

Overview	
Country	Spain
Type of organization	Startup / SME
Number of employees	8
Type of practice	Best practice
Level of investment	Medium
Activity type	Product design from waste material
Key words	Recycling / Repurposing /

Summary

www.basqcompany.com

Basq Company is a startup based in the Basque Country (Spain), established in 2019, which designs and manufactures footwear and apparel using exclusively recycled materials. Its products are made from PET plastic bottles, organic cotton waste, and end-of-life tires, contributing to the reduction of the environmental impact of these waste streams. All manufacturing takes place locally within Spain and Europe, under ethical working conditions and using renewable energy sources.

The core of Basq's best practice lies in the integration of circular economy principles throughout the entire process: from design and material selection to post-consumer recycling. One of its most recent developments is the HODEI project, a recyclable shoe model made from a single material and supported by a product return system for recycling. The company also allocates part of its revenue to marine clean-up initiatives.

Basq's brand identity is linked to surf culture and marine conservation, which strengthens its connection with environmentally conscious consumers. In 2021, the company was recognised as one of the most innovative in circular economy. Its approach is particularly relevant for the craft sector, as it shows how a small-scale enterprise can implement circular models by combining traditional craftsmanship, functional design, and environmental criteria.

Background and origin

Basq was founded in 2019 by Aitor Álvarez, a footwear designer from the Basque Country, Spain. The company's origin traces back to 2017, when Álvarez began researching how to make fully recycled sneakers after seeing the impact of marine pollution on his local coast. After two years of R&D focused on turning plastic bottles, textile scraps, and old tires into functional shoes, Basq launched as a startup to combine traditional craftsmanship with strong environmental values, especially ocean conservation.

Relevance to the craft sector

Basq's approach is especially relevant to the craft sector because it shows how traditional skills can be combined with sustainability and innovation. The company uses artisanal shoemaking techniques—manual cutting, sewing, and assembly—while sourcing all materials from recycled waste, such as PET bottles, textile scraps, and end-of-life tires. Production takes place in small, solar-powered workshops in Spain, reinforcing the connection between local culture and ecological responsibility.

Basq's model highlights how craft businesses can adopt circular economy practices and still offer quality, personalized, and unique products. Their shoes are handmade and often customizable, reflecting the values of craftsmanship: attention to detail, creativity, and local identity. By succeeding as a small enterprise, Basq provides a real-life example and inspiration for other artisans and small manufacturers looking to innovate sustainably in their own practices

Target groups

- Environmentally aware consumer.
- Surf and ocean-oriented communities
- Ethical and vegan fashion buyers
- Early adopters and innovation-driven consumers
- Middle-income and socially motivated customers
- European and international niche markets



Source: www.basqcompany.com

Material focus - type of waste material involved

Basq's products are made entirely from recycled waste materials, selected for both environmental impact and technical suitability. The main materials used are:

- Recycled PET plastic bottles: Turned into rPET polyester fibers for sneaker uppers, linings, insoles, and apparel.
- Recycled organic cotton: Made from textile scraps and old garments, spun into yarn and used in apparel.
- Rubber from end-of-life tires: Old tires are deconstructed, and the rubber is used for sneaker soles.
- Experimental bio-based materials: Such as apple leather and pineapple fiber, which are still in the R&D phase.

Each material is chosen for its technical properties—strength, breathability, grip—and to maximize sustainability, producing high-quality footwear and apparel entirely from waste



Source: www.basqcompany.com

Stakeholders involved

- Basq's circular model involves a diverse set of stakeholders:
- Founders and core team: Oversee design, operations, sustainability, and coordination with partners.
- Material suppliers: Recyclers process PET bottles, textile waste, and tires into usable materials.
- Manufacturing partners: Small, solar-powered workshops in Spain handle manual production and assembly.
- Funding partners: Include crowdfunding backers, private investors, and regional public programs (like BIC Bizkaia and Fundación Biodiversidad).
- Consumers and community: Engage as buyers and participate in the product return/recycling schemes.
- NGOs/environmental organizations: Collaborate on marine clean-up, with part of Basq's revenue supporting these initiatives.
- Certification bodies: Provide sustainability and vegan certifications (e.g., GRS, PETA).
- Both men and women are involved throughout the design, production, and communications roles, and the products are inclusive, covering men's, women's, and children's lines

Professionals involved and their roles

- Designers: Develop eco-friendly, recyclable products.
- Craft workers: Manually cut, sew, and assemble shoes and apparels.
- Sustainability experts: Ensure traceability and compliance with certifications.
- Communication staff: Manage blogs, social media, and education.
- Technical consultants: Support R&D for new materials.
- Community managers: Run crowdfunding and gather feedback.

Connection of the practice with the project-identified needs

Knowledge of Waste Materials

Basq's practice directly addresses the project's need for knowledge of waste materials. The company uses only waste—like PET bottles, cotton scraps, and tires—requiring in-depth understanding of how to source, process, and work with these materials. For example, Basq's team collaborates with recycling partners, applies mechanical recycling, and designs products (like the mono-material HODEI sneaker) for easy recyclability. Their approach demonstrates practical knowledge in selecting, cleaning, and transforming waste into high-quality, durable products

Green Entrepreneurial Skills

Basq demonstrates green entrepreneurial skills by building a circular business model: it sources waste locally, ensures ethical production, and implements a product take-back system for recycling. The company also manages regulatory compliance, runs crowdfunding campaigns to launch new products, and secures both private and public funding. This shows strong practical skills in green business development, market alignment, and innovation funding—directly addressing the need for green entrepreneurship identified in the project

Creativity and Innovative Solutions

Basq applies creativity and innovation by transforming waste (like PET bottles and tires) into stylish, wearable products with strong consumer appeal. They use minimalist, surf-inspired designs and have developed unique solutions such as the fully recyclable, mono-material HODEI shoe and an eco-deposit return system. Their focus on eco-design and continuous experimentation with new materials demonstrates how creativity can turn waste into high-quality, fashionable products, addressing the project's need for innovative and creative solutions



Methodological approach to implement the practice

Process description - step by step instructions for implementing the practice

1. Problem identification: Recognize environmental impact from plastic, textile, and tire waste, and define the mission—100% recycled, vegan, and locally made products.
2. Material research & prototyping: Identify suitable waste materials; collaborate with recyclers; develop and test prototypes over about two years.
3. Supplier and partner selection: Choose local workshops for manual, solar-powered production; partner with certified recycling suppliers.
4. Product launch & funding: Launch first products via crowdfunding to validate market interest and raise initial capital.
5. Circularity system design: Create take-back schemes (e.g., HODEI project) to collect and recycle used products.
6. Communication & consumer engagement: Focus on transparency; educate and involve consumers through blogs, social media, and events.
7. Continuous improvement: Maintain ongoing R&D into new materials and scaling strategies, using user and expert feedback.



Source: www.basqcompany.com

Related Resources that have been developed

- Technical documentation: Internal guides on material properties, eco-design, and recycling methods.
- Packaging and logistics protocols: Procedures for plastic-free, recyclable packaging and reverse logistics (product returns).
- Educational materials: Blog articles, social media campaigns, and infographics about sustainability and recycling.
- Crowdfunding tools: Videos, reports, and updates for engaging early supporters and gathering feedback.
- Experimental tools: Prototypes for return systems (eco-deposit), user guides for returns, and material testing reports, especially for new bio-based materials.

End product

Basq's main products are sneakers and apparel made entirely from recycled and vegan materials—mainly recycled PET bottles, organic cotton, and rubber from old tires. All items are handmade in small, solar-powered workshops in Spain. The products are durable, comfortable, stylish, and certified vegan. The HODEI model is fully recyclable and comes with a take-back system for used shoes. Packaging is always plastic-free and recyclable. Basq also makes t-shirts and sweatshirts from recycled cotton and rPET, using water-free dyeing and local production

Sources of funding for this intervention

- 40% private investment: Personal savings from the founder and early private investors.
- 30% crowdfunding: Campaigns on platforms like Kickstarter helped launch their first products and build a community.
- 20% public support: Regional entrepreneurship programs (e.g., BIC Bizkaia, Fundación Biodiversidad) provided grants and mentoring.
- 10% sales revenue: Reinvestment of earnings from product sales to support ongoing activities and innovation.



Source: www.basqcompany.com

Innovation, novel methods or technologies used

Basq innovates by making fully recyclable sneakers from a single recycled material (HODEI), offering a take-back system for recycling old shoes, and ensuring all products are 100% recycled and vegan. Production is manual and local, using solar energy and traditional craft methods. The company relies on crowdfunding and educates consumers about sustainability through storytelling and social media

Obstacles and challenges faced

Basq encountered several challenges, including inconsistent quality of recycled materials, high production costs due to local and ethical manufacturing, and limited design flexibility because they avoid glues and mixed materials. Setting up a product return and recycling system also proved difficult, as it required reliable partners and infrastructure. Additionally, being a small team meant they had to carefully prioritize tasks and sometimes rely on external collaborators. Overall, these obstacles highlighted the importance of strong supplier relationships, clear communication about product value, and gradual, strategic growth

Steps further and plans for the future

Basq plans to expand its product return system, enter more European markets, and add new recycled and bio-based products. They will keep investing in material innovation and aim to grow their team and educational activities as the company scales up

Key impacts - environmental, economic & social

Basq has a positive impact environmentally by reducing plastic, textile, and rubber waste, and by using solar-powered local workshops, which lowers emissions. Economically, the company creates local jobs and supports green entrepreneurship with its transparent and innovative business model. Socially, Basq ensures fair working conditions, raises consumer awareness about sustainability, and promotes inclusion through unisex and children's products. Though the team is small, future growth could create more local employment opportunities

Qualities and criteria's to consider the practice effective, efficient, sustainable, transferable

Qualities	
Effectiveness: How well does the practice achieve its goals?	Basq effectively reduces waste by upcycling plastic, textiles, and tires into high-quality, fully recycled products, while meeting market demand for sustainable fashion
Efficiency: Does the practice minimize resources while maximizing outputs?	Yes, Basq uses mono-material designs, local workshops, and crowdfunding to minimize resource use and costs, while maximizing sustainable outputBasq
Sustainability: Does the pratcice contribute to environmental protection, social equality and long-term viability?	Yes, Basq's practice supports environmental protection by using only recycled materials and low-impact processes, promotes social equality through fair jobs and inclusion, and ensures long-term viability with a sustainable business model and ongoing innovation
Transferability: Are the methods transferable in different contexts?	Yes, Basq's methods—such as eco-design, supplier partnerships, crowdfunding, and product return systems—are well documented and adaptable for small businesses or artisans in other regions, especially where recycling networks and craft workshops exist

Required Competences for the best practice implementation

Activities-to-competences mapping

Associated competences	
Knowledge	Circular economy principles, material science (plastics, textiles, rubber), environmental certifications, and sustainable supply chains.
Skills	Eco-design, manual footwear and apparel production, digital content creation, crowdfunding, business management, and communication.
Attitudes	Sustainability mindset, creativity, ethical commitment, adaptability, and openness to learning and innovation

Training needs required for successful implementation

Successful implementation requires training in eco-design, working with recycled materials, business and crowdfunding basics, digital communication, and soft skills like ethical awareness and community engagement

Lessons learned

- Circular production is achievable for small businesses with clear goals.
- Careful selection and testing of recycled materials is essential.
- Strong relationships with suppliers are key for quality and reliability.
- Simplicity in design aids both recycling and creating a strong brand identity.
- Local production ensures higher quality, transparency, and authenticity.
- Consumer education is crucial for market acceptance of sustainable products

References / links

- Basq official website: <https://www.basqcompany.com>
- SPRI: <https://www.spri.eus/en/> (search: "Basq")
- DEIA: <https://www.deia.eus> (search: "Basq zapatillas sostenibles")
- Kickstarter campaign for HODEI shoe: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/basq/hodei>
- Yanko Design feature: <https://www.yankodesign.com/> (search: "Basq Hodei")
- Red Emprenderverde / Fundación Biodiversidad: <https://redemprenderverde.es/> (search: "Basq Company")



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