

# Southern Catalonia, Knowledge Region

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# The way to the future

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## Editorial

The end of a year invites us to reflect on the past so we can better contemplate the future. A year ago, the ***newsletter Southern Catalonia, Knowledge Region*** was created to promote the projects of the [Chair for University and Knowledge Region](#) and the creation of a Southern Catalonia knowledge region covering the Camp de Tarragona and Terres de l'Ebre and in particular to create a space to debate territorial issues and innovation strategies in our region.

Throughout the year and for three editions, the newsletter has dealt with different themes, such as the importance of [developing a system of governance](#) that enables strategic decision-taking, the [European Regional Policy](#) and how it affects Catalunya and Tarragona, and finally the [RIS3 strategy](#) in the European context.

Experts of international prestige and members of the Chair for University and Knowledge Region have also contributed with specialized articles offering approaches to the different strategic lines on which our mission is focused. The article by [John Goddard](#) (Emeritus Professor in Regional Development Studies at the Newcastle University) and [Ellen Hazelkorn](#) (Director of the Higher Education Policy Research Unit and of the Dublin Institute of Technology) helped to place the Southern Catalonia region and the Universitat Rovira i Virgili in the global context. They highlighted the way that universities engage with society and emphasized the work carried out by the Universitat Rovira i Virgili since its creation through its [third mission](#). In the second edition, the members of

the support group of the Chair for University and Knowledge Region, Josep Maria Piñol Alabart and Marina Vives Blanco discussed the importance of foresight exercises as a tool for long-term decision making. Finally, in the last edition, Xabier Goenaga, Head of the Knowledge for Finance, Innovation and Growth section of the Joint Research Centre (European Commission) investigated the importance of intelligent specialization strategies in the regional context and university involvement in this process. In addition, Goenaga presented future trends for these policies at the European level.

Knowledge creation has been discussed in the interviews section, where we have obtained deep insights into opinions of three leaders in the Southern Catalonia region, namely Josep Poblet (president of Tarragona Provincial Council), Josep Félix Ballesteros (mayor of Tarragona) and Carles Pellicer (mayor of Reus). In the present edition, we compare their opinions to get an overall idea of their concerns, responsibilities and engagement in relation to the knowledge region.

Establishing a of knowledge platform for regional innovation allows us to analyze different cases of good practices and to study different topics, some of which you can find on our webpage. The result of these analyses and reflections is the section “Discovering European Knowledge Regions”, which looks at other knowledge regions with whom we have developed strategic collaborations shared experiences to see how they operate. In connection with other sections of the newsletter, the present edition offers a comparative study of Tampere, Cantabria and Twente to identify parallels and divergences between the regions and thus the route that Southern Catalonia needs to follow to develop as knowledge region.

The section “Discovering Southern Catalonia” also shines the spotlight on one of the most important knowledge structures among the scientific parks and innovation centres, namely the VITEC Technological Park of Wine.

Finally, the section “Events” invites you to share your thoughts in relation to an activity that took place during the European Week of Regions and Cities.

In conclusion, we encourage you to participate and share with us your opinions and ideas on how to make Southern Catalonia a Knowledge Region and a beacon of smart and sustainable territorial progress.

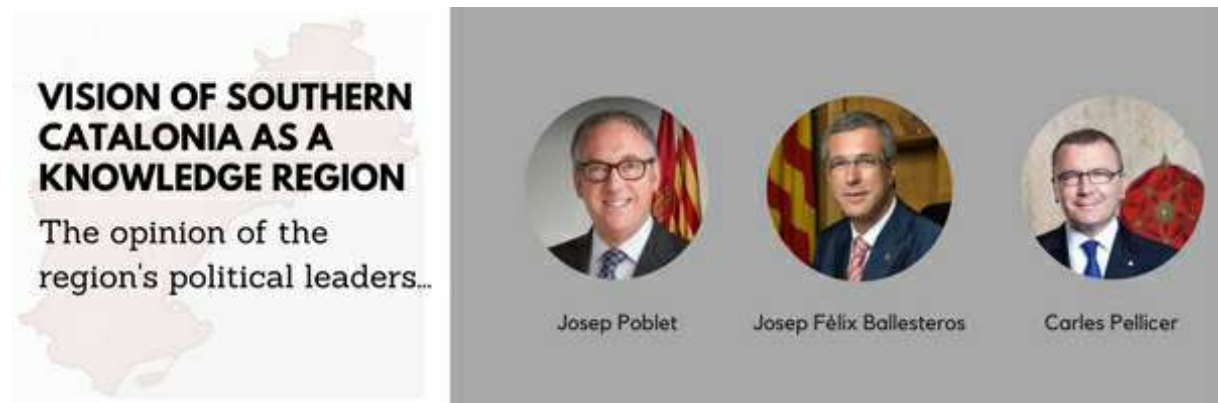
**Francesc Xavier Grau Vidal**

**Director of URV University Chair for University and Knowledge Region**



# Vision of Southern Catalonia as a Knowledge Region: the opinions of the region's political leaders Josep Poblet, Josep Fèlix Ballesteros and Carles Pellicer

[diaridigital.urv.cat/en/vision-of-southern-catalonia-as-a-knowledge-region-the-opinions-of-the-regions-political-leaders-josep-poblet-josep-felix-ballesteros-and-carles-pellicer/](http://diaridigital.urv.cat/en/vision-of-southern-catalonia-as-a-knowledge-region-the-opinions-of-the-regions-political-leaders-josep-poblet-josep-felix-ballesteros-and-carles-pellicer/)



Three of the region's political leaders have been interviewed to learn their views and opinions on the fundamental issues effecting the development of Southern Catalonia as a knowledge region

Southern Catalonia has all the characteristics needed to develop as a knowledge region. This involves a willingness to implement European regional policy to design a system of governance that facilitates strategic decision-making at regional level. In addition, the knowledge region is specifically configured as an opportunity to generate wealth and, therefore, to improve the quality of life of people living in the territory. The mayor of Tarragona, Josep Fèlix Ballesteros argues that “increasing the welfare and life opportunities of people depends on developing a knowledge region and, in particular, on urban development based on strategies driven by knowledge research and innovation.”

What advantages are there to Southern Catalonia becoming a knowledge region? Josep Poblet, president of Tarragona Provincial Council, explains that “becoming a knowledge region means that the dynamic of our society, its social and economic activities, are based on knowledge and that is therefore richer and more competitive. Today, being a knowledge region means having a better society”. In addition, Ballesteros stresses the importance of a socio-economic model based on innovation. Meanwhile, Carles Pellicer, mayor of Reus, argues that “outside the Barcelona metropolitan area we have the biggest economy in the country, an economy that is diverse and that needs to take control of its own innovation policy if it wants to rise to the challenges facing the country”. In this regard, Pellicer points to the important economic results that derive from being a knowledge region, which he identifies as: “more technology companies, more local talent, more recruitment of international talent, more research and development and more high-quality jobs”.

*The desire to evolve towards a knowledge region and improve quality of life for citizens*

*in Southern Catalonia is reflected in the commitment of its political representatives.*

The three public representatives of the region also point out some of the region's qualities, including its "strategically important location and infrastructure such as the Port of Tarragona and the Airport of Reus, which will make it one of the principal points on the future Mediterranean Corridor". Furthermore, "its rich and varied industry brings together various different sectors such as the chemical industry, energy, agriculture, tourism and historical and natural heritage. These sectors are reinforced by clusters and knowledge structures (technology parks, technology centres, innovation centres, etc.) and the Universitat Rovira i Virgili's role as a research institution.

### The economic and social sectors

One of the major concerns is involving the business and industrial sectors in the knowledge economy to create areas of specialization and boost R&D&I and increase international investment. Firstly, Poblet points out that "becoming a knowledge region would bring added value for the business sector by opening up new markets". He goes on to say that "companies will play the most important role because they are the ones who generate wealth, and so by increasing the role of knowledge in their activities, one also increases the wealth that they generate". Moreover, "investment will increase the competitiveness of companies and technology centres". On the other hand, Ballesteros states that "constructing a knowledge region is also a challenge for these sectors (...) if they are going position themselves competitively in an increasing complex and globalized economy". At the same time, Pellicer maintains that a knowledge region would cater for a different socioeconomic contexts and "allow us to increase volume and generate economies of scale".

### The system of governance and the quadruple helix system

One of the main challenges to creating a knowledge region is creating a system of governance that facilitates the coordination among participants and, therefore, strategic decision-making. In this regard, Ballesteros comments that not having such a governance system "has clearly been one of our weaker points compared with other economic regions". Moreover, he adds, "it is not a question of creating new institutions, but rather one of generating space for dialogue and consensus so that the development of the region can take full advantage of our great potential". Nonetheless, Pellicer argues the need for a specific entity dedicated to this project and reflects that "probably the most sensible thing would be for the Provincial Government to lead the process accompanied by the largest city councils and the University". Poblet's vision is based on the need to design, agree and implement a model on which the future of the region will be based. The possible role of the Provincial Council in this system of governance is certainly worthy of consideration.

The quadruple helix model [1] is an essential element in ensuring the success of knowledge region. According to Poblet, such a system should involve the public administrations, the private sector, academia and civil society in "improving the regional quality of all the economic and social sectors involved". Likewise, Ballesteros points out that the participation "of the public is one of the keys to the process of transformation

that we are experiencing. The new technologies are collaborative, open and accessible. Participation, transparency and forms of collaborative management have a key role in defining the strategies needed to become a real knowledge region". In addition, Poblet emphasizes the desire to "establish contacts with the various stakeholders so that they can interact and bring new ideas". To do so, they need to create "participatory platforms that allow people to share their views and to drive forward strategic projects". For this reason, Pellicer mentions the need to "raise awareness among the general public and the various economic sectors". In fact the mayor of Reus specifies that political agents and public institutions must lead this process: "we should lead the process from the front, drive it along".

### Towards the knowledge region: future developments

Finally, the politicians gave their opinion on the evolution of Southern Catalonia as a knowledge region. All of them call attention to its achievements in recent years and to the involvement of the Universitat Rovira i Virgili, which in its Statute as a higher education institution and, more specifically, in its third mission [2] has developed a dynamic of cohesion and sustainability throughout the territory in which it has a presence, thus improving and generating wealth in its surroundings. Specifically, Poblet states that "the opportunity for the intelligent specialization of the territory will help us to position Southern Catalonia as a Knowledge Region and to achieve our objectives, which in the near future will be key to the harmonious, cohesive and sustainable implementation of this project". Additionally, he says: "some of these objectives are to create new jobs linked to knowledge to develop a new industrial model based on knowledge to strengthen the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector and to improve social cohesion". As a matter of fact, the three agree on the need to keep working in this direction to fully develop Southern Catalonia as a knowledge region.

Consequently, the three leaders also agree that the path towards smart specialization also presents an opportunity to equip the region with joint decision-making tools that will facilitate the implementation of European policies and boost the region's development.

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[1] The quadruple helix model is based on an earlier model that focused on the relationship between university, government and industry in the implementation of local initiatives. However, the quadruple helix model adds a new stakeholder to this model: civil society (Yawson, 2009). Several authors have argued that relationships between these stakeholders promote the development and generation of knowledge. The quadruple helix model has been mainly oriented to strategies of intelligent specialization.

[2] The Universitat Rovira i Virgili has been characterized by its commitment to the territory and society through the Strategic Plan of Third Mission, which promotes the regional development of Southern Catalonia through the transmission of knowledge.

# Discovering knowledge regions: studies of good practices in governance

[diaridigital.urv.cat/en/discovering-knowledge-regions-studies-of-good-practices-in-governance/](http://diaridigital.urv.cat/en/discovering-knowledge-regions-studies-of-good-practices-in-governance/)



Studying other knowledge regions enables us to identify good practices in other regions. This compilation will focus on the role of governance in managing and planning regional development

The need to create a decision-making arena at regional level requires the analysis and study of different regions that have institutions specifically dedicated to that purpose and that have administrative powers at the level of regional government. The regions of Tampere, Cantabria and Twente have been analysed due to their complexity and singularity in different aspects.

## Tampere

The region of Tampere (Finland) makes a particularly interesting case study because it is an example of evolution towards a knowledge region or smart specialization. At the core of its system of governance is the Council of Tampere. It is interesting to point out that the Finnish system is organized into regional councils formed by municipal authorities that function according to the principles of local self-government. In addition, the Councils operate as regional development and planning authorities and “act as centres of development for the regions. They also pursue the interests of the region, its municipalities, inhabitants and business and carry out research, planning and analyses”.<sup>[1]</sup>

The councils receive “an annual state grant” to ensure regional development and establish the guidelines along which this development is to take place. The councils also organize draw up plans and carry out specific analyses. In this regard, foresight exercises are key to determining the needs and interests of different agents in the region and to developing a strategy for solving the needs of society.

How the system works?

The assembly consists of democratically elected members and is the decision-making core of Regional Council. Its members are councillors from different municipalities who meet two times a year.

To ensure the function of this model, the Finnish authorities have set up two permanent bodies:

1. The Board: “The executive and administrative body of the Regional Council” [2] members of which “are elected by the Assembly along party lines to be politically representatives of the region.” The Board meets at least once a month.
2. The Region Mayor is the president of Regional Council. Additionally, “he leads regional development activities in the region and works as a supervisor of the interests of the member municipalities”. [3]

Furthermore, Tampere’s region has an Economic Development Agency, Business Tampere, which promotes investment, attracts talent and creates opportunities for developing business in region.

## Cantabria

Cantabria (Spain) as a region is unusual due to the fact that it is both an autonomous community (i.e. the second level of government in Spain after the central government) and a province (the third level of government in Spain). Thus, even though its social and economic data are included in NUTS3 statistics, in reality the region has the administrative competences of an NUTS2 region due to its status as an autonomous community.

In Cantabria, an entity promotes the idea of a knowledge region. Firstly, the Cantabria International Campus (CCI), which brings together the Universities of Cantabria and Menéndez Pelayo with the aim of guaranteeing intelligent and cohesive development and of achieving excellence in research and knowledge transfer. The project also involves other regional and national entities, including regional and local governments, the hospital network, the port, foundations, institutes, chambers of commerce, etc.

Governance focuses on social, technological and political innovation through a strategy that monitors and evaluates impact. Specifically, two specific structures have been created: the “Regional Innovation Commission” and the “Regional Innovation Forum”. The first is the executive body responsible for promoting, planning and coordinating all R+D+I activities. This body brings together political leaders and executive directors from different sectors with the aim of implementing a mixed policy based on feedback and learning between those involved. The second is the “Innovation Forum”, which is a participative space aimed at all members of the innovation ecosystem.

Cantabria also has a regional development agency, SODERCAN, the objective of which is to promote R+D+I activities in industrial sectors with the aim of generating wealth in the surrounding companies.

## Twente



The last example is Twente (Netherlands) which is part of a provincial organization located in Overijssel. In 2007, the national government transferred its regional economic development responsibilities to the provinces. This legislation thus created a governance structure based on collaboration between the provincial government and local municipalities (Coalition Agreement Overijssel 2015-2019). Collaboration between institutions enables the Twente region to benefit from NUTS2 expertise, even though it is technically considered an NUTS3.

As in the previous cases, Twente has an institution, the Twente Board, which guarantees investment in research to promote technological education.

## Conclusions

The study of these systems of governance reveals different models adapted to the specific characteristics of each territory and their complexities at different levels. Ultimately, they all have the same objective of promoting knowledge-based activity. But the most interesting aspect is the theoretical basis on which they base their systems of government, namely the triple helix system, a concept promoted by Etzkowitz (1993) with the aim of leading societies towards knowledge.

It is worth mentioning that Tampere and Twente have specific territorial characteristics in that, despite being classified as NUTS3, the internal regional organisation of their countries allows them to act as NUTS2, thus allowing them to exercise their own administrative powers and resulting in more cohesive and therefore smarter regions. In fact, a very interesting differentiating element that is repeated in all three cases is the existence of regional development agencies that guarantee the distribution of investment to the different economic sectors represented in the territory.

In the light of all this, which governance model should Southern Catalonia adopt? It is difficult to reach a firm conclusion on this question; however, whatever the conclusion, it will benefit from an analysis of the situation, from dialogue and cohesion between the different entities involved and from strategic planning that will create region of knowledge capable of responding to society's needs.

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[1] This information has been checked online. See: <http://www.pirkanmaa.fi/council-of-tampere-region/?lang=en> [Last consultation: 14/11/2017]

[2] This information has been checked online. See: <http://www.pirkanmaa.fi/decision-making/?lang=en> [Last consultation: 14/11/2017]

[3] This information has been checked online. See: <http://www.pirkanmaa.fi/decision-making/?lang=en> [Last consultation: 14/11/2017]

# Discovering Southern Catalonia: VITEC Technological Park

[diaridigital.urv.cat/en/discovering-southern-catalonia-vitec-technological-park/](https://diaridigital.urv.cat/en/discovering-southern-catalonia-vitec-technological-park/)



In this edition, we discuss VITEC, the Wine Technology Park located in Falset. The park is one of knowledge structures of Universitat Rovira i Virgili and has become in leading player in the international wine sector

In this section, we present those areas of Southern Catalonia that are good examples of the configuration of the territory as a knowledge region. We present economic, social, cultural and natural spaces whose peculiarities and characteristics together constitute a social model based on knowledge, the objective of which is to help improve the quality of life of citizens living in the region.

VITEC is the Wine Technology Park located in Falset (Tarragona). It was created in 2009 out of a project initiated in 2005 by the Universitat Rovira i Virgili, the wine sector and various local administrations. Specifically, its creation arose from the need to provide a reference space for research and technological innovation in the wine sector and industry. The centre offers advisory services and technical assistance, as well as analytical and sensory analysis services and experimental winery services for the assessment of new processes and products. [1]

At the heart of the project is the VITEC Foundation, which runs the centre and is made up of other research institutes and regulatory boards. These include the Catalan Vine

and Wine Institute (INNOVI), the Institute of Agri-Food Research and Technology (IRTA) and the Catalan Cork Institute.

## **R+D+I**

The generation of knowledge from research activities has a positive impact on the industrial fabric and benefits and feeds into the innovative challenges posed by a highly competitive market. In this regard, VITEC is an important institution for wineries, regulatory councils and experts, whose production processes benefit from its research and knowledge generation.

VITEC's five main areas of R+D+I are viticulture, oenology, oenological chemistry, microbiology and sensory analysis.

The park's success is reflected in its figures. Since its inauguration and up to 2016, it has been the benchmark for more than 400 companies in the sector, it has received 15.5 million euros of private investment, 29 R+D+I projects have been won (with VITEC leading two of them at European level) and more than 5,600,000 euros have been invested in the generation of wine knowledge.[2]



Image 1. View of the VITEC vineyards. Source: VITEC

## **Facilities**

The facilities are located in area of 1,200 m<sup>2</sup> equipped with different laboratories, experimental wineries and wine tasting spaces.



Image 2. Viticulture Laboratory in VITEC's Technological Park. Source: VITEC

One of the most interesting laboratories is the viticulture laboratory, which provides support services and carries out field work. Its technologies and infrastructures are used to analyse land and vines with the aim of determining the nutritional state of the plant and setting up irrigation systems and fertilizers.[3] Also important are the oenology laboratory and microbiology laboratory, the latter being dedicated to the microbiological quality of wine.

Furthermore, the experimental winery cellar is also a fundamental facility that reinforces the principal aims of the centre by providing technical guidance to oenologists and wineries through pilot tests of new technologies, processes and winery products. [4]





Imatge 3. Vista del celler experimental de VITEC. Font: VITEC.

In conclusion, VITEC is one of the most important knowledge structures in the Southern Catalonia Region because of its relation to the knowledge economy and society.

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[1] This information has been checked on-line. See: <http://vitec.wine/el-centro/> [Last consultation: 09/10/2017]

[2] This information has been checked online. See: <http://vitec.wine/cifras/> [Last consultation: 09/10/2017]

[3] This information has been checked online. See: <http://vitec.wine/laboratorio-de-viticultura/> [Last consultation: 09/10/2017]

[4] This information has been checked online. See: <http://vitec.wine/bodega-experimental/> [Last consultation: 09/10/2017]



# Universities as agents of change in regions and cities

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## What role should universities play in designing and establishing regional development policies?

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Last October saw the European Week of Regions and Cities, in which the Chair for University and Knowledge Region participated in various activities.

The Chair attended the workshop on “Universities as agents of change in regions and cities”, which looked at the importance of universities in regional development. Specifically, it revealed the success of certain regions where universities have played key role in the creation of innovation eco-systems.

In a globalized and constantly changing world, the only way to be competitive and maintain sustained and sustainable growth is through knowledge, and regions must be capable to transform their knowledge into innovation. Furthermore, research universities are the largest generators of knowledge as they combine teaching and research in accordance with Humboldt’s model of higher education. Nevertheless, they can be classified into three types depending on their function and relation to society:

- **Ivory tower universities:** Institutions that focus on teaching and research but which do not have relationship with society
- **Entrepreneur universities:** Universities that generate new value because of they have adopted the triple helix model. In this sense, they use innovation to maximize their potential to transfer knowledge and increase their competitiveness in the

manufacturing sector.

- **Civic universities:** Universities that play an active role in regional development, which can be seen in their direct impact on the society and economy of their immediate area of influence. Furthermore, they combine different missions through the quadruple helix model, thus contributing to the needs of their environment and to global trends.

Despite the clear benefits to society that civic universities bring and the reiterated attempts of the European Commission to highlight the importance of universities in the development of smart specialization strategies for region, there is still no formal mechanism for including them in the regional governance system. Consequently, it is imperative to emphasise the crucial role that universities have in the economic development and social progress of regional knowledge systems.



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