

ADVANCING TOWARDS A TRADE UNION FOR ALL WOMEN*

Anti-racism is also a question of class

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ELA
EUSKAL SINDIKATUA

For a feminist and anti-racist unionism!

When is a trade union feminist?

When is it anti-racist?

Who can legitimately call it this?





we already have almost 8,000 migrant worker members and over half of these are women.

In addition, we must take into account that we are referring to those who are on the formal-regulated labour market, but we cannot forget that there are many women who do not appear on the tax registers or in the statistics. Yes, they work in the black economy, without work permits, facing up to a brutal precariousness, in sectors such as the care services, the hospitality industry or the service sector. Consequently, does the general interest of the working class women really represent the interests of all women*?

A long time has passed since ELA began to embrace feminism, particularly over the last decades. Women who are now approaching the trade union and deciding to organise themselves in a group do their bit for feminism, day by day. In many cases, it is even their class awareness that awakens their feminist awareness, because they suffer precariousness twice over: as female workers and as women. Therefore, in the trade union we continue trying to put ahead the interests and needs of women who, let us not forget, are half of the working class. But to do this, we need to ask ourselves: Are the interests and needs of all women* equal?

The fact is that long ago we learnt that not everyone has the same concerns and worries, something that worries one person does not keep someone else awake at night. However, trade unionism had been built on men's concerns and aspirations, as if their problems and interests were universal. But actually, being a woman or a man is not the same; and this is also the case in the world of work. Moving on, is it the same to be a white female worker or a racialized female worker? We continue to delve into the questions.

Looking at the data, at ELA more and more migrants are becoming members; the figure grows year after year. Today

At the same time that we are asking ourselves these questions, we are moving forward to build a feminist, anti-racist trade union, with tangible steps that are derived in struggles and victories that have names and surnames.

We still have a long way to go until we are a feminist, anti-racist trade union; a road that may never come to an end; but on this road, going beyond just the theory, our compass will continue to be our daily praxis.

This is not a purely political commitment. There is no way back if we want to represent the working class as a whole and particularly those who are in the most precarious situations and on the fringes, who are almost always migrant and racialized women.

Because we want to build a trade union that is a home for all women*.

Long live feminist, anti-racist trade unionism!



NEW MINIMUM WAGE FOR A BETTER DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH



ELA, LAB, ESK, Steilas, Etxalde and Hiru have registered Popular Legislative Initiatives (PLI) in the Basque Parliament and in the Parliament of Navarre in favour of a minimum wage (MW) for the region; additionally, ELA has registered the request to agree with Confebask and the CEN (Basque and Navarre employers' associations respectively) on a minimum wage for Hego Euskal Herria*.

In recent months, different initiatives have been developed to obtain a minimum wage (MW) for Hego Euskal Herria. Over the next few months the abovementioned trade unions will work together on the following initiatives: on the one hand, the Popular Legislative Initiative (PLI) that intends to ensure that the local institutions have the capacity to determine their own minimum salary. With the understanding that both routes are complementary, these trade unions are opting for unification. As a first step, on the 8th of January, 2025 they registered both Popular Legislative Initiatives in the Basque and Navarre Parliaments in order for the administrations of Hego Euskal Herria to be able to request the possibility of regulating the legal MW.

Why is it important to set the MW in Hego Euskal Herria? How is the MW determined? What consequences would a rise in the MW have? What are the MWs in the different countries in Europe? Here, we answer these and other questions.

Why is it important to determine the MW?

Determining the MW has a protecting scope by setting the wages in all the activities that do not have a minimum reference due to collective bargaining or when this is lower.

The MW must mean a sufficient level of wages to uphold the reproduction of life.

As an instrument of social and economic policy, the MW also is a mechanism for the distribution of wealth and social cohesion, which reduces the amount of people who are below the poverty threshold and promotes the negotiation of higher wages in the sectors with working conditions that are above the legal ones.

How is the MW determined?

The MW determined by law is the main mechanism for establishing the minimum wage MWs. According to data from the International Labour Organisation (ILO), 90% of the member countries set it in this way. Each territory establishes the MW using criteria adapted to their social and economic reality.

The greater industrialisation of the Basque economy means that the productivity per working person is, according to data from the OECD, the highest in the Spanish State and the percentage of wealth that each person generates is also greater.

Why is it important to determine the MW in Hego Euskal Herria?

Many products and services, or the prices of housing are higher than in most of the Spanish State. The Basque Government itself in its Survey on Poverty and Social Inequalities in 2022 established that 1,654 euros gross per month was the threshold on which well-being can start for a person.

Over the past five years, in towns in Navarre of over 5,000 inhabitants, the price of housing has increased by 26% and housing rentals by 46%. This is just one example of the fact that many products and services, or house prices are higher in Navarre than in most of the Spanish State.

Below this threshold the normal expenses that are considered necessary to maintain the minimum levels of well-being and comfort expected in a certain society can't be covered.

In the same year of 2022, the MW in the Spanish State was 1,167 euros gross and the

current one is way below the aforementioned threshold, which shows the insufficiency of the State minimum wage in the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (ACBC) and in Navarre.

What would the consequences of a rise in the MW have?

A substantial rise in the MW would have an impact on almost 200,000 workers in the ACBC and 80,000 in Navarre, mainly employed in the services sector and with some very unstable working conditions.

This step would have a particularly positive impact on women, migrants, young people and people with functional diversity.

The rise in the MW would help to bring an end to the gender wage gap, as well as other wage gaps such as those due to origin, age or functional diversity.

What are the MWs in the different countries in Europe?

The social, cultural, trade union and political fabric of Hego Euskal Herria differs from other territories, both in the composition and in the model. The MW of Hego Euskal Herria must respond to the differentiated disposition that society shows on many occasions, for example in the trade union elections.

The monthly MWs of several European countries in 2024 were as follows: Germany 2,054 euros; France 1,766.9 euros; Great Britain 2,230.9 euros; Belgium 2,070.5 euros; Luxemburg 2,570.9 euros; the Netherlands 2,134.1; Ireland 2,146.3 euros or Iceland 2,493.2 euros.



In 2024 the MW of the Spanish State was 1,323 euros (in twelve wage slips per year), a long way behind countries with an economic structure similar to ours and far from the needs of the workers in Euskal Herria.

What advantages would determining the MW here have?

Deciding on the MW in the actual territory itself makes an improved social cohesion possible. For the organisations that have promoted this PLI, this is the meaning that they give to the Basque framework of labour relations and social protection.

Endowing a greater amount of independence to our own framework would encourage a fairer distribution of the wealth generated and it would help to reduce the number of people at risk of social exclusion. In short, it would allow them to be part of a fairer and more inclusive society.

What does the PLI propose to be able to obtain the legal modification of the MW?

The proposal indicates that all the territories of the State may regulate a legal MW adapted to their needs and consequently, the autonomous regions could establish their own MW by way of a modification of the Workers' Statute based on article 87.2 of the Spanish Constitution: "The Assemblies of the Autonomous Communities may request the Government for the adoption of a bill or to pass a proposal of a law onto the General Committee of the Congress, delegating a maximum of three members of the Assembly in charge of defending it before the aforementioned Chamber."

This legal modification has been promoted by a Popular Legislative Initiative (PLI) that requests the Basque Government and the Parliament of Navarre to start up this procedure and to modify the Workers' Statute and, in this way, to ensure that all the Autonomous Communities who so decide may establish their own MW, adapted to their needs.

*Hego Euskal Herria: the set of territories that make up the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (ACBC) and the Autonomous Community of Navarre.