



Intro:

The Junior Ambassadors at IES Cantabria participating in the European Parliament Schools programme have interviewed María Sánchez Ruiz.

She is the Councilor and Head of the Economy and Treasury Department at the Cantabria Government.

Most of the answers were focused on the influence and impact of the European Funds and the way they are present in our lives. This interesting information helps us understand the way Europe plays a key role in everyday's life within our region.

María Sánchez Ruíz.

Consejera de Economía y Hacienda

Audio 1. European Funds

ALEXIA: ¿QUÉ SON LOS FONDOS EUROPEOS Y POR QUÉ RESULTAN IMPORTANTES PARA CANTABRIA?

LIAN

Alexia asked the Councilor for Economy and Treasury what the European funds were and why they were important for Cantabria.

She replied that the European Structural and Investment Funds are funds in the field of the European Union that work together to support the economic, social and regional cohesion.

She explained that there are currently five main funds: the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development; the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund; the European Regional Development Fund; the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund. And then she added that the last three funds mentioned are directly related to the Cohesion Policy, that is to say, the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund, while the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development is directly related to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, to the Common Fisheries Policy.

ALEXIA

She went on explaining that, in addition to these European Structural and Investment Funds, and in an extraordinary way, the European Union had made available to all the Member States an extra allowance of 750 billion euros to face the health, economic and social consequences originated from the COVID-19 pandemic. She clarified that those were what we call the *"Next Generation Funds"*.

Answering the question of why these funds were important for Cantabria, the Councilor said that it was because they were a very important source of financing for the Government of Cantabria public Treasury. Then, as an example, she mentioned that in the European Regional Development Fund, between 2014 and 2020, 90 million euros had been received and the Councilor concluded by adding that for the same period (2014-2020), 120 million euros had also been received for the European social fund.

Audio 2. Next Generation Funds

D. JOHNSTON: **¿QUÉ ES EL FONDO NEXT GENERATION?**

DAVID

She asked what the “*next generation EU fund*” was. The Councilor for the Economy Department said that the Next Generation EU fund was a European recuperation fund that implies an additional extra income for the European member states of 750.000 million euros between transfers and loans. She also mentioned that, out of all those 750.000 million euros, 140.000 million euros corresponded to Spain.

DAVID JOHNSTON

She said that economic allowance was equivalent to 11% of Gross Domestic Product and it would be useful to finance from 2021 projects that follow the digital transformation line about ecological transition from social and regional cohesion and equity opportunities. Also, she added that in relation to next generation funds, we had to distinguish between REACT EU funds global recuperation, resilience and transformation funds, which are the funds of the “España puede” programme

Audio 3. Economic allowance for CANTABRIA

SANTIAGO: ***¿CUÁNTOS MILLONES LLEGARÁN A LA REGIÓN CON CARGO AL FONDO REACT Y PARA QUÉ SE VAN A DESTINAR?***

SOFÍA

She asked how many millions would be given to the Regional React Funds and what they would be invested in.

She answered that the Spanish Government would transfer to Cantabria from 2021 and 2022, 96 million euros. She also said that the Councilor for Economy and Treasury transfers the competent departments the right amount of money for the development of the most important projects that are going to be invested within these funds. She added that these projects had to do with health, related to the proton-therapy with 45 million euros.

SANTIAGO

Besides, she said that regarding education, due to the 35 million euros which would be invested there, there would be developments such as the digitalisation in the educational field and the construction of two new buildings for vocational training, located one in Laredo and the other one in Torrelavega. Finally, she added that, thanks to those funds, there would be help for the most affected Covid 19 sectors and there would be an improvement in the employment with an additional investment of the Social European Fund, among other projects.

Translation

Good morning, my name is Pepa and I'm a vocational training teacher at the IES Cantabria Secondary School in Santander.

I have three daughters and one son. He is the youngest one, and he was born with Down Syndrome. At the moment, my son, Miguel, is 26.

We learnt that he had Down Syndrome when I was in the third month of my pregnancy. It was really a sad moment, because we knew nothing about Down Syndrome (we only knew about the stereotypes of people with this syndrome that we had seen throughout our lives, that is to say, adults who walk hand in hand in the street, sometimes dressed with children's clothing, or as if don't know how to behave...) After learning this piece of news, we thought that both ours and our daughters' lives would radically change and that we would never be happy again.

After trying to assume the bad news, we contacted other parents so that we were explained the reality of Down Syndrome in those years, and we confirmed how those families were just like the rest, some of them very happy and others a bit less.

When Miguel was born, we were prepared to some extent and it was a great joy for the whole family: our parents, brothers, nephews... because in spite of having Down Syndrome, Miguel was a very healthy baby.

At the beginning, when I looked at him, I could only see the Down Syndrome, but I soon stopped seeing just the syndrome, and started looking at Miguel, our beloved son, as unique and incomparable.

With the help of professionals, we started to include all the baby's routines by means of early stimulation, while his sisters was taking care

of him and trying to help him by all means smarting him up. Step by step, he achieved to do the same things as other babies, but he had more difficulties when crawling, walking, eating independently, putting his clothes on, and even speaking...

However, the joy we felt with every little achievement, never had it been as huge as the feelings we got with our daughters. We all started to feel really proud of Miguel.

When he was three years old, he started kindergarten. After that, he went to a public school and finally he attended a Secondary School. His classmates didn't have down syndrome and, what it was then considered "*integration*" then, is what we now call "*educational inclusion*" according to the term coined in 2006 by the United Nations Organization.

During his whole educational stage, we were always surrounded by professionals from the Down Syndrome Foundation of Cantabria. Even though we had to work a lot and things which were not always easy, the outcome was very positive and I have great memories of the teachers who gave more than they could to help Miguel.

When he was 17, we decided that he would quit high school and he would go to an Occupational Centre with other people who had down syndrome. There he learnt how to work in ordinary situations. Those years we were fairly calm and relaxed.

While he was at the Occupational Centre, he practised working in a bank (BBVA) for a couple of months. Although he was very happy with the job, it wasn't convenient nor suitable for him.

He also lived some months with some mates in a tutored flat, but the programme came to an end and he had to come back home again.

In May 2019, he started working at a company called Bricomart and, after 6 months, they made him a permanent contract. He's still working there happily, with young working mates that make him feel comfortable.

Miguel is a very extroverted and nice person. He gets confidence with any person he meets and that makes things easier.

Currently, the inclusion of Miguel in society is complete. He moves on his own around the whole city; he manages his own credit card; in his free time, he attends several music lessons; he is a Racing Santander football team supporter and goes to the stadium whenever he has the chance; he also takes part in the local parish playing the guitar; he practises sports such as swimming, biking, walking. Besides, he loves politics, and he frequently asks about many things that he reads in newspapers or listens to and he doesn't understand. To sum up, as any young man without Down syndrome or any other challenges to face

He enjoys and makes us enjoy a lot every time we get together with his sisters, cousins, brother in law and the rest of the family. He loves eating out.

Our life with Miguel has been very rich: We've had to learn to be patient, to give our time, to try to understand what's going on inside his head... But he teaches us his way of seeing life and, in many occasions, he makes us reflect.

Miguel is very empathetic with people and if he ever sees someone suffering, he has the virtue to say the right words for that specific moment. I always tell him that he has high capacities regarding social relationships and he loves to hear that.

Here I have tried to sum up how our experience has been since Miguel appeared in our lives.