

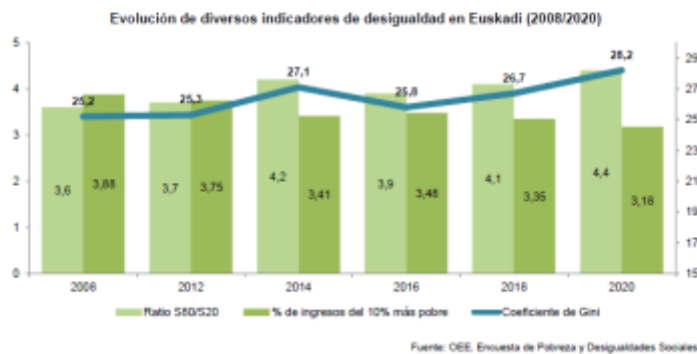
Interview with Alberto Gastón and Javi Sancho, representatives of the Emmaus Social Foundation.

1.- On a global and local level, in the Basque Country, what is the evolution of inequality and its consequences?

At a local level, as shown by the main evaluation results of the Elkar-Ekin 2016-2020 Social Inclusion Plan promoted by the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa, both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view, we can see a progressive deterioration in the main indicators related to inequality and income distribution, which translates into an ever-widening gap and, therefore, a greater precariousness of the most vulnerable groups in our territory.

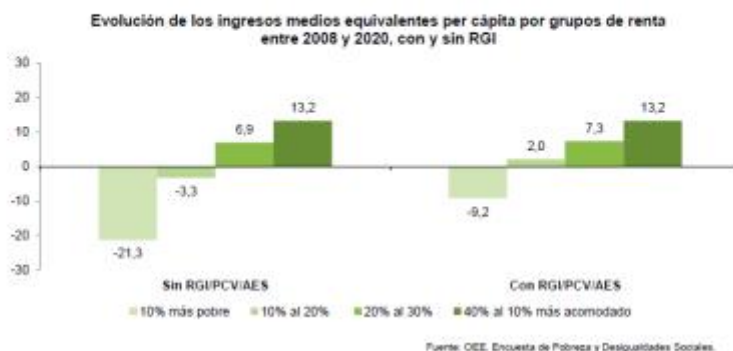
Crece la desigualdad en Euskadi

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At the national level, the situation is, if possible, even more worrying. Starting from a structure where income distribution is among the most unequal in Europe, the consequences of the pandemic have shown that the virus does understand classes. This is pointed out by Oxfam in the latest thematic reports published, showing that the groups with the highest incidence rates correspond precisely to the most vulnerable classes. A vicious circle that is difficult to escape.

Extending our gaze to impoverished countries (Latin America, Africa, etc.) is even more dramatic and questions the true universality of HR.

In any case, and focusing on the question posed, in our immediate context, the Income Guarantee Income (IGI) has acted as a buffer. However, since the 2008 crisis, things are getting worse and worse; the increase in migratory processes, the effects of covid, now the increase in inflation, the energy crisis, the crisis of raw materials, in short, the systemic crisis in which we live, means that the forecasts are not promising. The immediate consequences, unless active wealth redistribution policies are applied, are clear: widespread impoverishment, the structuring of pockets or groups of poverty with great difficulty in activating "social lifts", with a structural increase in social exclusion and, in particular, residential exclusion, with a progressive increase in the number of homeless people and families. All this in a climate of social tension that feeds polarized positions, the emergence of hate speeches where, in short, the concept of social cohesion is put at risk.

2.- From the Emmaus Social Foundation, what are you doing and what do you ask to be done?

As a multi-faceted organisation, our work focuses on several areas.

On the one hand, one of our lines of action focuses on a palliative line of action within the framework of social services, accompanying people who are at risk of social exclusion. Participation in inter-institutional spaces where we can have an impact on how to improve the forms of action. Moreover, the lines of action and advocacy that are pursued with some experiences or projects of a community nature. However, we still face the challenge of building an integrated and consistent discourse.

On the other hand, the insertion companies promoted by the Foundation aspire to offer employment opportunities to groups at risk of social exclusion, while at the same time accompanying them in their itinerary for the acquisition of technical and social skills that allow for higher levels of future employability.

Finally, we develop various projects in different areas (university, secondary schools, associations, etc.), where, using the logic of Education for Social Transformation, we denounce the situations that generate inequality, propose alternatives for exercising critical citizenship and accompany subjects of change in their own processes of transformation.

On the question of what we ask to be done, we should ask who: the administrations? the citizens?... A very big question... and a very big answer. To the former, responsibility and progress in the integration of systems and services to improve care for people. To the second, commitment.

3.- How does the Emmaus Social Foundation assess the Popular Legislative Initiative for an Unconditional Basic Income in the Basque Country - <https://rentabasica.eus/es/> -?

A priori, positive, of course. It is great that access to a benefit for everyone is a universal right and makes it possible to improve the living conditions of many people. As a concept, we have no doubts. But it is worth bearing in mind some drawbacks in the small print that are not being

considered, or at least minimised. There will undoubtedly be people who improve their situation, but this improvement does not necessarily mean a reduction in inequality *per se*, since the groups that have the least will continue to be the ones that have the least. There would be an immediate benefit to middle-income earners, since they would have some kind of remuneration, which would undoubtedly improve their living conditions. However, it should be ensured that the Unconditional Basic Income does not mean the suppression of other benefits, such as housing assistance, scholarships, Social Emergency Aid, IGI, which is detrimental to lower incomes.

On the other hand, in the context of social polarization that we are living in, where extreme political positions are becoming established, the phenomenon of fake news is increasingly present, etc. If the IGI already generates a lot of reticence and suspicions of fraud, a benefit of these characteristics even more so, especially if it is of a territorial nature, and not of a state nature.

We also believe that certain doubts about its application and sustainability have yet to be resolved. In this sense, it is essential to undertake a structural reform of the income distribution mechanisms, which would imply, among other things, a tax reform which, in view of what we have seen, is a real challenge to succeed. In the meantime, we call for the effectiveness of positive discrimination tools.

Nevertheless, we value initiatives such as the PLI as positive, as they question the root of how our system is structured and allow the population to exercise their right to citizenship and participate in political life from logics that transcend representative democracy.