

THINK TANK

Deliberation process on the work of the future: Working Document No. 4

(19 November 2020)

This working document is a follow-up to the three previous ones and contains the results of the deliberation at the session of 15 October 2020. The future of work will be marked by a number of major trends, among which the deliberation group has prioritised two: digitalisation and the ecological transition. The following paragraphs summarise the debate raised by Genís Roca on the theme of digitalisation and the work group's reflections on that debate. The final part of the document contains the Provincial Government's interpretation, which sets the basis for an experimental project on the work of the future.

With regard to the impact of digitalisation on value generation processes in the province, the group agreed that it would have a clear impact on value chains, redefining them and generating pressure for real-time value contribution. In this context, companies will need to transition towards flexible business models with scalability of processes, exploit synergies, have good access to knowledge on markets and competition, have a crosscutting vision and know how to innovate based on the information. This will require the creation of open innovation processes and networking. To make this transition successfully, companies will need new capacities, more academically skilled workers with social capacities who can also contribute value in the relational and strategic circuit and those who have so-called "soft" (social and collaborative) skills.

In addition to all this, they forecast that there will be another process which, if not addressed in the coming years, may hinder companies' access to personnel with such capacities. This is what has been referred to in the deliberation process as *atomization*. This atomization derives from networking and the subsequent loss of the central position of the company as the context of people's professional development. In other words, in the future each individual's career will play out in many different companies, sometimes simultaneously. This will lead to less identification with a specific firm and a

weakening of the sense of belonging. In this process, “personal brands” will be strengthened.

This atomization has various different effects. On the one hand, in these shorter contractual relationships, the worker does not have the perspective of a long-term professional career and is looking for short-term value. On the other hand, professional advancement is not dissociated from personal development; personal development is also pursued through work. This means that personal factors will impact professional decisions. It is important to remember that what makes people happy will be part of their decision-making processes in the world of work. This dimension of individual happiness also has links to society; individuals will find meaning when they see their impact on society. Through exploration, they can measure this contribution (or lack of it) on their surroundings. To under work, therefore, it will be important to take into account processes of socialisation. To some extent, each of us may be a product of this process. In each case, it is therefore necessary to consider the meaning and utility, for example, of digitalisation, to ensure that it serves us and not vice versa. The speed of the process will also be important, to ensure that people are not excluded.

This process atomization will be uniform amongst all the people from the same territory. We can simplify the categorisation of these differences by saying that there will be two groups of workers that are going to grow in number. On the one hand, there are the workers who have the skills that companies are looking for and who by their own decision, choose to work for several firms instead of just one, contributing their itinerant value to them all. In this case, the decision not to stay for a long time in any one firm and to work simultaneously in several firms forms part of the quest for personal development and meaning. *In this case the trend towards atomization is voluntary for the individual, but involuntary for the company.* On the other hand, there are the workers who do not have the skills required by companies or different projects. They will have difficulty staying in companies. This will not be their own decision, but because of the fact that the companies will only require their work for shorter, more intermittent periods. In this case, this situation is not an individual decision, as part of a quest for personal development and meaning, but an unwanted situation that also negatively impacts the individual's access to decent working conditions and social rights. *In this*

case, the trend towards atomization is involuntary for the individual, but voluntary for the company.

In this situation, it is foreseeable that there will be pressure to shift the focus of any interpretation of work from the company/worker relationship to the worker/society relationship. The group indicated that there will be spaces and times when a person will have no work. The institutions will have to cater for that space. At the same time, it stressed that ongoing education can help engage the individual in this pathway and anticipate any fears this transition may generate. This is also an area in which people can generate the necessary capacities to build high-quality relationships with companies.

These reflections will be taken into account in designing an experimental project on the work of the future within the framework of Etorkizuna Eraikiz.