



4.9 The Calatrava Bridge, Bilbao.

revitalization projects, such as the Eurocities project, and internationally with cities such as Pittsburgh.

The Strategic Plan for the Revitalization of Metropolitan Bilbao was initiated in 1989 at the request of the Basque Government and the Biscay County Council. The intention of this plan was to shape Metropolitan Bilbao for the next century. Some critical aspects of the plan include:

- Investment in human resources with a focus on educational and training programs in order to generate competitive advantages for business development in the city.
- The need to diversify the economic base to establish Bilbao as a service metropolis in a modern industrial region, which included the development of the Stock Exchange, the development of the Port for advanced maritime activities, the availability of an international Exhibition Center and the development of the European Software Institute. Such initiatives represent key nodes in the competitive position of the metropolis.
- The communications system for the Metropolitan Area, which incorporates a system of internal mobility that would allow adequate connection among different sub-regions. The development of the public transport system, mentioned earlier, new highways and rail connections leading to the rest of Europe were initiated under the direction of the Plan. The new Port at the Exterior Abra and the development of the Airport in Sondika extend the possibilities of regional, national and international connections for the city.
- The image of Metropolitan Bilbao's environment as a central concern. The Revitalization Plan promoted the control and management of air and water quality and the efficient management of waste products (urban and industrial), according to European Union standards. Regeneration of environmentally degraded areas was a crucial factor for the improvement of the city's external image and hence competitive position.
- Fostering a social and cultural centrality. This includes various emblematic buildings which contribute to improving the external image of the city, the best known of which is the Guggenheim Museum. The revitalization of the image of the city includes, as well, the redevelopment of decaying urban infrastructure and the rehabilitation of the old town.