

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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COMPETITIVENESS FOR WELLBEING: CONTRIBUTION OF THE BASQUE MODEL OF SOCIAL AND LABOUR INCLUSION OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

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This report is the result of the research project "Contribution of the Basque Model of Social and Labour Inclusion of People with Disabilities to competitiveness for the inclusive and sustainable well-being of the Basque Country". The project was divided into two phases. In the first phase, a team from Orkestra and EHLABE used an action-research methodology to reflect on the challenges faced by the Model and identify actions to help address them. Then, in the second phase, these challenges and actions were contrasted with representatives of relevant entities in the ecosystem in which the Model is developed.

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Executive summary

The Basque Model of Social and Labour Inclusion of People with Disabilities (hereinafter the “Model”) was first developed more than 40 years ago. One of its distinctive features is that it is the result of collaborative work developed by a network of public and private actors who believe that business, in addition to being competitive, can contribute to creating societies characterised by inclusive and sustainable well-being. EHLABE *Inclusión SocioLaboral (Euskal Herriko Lan Babestuaren Elkartea)*, the Basque association of non-profit organisations that promote the social and labour inclusion of people with disabilities, is at the forefront of the Model. EHLABE promotes and develops actions aimed at institutional dialogue and at interaction with social stakeholders jointly with its member organisations¹. Furthermore, one of its shared objectives is the improvement of the employability of people with disabilities and their social inclusion.

In response to its mission, EHLABE has promoted a reflection process supported by Orkestra on four key questions: (i) What are the distinctive features of the Model? (ii) What challenges and opportunities arise from the “wave of inclusion”²? (iii) How does it contribute to competitiveness for the inclusive and sustainable well-being of the Basque Country? and (iv) What challenges and opportunities do sustainable transitions pose for the Model?

(i) What are the distinctive features of the Model?

- It is a flexible and innovative model aimed at empowering people with disabilities. It mainly seeks to improve their quality of life and employability through training, occupational services, guidance and inclusive multi-sector employment, relying on networking and public-private collaboration.
- It includes a shared system of values, tools, activities and resources to promote the inclusion of people with disabilities in the Basque Country.
- It generates real, quality work that prioritises people with the greatest support needs.
- It develops individual social and labour pathways that focus on people's skills through employability services and a range of inclusive work resources.

(ii) What challenges and opportunities arise from the ‘wave of inclusion’ at local, regional and European levels?

- Enhance communication about the Model to improve its positioning.
- Facilitate the construction of a shared language on disability.
- Have a bearing on the policy debate on disability.

(iii) How does it contribute to competitiveness for the inclusive and sustainable well-being of the Basque Country?

¹Apnabi, Bidaideak, Bizgorre, Centro Rafael Marí, Eragintza, Gallarreta, Gureak, Indesa, KL, Lantegi Batuak, Raep, Ranzari, Sutargi, Usoa.

² It refers to the mainstreaming of inclusion in local, regional and global discourses.

- Thanks to the value it generates for society in general, for people with disabilities and their families, customers and suppliers. In 2022:
 - the Integrated Social Value (ISV) generated to society by EHLABE entities reached 794 million euros (7 euros for every euro of public subsidy received);
 - the value generated for people with disabilities and their families amounted to 90 million euros;
 - business initiatives generated value for customers and suppliers totalling 395 million euros.
- Through their business activities in the industrial and services sectors and by forming part of the different value chains that make up the Basque business fabric.
- By developing a toolbox based on innovation and entrepreneurship that can be applied to other groups and is grounded on the knowledge gained for over 40 years working for the social and labour inclusion of people who, due to their disability, face many barriers to be an active part of society.
- By pursuing the general economic and social interest in accordance with the principles of social economy: (i) the prevalence of people and the social or environmental purpose over profit; (ii) reinvestment of most of the profits and surpluses to carry out activities for the benefit of members/users or society at large; and (iii) democratic or participatory governance.

(iv) What challenges and opportunities do sustainable transitions pose for the Model?

To further contribute to competitiveness for the well-being of the Basque Country, collaborative work is needed to address the challenges and opportunities of the sustainable transitions summarised in Table 1. As a core component, the Model should contribute knowledge to ensure that the three transitions are fair, inclusive and forward-looking.

Table 1 The Basque Model of Social and Labour Inclusion of People with Disabilities faced with sustainable transitions

	Energy and environment transition	Technological and digital transition	Social and health transition
Knowledge and training opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute knowledge to ensure that the three transitions are just, inclusive and forward-looking Its knowledge and experience in addressing the social and labour inclusion of people with disabilities can contribute to adapting training to respond to the new needs emerging from the three transitions. 		
Technological opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address its own energy transition to ensure their competitiveness, and thus the sustainability of the model, working on aspects such as regulations, production costs, etc. Enable the use of bright technologies³ to boost the employment of people with disabilities in these new niches, while improving productivity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address its own technological and digital transition to ensure its competitiveness, and thus the sustainability of the model. Optimise new technological and digital resources to continue working on reducing inequalities in skills: enhance capabilities, reduce job requirements, and thus ensure greater development and contribution of value for each person. 	---
Opportunities for employability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become a key player in emerging sectors associated with this transition, generating new employment opportunities for people with disabilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Circular economy; - sustainable mobility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate new job opportunities for people with disabilities in emerging digital sectors (e.g. digitisation, robot training...) and strengthen the parcels and distribution sector. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote actions for the social and occupational integration of people with mental health problems. Strengthen and develop its role as a major player in the social and healthcare sector, consolidating the competitiveness of current residential services and adapting to new demands, also in the home.

³ Those that make substantial improvements to productivity, significantly reducing the costs of the production process (Acemoglu and Restrepo, 2019).

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate the impact on the reduction in medical expenses and hospital admissions of these people when they are integrated into a social and labour context. • Transfer knowledge and experience ("toolbox") to new challenges such as ageing and generational replacement needs in the labour market or people at risk of exclusion
<p>Sectoral opportunities</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tackle the current demographic and care challenges of people with disabilities. • Explore further involvement in related sectors such as the food industry.
<p>Facilitation opportunities</p>	<p>EHLABE, as a driving entity, can promote reflection among the associated entities to generate a shared language and agenda on the defined challenges and opportunities that will lead to the implementation of specific actions. The ongoing support provided by public administrations is a key element in this reflection.</p>		

The answers to the four questions addressed in this document can provide input to the dialogue with the main actors involved in the ecosystem in which the Model is developed. Dialogue can build a shared language and vision leading to an agenda for action. This will contribute to highlighting the role played by the Basque Model in achieving inclusive and sustainable competitiveness in the Basque Country and position it as a relevant actor in the territorial strategy aimed at achieving the well-being of all its citizens.



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