

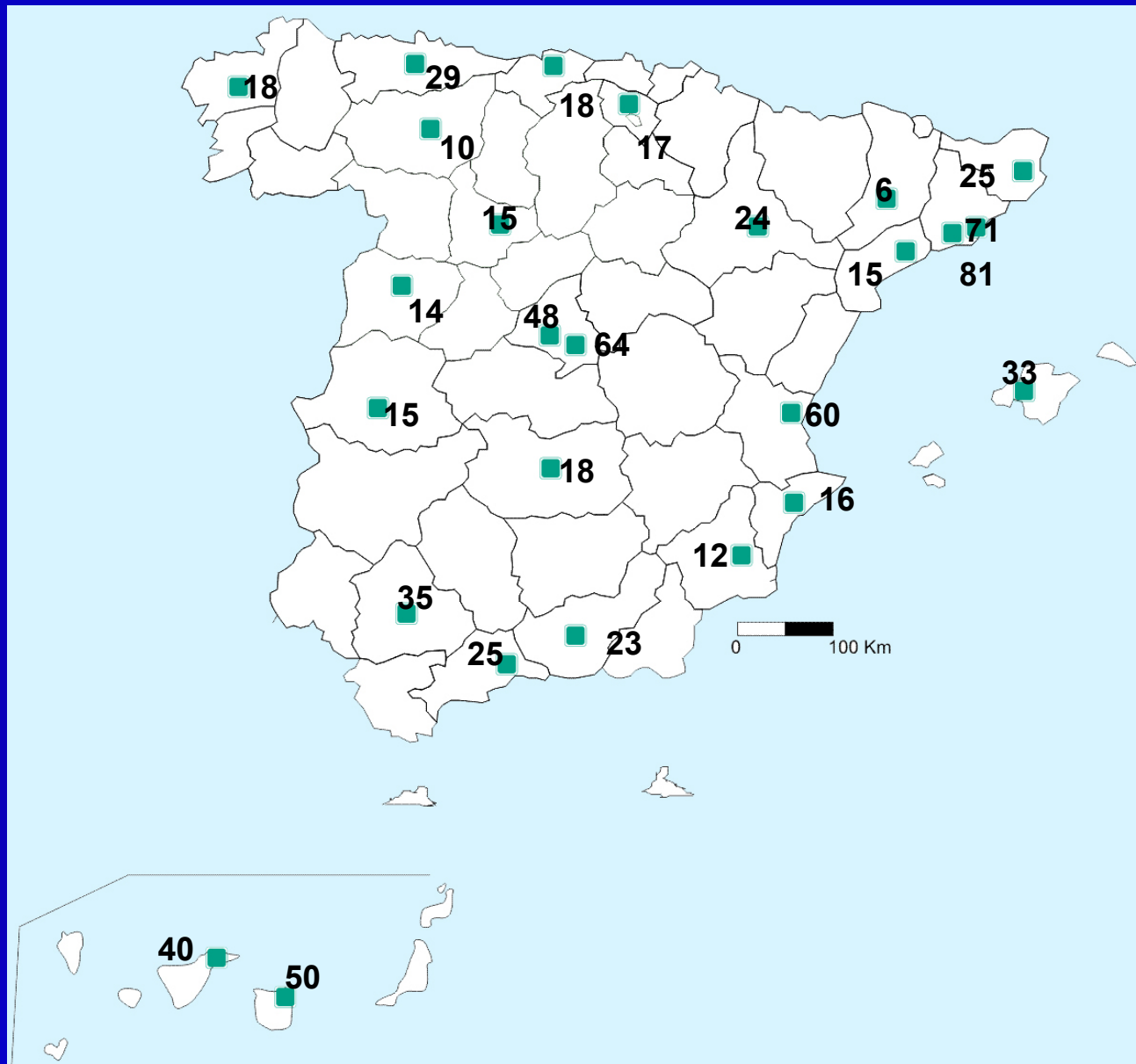
Geography and employability of graduates in Spain.

Dr. Jose Somoza Medina
University of León (Spain)

EVOLUTION OF GEOGRAPHY IN SPANISH UNIVERSITIES

- Before 80's, Geography in Spanish universities was just a specialization of the general degree in Arts (Filosofía y Letras. Especialidad en Geografía) with 3-4 geography related subjects.
- During the 80's Geographers studied just two years of geography subjects (4º and 5º) and the three previous (1º, 2º and 3º) mainly with historic matters (just 3 ge's subjects out of 15). The University degree was "Geography and History (Geography section)".
- "Geography" in Spain is an university degree since 1993 and the first students with this graduation left the faculties in Barcelona and León in 1996.
- During the 90's 25 of 26 universities that offer those studies changed their syllabus at least once. (The "oldest" one was established in 1994-1995 and in 17 universities the new syllabus started after 2000).
- In 2003-2004 the number of new students was 782 (with a general offer of more than 2.350). In 12 universities were less than 20 students.

Universities with Geography Degree (number of new students in 2003-2004)



JOB S ? ? ? ? ?

BECOME A TEACHER IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

- As in other countries, Geography was a compulsory subject in schools (primary, secondary and high) until 90's. So, when the increasing cohorts of children born during the 60's, 70's and 80's went to school instead of a geography teacher they found most times a historian or a graduated in Arts. At the beginning of the nineties, the national examination to be a teacher of Geography and History in secondary public schools comprised 40 themes of History, 35 themes of Geography and 15 themes of History of Art.

- When the first Geography graduates tried to become a teacher in secondary schools, Geography was no longer a compulsory subject. They have studied in their universities 20-25 subjects of geography and 0-4 of history. The examination of 2004 to become a teacher of secondary public schools in social science included about 10 themes related with geography and more than 100 of History and History of Art. In addition, the number of teachers in schools was declining every year.

BECOME A PROFESSIONAL GEOGRAPHER

- The Official Professional Geographers Association (“Colegio de Geógrafos”), established by Act in May 1999, had 902 members in January 2004, but in fact most part of them were lecturers and professors in universities (65%).
- The “Colegio” defined in 2004 five professional profiles, according with the information of their members
 - Geo-information technologies
 - Environment
 - Regional Planning
 - Knowledge Society
 - Socio-economic and spatial development
- Nevertheless, in a questionnaire carried out in Santander with Geography graduates between 1998 and 2003, 45 filled the “open question” with comments about this matter. Just one of them wrote a positive comment, the rest said things as “A degree without job options should be forbidden”; “I have lost five years of my life”; “the Geography degree is as useful as a primary school certificate”; “I feel failure”; “you have no chance to find a job” ...

SO, WHAT CAN WE DO?

-Geography should be a compulsory subject in secondary schools again. We have to join all our efforts in this objective. Not only to increase the employability of graduates, the main aim is the dissemination of a "geographic culture", including a new identity as part of the European Union.

-The Bachelor of Geography in Spain should take this into account, with a syllabus of 180 ECTS guided to the four profile identified by the "Colegio", the knowledge society. The 26 universities mentioned could stay offering a degree, integrating general subjects, applied subjects and matters from other sciences

-According to the academic background and human resources of every university, just seven or eight localities should offer a postgraduate course of 120 ECTS. For instance, Madrid (UCM + UAM + UAL + UC3) a postgraduate in Geo-information technologies; Barcelona (UAB + UB) and Seville (US + UMA + UGR) a postgraduate in Regional Planning; Valencia (UV + UA) and Santiago (USC) a postgraduate in Tourism planning; León (ULE + USAL + UVA) a postgraduate in Environment; and Santander (UC + UOV) a postgraduate in Socioeconomic and spatial development. In a country like Spain, with a high grade of decentralization, maybe every region will have to offer their postgraduate courses, but it will be necessary a global strategy.

**Thank You for your
attention**