



# MECANER TRANSITION PLAN

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# BASQUE COUNTRY **ECONOMY**



Manufacturing industry: 21-26% of GDP

Exports of goods: 41-47% of GDP (motor vehicles, industrial machinery, transport equipment)

Average annual salary: 29-32 k€ (Spanish state: 27 k€)

Unemployment rate: 8% (Spanish state: 11%)

Collective bargaining: 85% paid workers

CO<sub>2</sub> per capita emissions: 8 tCO<sub>2</sub>-eq/cap

Energy self-sufficiency rate: 9%

# BASQUE COUNTRY **TRADE UNIONS**

Basque sovereigntist unions ELA and LAB represent a 'counterpower' bloc, in opposition to CCOO and UGT.

- ELA: 100.000 membres, 36% union representatives
- LAB: 50.000 membres, 20% union representatives

Refusal to engage into social dialogue framework.

Very high strike rates since the 2000s.

Strong strategic renewal and socio-political unionism.

- Feminism and care work, anti-racism and migrant workers rights, housing, and recently ecological crisis.



Las Heras, J., Rodríguez, L. (2020). **Striking to Renew: Basque unions' Organizing Strategies and Use of the Strike-Fund**. *British Journal of Industrial Relations*. 2020, 00: 00-00. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjir.12582>

Etxebarria, E., & Larrinaga, A. (2024). **Trade union renewal against a background of national conflict: the strategies of the trade unions ELA and LAB in the Basque country (1976–2008)**. *Labor History*, 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0023656X.2024.2378014>

# MECANER CLOSURE



60 years old company located in Urduliz (Bizkaia).

Manufacturing of automotive stamping dies.

100% property of FCA, since 2021 Stellantis.

144 direct workers + 4 cleaning outsourced workers.

Announces its closure in Septembre 1st 2023:

- Legislative changes that force electrification.
- Obligation to assume high productive investments.
- Economic stagnation and drop in new vehicle sales.
- Production reorganization to reduce costs.
- Excess productive capacity in the EU stamping die area.



# ECOSOCIAL TRANSITION PLAN **DECISION**

Union representatives: 3 ESK, 3 LAB, 2 ELA, 1 CCOO

Collective layoffs process starting on March 1st (6 months after the announcement).

Union strategies discussion:

- LAB and ESK propose to explore the transition plan as a new union tool, while using classical mobilization.
- Urduliz city council (EH Bildu) is able and has the will to pay for the research report.
- ELA is not comfortable with the idea, and push for going into the indefinite strike and the trial against the company.
- Finally, the ecosocial transition plan is commissioned by the whole Mecaner's workers council to a research cooperative.



# ECOSOCIAL TRANSITION PLAN **DEVELOPMENT**



Participation in assemblies and discussion with Mecaner's workers. Interviews with industry experts and policy makers.

Search of productive alternatives following 3 criteria:

- Similar productive process and labour skills
- Forecast of demand surge due to ecological transition
- Public funding support through green industrial policy

4 alternatives related to the decarbonization of transport, buildings, industry and power generation.

4 property models described: keeping Stellantis, private investor, public intervention, workers cooperative.

# ECOSOCIAL TRANSITION PLAN **USE**

Union strategies rupture in January-February, ELA deciding to start alone an indefinite strike and not supporting the use of the plan during the negotiations.

Support from environmental organizations, but without the capacity of mass mobilization.

Basque Government recognize the plan, but conditions its financial and technical support to the emergence of a private investor leading the project.

Stellantis rejects the productive alternatives, alleging lack of profitability at the Mecaner facilities.



# ECOSOCIAL TRANSITION PLAN **POST-CLOSURE**



Negotiations ended in May 2024, without out the intervention of Basque Government, and Stellantis closed the factory.

All workers signed individual agreements and got severance pay.

LAB and ESK, together with Urduliz city council and environmental organizations demand the public purchase of Mecaner facilities. Together with a citizen participation process and a new industrial project towards the ecological transition.

The focus is now in the 2025 regional budget discussion.



# PRELIMINARY LESSONS

## **1. ANTICIPATION AND PREVIOUS DISCUSSIONS**

Difficulties developing such a new tool after the threat of closure and layoffs. Difficulties to break with the “expert knowledge culture” during the process.

## **2. WHEN IS THE RIGHT MOMENT?**

Fear of appearing to support the justification for the company's closure. Fear of the plan having a negative impact during the negotiation process.

## **3. INSUFFICIENT BUSINESS PLAN?**

Criticism for not having a detailed business plan showing the profitability of productive alternatives. Fear of not being competitive enough in the world market.

## **4. EXCESS OF RELIANCE IN INSTITUTIONS?**

Lack of a clear plan of the next steps after receiving the institutions' refusal to adopt a direct intervention. Lack of a mass mobilization counterbalance to force a change.

## **5. “WE ARE NOT BUSINESSMEN”**

Rejection of the workers cooperative option from the very first moment. That narrowed the options to the emergence of a private investor or public intervention.

## **6. LACK OF TRADE UNIONS UNITY**

Cross-accusations during the union strategy discussion. Generation of mistrust among workers. Weakening of unified demands, to the company and the government.

# FOR MORE INFORMATION

- La plantilla de Mecaner insta a Lakua y a la Diputación de Bizkaia a no permitir el cierre  
<https://www.naiz.eus/es/info/noticia/20230915/la-plantilla-de-mecaner-insta-a-lakua-y-a-la-diputacion-de-bizkaia-a-no-permitir-el-cierre>
- Mecaner, un cierre injusto o cuatro alternativas con mirada ecosocial para mantener la fábrica de Urduliz  
<https://www.elsaltodiario.com/industria/mecaner-un-cierre-injusto-cuatro-alternativas-mirada-ecosocial-mantener-fabrica-urduliz>
- LAB y ESK proponen que Mecaner produzca tecnología energética «verde» para evitar el cierre  
<https://www.naiz.eus/es/info/noticia/20240222/lab-y-esk-proponen-que-mecaner-produzca-tecnologia-energetica-verde-para-evitar-el-cierre>
- «La participación pública en la propiedad y la gestión sería la mayor garantía para el futuro»  
<https://www.naiz.eus/es/info/noticia/20240229/la-participacion-publica-en-la-propiedad-y-la-gestion-serian-la-mayor-garantia-para-el-futuro>
- Mecaner ez dago salgai. Mecaner Herriarentzat! [Mecaner no está en venta. ¡Mecaner para el pueblo!]  
<https://www.naiz.eus/eu/iritzia/articulos/mecaner-ez-dago-salgai-mecaner-herriarentzat>
- La lucha de GKN inspira el proceso de transición ecosocial en Mecaner  
<https://www.naiz.eus/es/info/noticia/20240907/la-lucha-de-gkn-inspira-el-proceso-de-transicion-ecosocial-en-mecaner>
- Piden a Lakua una partida presupuestaria para comprar las instalaciones de Mecaner  
<https://www.naiz.eus/es/info/noticia/20241126/piden-a-lakua-que-incluya-una-partida-presupuestaria-para-comprar-las-instalaciones-de-mecaner>
- Plan de transición ecosocial para Mecaner  
<http://www.garuacoop.es/plan-de-transicion-ecosocial-para-mecaner/>
- Fabrikaren eresketa publikoa behar dugu  
<https://hiruka.eus/urduliz/1728901376471-mecaner-herriarentzat-fabrikaren-erosketa-publikoa-behar-dugu>
- Mit Plan das Werk retten  
<https://zeitschrift-luxemburg.de/artikel/lallana-interview-mecaner-werk/>
- Mecaner Herriarentzat  
<https://sites.google.com/view/mecanerherriarentzat/>