

# WHY DO WE WANT TO ATTRACT TALENT?



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→ The different contributions that make up this Talent Guide have all endeavored to explain to the reader, who may be coming from outside the Catalan or Spanish world, that Barcelona is the ideal place to develop their talent, in whatever field that talent may lie: the reader could be a student, a businessperson, a researcher, a visual artist or an opera singer. In this text I aim to address that issue from the opposite perspective. That is, I will try to explain why both Barcelona and Catalonia want to attract and retain talent. In fact, the answer to this question is obvious: it is a well known fact, and we certainly need no convincing, that talent is a source of prosperity. And that is why cities around the world compete to attract it and why it is necessary to devote efforts to explaining why talented people should choose us as their destination. But beyond the generic principle that holds that the more talent you have the better, there are specific issues that are relevant to each city that are worth bearing in mind. In the case of Barcelona, two are particularly worth highlighting. On the one hand, our own experience, acquired over centuries, demonstrates the benefits of incorporating outside talent. We know that it is always worthwhile. On the other hand, we have also experienced the opposite phenomenon and know about the consequences of losing talent.

Throughout its history, Barcelona has had the ability to attract and capitalize on the talent that has arrived here from outside. Talent from outside of Barcelona, outside of Catalonia and outside of Spain.

Speaking of the latter, from my office on the Pompeu Fabra University's Ciutadella campus, I can see that the main building on the site, which lies next door to my office, bears the name Roger de Llúria in honour of the great admiral who played a fundamental role in the expansion of the Crown of Aragon in the Mediterranean during the reign of Peter the Great, following the rebellion known as the Sicilian Vespers of 1282.

Well, our beloved Roger, who is buried in Santes Creus, was actually born in Basilicata and bore the name Ruggero di Lauria. And IESE, one of our finest business schools, is located in Avinguda Pearson, which is named after an American engineer who, at the beginning of the 20th century, founded Barcelona Traction, popularly known as the Canadenca, a company that was a key player in the electrification of Catalonia. And if we continue exploring the nomenclature of buildings, streets and gardens in Barcelona, we will find other names – though fewer than I would like – of characters who, while not born in Spain, lived among us for long periods of time and left their mark, such as Ferdinand de Lesseps, who was the French consul in Barcelona in the 19th century, and, in the 20th century, the Russian-Georgian painter Olga Sacharoff, the educator Maria Montessori and the composer Arnold Schoenberg, the last two being refugees from fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

But the negative impact of the talent that we have lost over the centuries may well be even greater. Since there is no way of knowing what could have been, we do

not know exactly how much talent we lost with the expulsion of the Jews in 1492, but it was certainly not a minor loss and was very possibly superior to what was gained when the Catholic Kings conquered Granada at around the same time. And, in the 19th century, the exiles that resulted from the restoration of absolutism at the end of the Napoleonic wars, and, in the 20th century, from the victory of the Franco regime, also impoverished us, while enriching the countries in which the exiles found shelter. In our history, every time we have taken the path of purity and embraced the ideal of cultural and ideological homogeneity, talent has fled. And we know only too well that the result has been a persistent falling behind with respect to our European neighbours.

All of the above serves to explain why we are so enthusiastic about attracting talent and you will know, if you have read this guide, that we also have a lot to offer. And we are therefore aware that if in the past we have been unable to attract more talent it is due to our own failings and those of our institutions. But it is also comforting to observe that recent developments show a reversal of previous trends and the fact that the director of a museum, or even a politician, was not born in Spain is now something habitual in Barcelona. But the risk of involution persists and we have to do everything in our power to ensure that we do not repeat the mistakes of the past.

We want an open city in which nobody feels out of place. That's what winning cities are like.