Press note
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ECUADOR EXPECTS TO STRENGTHEN ITS TECHNOLOGICAL AND SCIENTIFIC SYSTEM THROUGH GERMAN COOPERATION

The “Ciudad del Conocimiento Yachay” (Yachay City of Knowledge) project, incorporation of scientists and the technical and technological education are the key

The visit of the Ecuadorian president, Rafael Correa, accompanied by a delegation which includes State Ministers and National Assembly members times up with a historic transformation process of this south American country’s higher education, science and technology. The SENESCYT (National Secretariat for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation), government institution responsible of these areas, is currently leading four emblematic projects for which German cooperation and the attraction of its investors is critical.

For the first one: The “Cuidad del Conocimiento Yachay” project (Yachay means learning in the native language of quichua), dialogue will be established with several academic areas as well as with public and private companies in order to catch the investors’ attention for what is expected to be the first Hub of knowledge in the region; the “Yachay” project is intended to be a business cluster that will link science, technology and innovation to the shifting demand presented by the national and regional production matrix.

The second project: Prometeo, is aimed to incorporate German scientists, scholars and experts in different research areas to the Ecuadorian higher education transformation process. To achieve this goal, a program has been proposed in which the “Prometeo” guest will carry out research, teach and advise in this “biodiversity paradise”, the guest will receive a monthly payment that can go from 1500 to 4500 Euros. For that purpose, for example, a letter of intent might be signed with the president of SES (Servicio de Expertos Senior – Senior Experts Service), Susan Nonnen. The cooperation agreements with the Berlin Technical University, the visit to Adleshof technological and scientific park, as well as other bilateral meetings such as the one that will take place with the Fraunhofer Institute also follow that train of thought.

The third project is related to the intensive agenda that the German-Ecuadorian cooperation carry out in the Technical and Technological Institute Reconversion project, which during the following 3 years expects to present the country with 40 new institutes that will provide specialized information about national strategic and interest areas. Germany is a known leader on this matter and advises the Ecuadorian government on the design of the new curricula, for example those that can be achieved thanks to the cooperation agreement between SENESCYT – Ecuador (National Secretariat for Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation) and the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The agreement aims to achieve expert incorporation, provision of supplies and equipment, as well as curricula design for Electronics, Industrial Mechanics and Offset Printing. The companies HAVER & BOECKER OHG; HEIDELBERG S.A and CONTINENTAL TIRE ANDINA S.A will participate in this agreement.

The fourth cooperation matter is one that will allow an intensification of the Ecuadorian government scholarship policy for top German universities along with cooperation agreements to provide Ecuadorian students with scholarships coming from Germany.
The Ecuadorian minister of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, René Ramírez, has high expectations of this visit due to the scientific and technological potential, characteristic of this powerful European nation, which is implied in a possible commitment towards Ecuador, it will be a significant leap forward for the quality of life of the country and its 14 million residents.

Since the year 2010 an intensive agenda took off to reform University education in Ecuador through the approval of a Higher Education Organic Law which started a series of changes that are now taking place throughout the country. In 2012, after a severe evaluation process, 14 universities were permanently suspended due to poor academic quality. The Government took on a study program for 40,000 students of the fore mentioned universities, the results of this program are being perceived in 2013.

This year the aim is to create 4 new universities that will address XXI century specific demands: The Yachay University (Part of the Yachay City of Knowledge project); the IKIAM University (biodiversity and environment specific university); University of Arts; and National Education University.

The Ecuadorian government is currently investing around 1300 million dollars in the academic reform, the highest amount in the region regarding the percentage of GDP intended for that matter. An Admission and Academic Leveling System was incorporated to public university which took off in 2012 and increased college admissions in 26%. The system also doubled the rate of registration of historically excluded populations such as indigenous and afro-descendants. The country is also at the top of reports such as the one presented by CEPAL on the registration rates of low income population, ranked higher than Chile and Argentina.

In 2012, 475 million dollars will be invested for international accreditation of 7 public universities, bearing the highest academic classification in the Ecuadorian evaluation systems; also 308 million dollars will be destined to the Technological and Technical Institute reconversion projects to emphasize on the education and training of specialized human resource that this country needs.

All of the above sum up to reflect a very ambitious project to reform university and overall higher education in Ecuador. Regarding projects such as Yachay City of Knowledge, the world is already talking about its potential and interesting proposals not only for Andean nations but for the new knowledge the entire world requires for life conservation, Climate Change combat and more. (See Erick Mack’s article http://news.cnet.com/8301-17938_105-57575554-1/plotting-the-next-silicon-valley-youll-never-guess-where/).