

Two weeks ago, we ask some questions to the scientific Ibai Artetxe and he answered us...:

1- Why did you study Biochemistry?

Well, I have always liked science. I remember when I was a kid that I had some books with general questions about many topics (Why is the sky blue? How does a plane fly? Which is the highest mountain? etc) and that I read them once and again, as well as any other book that could help me learning new things about our world. This desire for knowledge made me want to be a researcher, so that I could be the one answering such questions.

About the degree I studied, I have always specially loved learning about living beings, specially about how we work and what happens inside of us. In fact, Biology was my favorite subject in secondary school. It was during the last year of high school, when the Biology subject focused on the chemistry of life and on what happens inside of our cells, that I decided to study Biochemistry.

2- Does your professional life running over your personal life?

That concern is probably one of the reasons I left the research career to start teaching, I was partly afraid that it would be too hard on my personal life. Scientific research is highly demanding, and commonly affects our personal lives since it requires a lot of effort and time. However, I believe that it is possible to have both a successful scientific career and a happy personal life, most of the scientists that I know seem to do it. It requires some effort, motivation and really liking what you do, but I guess that is something common to nearly all jobs and careers. Teaching too can affect your personal life if you are not careful. The problem is not really that much about the job or career, but about how you are able to go through it.

3- Are the women important at science nowadays?

I believe that they have always been important, and that they will always be important. Men and women may be slightly different, but I believe all of us have the same potential to be a great scientist. I have worked with both male and female researchers and I have never seen differences regarding this matter. However, it is true that in science they have always faced much more difficulties than males, something that still happens (too many people still think that males are better scientists than females, which is stupid). Science should not care about genders, only about persons.

4- How was your experience during a 9 months on the Erasmus programme?

Great, fantastic and one of the best experiences in my life. It helped me growing and maturing in all fields: academically, professionally and personally. Living in another country, experiencing a different culture, establishing new relationships... Erasmus means learning a lot of new things, experiencing novel situations, opening yourself and leaving your comfort zone. And well, it also helped me improving my English, which is always a

good thing. I will always recommend it as a very valuable experience that everyone should go through.

5- How was your experience at Abo Akademi University in Finland?

Really good, the university was well prepared to receive exchange students, so that is always something nice. But the most important part is being able to know a different university in a different educational system. You learn about other ways to teach and learn, for example, "self study subjects" in which the students study by themselves from a chosen book, either by doing summaries or an exam. You learn about things you would not know in your home university. In my case, working in a laboratory there was an incredibly valuable experience, since when I went back home I could use all that knowledge to improve the techniques employed at our laboratory.

6- Do you know The Big Bang Theory?

Yes, I know it. I believe that sometimes it is funny, although I don't usually watch it.

7- Do you think this is a realistic series in comparison to your job?

I would say that yes, and at the same time no. It is true that scientist tend to be a little bit different, as we say here "frikis". And I believe that a lot of the topics that appear in that series about science and scientists are true. However, the series exaggerates a lot the "strange" behavior of scientists, reality is more mild. But yes, I confess that we tend to do strange things and jokes as seen by non scientist people :P

8- What is your dream if it's not already realized?

Sometimes dreams change as we do. When I was younger I dreamed of being a great scientist, doing great discoveries, winning a Nobel Prize... But then I realized that I wasn't that interested in being a researcher. Still, I love science, that will never change. It is just that, instead of helping science as a researcher, now I want to help science by teaching it. Nowadays, my dream is to become a good science teacher: someone able to teach students all that I know so that they can learn to walk their own path and live in this highly demanding society, preparing them to understand the importance of science in their lives, and trying to give future scientists all the knowledge and motivation they will need to have a successful career.



