

## Markel Olano

### Deputy General of Gipuzkoa

Born 2 June, 1965 in Beasain. He has a degree in philosophy and he has filled different roles in the PNV throughout his political career. He's been the highest ranking party official in areas such as education, culture and new technologies. He's currently in his second term as Deputy General of Gipuzkoa.



“ After years of deep economic crisis that has seriously impacted our society, how would Markel Olano judge the current social and economic situation of Gipuzkoa?

It's a situation of gradual recovery, but it's happening within a changing international context that makes companies feel constantly under stress. In general, they're all talking about recovery in terms of orders and billing, but also about narrower margins. Furthermore, there are a number of open fronts (internationalisation, R&D&i, industry 4.0) that make these times very exciting

but, at the same time, extremely critical because we either get on board now or we might run the risk of descending into a process of de-industrialisation. And, the Regional Government's attitude in this context is to stay close to companies in order to foster competitive and socially advanced industry. That's the only way we can maintain the socio-economic model of Gipuzkoa where the competitiveness of our industry and businesses makes it possible for us to create jobs and maintain high quality social services, and in this way we can fight inequality at all levels.

“ All these years of crisis has exposed a few threats but also some opportunities. Does the Deputy General of Gipuzkoa think that the society of Gipuzkoa is prepared to face the challenges on our doorstep?

After everything these years of crisis have meant, whose consequences are still being felt by a lot of people and families, I see a society that's worried, but also committed to building a future where we can take steps towards improving levels of well-being and solidarity. Gipuzkoa is striving to modernise its infrastructure, production systems and its social well-

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being system while also building a more and more fair society with less inequality. I think our society is prepared to take on the challenge. As a territory, we need to be ambitious and look at the most advanced models in Europe so we can, on one hand, transform our industry to achieve greater competitiveness and, on the other hand, find answers to social issues like reconciliation and co-responsibility, the ageing of our population and integrating the most disadvantaged groups into the labour market.

“ One of our territory's strengths has been its industrial fabric. Moreover, Gipuzkoa has a long tradition of entrepreneurship. Markel Olano thinks we still have those things... What are institutions proposing to foster entrepreneurship and industry?

If we want to maintain the levels of social well-being that we've been used to up to now, we need to stay committed to industry as a primary motor of our economy. And if we have our current industrial fabric, which is cutting edge in many areas, it's because of the entrepreneurship of a lot of people who have worked very hard for a project, elbow to elbow with other people, and they've had the vision necessary to carry our companies forward. Since the beginning of this term, the General Assembly has set the reactivation of the economy as its primary goal. And, to those ends, we've initiated the Economic Reactivation Plan for 2015-2019, with a budget of 200 million euros. One of the programmes in the plan is aimed precisely at fostering entrepreneurship. I'd like to highlight on this point the need to foster intra-entrepreneurship between companies. By that I mean, companies

themselves should identify and generate ideas that can give rise to new lines of business or innovative improvements in existing products. ULMA, in particular, is a very good example of this. It shows us the importance of intra-entrepreneurship because it makes it possible to diversify and create new lines of business.

“ The cooperative landscape in Gipuzkoa has a strong industrial tradition backing it up. How does Markel Olano think cooperativism has influenced the social and economic development of Gipuzkoa?

It's not an exaggeration to say Gipuzkoa wouldn't be the same territory without cooperativism. Our society, our companies, would be different, which is why I see cooperativism as having made a vital contribution to the development of Gipuzkoa. MONDRAGON is one of the most notable assets our territory has, and one of the ones that best represents the values of the society of Gipuzkoa; the way we work and who we are. The Basque cooperative movement is globally recognised in cooperative work and it represents Gipuzkoa around the world as associating advanced concepts in knowledge, intelligence, competitiveness, innovation and research with other issues like solidarity, cooperation, auzolan (communal neighbourhood work), diversity and work culture.

“ To finish up, Markel Olano, Deputy General of Gipuzkoa, has recently visited the ULMA Group. What can you tell us about ULMA? Do you have a message for its members and workers?

I'd like to acknowledge and highlight ULMA's commitment, and the entire MONDRAGON group's in general, to the

territory and the people that make up its society. That commitment has led ULMA to hire 600 more people in recent years, in times of crisis. I'd like to underline that recognition and, from there, I extend my congratulations to everybody who is part of this project. ULMA shows us that through firm and ongoing commitment to innovation and competitiveness opportunities for companies can grow. ULMA shows us how that route is also valid for the challenges we'll be facing as a territory in the future.

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