

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY  
CUADERNOS ORKESTRA

05/2021

ISSN 2340-7638

# **LONG-TERM REGIONAL STRATEGY FOR INCLUSIVE COMPETITIVENESS: THE BASQUE COUNTRY CASE, 2008-2020**

Mari Jose Aranguren Querejeta  
Patricia Canto Farachala  
Edurne Magro Montero  
Mikel Navarro Arancegui  
James R. Wilson  
Jesus Mari Valdaliso

2021

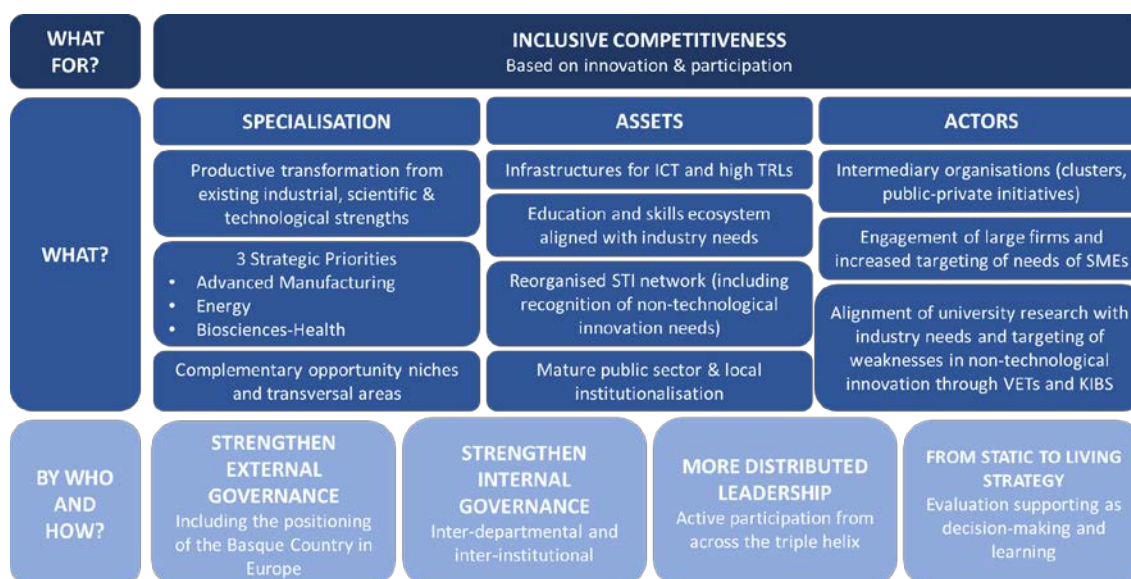
Executive Summary. Cuadernos Orkestra, No. 05/2021

## Executive Summary

The Basque Country is one of few regions in the world that can lay claim to having proactively and consistently built a successful, industry-focused territorial strategy over the course of several decades. It has experienced a remarkable process of growth and transformation since the mid-1980s and is today among the top regions in Europe in both GDP per capita and in having a low percentage of population at risk of poverty or social exclusion. As such it has been identified as a success case in several prestigious international studies.

The experience and capacities developed over three decades of focused industrial strategy from 1980 left the region in a strong position to respond to the intense economic downturn precipitated by the financial crisis of 2008. In the context of this crisis, the strategy in the period 2008-2020 has built sustained resilience and generated continued improvements in economic and social outcomes. Key differentiating features include: i) the targeting of strategic priorities and opportunity niches through an explicit Smart Specialisation Strategy that seeks to engage large and small companies, universities and other key actors; ii) the reorganisation of the Science, Technology and Innovation network and alignment of the skills ecosystem with industry needs; iii) the shift in focus towards non-technological innovation as complementary to technological innovation; and iv) the strengthening of governance mechanisms to promote more distributed forms of regional leadership and enhanced external connectivity.

### Summary of Basque Regional Strategy 2008-2020



Amid the new economic and social crisis precipitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, challenges for the Basque Country looking forward are linked to ongoing social-demographic, energy-environmental and technological-digital transitions. Other regions seeking to learn from the Basque Country's experience in building resilient socioeconomic competitiveness through a consistent and long-term strategy might focus on key dimensions related to strategic orientation, proactiveness, focus, capabilities and openness that have been at the core of the Basque Country's success.



# Orkestra

BASQUE INSTITUTE  
OF COMPETITIVENESS  
DEUSTO FOUNDATION

[www.orquestra.deusto.es](http://www.orquestra.deusto.es)