

**Interview with Eva Arrilucea,
Tecnalia representative at the ToShare Observatory**

1. Why is Tecnalia participating in an observatory on the fair distribution of wealth?

Tecnalia is the largest private technology centre in Spain, in terms of number of employees and turnover, and one of the most important in Europe. Since its beginnings, in the middle of the last century, most of the centres that were later incorporated under the Tecnalia brand were set up on the initiative of Basque industry. Tecnalia cannot be understood in isolation from industry, which, moreover, has historically been the main source of wealth and prosperity in this country.

The technologies that Tecnalia develops and transfers to the productive fabric - nanotechnology, renewables, advanced manufacturing technologies, cyber-security, biotechnology, etc. - are closely linked to industry and to the Basque Country's intelligent specialisation strategy, and are also the basis for solutions that seek to respond to the major objectives of sustainable development such as healthy ageing, climate change or the search for a more sustainable energy model.

However, technology, strategy and industry do not work if there is no demand. We cannot transform the world without people, we cannot innovate if society turns its back on us. Only through a complete social commitment can a solid productive fabric be achieved, one that demands cutting-edge technology and creates wealth and economic growth. And there is no social commitment if there is no social justice, which is why Tecnalia participates in ToShare and is committed to a fair distribution of wealth.

2. Why is the accumulation of wealth and the consequent inequality it generates a problem?

Social inequality brings with it a battery of well-known problems: poverty, health problems, unhappiness, higher crime rates, lower life expectancy, breaks down the sense of community, the feeling of belonging to the same territory and sharing a history and culture. If the problem that worries you most is that the wifi reaches all the rooms in your huge mansion on the beach, and the problem that worries me most is how I am going to put a plate of food on my children's table tonight, we are hardly going to agree on what is important for the country and where we need to direct our efforts.

The discontent arising from inequality is reflected in some aspects that are not alien to us right now, such as misinformation and hoaxes, populist discourses that are fed by confrontation, social conflict and pointing out the culprits: the immigrant, the one receiving social benefits, the one who has even less than us. Inequality leads us to a fight of poor against poor and to make decisions from fear, which is the worst mood for making decisions.

Beyond ethical and moral considerations, inequality is a problem because without social justice there is no cohesion and no sense of country, and without cohesion prosperity and economic growth are impossible.

3. What are the proposed solutions?

The first thing is to recognise that when we talk about social inequality we are not talking about ghosts, about things that happen to others. Although we are one of the best positioned regions in Europe in terms of social equality, the recent ISEAK report "Poverty and Inequality in the Basque Country" reveals an increase in inequality since the crisis of 2008 until today, which the Covid-19 crisis has only made worse.

The only way to get rid of this is by creating jobs, but not just any kind of jobs. There is a lot of poverty with precarious employment, with unstable jobs that have wages that do not allow people to live with dignity. What we need is to create high value-added employment with high and stable wages. And this kind of employment is found in industry and knowledge-intensive services (such as engineering, telecommunications services or consulting).

Industry is not only the sector that pays the best wages (in the Basque Country the average wage is six thousand euros higher than in services), but it is also the one with the highest levels of productivity, and the one that has the closest relationship not only with the other sectors, but also and above all with science and technology, which makes it the sector with the greatest likelihood of exploiting knowledge and turning it into solutions for global challenges: vaccines, safe towns and streets, healthy food and sustainable energy sources.

Stable jobs and high wages, coupled with fair taxation and accountable and transparent public management, are the way to ensure universal and quality public services, allowing us to close the circle of well-being by ensuring equal opportunities for all, not just for those who can pay. With an innovation-intensive industry, we are not only providing stability to the people linked to this sector, but also to those working in other sectors, including science, and through taxation, to society as a whole.

We are talking about taxation, transparency, efficient management, citizen involvement in decisions, and responsible research. At Tecnalia we are well aware that technology is not enough to change things, which is why we focus on finding solutions, and we do so in close collaboration with other agents that we consider essential for these solutions to reach the public: universities, companies and the public sector are our natural allies in the commitment to make the Basque Country an industrial power, but also and above all the best place to work and to have a decent and satisfactory life project.