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European congress participants in Pamplona discover the Way of St. James as a symbol of the construction of an open and intercultural Europe

The chair of the Mitxelena Association reinforces the intention of the mayor of Puente la Reina /Gares to reconsider the reinstatement of the European flag in the town hall.

Some twenty representatives from four European Adult Education Institutes met in Pamplona to hold the first face-to-face session of the Erasmus +project financed by the European Commission to establish the contents and competences that people who work in the professional practice of social counselling or coaching should have.

The group dynamics and a parallel conference took place on 15 and 16 September at the Public University of Navarra (UPNA), with the presence and participation of Begoña Pérez Eransus, vice-rector of University Projection, Culture and Outreach of the UPNA; Jesús Hernández Aristu, President of the Mitxelena Association and retired professor of this institution; Susanne Rieger, President of the European Association for Supervision and Coaching (EASC); the sociologist Josexo Beriáin and the Vice-Dean of the Faculty of CC.HH.SS and E. Arantza Almoguera, quality coordinator of this centre.

In the first face-to-face meeting after almost a year of work, the delegation discussed the cultures in dispute for hegemony in the global world and their influence on the daily lives of citizens. Aspects that every person dedicated to supervision and coaching must take into account in the exercise of their profession, acquiring and developing those dialogic skills and competencies that facilitate understanding, comprehension and intercultural communication, whether in economic, business, institutional or interpersonal spheres.

With the theoretical premises shared at the conference, the institutes will develop the curricular profile for the training of Coaches at a postgraduate level and approved throughout Europe. In Pamplona, they specified the competencies for the practice of coaching and supervision. The intercultural perspective is necessary in a continent, Europe, where people from very different countries and situations live: refugees, migrants and people from other cultures, and with a diversity of traditions and cultural realities that are partly shared and partly different from each other.

After the two days of work, the congress participants - from Germany, Hungary, Czech Republic and Spain - visited a point on the Camino, Puente la Reina / Gares, "as a symbol of the construction of an open and intercultural Europe", according to Hernández Aristu. They visited the pilgrims' hostel; the Church of the Crucifix, apparently donated by German pilgrims; the hospital where the pilgrims were received on their way to and from Santiago; the defensive system; the church of Santiago and the medieval bridge.

The congress participants were enveloped in the historical echoes of pilgrims from their own countries who crossed these same streets thanks to the explanations of Miguel Pérez, who acted as cicerone.

Re-establish the hoisting of the European flag

The reception by the mayor of the town Oihan Mendo was the highlight of the stay in Puente la Reina/Gares. The mayor highlighted the identification of the inhabitants of Puente with their town, open to the welcome and care of pilgrims with community responsibility, manifested in works carried out in "auzolán". He praised the initiative of Mitxelena to visit Puente la Reina, as the Camino that crosses the town connects with the thousands and thousands of pilgrims who come and came from all the Nordic countries to Santiago.

In this context, he pointed out that they would reconsider raising the European flag on the balcony of the Town Hall, as they see that initiatives such as the conferences that have been held at the UPNA show that in Europe, groups and collectives such as the one present there, are busy building it with their work and effort. The flag was removed at the time because the City Council felt that the European institutions were not doing enough to welcome refugees.

The president of the Navarre Mitxelena Association expressed his gratitude for the welcome in the town, in its highest political representation in the plenary hall of the town hall, and reinforced the mayor's intention to reconsider the repositioning of the European flag. "The European Union is not only made up of its institutions, which are sometimes reluctant to welcome foreigners persecuted in their own countries, not even primarily, but also of its citizens, its peoples and regions. The starry flag, like the path of stars itself, represents more than 400 million people, who see and feel themselves represented by that flag," he said.

Finally, the mayor closed the event by presenting the red scarf of the fiestas of Puente la Reina to each of the members of the delegations from the four countries represented. The day concluded with a culinary encounter and an Ultreya toast.