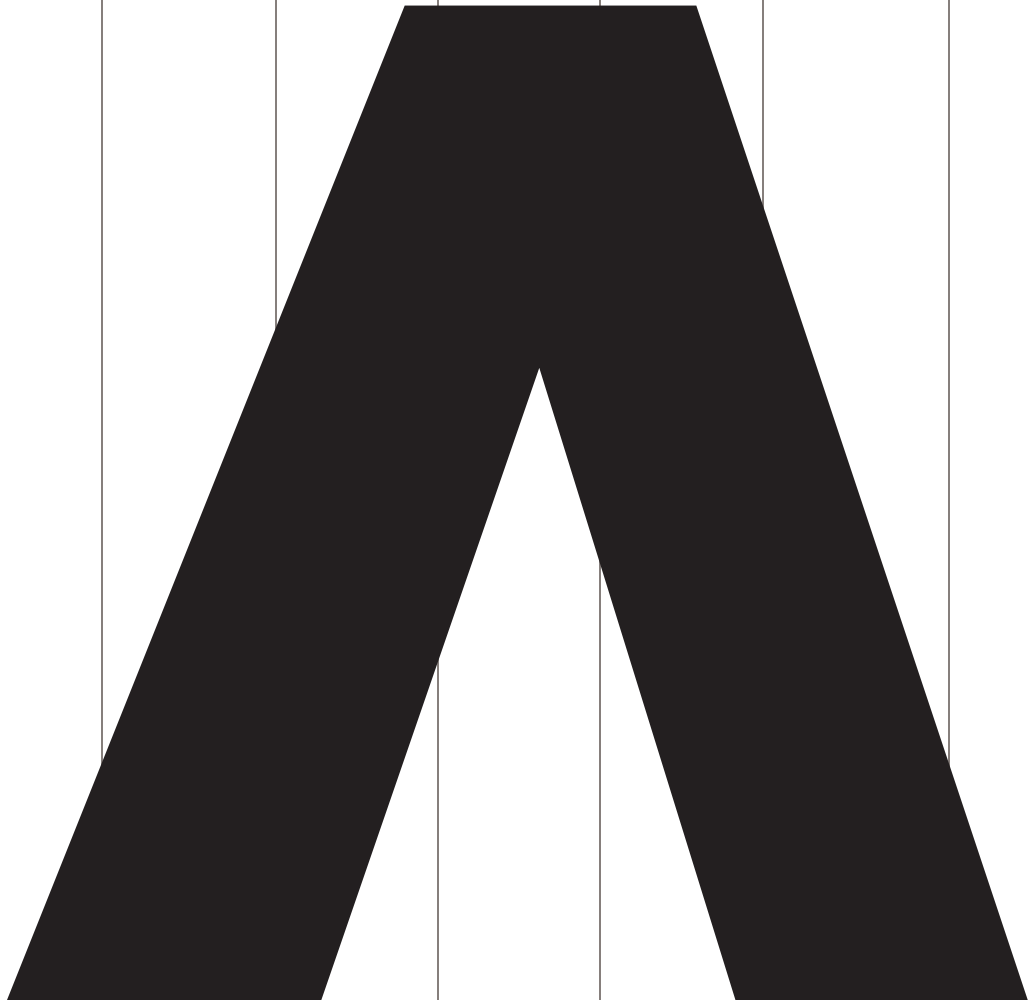




# SOCIAL ECONOMY:

A Path to Climate and Social Justice.  
**A call to action from ASETT.**



## SOCIAL ECONOMY: A Path to Climate and Social Justice. A call to action from ASETT.

On 16 May 2020, a manifesto entitled **Work: Democratize, Decommodify, Decarbonize** was published by 43 newspapers, in 27 languages and 36 countries around the world. It was signed by over 3,000 researchers from 750 different universities and other academic institutions from all corners of the globe.

At the height of the Covid-19 crisis, some were already contemplating what we had learned from the pandemic, while humanity was still reeling. The first and most important lesson was that humankind and its work must not be reduced to mere "resources". Fear of dying opened society's eyes to the value of the labour of innumerable medical staff, without whose work the losses would have been much greater. We saw that society stops functioning if the people who form it are isolated, no matter how much communication technology we have at our disposal. We found that machines can make tasks easier but cannot yet replace human work. **We discovered that the dignity of work needed to be restored. And it became abundantly clear that not only were people at risk, our entire planet was in danger. It was proven that market forces on their own are ineffectual at protecting the common good. Shortages of masks and vaccines were a painful example of this.**

But, as always happens when humankind faces a threat, **a spirit of cooperation emerged, not only within human communities around the world, but also in political discourse, calling for unity and solidarity.**



Despite this, five years have passed and the grievous problems that were so clear and occupied so many minds at that time, rather than diminishing, have worsened.

Since that time, a number of different crises have erupted. And not only economic crises and humanitarian crises caused by new armed conflicts, but also climate crises, driving migration and causing natural disasters, with dreadful consequences. All these crises have something in common. With each new crisis, no matter its nature, we see inequality rise.

Inequality is the major pandemic of the twenty-first century. The inequality gap is widening and the gap between rich and poor is widening rather than receding. Women, racialized and marginalized minorities are disproportionately affected by growing income inequality. Women have some of the poorest-paid and least secure jobs and continue to face a high gender pay gap.

The good news is that a vaccine already exists. The vaccine relieves all of the symptoms and saves many lives from poverty and social exclusion.

The vaccine has been tested for many years and in a multitude of countries and communities, and the above-mentioned manifesto identified it as a reason for hope: **that vaccine is the Social Economy.** It has proven successful in business and in society, producing economic and social benefits. It has reduced the gap between men

and women and created decent jobs that have enabled millions of people to leave the informal economy, contributing through their work to progress in their communities.

But the sickness of inequality is widespread, and many more doses of the vaccine are needed. We need to produce it in bulk, creating more businesses that have not only economic aims, but also social ones, with more democratic practices. This is why ASETT was born.

ASETT (Arizmendiarrrieta Social Economy Think Tank) proposes work on real, proven solutions. It is a global project but was launched in Spain where the social economy is equivalent to 10% of GDP. A country where record tourism in 2024, with 96 million foreign visitors, represented 12% of GDP for that year. We firmly believe that a country with a larger social economy can be a better country. A country with less inequality, with better distribution of wealth and a society better practised in performing the democratic customs of participation and collective decision-making.

The traditional economy merely aims to maximize profits no matter the cost and consequently increases inequality, but social economy businesses have already demonstrated that there is a bona fide alternative. A different way forward, that is more humane, that takes into account workers' rights and pursues an environmental transformation and social justice.



That is why ASETT aims to raise awareness of this economy, scale it up and adapt it to different regions, so that more communities can enjoy its benefits. We want to replicate the numerous success stories in countless places, all the while building a network of academic, institutional and business stakeholders who can contribute their knowledge and work to this undertaking.

Because we must not stand by and watch the planet and society degenerate. Because we believe it is vital that we strive to reverse the current situation. Because, as José María Arizmendiarieta, founder of the Mondragon Cooperative Corporation, once said, a good idea or remark is one that becomes action. We want to combine an academic approach with the energy of all of the institutions and businesses that are heedful of the dignity of workers and of the public.

That is why, we, the signatories herof, undertake to work to improve legislative systems and financial instruments. We undertake to work

**The social economy is a genuine alternative. In the name of dignity of all people, of democracy and of the planet, it is time to cultivate it.**

so that education includes the business models of the social economy, so that those models can be adopted more widely and have a greater impact. We undertake not only to denounce problems, but also to work on potential solutions. We undertake to strive for these goals, because we believe in the ambition, the enthusiasm and the work of the multitude of collectives that are already doing excellent work, which should be more widely recognized.

It's now essential to change course. We can radically redesign our economies to be centred on equality, people and the planet. We need economic systems that are just and sustainable; serious action on the climate crisis; and new rules that empower all people to live with choice, dignity and equal opportunity.

Against a model of capitalism increasingly dominated by technological oligopolies — concentrating unprecedented power and wealth in the hands of a few and corroding the very fabric of our democracies — the social economy offers a concrete, plural, and transformative alternative. In the name of human dignity, of democracy, and of the planet we all share, the time has come to extend and strengthen it.

*\*ASETT is an initiative of the Government of Spain, developed in collaboration with the Government of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, the Spanish Social Economy Confederation (CEPES), the High Council of Cooperatives in Euskadi (CSCE), the Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa, the City Council of Donostia-San Sebastián and the Mondragon Corporation.*

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