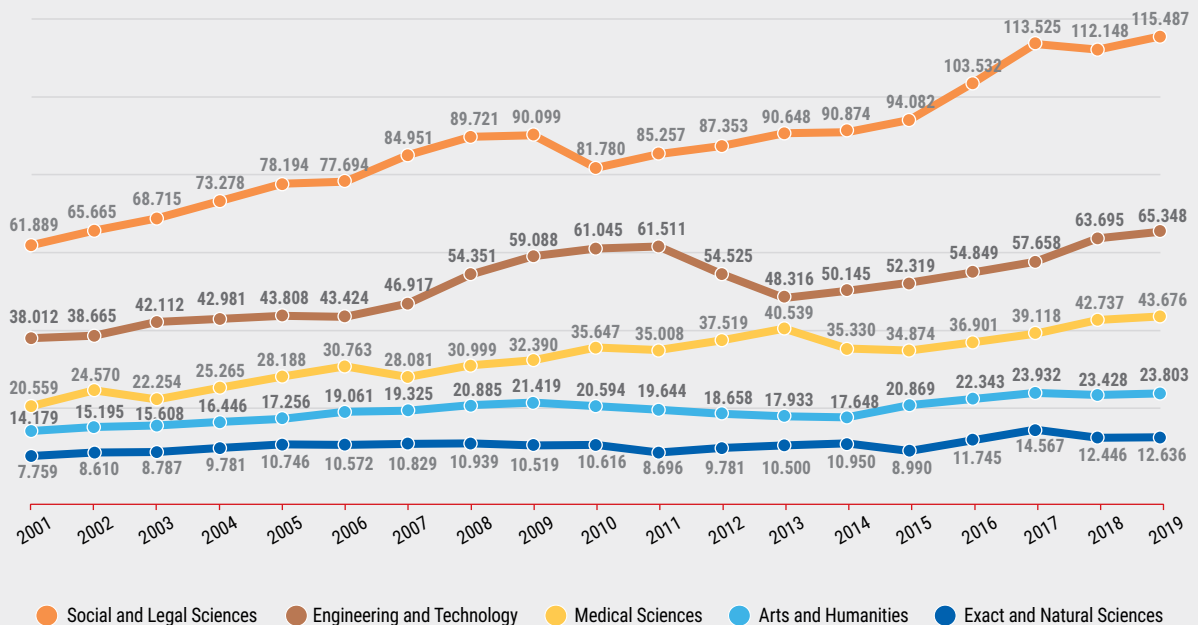
## HIGHLY QUALIFIED LABOUR MARKET IN THE BAC: SITUATION AND DEVELOPMENTS UP TO 2019 BY SECTOR OF ACTIVITY AND ACADEMIC BRANCH

Data obtained from the labour market survey and Lanbide.

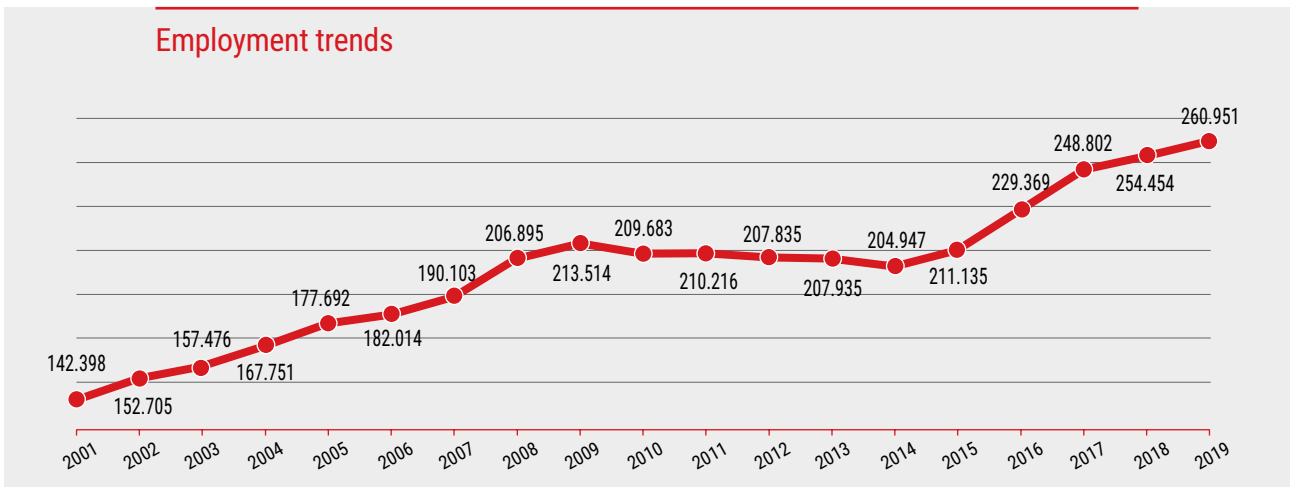
### Division of the labour market according to academic branches



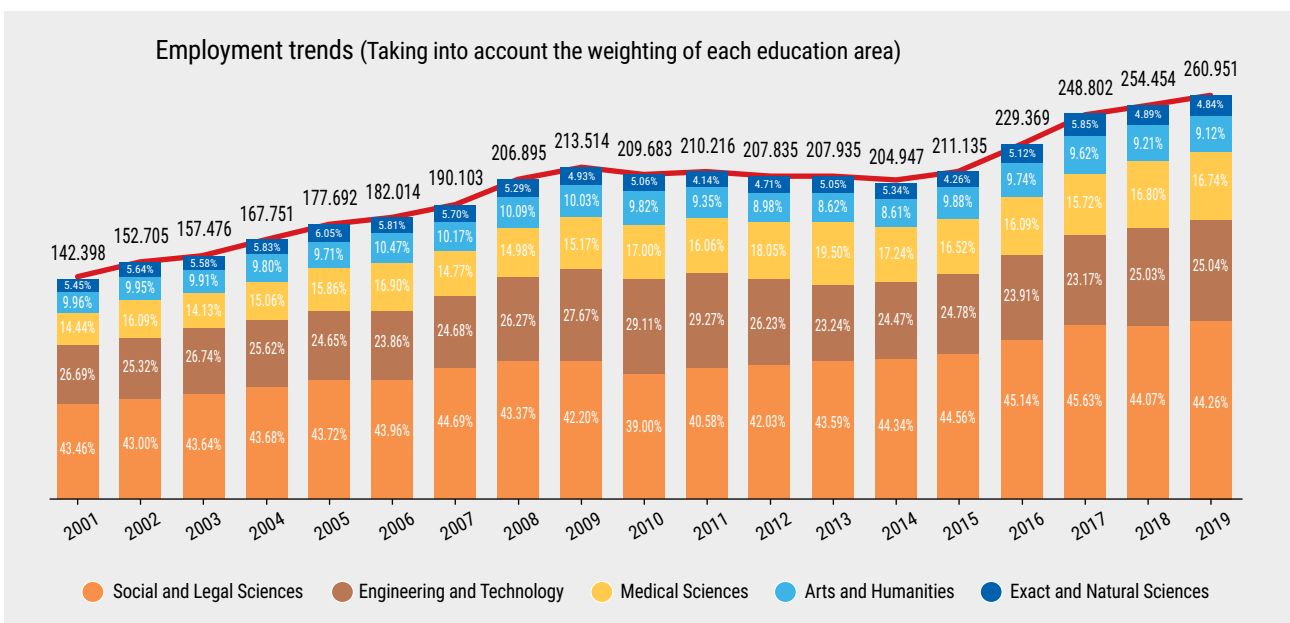
### Employment trends by academic branch



The graph below shows the evolution of highly qualified employment for university graduates in the labour market of the Basque Country until 2019, as a result of the sum of all academic branches.

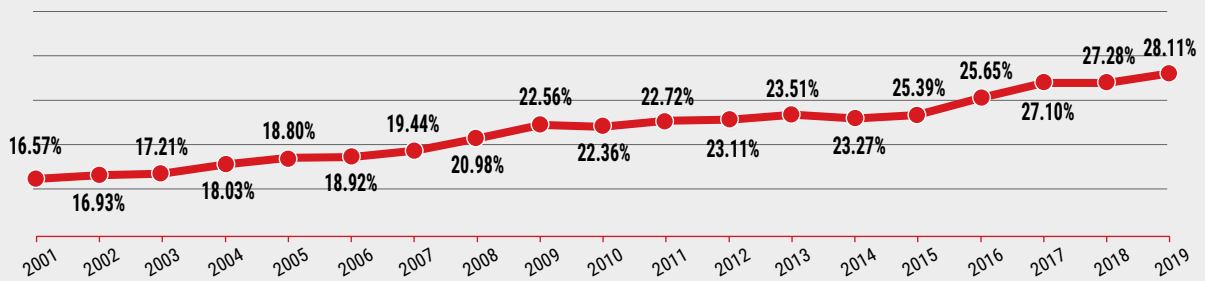


The same trend can also be seen below, taking into account, in this case, the weighting of each academic branch.

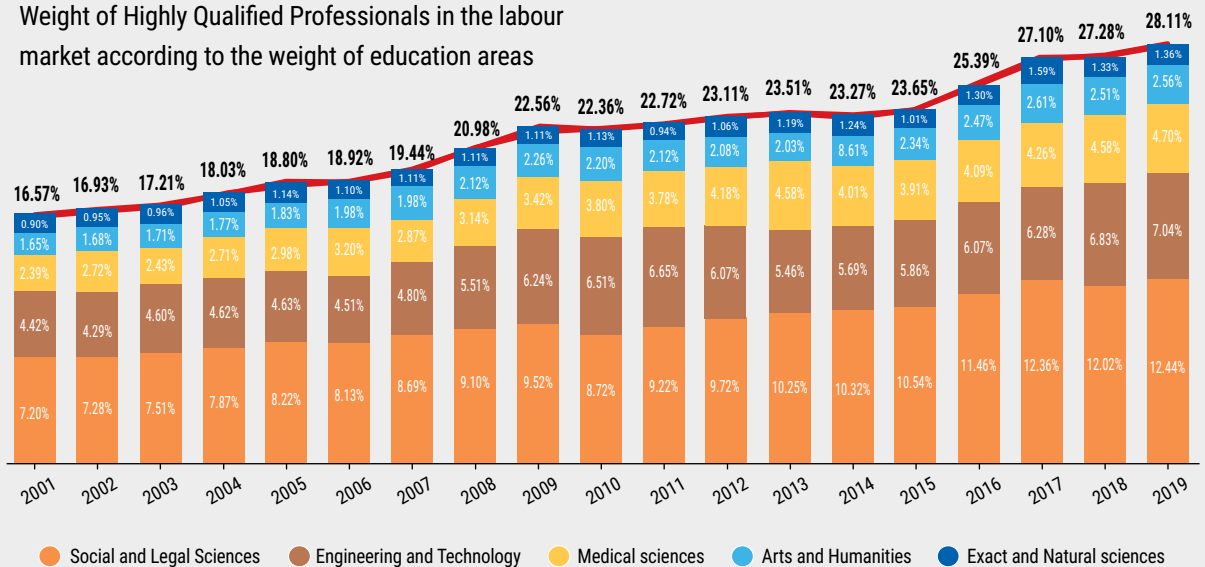


Weighting of university graduates working in highly skilled jobs in the Basque Country labour market

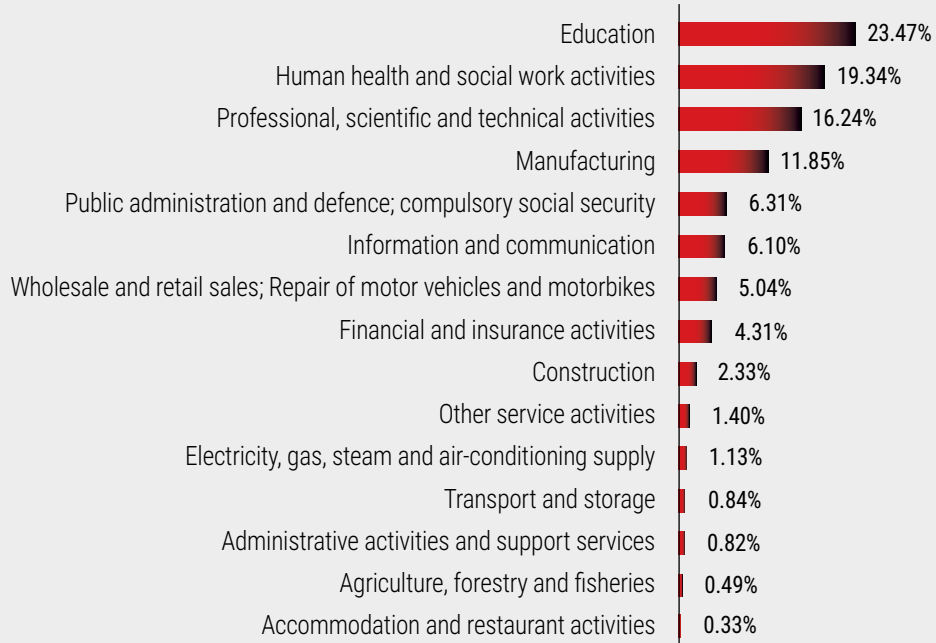
Weighting of Highly Qualified Professionals in the labour market



Weight of Highly Qualified Professionals in the labour market according to the weight of education areas



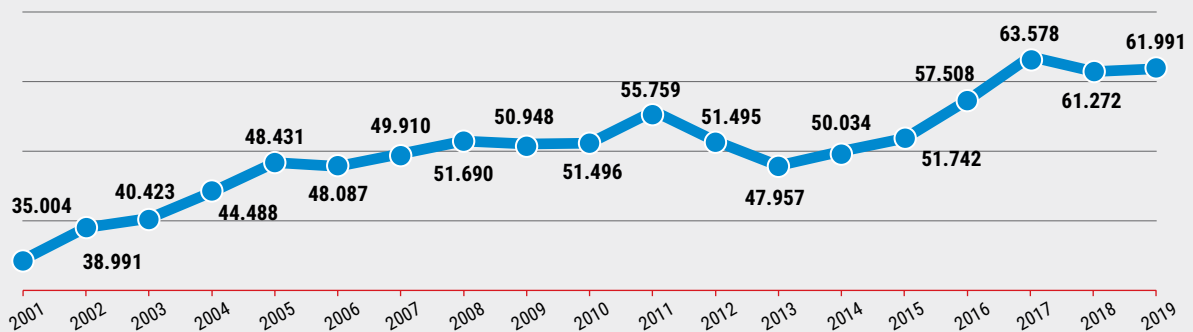
### Division of the labour market according to sector of activity



### Trends in employment by sector of activity

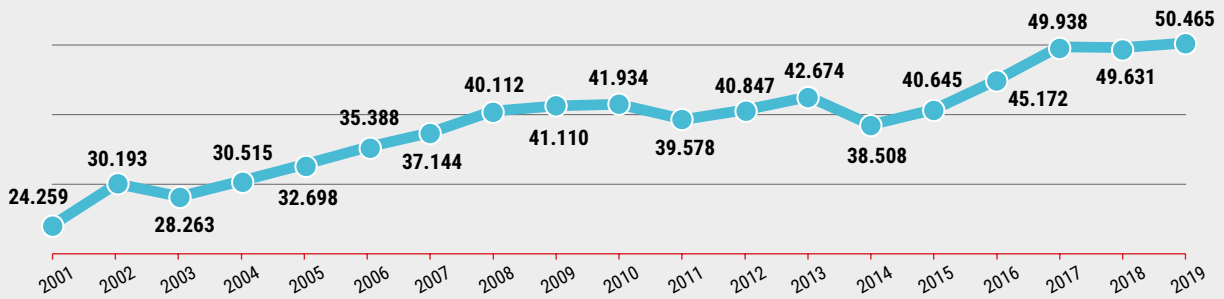
Below shows the trend in employment up to 2019 by sector of activity.

#### Education

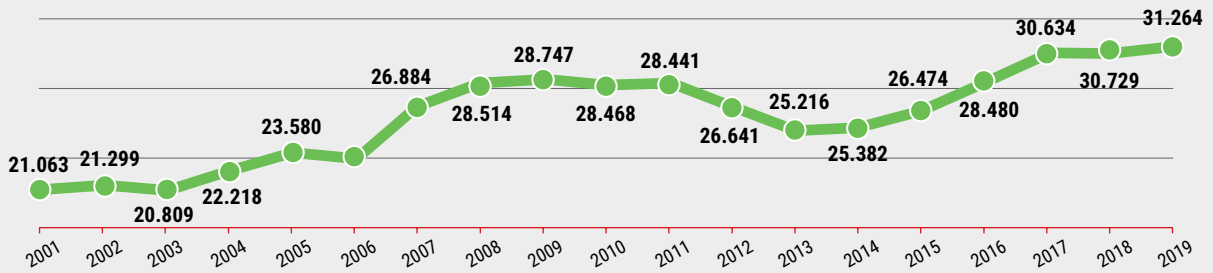




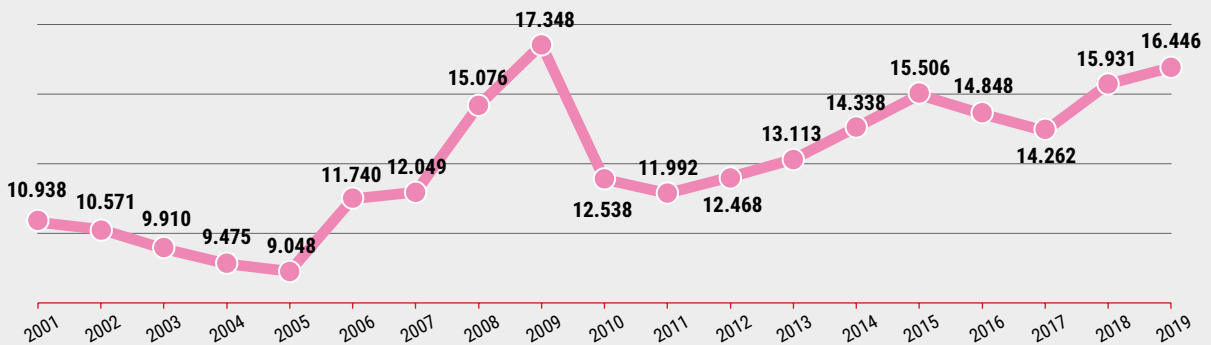
Human health and social work activities



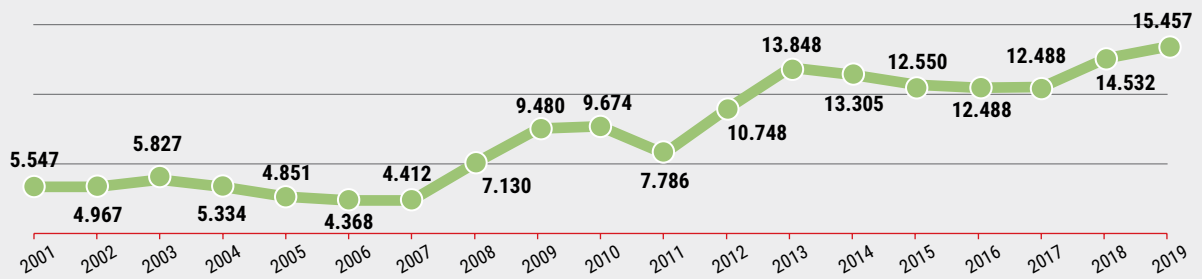
Manufacturing



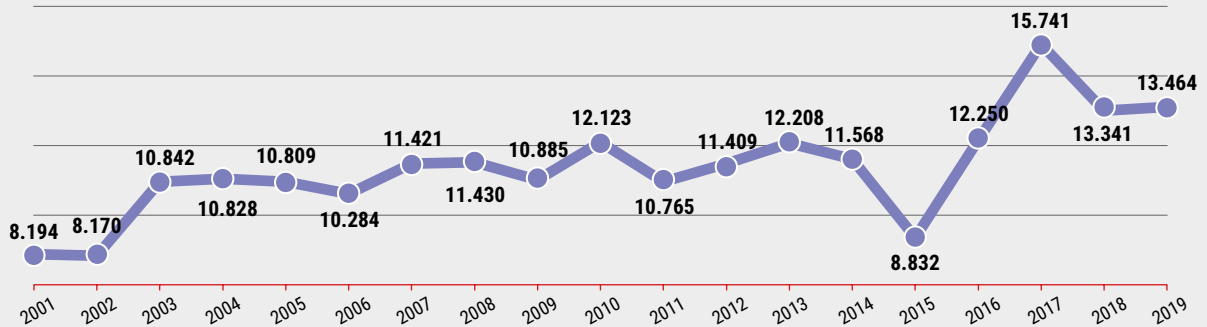
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security



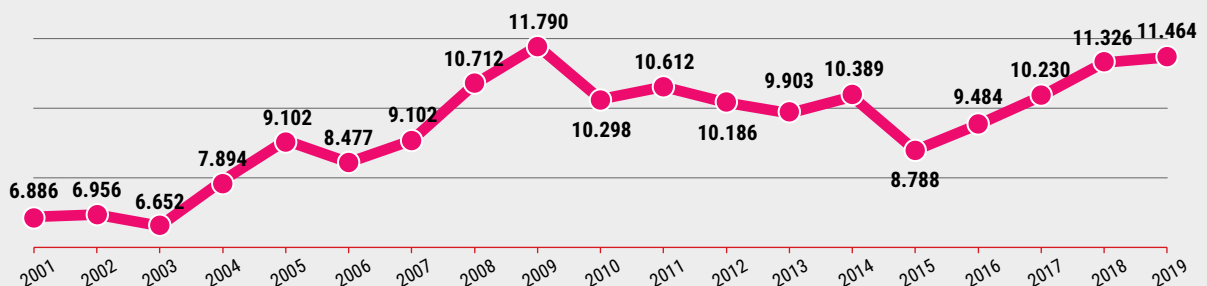
Information and communication



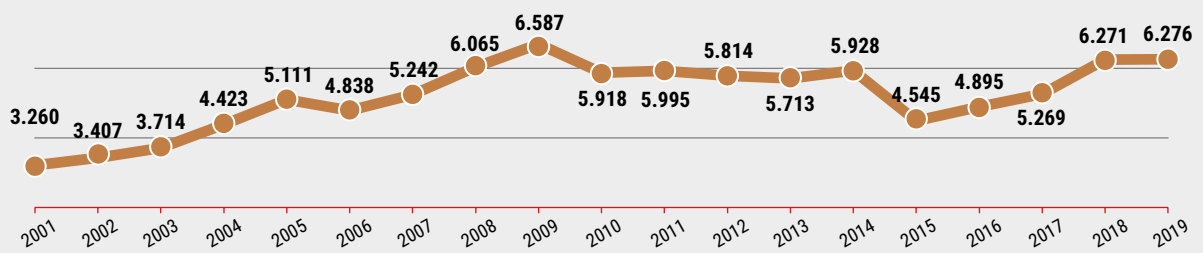
Wholesale and retail sales; Repair of motor vehicles and motorbikes



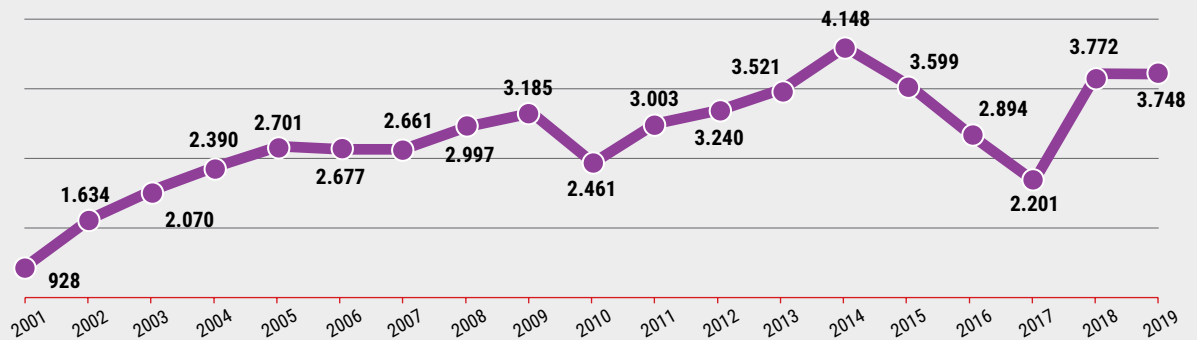
Financial and insurance activities



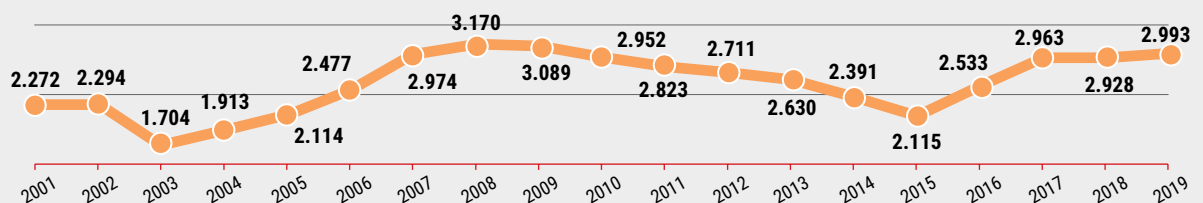
Construction



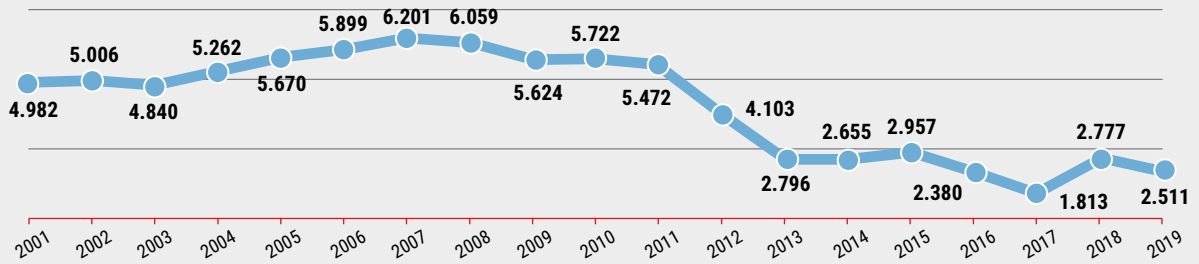
Other service activities



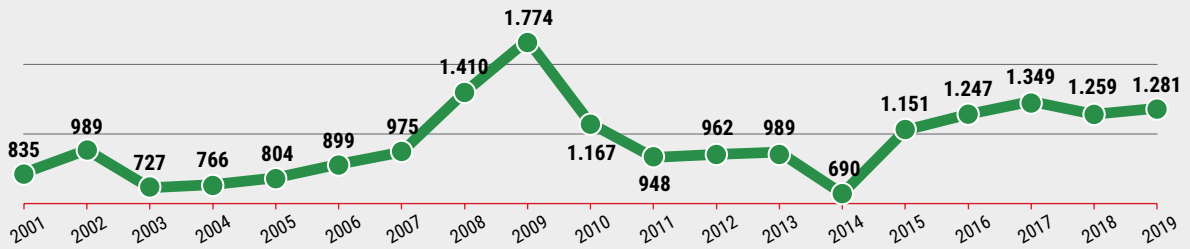
Electricity, gas, steam and air-conditioning supply



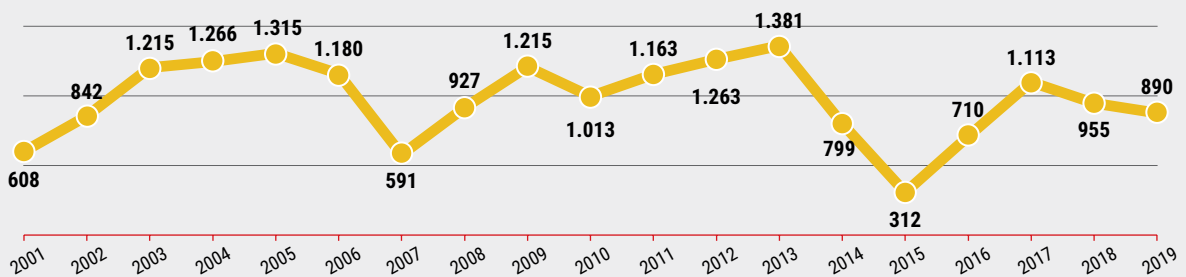
Transport and storage



Agriculture, forestry and fisheries

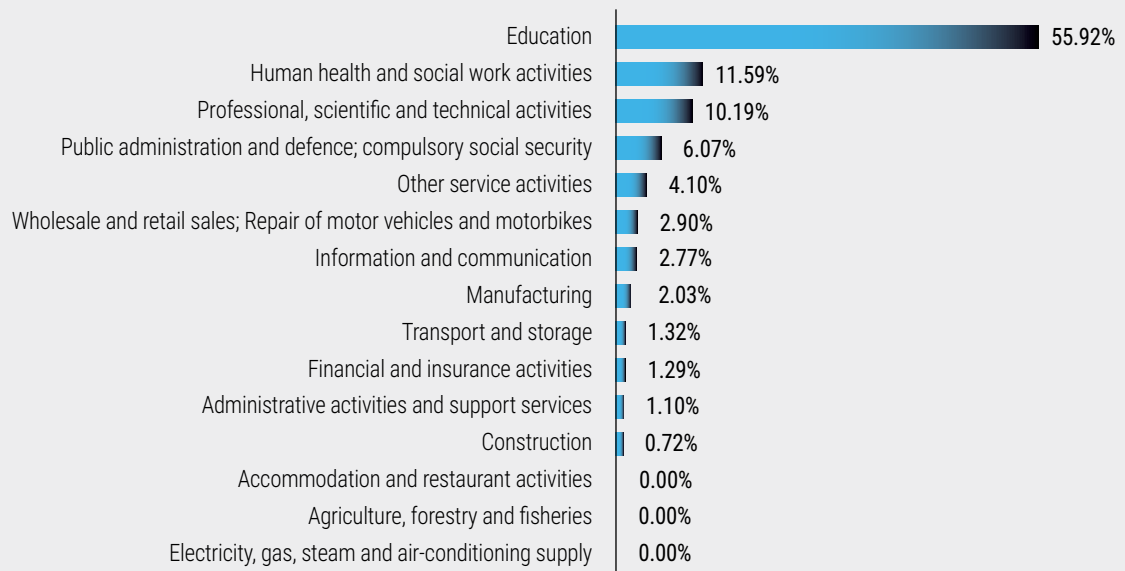


Accommodation and restaurant activities

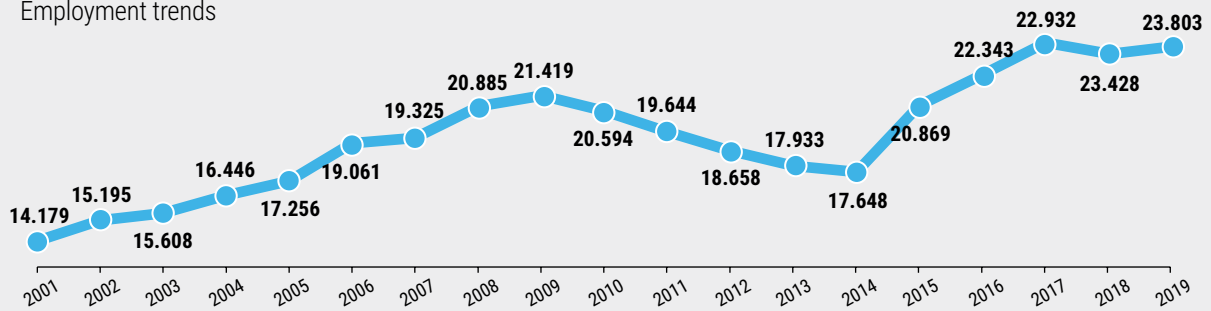


Division of the labour market according to the sectors in which each academic branch is employed

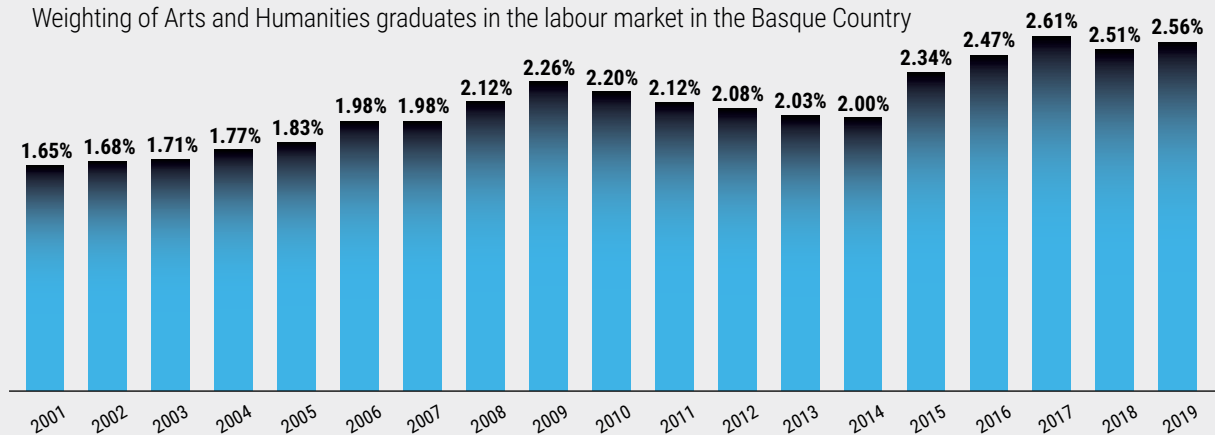
Arts and Humanities



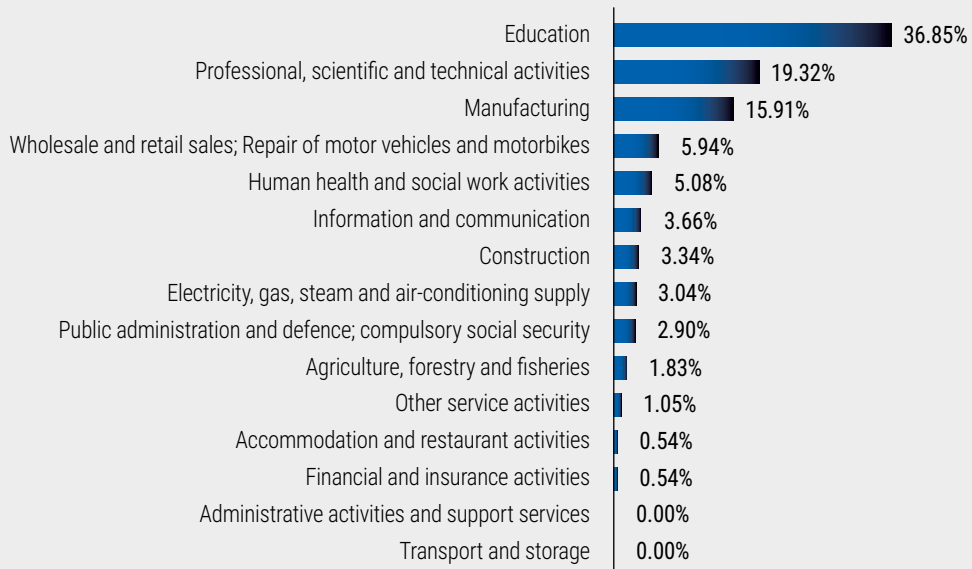
Employment trends



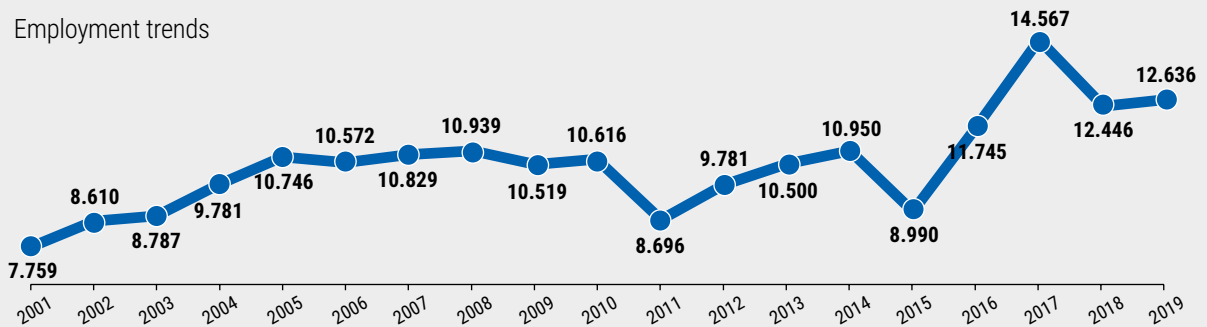
Weighting of Arts and Humanities graduates in the labour market in the Basque Country



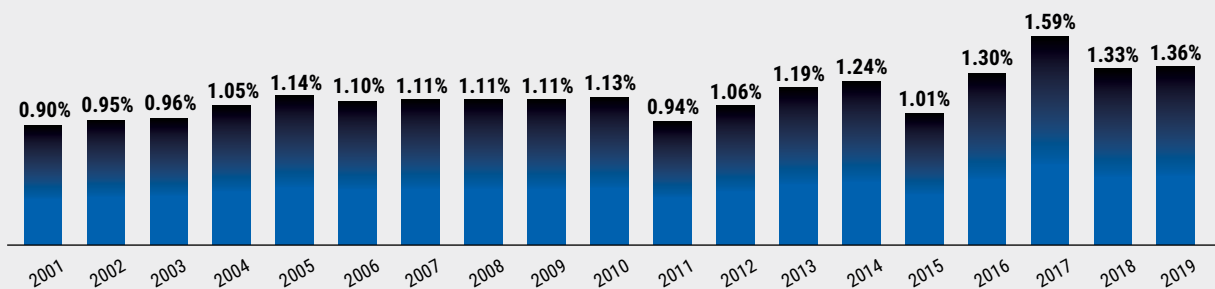
**Exact and Natural Sciences**



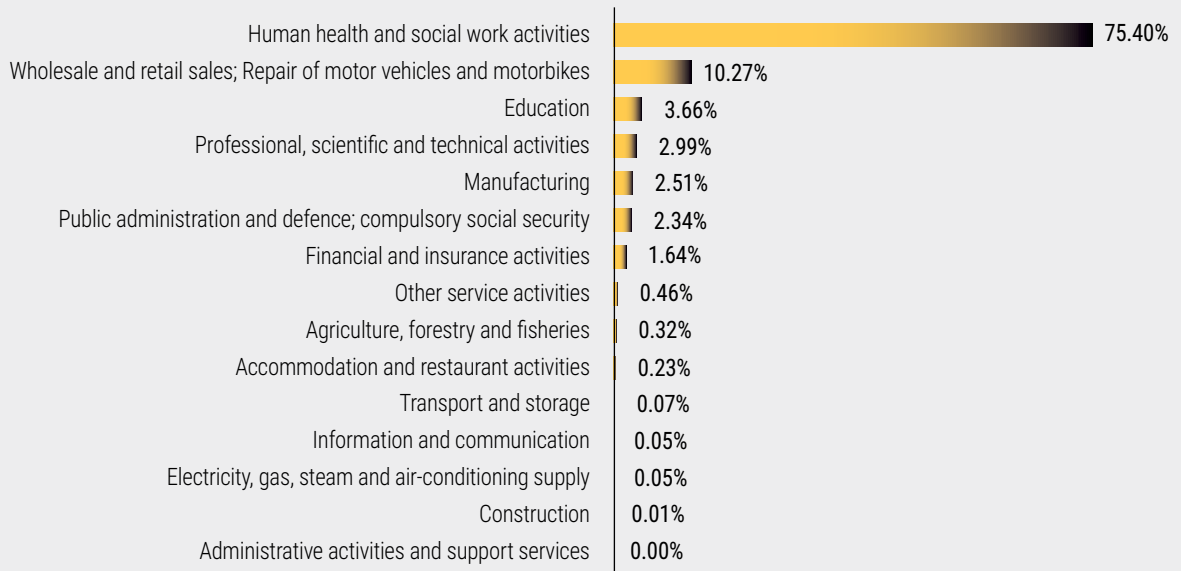
**Employment trends**



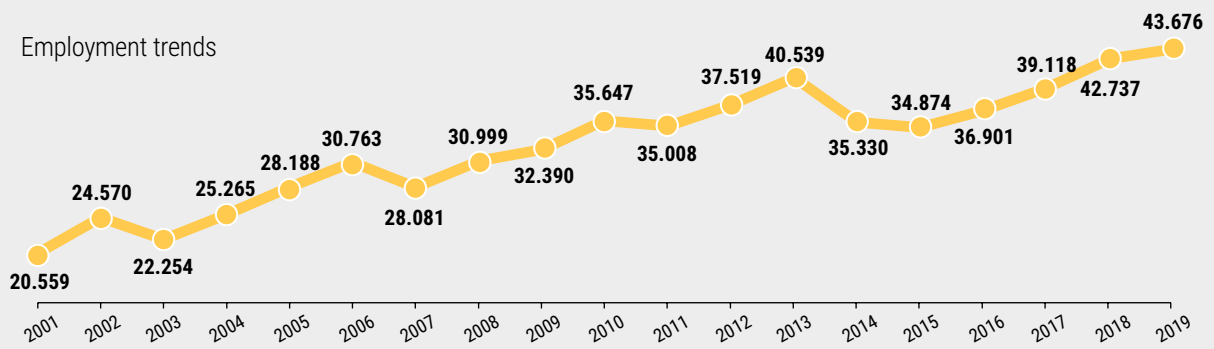
**Weighting of graduates in Exact and Natural Sciences in the labour market in the Basque Country**



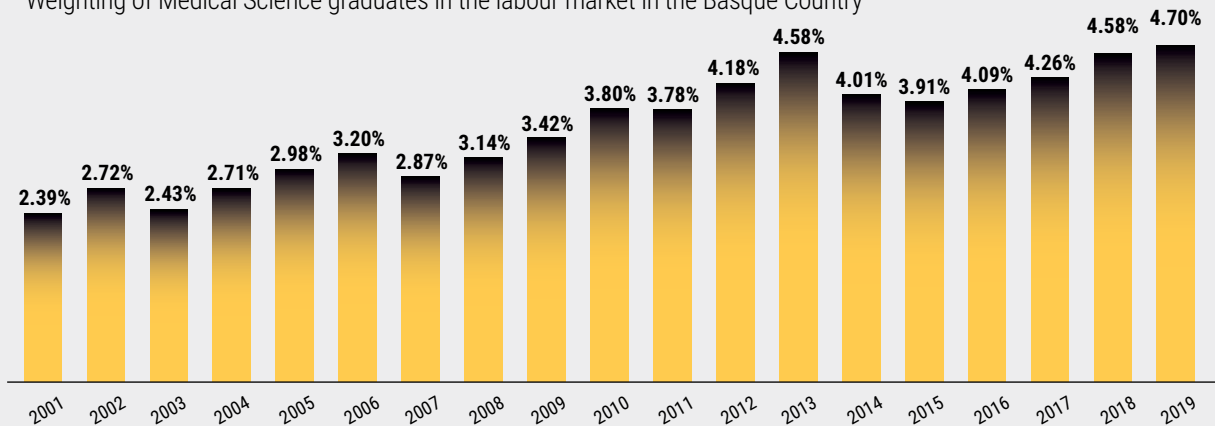
### Medical Science



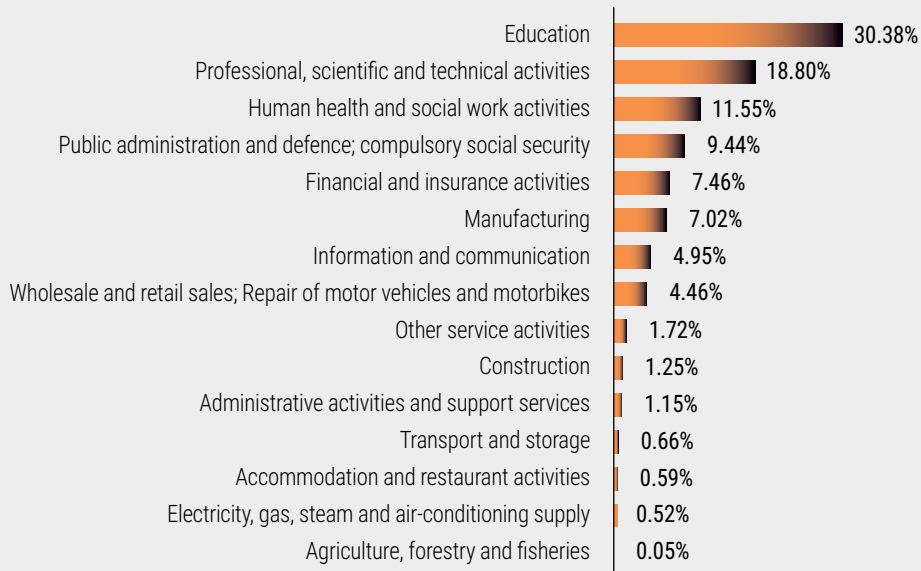
### Employment trends



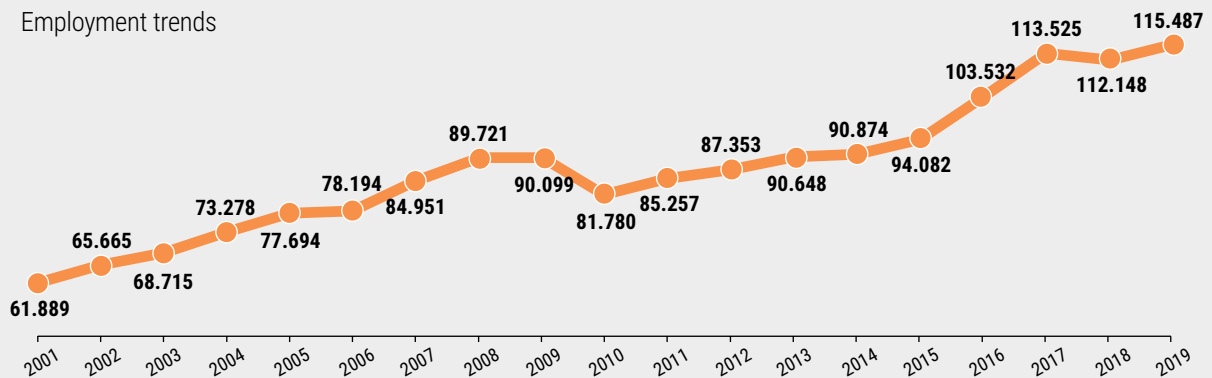
### Weighting of Medical Science graduates in the labour market in the Basque Country



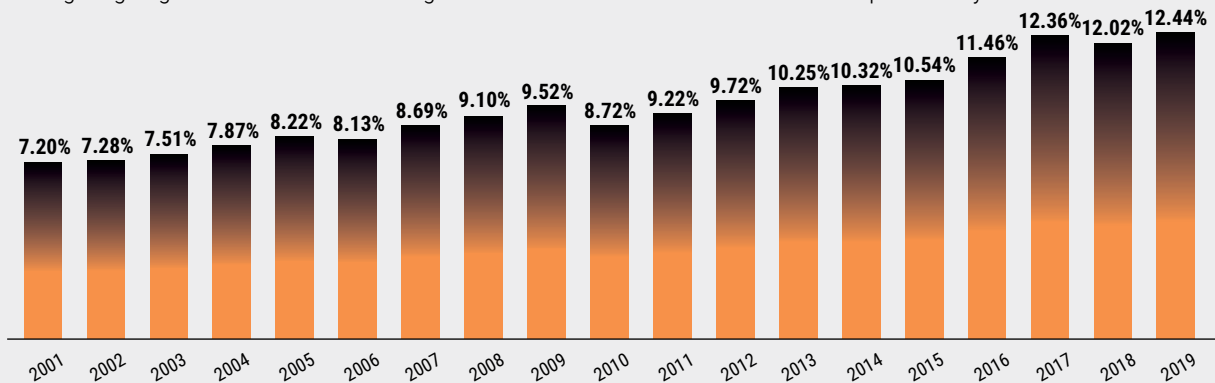
### Social and Legal Sciences



### Employment trends

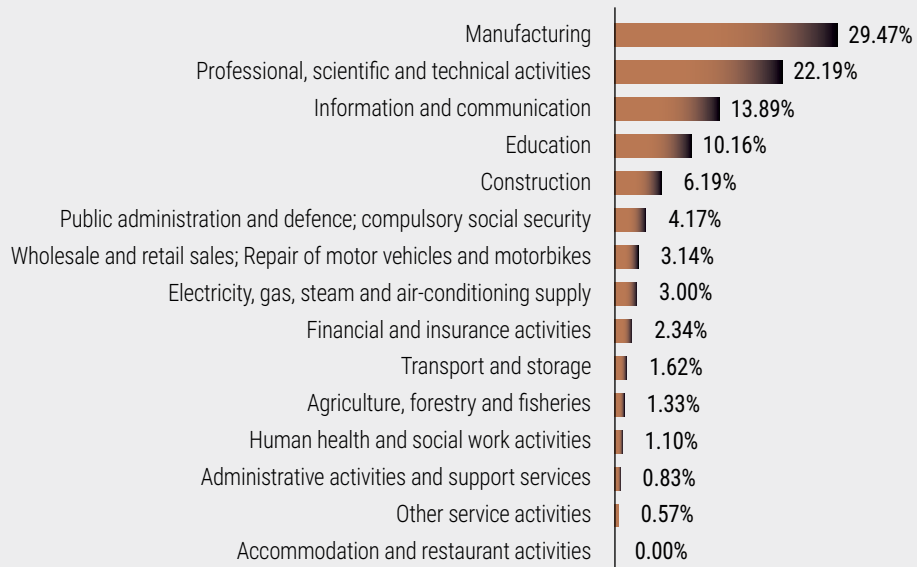


### Weighting of graduates in Social and Legal Sciences in the labour market in the Basque Country

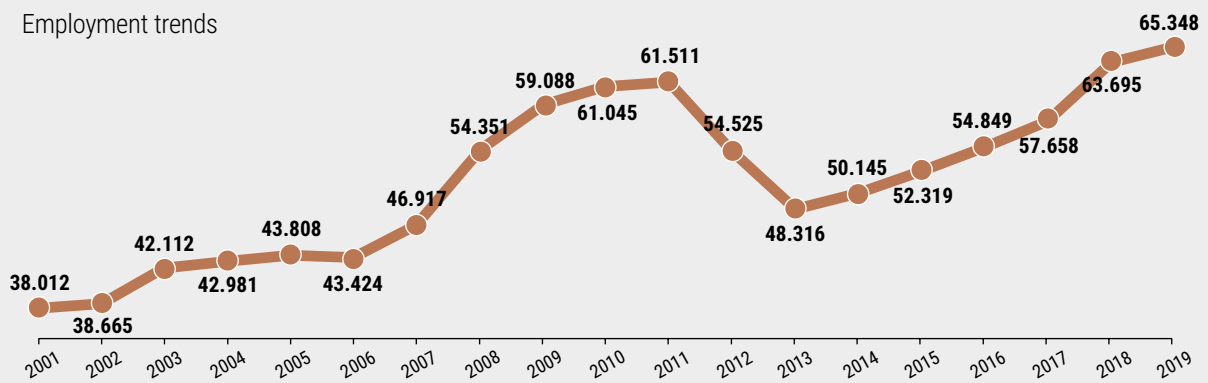




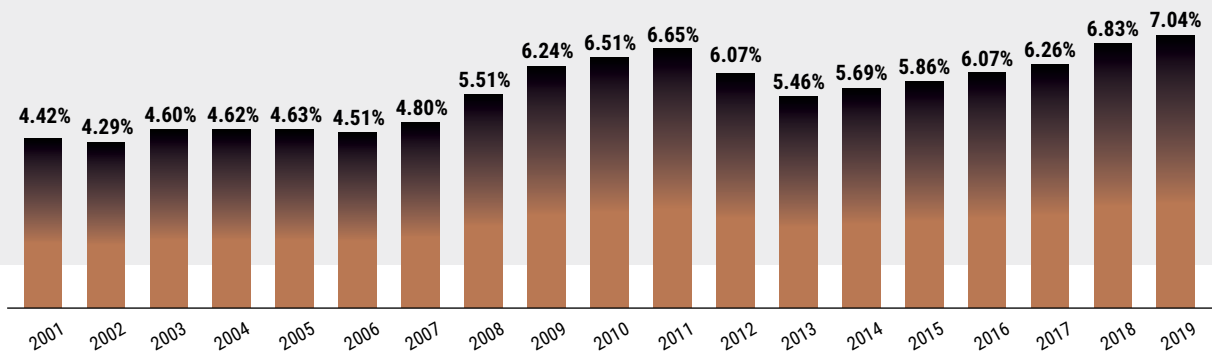
### Engineering and Technology



### Employment trends

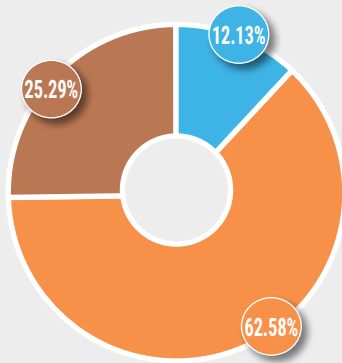


### Weighting of graduates in Engineering and Technology in the labour market in the Basque Country

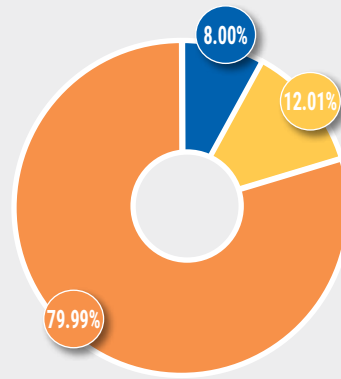


Division of the labour market according to the academic branches in demand in each sector

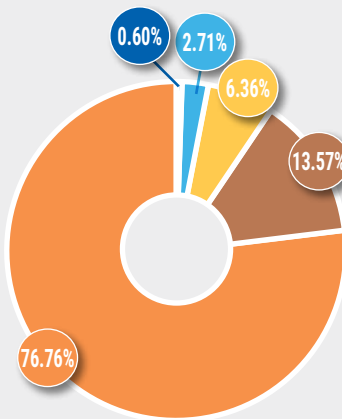
Administrative activities and support services



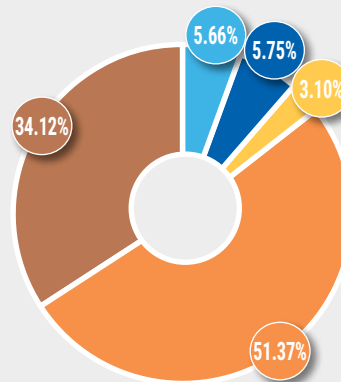
Accommodation and restaurant activities



Financial and insurance activities

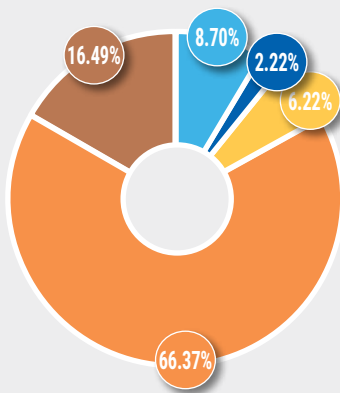


Professional, scientific and technical activities

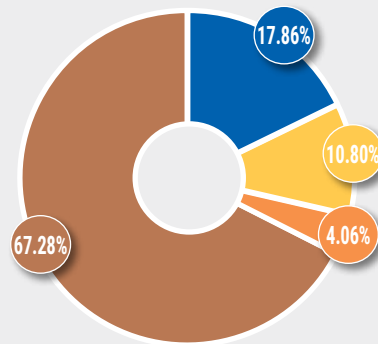


● Social and Legal Sciences 
 ● Engineering and Technology 
 ● Medical Sciences 
 ● Arts and Humanities 
 ● Exact and Natural Sciences

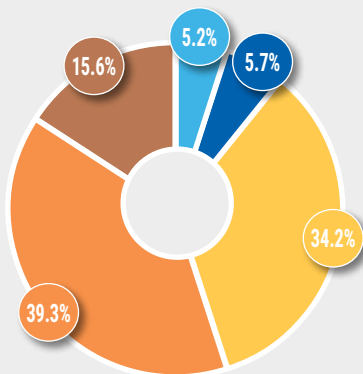
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security



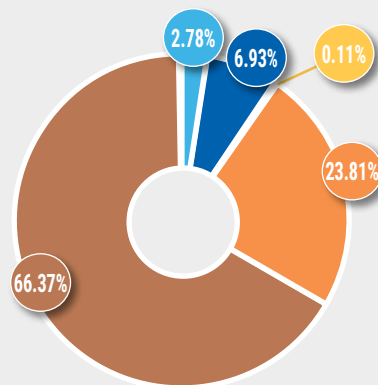
Agriculture, forestry and fisheries



Wholesale and retail sales, Repair of motor vehicles and motorbikes

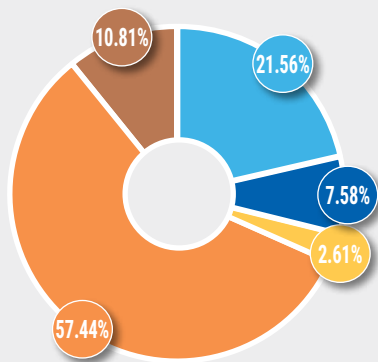


Construction

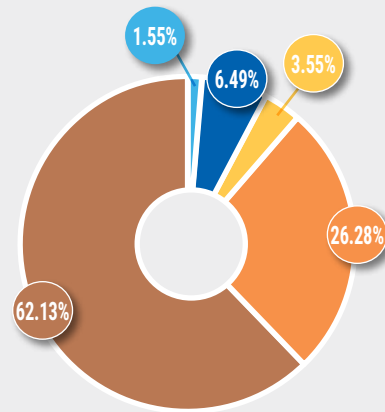


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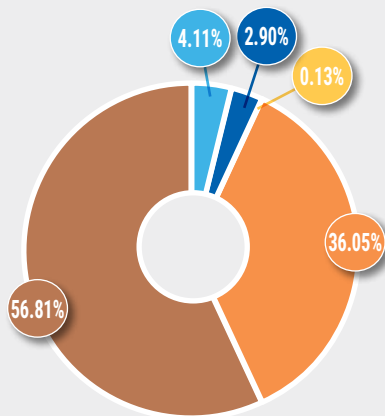
Education



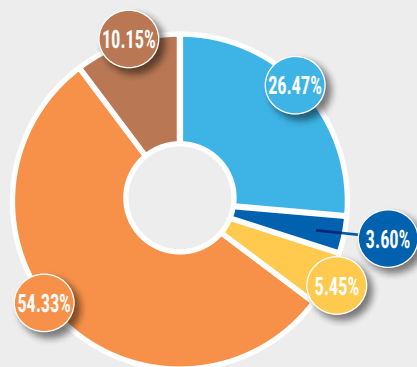
Manufacturing



Information and communication

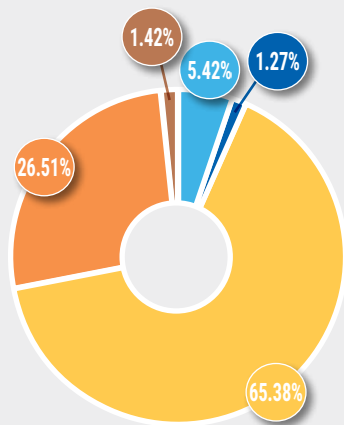


Other service activities

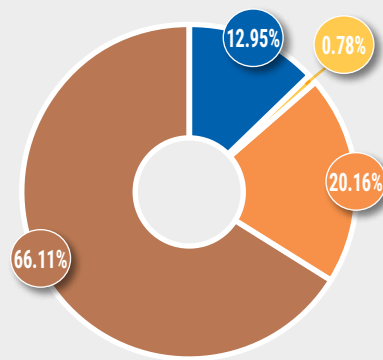


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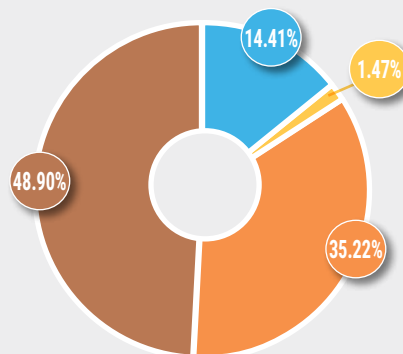
Human health and social work activities



Electricity, gas, steam and air-conditioning supply



Transport and storage

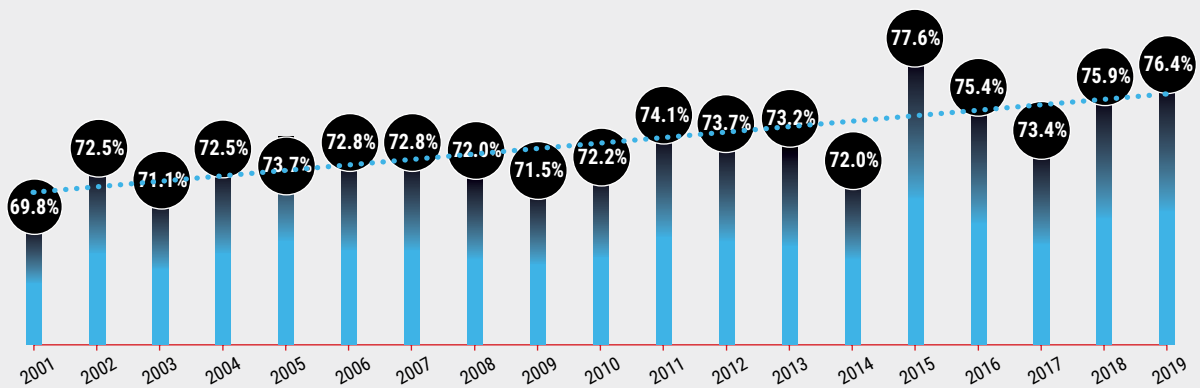


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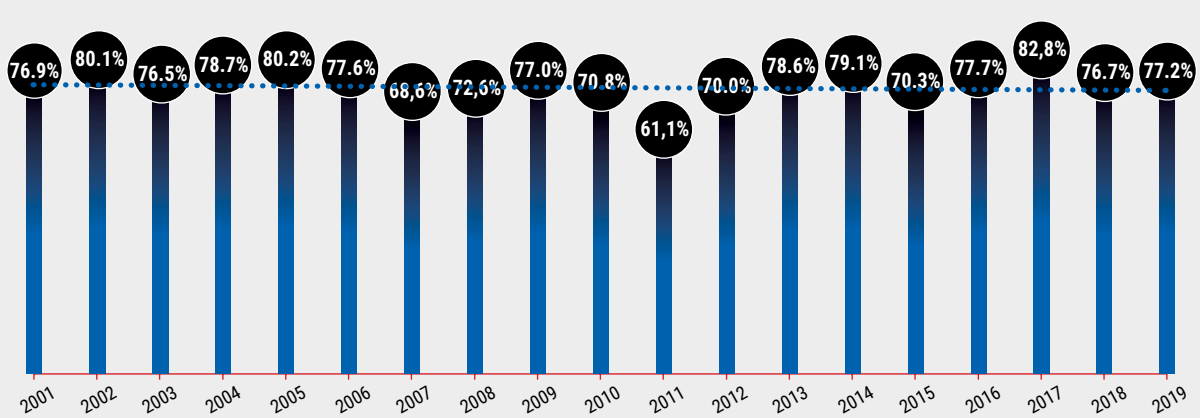
# MATCHING GRADUATES TO THEIR OWN OCCUPATIONS BY ACADEMIC BRANCH

The adjustment of graduates in their own occupations by academic branch indicates the fit of employment in highly qualified jobs for university graduates according to the academic branch in which they have studied.

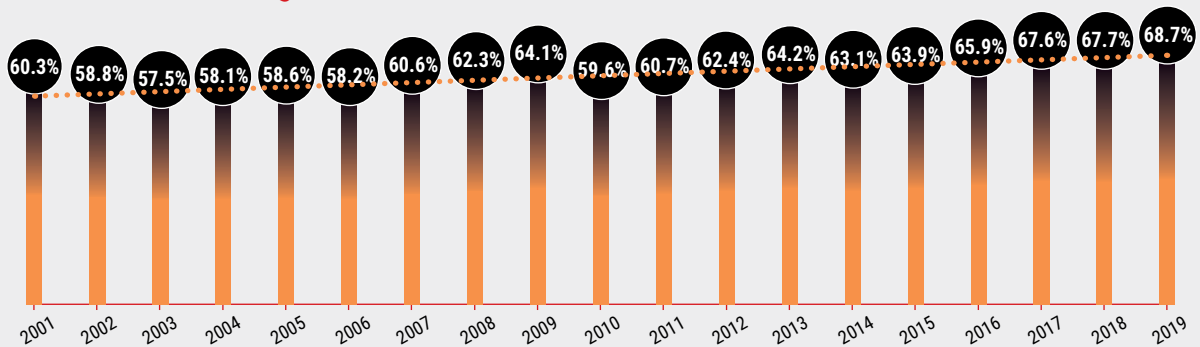
## Arts and Humanities



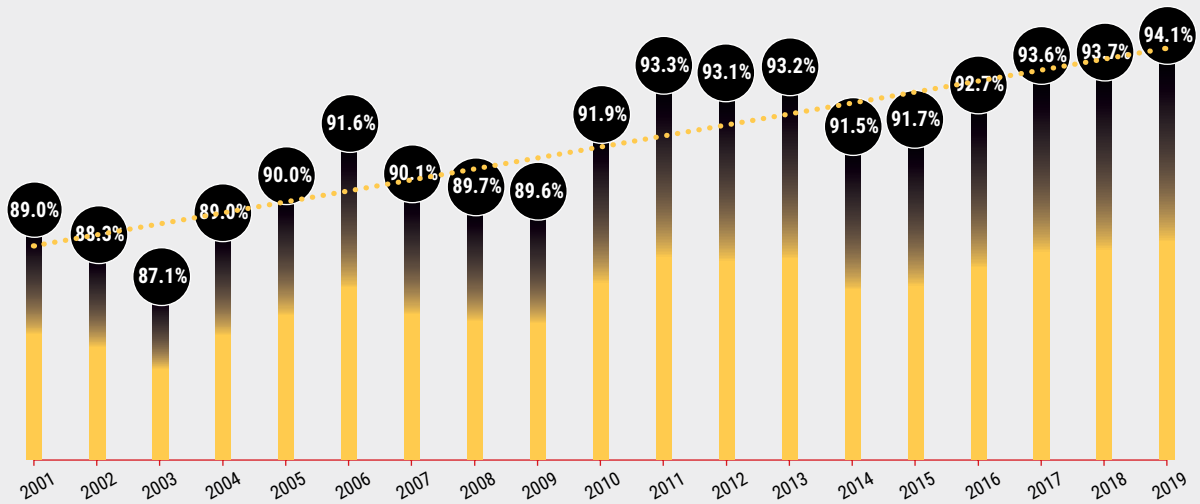
## Exact and Natural Sciences



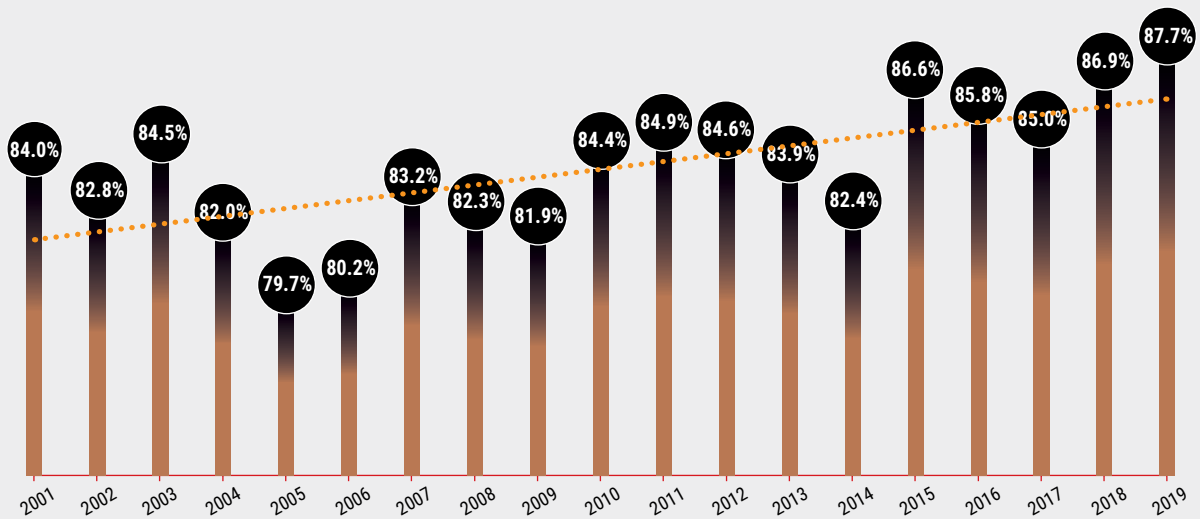
## Social and Legal Sciences



Medical Science



Engineering and Technology



# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank our partners, organisations from the public, private and academic sectors, for the support they have given to Bizkaia Talent and for their commitment to the development of Bilbao/Bizkaia/Basque Country based on collaboration and advanced knowledge.



We would also like to thank all the people and organisations that have contributed with their opinions and accounts to the preparation of this report, as well as all the Basque organisations and the more than 15,000 professionals in our network for their trust and collaboration with Bizkaia Talent.





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