

KLASE sindikatua

sindikatu ABERTZALEA

sindikatu SOZIALISTA

sindikatu EKOLOGISTA

sindikatu INTERNAZIONALISTA

sindikatu SOZIOPOLITIKOA

sindikatu EUSKALDUNA

KONTRA BOTERE sindikatua

sindikatu EKOLOGISTA

LAB,

sindikatu EUSKALDUNA

Basque Country's class union

KONTRA BOTERE sindikatua

sindikatu ABERTZALEA

sindikatu EUSKALDUNA

GIZON ETA EMAKUMEEN sindikatua

sindikatu SOZIOPOLÍTIKOA

sindikatu SOZIALISTA

KLASE sindikatua

>nazioartea





Esku artean duzun materiala beharrianak sortua izan da. Borrokakide ditugun sindikatu, pertsona eta kolektibo guztiei LABen egitasmoa zertan datzan azaltzeko beharrianetik da sortua, hain zuzen ere. LABen nortasun ikurrak eta helburu estrategikoak nazioartean azaltzea du helburu lantxo honek.

Edozein kasutan, ezinezkoa da LABi buruz berba egitea, sindikatu honen sorburua den Herriaz, Euskal Herriaz, hitz egin gabe. Izan ere, LAB klase sindikatua eta Euskal Herrikoa da, neurri berean. Gure helburu estrategikoak Euskal Herriaren independentzia eta sozialismoa dira.

Nazioarteko foroetan LAB bezalako sindikatu baten funtsa azaltzen saiatzen garenean, eta gure Herriaren errealtateaz hitz egiten hasten garenean, galderak bata bestearen atzetik datoz: Non dago Euskal Herria? Zein hizkuntzatan mintzo zarete? Zein da zuen historia? Zenbat biztanle zarete? Euskal Herria eta Espainia eta Frantziaren artean gatazka politikorik ba al dago? Zeintzuk dira LABen helburuak? Zein sindikatuk dute gehiengoa Euskal Herrian? Zein nazioarteko erakunde sindikalean dago LAB? Zeintzu sektore ekonomiko daude sindikatuaren ordezkatuak? Itaunak asko dira, eta oso anitzak.

Galdera horiei erantzuteko helburu xume baina garrantzitsuarekin burutu dugu lan hau. LABen eta Euskal Herriaren gainean egin ohi diren galdera ohikoenak erantzutea helburu duen gidatxoa daukazu esku artean. Bere helburu bakarra, beste lurralde baten gure sindikatuaz eta gure Herriaz interesa duen edozein pertsona zein sindikatuk bere zalantza nagusienak era errazean argitu ahal izatea da. Behar honek ez du saiakera bat izan nahi, ezta LABi eta Euskal Herriari buruzko lan sakona, kide ditugun sindikatu eta norbanakoei eskaintzen zaien lehen hurbilketa baizik. Lan hau irakurri ondoren gure sindikatuaren edota Euskal Herriaren ezagutzan sakondu nahi duenak bukaeran bibliografia laburra aurki dezake.

Gida honek hiru zati ditu, ondo berezituak: lehenak "Euskal Herria: euskaldunen Herria" du izenburutzat, eta bertan gure Herriaren kokapen geografiko, kultural eta demografikoa agertzen da, besteak beste. Bigarren atala, "Euskal Herriko historiaz zertzelada laburrrak" deritzona, laburpen historikoa da, bere helburua gure Herriak mendeetan zehar bere askatasunaren alde burutu duen borrokaren berri ematea delarik. Bukatzeko, hirugarren atala, "LAB eta bere egitasmo sindikal eta politikoa" da eta bertan LABen historia laburbiltzen da, bere nortasun ikurrak, sindikatuaren aldarrikapen politiko, sozial eta sindikalak eta bere egituraketa konfederala azaltzen dira, modu laburrean beti ere.

Azpmarratzekoa da aurkituko dituzun datu eta zenbakiak orientagarriak direla eta aldatu egiten direla denbora aurrera joan ahala. Beraz, ez dira estu-estuan hartu behar. Gainera, aipatzekoa da ere gurea bezalako Estaturik gabeko Nazioen kasuan, datuok lortzea oso zaila dela (ia ezinezkoa askotan) eta, horregatik, uste dugu, aitorten berezia behar duela urteetan zehar Udalbiltza edota Gaindegia bezalako eragileek egin duten lan ordainezina, liburutxo honetarako hain baliagarri izan zaiguna.

Orain zuen txanda da. Espero dezagun, lan hau irakurtzean, LAB sindikatuaz eta euskaldunon aberriaz zerbait gehiago ezagutu izana iturri zuzenetatik, eta gero jasotzen duzun informazioa zuen sindikatuaren, zuen lurraldeko langileei azal diezaiezuela, ahal den neurrian behintzat. Horrela balitz, gure helburua beteta legoke.

Mila esker aldeztetik munduan zehar gurekin lubakia partekatzen duzun sindikatu eta behargin guztioi. Elkartasuna herrien arteko xamurtasuna!

This publication appears as a result of one need. The need to make known to our friend trade union organizations, and to every person and collective interested in LAB's union project. The need to explain internationally which are our identity signs and our strategic goals as a trade union.

However, it is impossible to talk about LAB without mentioning the People it is linked to: the Basque Country. Because, above everything, LAB is a class syndicate and a Basque syndicate. Our strategic goals are achieving independence and socialism for our People, the Basque Country or Euskal Herria.

When we try to explain in different international fora the purpose of a trade union like LAB, and we start talking about the reality of our country, questions start to pour immediately: "Where is the Basque Country? What is your language? What is your history? How many inhabitants are there? Is there a political conflict between the Basque Country and Spain and France? What are LAB's goals? Which are the major trade unions in the Basque Country? To which international trade union organization does LAB belong? Which branches or sectors are represented by LAB?" The questions are infinite and very different.

We have prepared this paper with the simple but significant purpose of answering to those questions. We want to answer to the most immediate doubts of the people in other countries who have an interest in our trade union and our People, in an easy and pleasant manner. Therefore, this guide is not intended to be neither an essay nor a deep paper on LAB or on our People, but a first approach addressed to friend trade union organizations and to the people comprising them. After reading this paper, those who may like to know more about the idiosyncrasy of our People and our syndicate have much more developed papers, referred briefly at the end of this guide.

This paper has three well-differentiated parts: the first one called "The Basque Country: the Country of Basque men and women", aimed at locating geographically, culturally and demographically the Basque Country for other Peoples, who do not know our land. The second, under the heading "Brief notes on the history of the Basque Country", is a short historical summary, with the purpose of explaining why, throughout centuries, our small country has fought and keeps fighting for its freedom. Finally, a third part, titled "LAB and its trade union and political project" summarizes LAB's history, its identity marks, its main political, social and trade union vindications that identify it as a socio-political and class trade union, as well as its confederate structure which gathers workers from every sector of the economy.

It must be underlined that the data, figures and numbers pointed out in this paper are approximate and are subject to variations. Therefore, they should not be interpreted to the letter, because they change from one year to another, although not significantly on the whole. It must be also highlighted that in the case of a Nation without State, as it is the case of the Basque Country, achieving these data is a very hard task (almost impossible in some cases) and, therefore, we think that it is worth mentioning the work carried out for years by institutions such as Udalbiltza⁽¹⁾ or Gaindegia⁽²⁾, which turned out to be very useful in the preparation of this paper.

Now it is your turn. We hope that, by reading this, you travel mentally to our land and you get to know personally a bit more about the Country of the Basque men and women and our trade union, LAB. That later on, you tell it in your own trade union, to the workers in your Country and surroundings. If it is so, we may have achieved our purpose.

Thanks beforehand to every trade union organization, and the workers that share barricades with us world-wide. Solidarity is the tenderness of the People!

In Euskal Herria (Basque Country), April 2009

> ⁽¹⁾ The Assembly of Town Halls and Municipal Representatives of the Basque Country (Euskal Herria, in Basque), created in 1999.

⁽²⁾ Observatory for Social and Economic Development in the Basque Country.

1.- BASQUE COUNTRY:

the country of BASQUE MEN AND WOMEN

Geographical location, climate and orography

The Basque Country or Euskal Herria in Basque, is located in the south part of Europe, in the Bay of Biscay and it stretches on both sides of the Pyrenees, between the Spanish and the French States. It is bordered by the Cantabrian Sea in the north, France in the east, and Spain in the south and west. The part located inside the Spanish borders constitutes the south of the Basque Country⁽³⁾, and the part in France is the north of the Basque Country⁽⁴⁾.

The area of the Basque Country is 20.950,3 km² and its population reaches approximately three million inhabitants⁽⁵⁾, out of which over 90 % live in the south part or "Hegoalde". The municipalities comprising the Basque Country amount to 685.

The Basque Country has 7 provinces and four of them constitute Hegoalde (Alava, Biscay, Gipuzkoa and Nafarroa Garaia or Upper Navarre) the other 3 comprise Iparralde (Labourd, Nafarroa Beherea or Lower Navarre and Soule)⁽⁶⁾.

The south part or "Hegoalde" was divided by the Spanish State into two autonomous communities (the Basque Autonomous Community and the Chartered Community of Navarre)⁽⁷⁾. As regards the French State, it does not recognize the north of the Basque Country or "Iparralde" as a territory with its own identity and it includes it in the Department of the Atlantic Pyrenees, with Bearn. What the Spanish and French States want to achieve with this territorial division is the weakening of the Basque national identity.

Population density in the Basque Country is very high, given that it reaches 142.8 inhabitants per km², whereas the world average is 48 inhabitants per km² and in Europe 117.8 inhabitants per km².

The historical capital of Euskal Herria, despite the territorial and administrative division imposed by the Spanish and the French States on the Basque People, is Iruñea (Pamplona, in Spanish), which has approximately 200,000 inhabitants.

Province	Alava	Biscay	Gipuzkoa	Labourd	Upper Navarre	Lower Navarre	Soule
Capital	Gasteiz (Vitoria)	Bilbo (Bilbao)	Donostia (San Sebastian)	Baiona (Bayonne)	Iruñea (Pamplona)	Donibane Garazi (Saint Jean Pied de Port)	Maule (Mauleon)
Inhabitants	230,000	360,000	200,000	50,000	200,000	1,500	3,500

> ⁽³⁾ The south of the Basque Country is called "Hegoalde" in Basque or "Euskara".

⁽⁴⁾ Also called "Iparralde" in Euskara.

⁽⁵⁾ In Iparralde there are over 270,000 inhabitants and the population in Hegoalde exceeds 2,720,000 inhabitants.

⁽⁶⁾ The south of the Basque Country is 15,720.4 km², 85.7 % of the land, and the north is 2,995.4 km², 14.3 % of the land. The largest province is Upper Navarre or Nafarroa Garaia with an extension of 10,421 km², 49.7 % of the land and the smallest is Soule, with 814.5 km², which represents 3.9 % of the land in Euskal Herria.

⁽⁷⁾ The Basque Autonomous Community is comprised by Alava (Araba), Biscay and Gipuzkoa and the Chartered Community of Navarre, which is Upper Navarre.

Over 60 % of the population lives in Bilbo, Gasteiz, Iruñea, Donostia, Baiona and their surroundings. Therefore, it can be stated that the Basque society is predominantly urban.

The territory where the Basque Country is located is mainly mountainous. The highest peak is Hiru Erregeen Mahaia⁽⁸⁾, in Upper Navarre, in the Pyrenees, with 2,428 metres. The most important mountain chains, apart from the said Pyrenees, are Urbasa, Aralar, Gorbea, Aizkorri, etc.

Additionally, the Basque Country has 225 km. of coastline and 104 beaches apart from many rivers; the longest are the Ebro, which is 910 km long, in the south, and the Aturri, in the north of the Basque Country, which is 335 km long.

Its predominant climate is oceanic, with abundant precipitations. This climate predominates in a large part of the territory and it is influenced by the Atlantic Ocean. Therefore, thermal oscillations, between winter and summer or between day and night are not very extreme. Additionally, due to mountain chains and the orography in the Atlantic side of the Basque Country there are a large amount of precipitations⁽⁹⁾. Winters and summers are smooth as regards temperatures; generally it is not very hot or cold, although during summer there may be short episodes of extreme heat with temperatures up to 40° C. All this makes our Country have a very green and mountainous landscape.

Nevertheless, it must be specified that in the southern part of Alava and Navarre, in the Rioja Alavesa region and Navarre's Riverbank in particular, in the area of the river Ebro, precipitations are scarce; winters are cold and summers hot. Climate in this area is Mediterranean.

Demographic data

During the last 130 years the population in Euskal Herria has been multiplied by three. Thus, we have gone from 925,000 inhabitants in 1877, to almost three million nowadays. However, this demographic increase slowed down a lot in the second part of the 80's of the last century.

It must also be specified that for the last century, in spite of the general population increase, some provinces in the Basque Country such as Lower Navarre or Soule saw the decrease of their population due to the fact that young people from these territories was obliged to migrate, as the French State has historically condemned the northern Basque Country to a scarce industrial and economic development. Therefore, the young people from Iparralde had to leave their land to study and work.

The Basque Country's birth rate in 2004 was very low, 9.8 births per 1,000 inhabitants, even lower than the European average⁽¹⁰⁾, which is the lowest average of all continents.

Due to the decrease on the number of births and the gradual increase of life expectancy, as it happens in the rest of Europe, population is progressively growing older. Evidence of this is the fact that for the last 30 years, the number of births has halved in our land and, on the other hand, the number of old people has doubled.

⁽⁸⁾ Also called Hiru Erregeen Mahaia in Basque.

⁽⁹⁾ The annual average is between 1,200 and over 2,000 cubic mm

⁽¹⁰⁾ European average: 10.1 births per 1,000 inhabitants (data 2004).

Migratory flows

Historically Euskal Herria has experienced different migratory flows. Thus, until the beginning of the 20th century Basque people migrated, above all, due to economic reasons, although it was very common to see young people leaving the Basque Country to avoid serving in the Spanish and French armies, which most Basque population has never considered the armies of our country. Migrations were mainly towards Central and South America and, in a lower extent, towards North America and the Caribbean. Also a large number of Basque people had to migrate to France and Spain.

It is very difficult to state accurately the amount of people that migrated in the 18th and 19th centuries, but nowadays it is estimated that around four and a half million people living outside Euskal Herria have Basque origins. Consequently, Basque origin surnames are very numerous world-wide, with special presence in America (Iraola, Arrieta, Bolivar, Guevara, Alcivar, Iturralde, Ugarte, and many more).

Migration stopped during the 20th century with the industrialization of the southern Basque Country, although it continued being a major social issue in Iparralde, the northern part.

Thus, between 1962 and 1975, 300,000 people came to the southern Basque Country (Hegoalde); more than the ones that left it. This way, in 1975, around 30 % of the population registered in the south of the Basque Country was born outside. Most immigrants came from other places in the Spanish State due to the industrialization throughout the 20th century until the 70's.

Since 1990 the number of immigrants from outside the European Union has been increasing and, according to official data, it is over 120,000 people. Nevertheless, the actual figure is much higher given that a great number of immigrants from outside de EU are not registered or have "no documents".

Therefore, although most immigrants living in the Basque Country come from Spain and France, in the last years, the number of non-EU immigrants who come to earn a living in our country, has increased spectacularly. The majority of them come from Latin America (59.3 %), Africa (23.1 %) or non-EU European States (13.1 %)⁽¹⁾. However, the number of immigrants is lower than in other EU member states.

In LAB we clearly know that the arrival of immigrants from other cultures and countries is due to the predominant unfair neoliberal system prevailing world-wide, whose consequence is an also unfair share of wealth. We believe that migration represents a deep challenge for the Basque society and the changes it will bring must be addressed from a mutual respectful and understanding attitude.

LAB fights so that immigrants may have the same civil, political, labor and trade union rights as the Basque people, since we do not admit discrimination whatsoever.

> ⁽¹⁾ The fact that the data belong to 2005 must be taken into account and that Romania and Bulgaria did not enter the European Union until 1-1-2007, so the people from these countries who live in the Basque Country should be included in this information.

The “Ikurriña”, symbol of the Basque Country

The flag of Euskal Herria is known as the “ikurriña”⁽¹²⁾. It is a green x-shaped figure, with a white cross overlapped and red background, created by the brothers Sabino and Luis Arana Goiri⁽¹³⁾ by the end of the 19th century.

This said, it is necessary to point out that during the previous centuries there were several symbols representing the Basque nation, such as the “Arrano Beltza”. Nowadays the vindication of the Basque State is also represented by Navarre's shield.

It has to be underlined that the “ikurriña” and its use were persecuted during Francisco Franco's dictatorship in the southern Basque Country (located in the borders of the Spanish State) for more than 40 years. Even today, its official use is persecuted in certain provinces of the Basque Country, such as in Upper Navarre. Similarly, the imposed Spanish law, obliges to place the Spanish flag in the official buildings of the Basque Country, although the citizenship's main will is that our flag, the “ikurriña”, may flutter alone.

“Euskal Herria”: the country of “Euskara”, the Basque language

The national and original language of the Basque Country is “Euskara” or Basque, which is currently spoken by approximately 800,000 people, a bit less than a third of the whole population in Euskal Herria. Some who knows and speaks Euskara/Basque is called “euskaldun”. Those people living in the south of the Basque Country also speak Spanish, and those from the north speak French. Unfortunately, not all the people living in the Basque Country speak Basque.

Historically, Basque language has shared its territory with other two languages that are much more extended: Spanish and French. These are languages from countries that were colonial powers and that are spoken by millions of people world-wide⁽¹⁴⁾.

Euskara is the oldest language in Europe that is still spoken, as it has been acknowledged by the most famous linguists who are astonished by the fact that it is a unique language, that contrary to other surrounding languages, does not come from Latin or Indo-European. Euskara has different dialects, although for over 30 years there is a standard and unified Basque language, used in any field, to ensure a graduate recovery and normalization of the use of the Basque people's language.

Around the 1st century, Basque language was spoken in cities in Spain and France, outside the strict geographical territory of Euskal Herria, as evidenced by a great number of Basque names of places existing outside the limits of the Basque Country. Nevertheless, during the last century the number of people proficient in Basque language has been reduced to almost its half, endangering its permanence as a language.

This backward movement was not a coincidence, but the result of the specific linguistic policies of France and Spain which are contrary to Basque language. Euskara has historically been persecuted and discriminated by the Spanish and French States. Hence, during Franco's dictatorship its public use was prohibited and punished in the Spanish State.⁽¹⁵⁾

⁽¹²⁾ “Ikurriña” is a Basque word meaning “symbol”.

⁽¹³⁾ Sabino and Luis Arana Goiri founded the Basque nationalism as an organized political option, and created the Basque Nationalist Party, a Christian-democratic party.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Nowadays Spanish is spoken by 352 million people in the world and French by 122 million people.

The situation of diglossia continues nowadays as Euskara is only a co-official language (together with Spanish) in three Basque provinces⁽¹⁶⁾, meanwhile in Upper Navarre and in the part of the Basque Country under the French administration, it lacks official recognition. This means that although thousands of people speak it also in these provinces, its existence is not officially recognized and the linguistic rights of Basque speaking people are violated everyday. As a result, those who speak Basque do not have its normalized use ensured in legal institutions or in the health area, just to set two examples.

43.3% of Basque speaking people live in Gipuzkoa, 35.1% in Biscay, 8.2% in Upper Navarre, 7.6% in Iparralde (French State) and 5.8% in Alava.

Therefore, the future of our language in this globalized world is worrying. However, there are also lots of positive data: for the last years the number of people who understands and speaks Euskara has increased⁽¹⁷⁾. In this sense, 40 % of the young people can speak Basque. In the case of those people aged 35 and over, only 20 % of them speak Basque.

Education in Basque is predominant in many areas of the Basque Country and there is a significant popular movement in every town and at a national level fighting to promote the education in Basque and to grant the official status of our language. Unfortunately, the current educational model does not always grant the proper understanding of the Basque language, even in areas where Basque is recognized as one of the official languages.

This means, that in spite of not having a linguistic policy or a unified education system, due to the territorial division suffered by the Basque People, the Basque language does have a predominant social support. Its future development will depend, to a great extent, on the capacity of the Basque people to acquire the necessary legal-political instruments to grant its actual official status in the whole Euskal Herria and the implementation of the necessary linguistic policies.

Main economic indicators of the Basque Country ⁽¹⁸⁾

During the last three decades the Basque Country has changed its economic role; before, the industrial sector was dominant, but now, the service sector plays the main role. Additionally, other strategic sectors like the primary sector (agriculture, fishing, etc.) are in serious danger of disappearing.

In the Basque Country's economic activity the service sector represents 60.8 % of the Gross Domestic Product. Industry is 27.1%, construction 8.6% and the primary sector 3.4%. It has to be underlined that the weight of industry on the economy as a whole keeps being greater than in most EU member states.

> ⁽¹⁵⁾ At that time children used to be severely punished at school when they spoke in Basque. Additionally, naming new-born children with Basque names was totally prohibited.

⁽¹⁶⁾ The Basque language is co-official in Alava, Biscay and Gipuzkoa, but even in those provinces Basque speaking population does not have its linguistic rights recognized, given that public administrations do not ensure offer all their services in Basque in areas such as health, justice, etc.

⁽¹⁷⁾ This has happened in the part of the Basque Country subjected to the Spanish State. In Iparralde, the part under the French administration, the understanding and use of Basque has been reduced dramatically in the last years.

⁽¹⁸⁾ The data gathered in this section are from year 2007 and appear in the paper published by Gaindegia and LAB: "Principales indicadores económicos y sociales de Euskal Herria" (Main economic and social indicators of the Basque Country).

This evolution of the economy is not accidental, but the result of the policies developed by the different governments of the Basque Country. In the Basque Autonomous Community, which includes the territories of Alava, Biscay and Gipuzkoa, the Basque bourgeoisie's party that has governed for over 30 years, the PNV⁽¹⁹⁾, and the state parties, PSOE and PP⁽²⁰⁾, which have recently assumed the government after calling illegitimate elections where a significant part of the electorate could not exercise its right to vote, are committed to the service sector and the construction of pharaonic works that do not respect the idiosyncrasy of our People, nor its sustainable development.

In the case of the Chartered Community of Navarre, where the governing party is Unión del Pueblo Navarro (UPN), no economic policy has been designed and today Upper Navarre is totally compromised with the decisions of multinational companies located in this province.⁽²¹⁾

Regarding the north of the Basque Country⁽²²⁾ that lacks any kind of legal-administrative recognition and, the different governments of Paris, with the collaboration of the small local middle class, have devoted all their economic development to the tourism sector. This and the primary sector are the most important in the North.

The incomes available per active person were of 31,346.77 Euros in 2007, exceeding in more than 6,000 Euros the Spanish average.

Concerning the employment rate between the ages of 15 and 64, it amounts to 65.60 % of the whole population, slightly higher than the European average. 59 % of the active population works in the service sector, 30 % in industry, 8 % in construction and only a 3 % in the primary sector. The female unemployment rate was 9.5 % in 2007, similar to the European rate.

However, the percentage of temporary contracts has to be highlighted, as they exceed the European average; most of them are irregular and violate the law. Thus, the temporary rate is close to 30 % and doubles the European average. This situation affects, above all, women, young people and immigrants; those people with a poorer status in the work market.

As regards the R&D expenditure it amounted to 1.3 % of the GDP, a much lower number than the 1.9 % of the average in the European Union and the 3.2 % in Japan. Also the social expenditure is lower than in the nearby countries.

Basque people⁽²³⁾ has lived in the territories that today form the Basque Country since Prehistory. Roman historians such as Pliny, Lucio Floro or Strabo already mentioned in their works the existence of several tribes in the territories known, nowadays, as Euskal Herria or the Basque Country with their own customs, political organization and language.

> ⁽¹⁹⁾ PNV (Basque Nationalist Party): right-wing nationalist party, Christian democrat.

⁽²⁰⁾ PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party): Spanish social democrat party, currently governing Spain, and PP (Popular Party): right-wing Spanish party, defending ultraconservative positions and that, under the rule of Aznar, supported the imperialist invasion of Iraq and illegalized political parties and youth organizations of the Basque independentist left-wing.

⁽²¹⁾ 90 % of the companies located in Navarre are multinationals.

⁽²²⁾ Labourd, Lower Navarre and Soule

2.- BRIEF NOTES

on history the BASQUE COUNTRY

Origins

Romanization was strong in a part of Euskal Herria, especially in southern Upper Navarre and Alava where there are still evidences in important cities of the Basque Country. For example, Pamplona⁽²⁴⁾, Vitoria and Bayonne were settlements founded by the Romans. Nevertheless, other areas of the Basque Country⁽²⁵⁾ hardly did know their existence.

The fall of the Roman Empire meant the creation of settlements of Visigoths and Franks. However, Visigoths never dominated the Vascones⁽²⁶⁾.

Later on, Arabs entered in 711 what is today the Spanish State and, as in the Roman era, their influence was especially felt in the southern Upper Navarre and Alava⁽²⁷⁾.

The Kingdom of Navarre

The Kingdom of Pamplona was created in the 9th century, being Iñigo Arista its first king who obtained the support of most families in the territory controlled by him. Then, it was called Kingdom of Navarre and kept its independence until the 16th century. During the 11th to the 16th century the Kingdom of Navarre became Christian.

Sancho Garces II "Abarka" (970-994) was the first to call himself "King of Navarre" and in the times of Sancho III the Great (1004-1035) the Kingdom of Navarre reached its greatest territorial extension, as it included the lands of Navarre, Alava, Biscay, Gipuzkoa, La Rioja, part of Castile and Aragon, as well as Iparralde. He unified the Basque territories.

From 1512 to 1524, following the orders of Ferdinand the Catholic, and under the rule of the Duke of Alba, Navarre was conquered by the already unified Crowns of Castile and Aragon. In 1515, by means of the Treaty of Burgos, Navarre was annexed for the Crown of Castile. However, there were important centres of resistance among the Navarre population who were opposed to this annexation⁽²⁸⁾. Reaching this point, it is necessary to underline three aspects of the late incorporation of Navarre to the Spanish crown:

1. The Kingdom of Navarre was conquered by the Spanish later than many American People.

> ⁽²³⁾ Different tribes used to occupy several areas in the Basque Country: Vascones, Varduli, Caristii and Autrigones, among others. They had similar customs and languages.

⁽²⁴⁾ Pamplona or Iruñea is the historical capital of the Basque People.

⁽²⁵⁾ Roman presence was smaller in the territories near the Cantabrian Sea (what is today Biscay and Gipuzkoa), like in Iparralde.

⁽²⁶⁾ In the chronicles of the successive Visigothic kings constantly appears the expression "domuit vascones", proving that no Visigothic king could ever dominate them effectively.

⁽²⁷⁾ Roman and Arabic influence is kept today in the language, since numerous words from Basque come from Latin and Arabic, apart from other languages.

⁽²⁸⁾ An example of it were the battles of Noain (1521), Amaiur (1522) or the battle of Fuenterrabia's castle (1521-1524)



2. In spite of the conquest, Navarre, as well as Alava, Biscay and Gipuzkoa maintained their chartered structure intact, with their laws, their own borders and different courts.⁽²⁹⁾

3. The conquest of Navarre by the Catholic Kings was the triumph of the Counter Reformation and the Inquisition opposed to the tolerant court of Navarre, which was a model of cultural, religious and political openness until the end of the 16th century in the part of the Kingdom of Navarre that was not conquered by Spaniards, where literature and sciences were cultivated and the first books in Basque were printed.⁽³⁰⁾

French assimilation of the northern territories of the Basque Country⁽³¹⁾

After these events the Kingdom of Navarre was limited to the territories on the other side of the Pyrenees (Labourd, Lower Navarre and Soule), until 1594, when Henry of Navarre was crowned “king of France and Navarre”, after abandoning Protestantism and embracing Catholic religion.⁽³²⁾ This title was in force for the following kings of France until the triumph of the Bourgeois Revolution in 1789.

For the next centuries and until 1789 there were many French attempts to undermine the sovereignty, the Courts and the legality of the northern Basque Country, which gained the rejection of the Basque population and that turned into different popular risings.⁽³³⁾

When the Bourgeois Revolution arrived in France, in 1789, the States-General of the Kingdom of France invited the Parliament of Lower Navarre to participate, and this invitation was rejected under the justification that it was a different kingdom. That same year the French Assembly voted the abolition of the constitutions of Lower Navarre, Labourd and Soule, subjecting them by force and against the wishes of the population in the northern part of the Basque Country.

Later the current Department of the Atlantic Pyrenees was created, joining by force the Basque and Bearnaise Countries, notwithstanding the absolute opposition of both communities. Thus, the French State started collecting taxes in Iparralde and the obligation for Basque people to do the military service outside Iparralde, in French territory, was established.⁽³⁴⁾

During the government of Napoleon the French centralism was strengthened and the Basque language was pushed aside when the compulsory and exclusive education in French was established. Since then, and throughout these centuries, the underdevelopment and poverty in the northern Basque Country have been very acute and constitute the basis of the massive Basque migration to France and America.⁽³⁵⁾

> ⁽²⁹⁾ This fact, as we will see, represented a permanent source of conflicts between the territories in the south of the Basque Country and the Spanish State, during the following centuries.

⁽³⁰⁾ The first book published in Basque was *Linguae Vasconum Primitiae* by Bernard Etxepare, in 1545.

⁽³¹⁾ The northern part of the Basque Country, also called “Iparralde” in Basque, is comprised by the territories of Labourd, Soule and Lower Navarre.

⁽³²⁾ Today, the major religion in the Basque Country is Christianity in its Catholic faith. Nevertheless, there are also other religious minorities such as Muslims or Christian Orthodox, mainly represented by immigrant people. Similarly, the number of people describing themselves as atheists, agnostics or lays is significant.

⁽³³⁾ Just to set some facts: rebellion in 1657 against the impositions of the French king Luis XIV; rebellion in Soule in 1661 and in Lower Navarre in 1685 for the attacks against common properties, etc.

⁽³⁴⁾ In 1794, French authorities deported thousands of Basque people from the border to the Landes region due to their denial to fight against their fellow countrymen and relatives or friends from Gipuzkoa and Upper Navarre. Most of them died under abominable conditions.

⁽³⁵⁾ See section “migration flows” part I.

Southern Basque Country: fighting to maintain the *Fueros*

For a long time, each Basque territory maintained its own legislative, executive and judicial systems, which were known as “*Fueros*” (privileges). Neither Spanish nor French kings dared to abolish them.

As we have pointed out, the situation changed in northern Basque Country after the Bourgeois Revolution in 1789, which eliminated the *Fueros* of Labourd, Lower Navarre and Soule.

As regards the provinces comprising the Southern Basque Country that were subjected to the Spanish State, between 1833 and 1839 the First Carlist War took place, when the Basque population saw that the freedom systems established in the *Fueros* regime endangered and, that despite the Spanish conquest, it had been respected until then. The revolt became a popular uprising.

For seven years the Basque People organized its own State with a wide popular support and a powerful army was created comprised by land workers and humble classes that, under the control of General Tomás de Zumalakarregi, inflicted hard defeats on the Spanish army.

After Zumalakarregi's death the war ended in 1839 with the so called “*Abrazo de Bergara*”, due to which Basque people would dissolve their army in exchange of maintaining their *Fueros* and their regime of freedoms. However, Spanish rulers, the incipient Spanish bourgeoisie and the Spanish army, continued with their unifying attempts.

In 1841 the Spanish government, in accordance with their allies in Upper Navarre, enacted the Law of the Modification of the *Fueros*, also known as Pacted Law, which instead of a pact was an imposition. This represented the transformation of Upper Navarre that, after being a Kingdom, became a Spanish province what varied the borders that had existed until then; the tax regime also changed and the compulsory military service was imposed, which gave rise to a massive desertion of young Navarres from the Spanish army and popular uprisings during the next years.

The *foral* regime was maintained in Alava, Biscay and Gipuzkoa, but the existing popular discomfort resulted into a new significant uprising known as the “*Second Carlist War*”. Again the defenders of the *foral* regime in the three Basque provinces were defeated and in 1876 the *Fueros* were abolished, and it was established “*manu militari*” an assimilation regime similar to the one established in Upper Navarre in 1841.

Emergence of Basque nationalism and Franco's dictatorship (end of the 19th century-1975)

The origins of modern Basque nationalism dates back to the end of the 19th century. After the abolition of the *fueros* and the industrial revolution, the national question becomes increasingly tangible, as well as the attempts of political, economic and cultural assimilation by the Spanish and French States.

In this context one of the ultimate exponents and ideologist of the current concept of the Basque nation appeared, this was Sabino Arana Goiri⁽³⁶⁾ that created the term “*Euzkadi*”⁽³⁷⁾ in order to define the Basque territory of the seven provinces. Additionally, the impor-

tance of other people like Agosti Xaho or Arturo Kanpion should also be highlighted, as they made a great contribution to the ideological fundaments of the Basque national feeling, from cultural ideas and/or republican ideas to lay and left wing ideas, especially in the case of Xaho.

In 1895 the Basque Nationalist Party was founded, it had nationalist bourgeois and catholic ideas, and in 1918 Euskaltzaindia or the Basque language Academy was created, acting in the whole Basque Country and working exclusively on matters related to *Euskara*.

In 1930 some members disagreeing with the political and social ideas of the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV, in Spanish), created another nationalist party, but in this case it was a leftist and lay political party, called Basque Nationalist Action (ANV, in Spanish).⁽³⁸⁾

Nationalist ideas reached an unprecedented upturn in the Basque Country and in 1931, in Estella (Upper Navarre) a project of Statute for the four regions in Southern Basque Country was approved.

The 18th July, 1936 the Spanish army, supported by the high bourgeoisie, the Catholic Church and the most reactionary right-wing parties, rose up in arms against the Second Spanish Republic.

The majority of the Basque People supported the republican legality. This support was due to the interest in defending the national cause of some parties and syndicates, and to the defence of the workers' rights by others. This made them join against a common enemy, represented by Franco and the fascist right-wing parties.

The war that as regards its bellicose side ended in 1937 in the Basque Country, left 50,000 dead people, 10,000 prisoners and over 150,000 exiled people that looked for refuge, mainly, in the French State, in America or in the former Soviet Union. After Franco's victory, any leftist or Basque nationalist political activity, even Basque language was prohibited and toughly repressed.

Political parties who were against almost disappeared from the streets and from social life because they were the victims of the political repression during the dictatorship years.

As a result of this, a new generation of young people in the Basque Country assumed the political fight and in 1951 they created the Ekin organization, which by the end of 1958 gave rise to the creation of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA).⁽³⁹⁾

> ⁽³⁶⁾ Sabino Arana Goiri (1865-1903), died when he was 38 after being persecuted due to his political ideas. Basque nationalist ideas were also promoted by ideologists like Agosti Xaho, from Soule, or Arturo Kanpion, from Navarre, among others.

⁽³⁷⁾ The term "Euzkadi" is nowadays only used by the Basque nationalist right-wing, the Basque Nationalist Party. In the 60's the leftist independentist nationalist parties started using the term "Euskadi", and currently the term Euskal Herria (Basque Country) is more popular among the Basque population, which etymologically means "Country of the Euskara (Basque language)" and it is used to refer to the whole Basque territory from the political and cultural point of view.

⁽³⁸⁾ This historical party fought against Francoism in the Republican front and later against Nazism. During Franco's dictatorship it was prohibited and worked totally underground. It was legalized again in 1977, the Spanish Government under PSOE's rule, following its line of repression of the Basque left-wing independentist movement, illegalized it again in 2008, when it had thousands of militants, hundreds of elected people and over 30 town halls in the south of the Basque Country.

⁽³⁹⁾ ETA, acronym of Euskadi Ta Askatasuna ("Basque Land and Freedom").

ETA gathered the Basque independentist ideas with the socialist ideas. It must be underlined that the main identity sign of the Basque People is its language, and anyone living and working in our country is considered to be Basque. Similarly, it is committed with any fight method; among others the armed fight until the Right to Self-determination of the Basque People is recognized. The armed organization soon became a fundamental political actor in the Basque Country, and became the leader in the fight against Franco's dictatorship.

The most outstanding events in the Basque fight against Franco's regime were in the following dates:

- In December 1970, when in the Trial of Burgos, the dictatorship pronounced very serious sentences against the prosecuted independentist militants and the working class and the Basque People went out to the streets to impede the performance of the death penalties. They succeeded.

- By the end of 1973 ETA killed the President of the Spanish Government, Admiral Carrero Blanco, best candidate to succeed Franco after his death.⁽⁴⁰⁾

- The 27th September 1975, Francoist regime executed by firing squad the Basque members of ETA Juan Paredes Manot "Txiki" and Ángel Otaegi, and three Spanish revolutionaries of the FRAP. The Basque People took the streets trying to impede these last francoist crimes.

Meanwhile, in northern Basque Country, in 1963 the independentist group Enbata was created and in 1973 the armed organization Iparrretarrak (IK) was born. This was due to the fact that the national feeling was still incipient in northern Basque Country, but it was progressively taking shape because a new generation started to defend the Basque culture and language, which was also being seriously threatened in Iparralde.

The transition and several negotiation processes (1975 - Until now)

During the last years of Franco's dictatorship and after his death, during the transition period that followed it until the implantation of the current autonomic regime in the Spanish State, the Basque Country experienced a convulse situation, with great social, political and popular disturbances. General strikes, demonstrations and national and worker's fights followed one another, armed conflicts never ended and the Spanish and French prisons were full of Basque political prisoners.

Thus, although in 1977 the Spanish Government was obliged by the popular pressure to release imprisoned Basque political militants, the fact that the causes of the armed political conflict continued as cruel as ever was the reason why prisons got newly full of militants of ETA and other Basque organizations.

The 6th December, 1978 there was a referendum to approve the Spanish Constitution. Such constitution, which ensures the Spanish unity by means of the army, imposes monarchy, leaves in the background the languages other than Spanish and recognizes private property, was not approved by the majority of the Basque People.

> ⁽⁴⁰⁾ Francisco Franco died of natural causes the 20th November, 1975.

Almost a year later a referendum was held in order to approve the Statute project for Alava, Biscay and Gipuzkoa agreed by the Spanish parties and the Basque nationalist bourgeoisie, with the PNV and PSOE leading them. The Basque independentist left-wing parties were against this Statute because it recognized the division of the southern Basque Country, by way of the legal-administrative partition of the Basque provinces (Alava, Biscay and Gipuzkoa) and Upper Navarre, it did not recognize the Basque People and their right to self-determination and discriminated the Basque language, apart from establishing a capitalist economic regime that does not take into account the interests of the Basque working class. Finally, the text was approved in the three provinces where it was voted by an insignificant margin of 53 %.⁽⁴²⁾

Regarding Upper Navarre, which was excluded from the autonomic referendum of 1979, a separated Statute was established without popular referendum through the Law of Foral Improvement in 1982.

These Autonomy Statutes gave rise to regionalist governments with very limited competences that are far away from the political will of the majority of the Basque People. As a proof thereof, today an ample majority of the Basque People recognizes that the current legal-political framework, established then, is exhausted and it is necessary to establish a new framework. The characteristics that the new framework must have are the ones conditioning extent the current political pulse in the Basque Country.

Since the 80's until now the Basque Country has experienced crucial political moments. These are some of the most significant:

- The creation of Herri Batasuna, a political party gathering different political parties of Basque independentist left-wing ideology, that conditioned the political evolution of the Basque Country for the next years.⁽⁴³⁾
- Death by tortures in a police station of Madrid of the Basque militant Joseba Arregi in February 1981.
- Thanks to the fight of the working class, the popular classes and several organizations, the project for the nuclear power station in Lemoiz was stopped, which represented the victory of the ecologist, antinuclear and popular movement without precedents in Europe.
- During the transition from Franco's dictatorship and under the Government of Felipe Gonzalez, of the PSOE party, the Spanish State used dirty war systematically, through the creation of right-wing groups such as Triple A, the Basque-Spanish Battalion (BVE, in Spanish) or the Antiterrorist Liberation Groups (GAL, in Spanish) employing State terrorism against the militants of the armed organizations or the Basque political organizations. We must place in this context the murders of several refugees in the north of the Basque Country (France) during the decade from 1970 and 1980 and the murders of Herri Batasuna's leaders, Santi Brouard (1984) and Josu Muguruza (1989) in Spain, among others
- The 12th March, 1986 a referendum was held for the incorporation of the Spanish State to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Basque Country rejected such incorporation although the major parties (PSOE and PNV) supported it and in the whole Spanish State the votes in favour succeeded. Once more, the wishes of the Basque People expressed through the polls were ignored, and the incorporation of the Basque Country in the NATO was imposed to us against our wishes as People.

> ⁽⁴²⁾ To have an idea of the scarce welcome of this Statute of Autonomy, it must be taken into account that the project of the Statute voted in 1933, in the same territory and with the same question, had the support of 84 % of the electors

⁽⁴³⁾ Herri Batasuna, like other independentist groups derived from it, such as Euskal Herritarrok or Batasuna were illegalized by the Spanish government in 2000, in spite of having an electorate of 200,000 people approximately (between 15 and 20 % of the Basque electorate), with thousands of militants, hundreds of elected people in different institutions and tens of town halls. Additionally, in September 2008 Basque Nationalist Action (ANV) and the Communist Party of the Basque Lands (PCTV-EHAK) were illegalized, these were also Basque left-wing independentist parties with similar electoral representation..

- From 1980 to 1990 throughout the Basque Country, north and south, the youth movement of refusal to serve in the Spanish and French armies spread, and therefore, thousands of young Basques with the age to serve the compulsory military service rejected doing it and suffered retaliation and were imprisoned. Finally, thanks to this movement of civil disobedience the compulsory military service ended in both States.

Similarly, during all these years there have been several popular and workers' fights showing the enormous strength of the associations and organization net in the Basque Country: fights for the rights of political prisoners; ecological fights, in favour of our language, Basque; movements in favour of squatting; internationalist brigades⁽⁴⁴⁾ that were organized every summer from the Basque Country towards other parts of the world in order to know other revolutionary processes and many more.

During all these years and until today, the political conflict survived and had its most aggressive expression in the confrontation between the armed organization ETA and the Spanish State. There have been three negotiation processes, in years 1989, 1999-2000 and 2006-2007 that, although each one had its own contents, methodology and characteristics, were broken by a common element: the refusal of the different Spanish Governments, either of the PSOE or the PP to acknowledge the Right of the Basque People to decide its future without limiting its will and the denial to recognize its territorial unity. It must be underlined that the Spanish governments have always had a loyal ally, the PNV, the party of the Basque nationalist bourgeoisie, which has always boycotted any change in the current political and administrative structure fearing the loss of power.

On the other side, the Basque independentist left wing parties still extends its hand in order to deal with a negotiation process that may end the political conflict confronting our people with the Spanish and French States, and to overcome the armed confrontation between ETA and the Spanish State.

A fair solution for the existing political conflict should be based on the following axis:

- The right to decide of the Basque People and the respect of its decision, without any other limit but its sovereign will.
- The possibility of defending and performing every political option, including the independence, if the majority of our Basque People decides so.
- The recognition of the Basque Country's territory, through the creation of two autonomies: one in the French State for the territories of Labourd, Lower Navarre and Soule (North of Euskal Herria), and another in the Spanish State, gathering Alava, Biscay, Gipuzkoa and Upper Navarre (south of Euskal Herria).

It has to be underlined that, although the Basque Country has reduced dimensions, in Europe there are even smaller States (for instance, Slovenia, Luxembourg, Monaco or Malta, among others) or with a smaller number of inhabitants (Latvia, Slovenia, Estonia, etc.). This means that one People is subject of political Rights regardless of its size or number of inhabitants. What is really important so that those rights may be applied, is its existence as such based on objective factors (such as the language, common history, culture, etc.) and subjective aspects (the will of the majority of inhabitants to decide their future as People). Regarding the case of the Basque

> ⁽⁴⁴⁾ It is worth mentioning the fight of Pakito Arriaran, Begoña Garcia and Marta González, Ambrosio Mogorrón and Iñigo Egiluz, Basque citizens who died in El Salvador, Nicaragua and Colombia, respectively, fighting and supporting international solidarity during the 80's and the 90's.

Country, both components are present, so the Right to self-determination, recognized in a great number of international treaties, is a Right that also corresponds to our People.

Repression against the Basque People: the hidden side of the Spanish and French States.⁽⁴⁵⁾

The political conflict confronting the Spanish and French States against the Basque Country has taken over 1,000 lives.

Currently, the collective of Basque political prisoners constitutes approximately 750 people, many of them only performed a strict political work. Many political prisoners suffer incurable diseases or have their penalties randomly extended, remaining thus in prison in spite of having finished their whole sentence. Around twenty of them died as a result of the dispersion policy against them, and also as a result of not being attended as regards health assistance. Other twenty relatives and friends died throughout these years when they traveled thousands of kilometres to visit their beloved ones. Similarly, there are thousands of Basque political refugees.

Nowadays, in Spain repression against the working class and popular sectors of the Basque country has reached an unknown level and whole management bodies of leftist and independentist political parties are imprisoned, as well as youth movement members, members of the anti-repression movement and even journalists. For their performance of a strictly political and non-violent work.

Spain does not respect the minimum legal guarantees in detentions, as it was pointed out in UN reports on human rights, and torture cases (with the later reprieve for torturers) are usual.

Thousands of demonstrations have been prohibited and the number of detentions due to political reasons in the last 40 years exceeds 40,000 people. Additionally, several media⁽⁴⁶⁾ have been closed by the Spanish Government and hundreds of candidates to different elections have been illegalized, as well as several political parties of the Basque independentist left-wing.⁽⁴⁷⁾ As a result of the distorting effect caused by these illegalizations (which consequence is that around 15-20 % of the electorate cannot vote for the political option they want; that is to say, the independentist left-wing) the Spanish parties (PSOE-PP) representing a minority of the electors, achieved, illegally, the Government of the Basque Autonomous Community in the last elections held in 2009.

However, and despite the repression suffered, the Basque People have always known how to answer, supporting the political prisoners, denouncing the closure of media, facing the illegalization of parties and voting them massively in the polls in spite of their illegal status. All in all, always creating new alternatives.

> ⁽⁴⁵⁾ The data stated herein are just for the sake of reference, given that many more could be included. They are also subjected to continuous modifications, because, for instance, those referred to prisoners or people detained for political reasons vary everyday.

⁽⁴⁶⁾ *Egin*, *Egin Irratia*, *Euskaldunon egunkaria* (the only journal completely in Basque) or *Ardi beltza* for example.

⁽⁴⁷⁾ Some of the illegalized parties: Herri Batasuna, Euskal Herritarrok, Batasuna, Basque Nationalist Action (ANV), the Communist Party of the Basque Lands (PCTV) or Demokrazia 3 Milioi.

3.- LAB

and its TRADE UNION PROJECT

An introduction

LAB is the acronym of “Langile Abertzaleen Batzordeak” meaning “Commissions of Patriot Workers⁽⁴⁸⁾”. The strategic goals of LAB syndicate are the achievement of Independence and Socialism for the Basque Country.

LAB syndicate acts in the whole Basque Country and it is the only national trade union existing in our country. As a response to the historical feelings of the Basque national movement, LAB promotes with the trade unionism to make the relations between the south and north of the Basque Country deeper, in order to set the bases that may allow the territorial reunification of the whole Basque nation of both sides of the Pyrenees in the future.

It was founded in autumn 1974 in southern Basque Country (Spanish State), and it was extended in 2000 to the north, in the French State.

LAB is part of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and of the Secretariat of its European Regional Office (Eurof) since 2004.

Currently, our trade union has over 45,000 affiliates, and more than 4,400 representatives of workers in different work centres. We are a confederal trade union, which develops its work in every sector of the economy. LAB represents around 16 % of the population in the south part of the Basque Country.

It must be underlined that in this southern part, Basque trade unions are a majority, because we represent the 52 %, meanwhile the state trade unions are a minority⁽⁴⁹⁾, which gives rise to a trade union situation different from the rest of the Spanish State.

Historical antecedents of the Basque workers' movement.⁽⁵⁰⁾

The economic development in the south of Euskal Herria experimented a dramatic turn in the 19th century due to external elements of the pre-capitalist structure predominant in the country.

The industrialization started radically, breaking the agricultural, livestock and handicraft models, when the European and Spanish capitalism decided to exploit intensely the iron mines located in Biscay. This caused an economic, social and cultural u-turn with strong political consequences.

> ⁽⁴⁸⁾ It must be underlined that the Basque term “abertzale” means “the one that loves his/her country”. Despite the lack of an exact equivalent term in Spanish, the closest term would be “patriot”

⁽⁴⁹⁾ The representative percentages of the major trade unions are: ELA 35.78 %, LAB 15.98 %, CCOO 21.19 %, UGT 17.41 %. The remaining representation belongs to other minor trade unions.

⁽⁵⁰⁾ It is worth remembering that this matter can only be fully understood if we relate it to the sections stated in part II.

The crisis of the agricultural sector provided cheap labour force that, nevertheless, joined only partially to the mining work, given the predominant and brutal exploitation system. The native population chose migration or the combination of farming and industrial work. Therefore, the mining sector took labour force mainly among immigrants, who had to bear inhuman working conditions.

The incipient industrial capitalism promoted the confrontation between native and immigrant workers, which increased due to mean political interests. The cultural differences and the political situation created by the abolition of historical rights of the Basque People, accelerated the process.

At that time, the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE), its trade union, the General Union of Workers (UGT) and the anarchist syndicate CNT stood out due to their opposition to the wild exploitation and their support to the social change. However, in the case of the PSOE and the UGT this orientation changed until they became part of the capitalist system and their acts were legal.

The Basque Nationalist Party (PNV) appeared by the end of the 19th century. It defended a bourgeois Christian democrat nationalist project, and promoted the creation of the trade union Solidarity of Basque Workers (SOV, later ELA) in 1911, with the purpose of reducing the power of UGT, which was spreading its influence among the working class. Those days, the SOV proposed class "harmony" between employers and workers rather than class fight.

Thus, a marked dualism emerged in the Basque working class. On the one hand, the state's left-wing parties, ignoring the national issue of the Peoples without State and considering it like something belonging to the bourgeoisie. On the other hand, Basque trade union and political organizations, unable to unite the fight for the national liberation and the fight for social liberation.⁽⁵¹⁾

This situation gave rise to painful confrontations within the Basque working class but also evidenced the need of an ideological space suggesting that the Basque working class needed the national liberation fight to defend its class interests. Such space could not emerge from the Basque nationalist right-wing or from the Spanish state left-wing, which despised and ignored the Basque national identity.

Brief history of LAB.⁽⁵²⁾

After the victory of Francoism a grayish era came; every political, syndical or cultural expression contrary to the system was banned. In the Basque Country the state's left-wing and the nationalist right-wing parties were totally inoperative and the response to Franco's fascist regime was almost void.

> ⁽⁵¹⁾ Here we must point out the honourable exception of Basque Nationalist Action (ANV), a small party created in 1930, which defended the freedom of the Basque People, social justice and laicism. This was the first left-wing independentist party and fought against Francoism, losing over 500 militants. During Franco's dictatorship it was declared illegal. After Franco's death it took part in Herri Batasuna, coalition of the Basque left-wing independentists and in 2008 it was declared illegal for the second time in history, by the Spanish Government, the defence of socialist and independentist ideals being its only "crime", and in spite of having thousands of voters and militants, hundreds of elected people and tens of town halls after the elections of 2007 in the south of the Basque Country.

⁽⁵²⁾ It is worth remembering that this issue can only be fully understood if we relate it to the explanations in section II: "Brief notes on the history of the Basque Country I".

This started changing in our land when during the decade of the 60's when the Basque National Liberation Movement (MLNV) appeared; this movement links the national liberation discourse with the social freedom discourse for the first time. At that time the leftist independent movement of the Basque Country follows the examples, among others, of the fights for liberation in Vietnam and Algeria or the Cuban Revolution. Therefore, it is said that "the national and the social liberation are two sides of the same coin".

During the decade of the 70's the movement to fight Francoism is at its peak in Euskal Herria and the working class is organized in the companies playing a fundamental role in the fight against the dictatorship. Thus, the need of an organization for masses that may fight for the national and social emancipation from a socialist perspective arises. As a result of that, the Nationalist Workers' Commissions (COA) are created.

In autumn 1974, and within a process of logic evolution of the COA's the Langile Abertzaleen Batzordeak (LAB) was created. In its foundation principles LAB was defined as a "mass organization of an oppressed People, looking for the Basque working class liberation, who accepted anyone who wants independence".

In 1975 the Koordinadora Abertzale Sozialista (KAS) was created, firstly with the purpose of answering to the executions by shooting of the Basque militants Txiki and Otaegi, carried out by Franco's dictatorship. However, KAS, who was comprised by different political and trade union organizations and to which LAB belonged, continued working as a front opposed to the political reform intended for the Basque Country after Franco's death. Similarly, KAS defended the Right to Self-determination of the Basque People and a series of improvements as regards the working class life.⁽⁵³⁾

In 1977 LAB decided to become a trade union, instead of a assembly movement. The purpose was to face, under better conditions, the organization needs of the working class, taking advantage of the legal possibilities, but without forgetting our origins: participative and delegated democracy, considering as a debate and decision element the workers' assembly.

In 1978 LAB celebrated its first Congress and after that, six more have been celebrated. In those congresses our trade union has adapted its organization and ideology to the changes happened through all those years in the Basque society, but it has maintained the strategic goals of the achievement of Socialism and Independence for our country.

In May 2008 the 7th Congress of LAB was held. There we went deeply into the topic of a socio-political counterpower syndicalism and we established the fight against work precariousness and the defence of the political Rights of the Basque Country as a priority . Likewise, there was an important renovation of the trade union's directorate, given that the generation that managed it for three decades gave way to a new generation of trade union members. Within this context the previous Secretary General, Rafael Díez Usabiaga, was replaced by Ainhoa Etxaide, the new Secretary General.

On the other hand it has to be underlined that, in 1994, LAB achieved the status of the most representative syndicate, which legally allows it to be present in every institutional area and collective negotiations.⁽⁵⁴⁾

> ⁽⁵³⁾ All this was gathered in the "KAS Alternative".

⁽⁵⁴⁾ This was a consequence of a constant growth: in 1980 LAB obtained 4.58 % of representation, 5.74 % in 1982, 10.62 % in 1986, 12.6 % in 1990 and 15 % in 1994. Today, we have a representation of almost 16 %.

Similarly, LAB, was present for the first time in the northern Basque Country (French State) in the syndical elections of the *prud'hommes* in 2002, two years after its establishment in this part of Euskal Herria, achieving the 8.85 % of the votes and a representative. In year 2008 LAB obtained 4 representatives and received over 14 % of the votes.

The aims of LAB's programme: socio-political counterpower syndicalism

In the ideological field, these are some of the identity signs of LAB:

Nationalist Syndicate: LAB proclaims that the Basque Country is a nation, comprised by the territories of Labourd, Lower Navarre and Soule, in the French State; and Alava, Biscay, Gipuzkoa and Upper Navarre in the Spanish State. It is the whole citizenship who must decide on its present and future, exercising the Right to Self-determination. The final goal of LAB is the construction of an independent, socialist, Basque Speaking Basque State⁽⁵⁵⁾, non patriarchal and ecologist.

Class and socio-political syndicate: LAB defends and fights next to the Basque working class in order to transform the society from its roots. LAB fights against the capitalist system and looks for the achievement of a Basque socialist State. From LAB we vindicate the active participation of the Basque working class in the national and social construction of the Basque Country. The fight for sovereignty and a free, egalitarian society in solidarity where people may not suffer any discrimination has to be led by the working class.

Counterpower syndicate: LAB considers that the improvement of life conditions for the Basque working class will only be achieved through fight and the confrontation with those who have the production means and the Capital and the public administrations supporting them who make laws against the working class. Therefore, opposing the syndicalism based on the wrongly called "social dialogue" performed by the official trade unions, LAB is committed to a confronting trade counterpower unionism against power in work centres.

Autonomous syndicate: LAB is independent from any party, institution or lobby. However, autonomous does not mean isolated and, therefore, it has chief relationships with other organizations of the Basque independentist left-wing (political organizations, youth movements, anti-repression, international, ecologist, etc.) in order to find shared strategies that may provide advances in the process of national and social transformation.

International syndicate: we state that there is no way out for human race under the conditions imposed by neoliberalism and fighting against it, its axis is the solidary fight of all the exploited people in the world. We understand the national vindication and the right to self-determination of people as the working class' fight engine, because it is a legitimate vindication that is confronted to the capitalist globalization's logic, which sacks all the natural resources of the People, divides their societies and condemns their population to hunger and migration. We express our solidarity with every worker fighting to improve their work and life conditions. With these references LAB will tighten its relations with other trade unions that promote the same goals and will continue participating actively in the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and in the platform of syndicates of nations without state.

Syndicate of men and women: the oppression suffered by female workers is structural and has its roots in the division of works

> ⁽⁵⁵⁾ "Euskaldun": Basque-speaking person or place.

based on gender. LAB takes on the commitment to fight against this oppression in society in general, and in the labour world and the syndicate in particular. Likewise, LAB will fight any kind of discrimination based on gender and in favour of the full equality between genders.

Basque-speaking trade union: Basque is the basic element of identity of the Basque Country as a nation. Therefore, LAB takes it as its own language and it commits to the development and support of policies to recover this language and normalize it as a national language, specifically in the labour world. Basque will be the language used in its activities.

Ecologist syndicate: the capitalist development model that pillages, destroys and sacks nature, is killing our planet (greenhouse effect, pollution, desertification, etc.). Therefore, LAB considers that the ecologic fight has a marked strategic character and it is committed to a model of balanced development, recovering the ecosystem and life quality.

These being our programme's aims LAB criticizes severely the predominant International Order, based on social injustice, hunger and the suffering of millions of people. Similarly, we oppose to the European construction model they try to impose on us. Contrary to the Europe of Capital and States, LAB chooses a Social Europe of the People.

LAB defends, equally, the establishment of a Basque Framework of Labour Relations and Social Protection (MVRL, in Spanish). Nowadays the Basque working class is not able to decide over social and labour matters. The MVRL would mean that Basque institutions may have the proper competences to develop their own labour and social policy. It is a necessary previous step to obtain favourable changes for the working class and to develop the adequate policies of employment and social security.

The MVRL would allow a collective negotiation within the Basque Country, which would make the fight against anti-worker labour reforms usually stated from Paris and Madrid against the will of most Basque working class easier.

Likewise, LAB is committed to create a Basque Socio-Economic Space (ESEV, in Spanish) allowing a development in accordance with our social and economic reality. The ESEV requires enough legislative capacity in order to develop a Basque public sector, capable of promoting its own economic and tax policy, supporting the industrial policy and, finally, acquiring an efficient Basque public administration.

In the field of collective negotiation, LAB's main purposes are the achievement of a Basque negotiation field instead of the State's, and the fight against the existing deficiency at the work market. Such deficiency is shown by the high underemployment present in the Basque labour market, and also by the high temporality rate, close to 30 % and one of the highest in Europe. LAB prefers a collective negotiation understood as a fight framework to catch up on employers' associations.

Another fundamental line action for LAB is the fight against the occupational accident rate that causes the death of over 100 workers every year in the Basque Country, and damages the health of many more that are victims of serious accidents.

Throughout history, LAB has participated in the main workers' fights carried out in the Basque Country, both in the north and in the south, in sectorial fights and in every company where it is present. It is worth highlighting the special importance of LAB in the general

strikes developed these years against industrial reconversion, in favour of the 35 hour work journey and the social salary (year 1999), against regressive labour reforms or, in 2009 against the capitalist crisis, the labour shortenings and for a fair share of wealth and an honest employment with rights.

Organizational structure

The main organizational body in LAB is the number of affiliates, more than 45,000, and the representatives in companies, over 4,400.

This said, it has to be underlined that the supreme body of the syndicate is the Congress, where our main strategic lines are discussed and decided. It is comprised by 500 affiliates and it is held every four years.

The utmost inter-congress discussion and decision body is the National Assembly with 150 people.

The managing body in the trade union is the National Committee, which is elected in the Congress and it is comprised by 36 people. Its main function is caring for the implementation of the congress resolutions.

Likewise, there is an Executive Committee, with 12 members, half men and half women, with the function of activating the National Committee.

In order to face daily syndical action, LAB has an organizational structure that stands on two axes: regions and sectors.

In LAB's organization chart there are 17 regions gathering the same number of areas in the Basque Country.

There are 8 sectors divided in 3 different federations:

- Federation of Industry:
 - Metal.
 - Construction and Chemical industry.
- Federation of Private Services:
 - Transport, Sea and Telecommunications.
 - Services (commerce, hotel and restaurant services...).
- Federation of Public Services:
 - Education.
 - Health.
 - Public administrations.
 - Social-community services.

Likewise, LAB has different secretariats, areas and responsibilities of a confederate nature.

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