

Basque Studies Society: A Scientific Institution



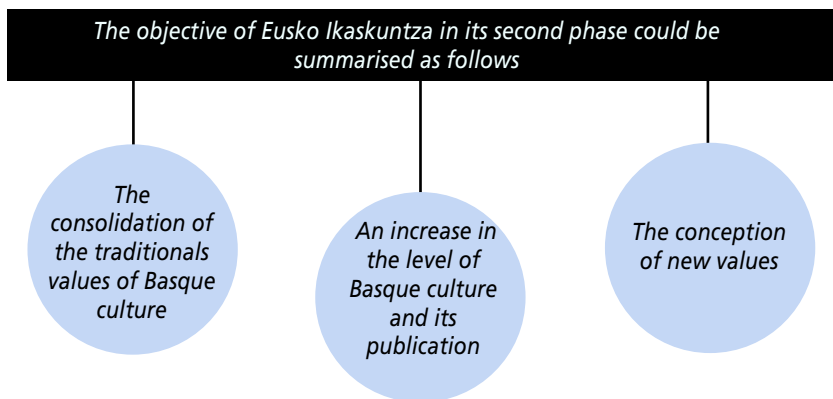
Eusko Ikaskuntza (the Basque Studies Society) was created in 1918 as a result of the explicit will to do so by the Diputations of Alava, Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa and Navarre. The object was, as is reflected in the rules and regulations of the I Basque Studies Congress celebrated in Oñate in September of that year, and presided by King Alfonso XIII, **to promote the formation of an entity that was to confer permanency, to unify and direct the renaissance of Basque culture.** And since then this goal has been fulfilled, Eusko Ikaskuntza has acted –due to reasons of geopolitical configuration– as the only scientific entity that it has given cohesion to the field of scientific research, providing coverage, from its very beginnings, to all parties interested in promoting an intensification of Basque culture by adequate means.

It can be said that all activity in Basque cultural life, from the birth of the Society until 1936 pivoted around Eusko Ikaskuntza. There were discussions and designs on what could have been the Basque University. The Society was entrusted with the drafting of a Statute of Autonomy. It organised Summer Courses. It started work on the Academy of the Basque Language. It prepared and produced educational material for the incipient "ikastolas" or Basque schools. And, above all, it has held, with an extraordinary success, six Congresses on Basque Studies, in which it assembled all those people who had something to provide in the topic elected for each conference.



One of the basic characteristics of Eusko Ikaskuntza has been its social, economic and political plurality, since the membership in the Society has never been conditioned to any special requirement. Mere members, as well as those that at some stage have had management responsibilities, have not had any other objectives but the integral and balanced development of Basque culture. And proof of this is the very motto of Eusko Ikaskuntza: *Asmoz ta Jakítez**. The first President of this first phase was Julián Elorza, who belonged, at the same time, to the Diputation of Gipuzkoa. King Alfonso XIII and Arturo Campi3n were Honourable President and Honorary President, respectively. And special mention must also be made to Angel de Apraiz, the first Secretary of Eusko Ikaskuntza.

* *Asmoz ta Jakítez*: in the Coat of Arms of the Aulestia family (from Bizkaia) one can read: *Bekoak goikoa ezkondu leidi; ta txikiak handia benzi leidi, asmoz ta jakítez*. That is to say, That the lower one may reach the higher one, and that the small one may defeat the large one, by means of aspiration and knowledge.



In period between 1936 and 1976 the activity of the Society was practically non-existent, although within the continental Basque Country, Mr. José Miguel Barandiarán tried to maintain some sort of activity by creating the International Society of Basque Studies and organizing two new congresses, in Biarritz (1948) and Bayonne (1954). In 1976, after the summons made by members of 1936 Permanent Board, the activity of Eusko Ikaskuntza was re-initiated, and as consequence of the positive response, a General Assembly was organised in Oñate in September 1978. Once again, the four founding Diputations assumed responsibility for supporting the new project.

As the basic protagonist in this general idea Eusko Ikaskuntza **counts on its members**. Its members are its fundamental assets, since the final result is based in the disinterested contribution of each one of them. And to become a member of Eusko Ikaskuntza there is no other requirement but the compliance with the first article of its Bylaws: *to love the Basque Country, and to aspire to the restoration of its personality*.

The date of the beginning of the second phase of Eusko Ikaskuntza is therefore 1978. The four founding Diputations commit themselves once more to Providing Eusko Ikaskuntza with the necessary means to achieve its objectives. It is evident, however, that society in general is different from that sixty years ago. In Eusko Ikaskuntza's normal geographical area of influence there were already Universities and, although still weak, the Basque cultural movement was going moving forward. Eusko Ikaskuntza therefore had to adapt to the new times.

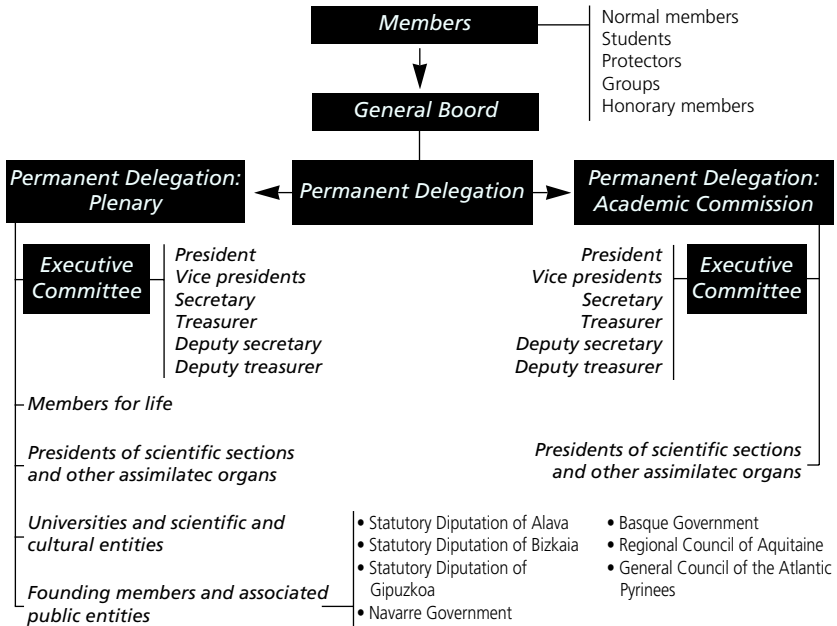
Even though it was clear that the Society had to adapt its structure and objectives to the new socio-political context, it was also true that it still had to attend to its main reason of existence, **since it was not in vain that it was the sole scientific entity which had emerged from the unifying spirit of its founders**. The first article of its Bylaws were still fully applicable, and Eusko Ikaskuntza was to base its process of modernisation in it. It is with that conviction that the General Meeting was convened in August 1978, also in Oñate, and that is where it is decided to bring its bylaws up to date. And, at the same time, it named Mr. José Miguel Barandiarán its new president, and elected Agustín Zumalabe as its secretary.

Internal structure

The nearly three thousand members of Eusko Ikaskuntza, the main asset of the Society, are split into Scientific Sections and thus form a structure that pursues direct membership participation, so that the decisions that are taken have the greatest possible support. Members of Eusko Ikaskuntza are grouped in the following scientific Sections, attending to the desire of each one of them:

- Anthropology-Ethnography
- Plastic and Monumental Arts
- Physical Sciences-Chemistries and Mathematics
- Medical Sciences
- Natural Sciences
- Social and Economic Sciences
- Cinematography
- Law
- Education
- Folklore
- History-Geography
- Language and Literature
- Media
- Music
- Prehistory-Archaeology

Furthermore, there is also a classification by territory, so that each of the territories has a Vice-presidency, there being thus five **vice-presidencies** in total.



The members of the **Sections** meet at least twice a year, with the purpose of presenting projects and, at the same time, receiving information on the running of the Society, which they are given by the Chair of each Section.

The **Commission of Scientific Section Presidents** has to convene meetings at least three times a year and it is through such contacts that a greater interdisciplinary operation is attempted. The decisions of this organ will have to be submitted, for approval, to the Academic Commission of the Permanent Board.

The **Executive Committee**, formed by the President of Eusko Ikaskuntza, the five Vice-presidents, the secretary and vice-secretary, the treasurer and vice-treasurer, meets at least, five times a year.

The **Academic Commission of the Permanent Board** has to meet at least twice a year. It is formed by the members of the Executive Committee, by the Presidents of the Scientific

Sections and by those in charge of the emblematic programs of the Society. The scientific management of Eusko Ikaskuntza is fundamentally based on this organ.



The **Plenary of the Permanent Board**, that is to be held twice a year, it is composed of the Academic Commission, private and public entity representatives and the people in charge of the emblematic programs of Eusko Ikaskuntza.

Finally, above all the mentioned collegiate organs, is the **General Board** of members, that according to the bylaws is to be held once a year, at least, to hear and, if satisfied, approve the Activities Report and the balance corresponding to the previous fiscal year.

In addition to the mentioned collegiate organs, there are others that contribute to channelling the activity of Eusko Ikaskuntza, such as the Council of Excellence, the Scientific and Cultural Entities Commission and the Emblematic Programs Commission.

The rights and obligations of the associated organs, the personnel and the associates of Eusko Ikaskuntza are established in the Bylaws and in the Internal Rules and Regulations.

The Basque Studies Society, today

Eusko Ikaskuntza is the only scientific entity officially installed in all the territories in which Basque culture, in its widest sense, it is a reality. That is to say, in the Basque Autonomous Community, in the Statutory Community of Navarre and in the Northern Basque Country. Mention must be made in this respect to the Royal Academy of the Basque Language, which emerged in 1919 from within Eusko Ikaskuntza, and which also boasts this characteristic, the Basque language being the object of its work.

Eusko Ikaskuntza has had to confront the challenges of the past few years and the wide offer that it boasts at present is proof of this. Once converted into the basic norm, Basque culture is its fundamental objective, and supporting itself in the traditional values of such a culture, it works in the quest for new points of reference and in the widest possible dissemination of the results.

As the number of members grows, its capacity of research multiplies itself both quantitatively and in terms of quality. The arrival of new generations has rejuvenated the profile of the member, whose average age is 35. The biggest group of members as far as university studies are concerned, is that of people with degrees in History and Geography, followed by those in Biology, Law, Architecture and Pedagogy.

The race for the modernisation of the Society has been constant since Gregorio Monreal assumed the presidency in 1992. Since then, Eusko Ikaskuntza, now led by its new manager Juan José Goiriena de Gandarías, has shown a very high capacity for research. We shall now see below and in summary, the current lines of research followed by Eusko Ikaskuntza.

Research

Eusko Ikaskuntza is a scientific entity and the research on the matters which correspond to the Sections is the basic reason for the existence of the Society. Research programs are

proposed through the respective Sections or by Eusko Ikaskuntza itself, in those projects which are given priority.

The members have access to research grants for their projects or for priority projects. Every year, the Society opens a period of presentation of work plans, which after previous assessment in the respective Section, are analysed by the Commission of Scientific Section Presidents, who decide which are the projects that will be financed during the year, as well as the amounts granted.

In addition to such Section grants, Eusko Ikaskuntza promotes other programs, like the Apraiz and Zumalabe Scholarships, which have been established as a result of collaboration agreements signed with town councils and, in general, any project in which the need to research on a given topic has been detected and which the Society has considered interesting to promote.

The quality of the research is guaranteed by the Sections themselves. As far as the priority programs are concerned, Eusko Ikaskuntza establishes specialist committees for each case, with the mission of validating the work that is carried out.

Teaching

Another of the basic activities in Eusko Ikaskuntza is teaching, which has been a most spectacular line of development over the past few years, due to the installation of new programs, some of which are mentioned below:

The *Jakitez Program*, established in 1996, is a course on Basque studies and a stimulus for scientific culture, that encompasses more than a hundred professors in eight universities, of 250 hours, the purpose of which is to train university specialists in Basque culture. This program is offered with a degree from the University of the Basque Country.

The Internet *Interactive Masters*, with 600 hours of teaching time each, are yet another of the Eusko Ikaskuntza's large challenges, which is once again proof of its pioneer spirit, as the first entity in the Basque Country that has used a telematic network to offer training programs which are accessible to everybody. Since 1997, the offer has been broadened with different specialities. Such Master courses imparted on-line are being offered as a degree by the University of the Basque Country for the first time in the history of that entity, all of which increases the value of Eusko Ikaskuntza's academic offer.

The course on *Country Planning and Management*, under way since 1997, attempts to give a vision on the matter, while involving the administrations and private entities of the Basque Autonomous Community, the Statutory Community of Navarre and those in Iparralde. The course has 250 hours of theoretical and practical work, and the course is offered with a degree from the University of the Basque Country.

The *Oñatiko Unibertsitatea Program*, which covers a different topic proposed by the Scientific Sections every year. Specialists of recognised prestige and pupils that have shown an interest on the topic meet in the University of Oñate for several days.

All kinds of sessions and seminars are organised during the year, the lion's share of which at the initiative of the Sections. These events are directed to the membership and to the public in general.

The **Basque Studies Congresses** are in a category that could be classified between research and teaching, an activity that Eusko Ikaskuntza has been carrying out since its foundation. The Plenary of the Permanent Board is responsible for summoning the Congresses, on a topic of contemporary interest, and starts a process which finally culminates some years later with the sessions of the corresponding Congress. As example of the importance of this approach, mention must be made of the three latest events: XII Congress *Basque studies in the educational system*, Vitoria-Gasteiz, 1993; XIII Congress *Science, technology and social change in the Basque Country*, Zamudio, 1995; XIV Congress *The society of information*, San Sebastián, Bilbao, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Pamplona, Bayonne and Madrid, 1997.

Dissemination

Research, by itself, would not make much sense if it were not accompanied by the dissemination of results. Once the corresponding quality filters have been passed, the projects have been published. Eusko Ikaskuntza, however, does not consider publication as an end in itself, but rather a means to increase the quality of Basque studies and their availability to the scientific community. And from that concept onwards, every day the Society makes every effort to improve the average quality of its publications.

Traditional process:

The publications on paper are those which have the widest projection to date. This line of dissemination actually turns Eusko Ikaskuntza, from the functional point of view, into an editorial that publishes an average of forty books a year. Most of these publications are **Section Notebooks**, in which the members' research projects are published. Publication is possible with the grants mentioned above. Then there is the **RIEV** (*Revista Internacional de los Estudios Vascos, International Magazine of Basque Studies*), established in 1907 by Julio de Urquijo and published by Eusko Ikaskuntza since 1921. Mention must necessarily be made to other collections, like the **Fuentes Medievales del País Vasco** (Medieval Sources of the Basque Country) with almost 100 titles, **Lankidetzan** (in cooperation with external entities), the **Manuel Lekuona Prize** (biographies and bibliographies of the prize winners), the **Basque Studies Congresses** and **Eleria** (magazine of Basque jurist).



The general information of the Society reaches the members by means of the monthly bulletin **Asmoz ta Jakitez**, which is now sent to over seven thousand subscribers. There is also the quarterly publication **Asmoz ta Jakitez. Argitalpenak**, with information on Eusko Ikaskuntza publications.

An editorial catalogue is published every year and, either by sale or in exchange for other publications, the books of Eusko Ikaskuntza are to be found in specialised libraries all over the world.

New processes:

In response to the new technologies present today in the world of communications, in 1997 the Permanent Board of Eusko Ikaskuntza approved the establishment of the **Mediateka**. Through this, headway is being made on the on-line publication or electronic support of documentation on the activities of interest accomplished by Eusko Ikaskuntza since 1918. It is considered a unprecedented challenge, as Eusko Ikaskuntza is the owner of

the greatest existing fund of Basque studies. The electronic conversion of such documentation is a considerable technical, human and economic effort.

They are now some 15.000 digitised photographs in the Photographic File of the Society, a fund that grows day to day, due to the society's own internal production and due to gifts from other people who have deposited their confidence in the good work carried out by Eusko Ikaskuntza. Thanks to a multimedia program, each photograph can be identified through 35 different records.



Continuing with the same objective, work is also being made on the digitisation of the different data bases, which opens the door to electronic publications. This began with the CD-ROM of the *Basque Studies Congresses 1918-1995*, followed by the CD-ROMs on the XIV Congress and the RIEV. The rest of the traditional publications are also about to be published in this way.

In 1996 Eusko Ikaskuntza signed a agreement of collaboration with the Auñamendi Editorial, to prepare the update of the greatest encyclopaedia on Basque topics that has ever existed, and which is the property of the mentioned editorial. Thanks to this agreement, Eusko Ikaskuntza has undertaken the digitisation of all that has been published in the Encyclopaedia, a task that has already been finalised and which is about to be published on line for general reference. A fund named Bernardo Estornés Lasa has been created, in honour of the founder of the Auñamendi Encyclopaedia, with over 25.000 pages with more than 50.000 photographs and drawings. Over the next few years, Eusko Ikaskuntza will address the update of this Encyclopaedia, within an ambitious work program.

Mention has been made to the data bases and, logically, we must not forget the documental funds deposited in the Society, three of which deserve special mention because of their importance to date: the Manuel Irujo, the Manuel Lekuona and the Angel Apraiz Funds. The legacies of these three important men in Basque political and cultural life were entrusted to Eusko Ikaskuntza, by their express will or that of their successors. The list of donations is even greater and, of course, it is open to any offer that is made to Eusko Ikaskuntza. The Society is honoured by the confidence deposited in it by people and entities of diverse ideologies and conditions.

In order to be able to work on line with the intensity desired by Eusko Ikaskuntza, it was necessary to set up a web page on the Internet. Also in this field, the Society has turned out to be a pioneer. In June 1996 it opened its window to the world, offering all kinds of information, documentation and services. The updating of content of the server is checked daily.

One of the most interesting programs which is being developed on the basis of the new technologies is "Euskonews & Media", a weekly electronic magazine on Basque science and culture, issued through the Internet. Its publication started in September 1998, and it has attained a considerable amount of visitors from all over the world. Its http address is www.euskonews.com.

There is another field which Eusko Ikaskuntza takes special care and interest about, which is recognising the personal contribution of men and women to Basque culture. This is done by means of the annual prizes. In 1983 the Manuel Lekuona Prize of Eusko Ikaskuntzawas established to distinguish people whose "opera omnia" is of special interest.

A second recognition, is the one which rewards the most brilliant scientific curriculum in social sciences and humanities, which was first awarded in 1995.

One of the activities for which Eusko Ikaskuntza has a very special feeling from its very origins, is its relationship with the town councils in the Basque Country. In 1919 it organised the First Basque Municipal Administration Meeting. Today many town councils are associated with Eusko Ikaskuntza. In 1994 this opened a line of close collaboration with municipal corporations, in order to better convey Eusko Ikaskuntza members' research capacity, and to make young researchers involve themselves more and more in the structure which has been created for this purpose.

Also, another area which deserves special attention is the relation with universities, both within and outside Eusko Ikaskuntza's geographical scope. By means of agreements signed with universities some very valuable results have been achieved, and such results have increased the reputation of the Society. Proof of this is the official character bestowed by the University of the Basque Country to certain courses organised by Eusko Ikaskuntza, or the creation of a Professorship for Basque Visiting Teachers in Oxford University, attended by several professors nominated by Eusko Ikaskuntza every year. This is a task of inter-university co-ordination that Eusko Ikaskuntza accomplishes in certain areas and that has allowed for a closer contact between specialists in Basque topics.

Eusko Ikaskuntza is a modern scientific entity. The Society bases its work program on the scientific capacity of its associates. Eusko Ikaskuntza has managed to get to the end of the century with renewed strength. The end of the century at the beginning of which it was born. And Eusko Ikaskuntza appears to be ready to confront the challenges of the new times ahead. But Eusko Ikaskuntza does not wish to forget the purpose for which it was created, that is, becoming a permanent entity, that unifies and promotes Basque culture. As its origins are so clear, Eusko Ikaskuntza is strengthened by the daily satisfactory fulfilment of this objective.