

## BBVA sponsors several higher education programs to promote professional careers for disabled people

This past Monday, the 21st of July, the Princess of Asturias presented certificates to the 36 disabled men and women who completed the higher education programs that were designed to promote professional careers for people with disabilities: *Economics-Finance Program and Human Resources Program*.



These programs were organised by Fundación ONCE, financed by the European Social Fund, and have been sponsored by the most important companies in the country. Among these companies is BBVA, also a member of the educational program's Advisory Board. Both of the programs took place at prestigiously renowned schools: ESADE for the Economics-Finance program and the *Instituto de Empresa* (IE Business School) for Human Resources.

BBVA was represented by the director of the Group's Human Resources Department, Juan Ignacio Apoita, and collaborates on this initiative that seeks to guarantee a means of professional development for disabled people and their integration into the business community. A 100% subsidy for registration fees was given to those people with a certified level of disability greater or equal to 33% and who were unemployed. Under the operating program *Lucha Contra la Discriminación* (Fight Against Discrimination), Fundación Once seeks to increase employability and workplace integration for those professionals that have completed the post-graduate courses. To reach this goal, they depend on collaboration from many companies, including BBVA. In addition to establishing themselves as a reference model for students, these companies will help complement the student's education with practical skills and play an advisory role in the composition of courses along with supporting the integration of participants into the workplace. "You will all take on the responsibility to change the way companies view the world of the disabled and what they think they can contribute to the community," stated the president of Fundación ONCE, Miguel Carballada, when praising the effort and hard work shown by students who completed the educational courses.

BBVA's collaboration in this program is part of a line of action to participate in issues affecting disabled people by means of supporting organisations that are legitimate and representative of that community. At the end of 2007, BBVA signed collaboration agreements with major organisations around the globe that deal with issues affecting the disabled community (Fundación ONCE, COCEMFE – physical disabilities-, FEAPS – psychiatric disabilities). The main objectives of these organisations are:

- Promote full workplace integration for disabled people.
- Promote the development of different aspects of LISMI (Act for the Social Integration of Disabled People).
- Improve the quality of life of disabled people and their families and foster the integral development of this community.

Striving to perform above and beyond what is legally required, this program uniquely combines a way to build culture and policy with a vision to improve the future for all people; especially those who may need more support at certain times in their lives.