



OECD Regional Development Papers

# **A territorial approach to the Sustainable Development Goals in the Basque Country, Spain**

## ABOUT THE OECD

The OECD is a multi-disciplinary inter-governmental organisation with member countries which engages in its work an increasing number of non-members from all regions of the world. The Organisation's core mission today is to help governments work together towards a stronger, cleaner, fairer global economy. Through its network of specialised committees and working groups, the OECD provides a setting where governments compare policy experiences, seek answers to common problems, identify good practice, and co-ordinate domestic and international policies. More information available: [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org).

## ABOUT OECD REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT PAPERS

Papers from the Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities of the OECD cover a full range of topics including regional statistics and analysis, urban governance and economics, rural governance and economics, and multi-level governance. Depending on the programme of work, the papers can cover specific topics such as regional innovation and networks, sustainable development, the determinants of regional growth or fiscal consolidation at the subnational level. OECD Regional Development Papers are published on <http://www.oecd.org/cfe/regional-policy>.

This paper is published under the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the OECD. The opinions expressed and the arguments employed herein do not necessarily reflect the official views of OECD member countries.

This paper was authorised for publication by Lamia Kamal-Chaoui, Director, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, OECD.

This document, as well as any statistical data and map included herein, are without prejudice to the status of or sovereignty over any territory, to the delimitation of international frontiers and boundaries and to the name of any territory, city or area.

Cover image © ma\_rish / Getty Images Plus

© OECD (2025)



Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0)

This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International licence. By using this work, you accept to be bound by the terms of this licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

**Attribution** – you must cite the work.

**Translations** – you must cite the original work, identify changes to the original and add the following text: In the event of any discrepancy between the original work and the translation, only the text of original work should be considered valid.

**Adaptations** – you must cite the original work and add the following text: This is an adaptation of an original work by the OECD. The opinions expressed and arguments employed in this adaptation should not be reported as representing the official views of the OECD or of its Member countries.

**Third-party material** – the licence does not apply to third-party material in the work. If using such material, you are responsible for obtaining permission from the third party and for any claims of infringement. You must not use the OECD logo, visual identity or cover image without express permission or suggest the OECD endorses your use of the work.

Any dispute arising under this licence shall be settled by arbitration in accordance with the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) Arbitration Rules 2012. The seat of arbitration shall be Paris (France). The number of arbitrators shall be one.

# Preface

In today's highly uncertain policy environment marked by the climate emergency, changing patterns of trade and technological innovation, the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide national, regional and local governments with a clear, stable and effective framework to address policy challenges, notably to boost the green transition, provide quality and affordable housing, foster sustainable mobility and address the consequences of an ageing population.

The Basque Country, Spain, initiated its journey to align its policies with the SDGs in 2016, which led to the adoption of the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda and an SDG action plan to advance public engagement, monitoring and implementation of SDG flagship projects in specific target areas such as energy, health, housing and education. Complementing this are sectoral strategies to foster sustainable development, notably in the fields of climate, education and demographic change, alongside an urban agenda that cuts across governmental departments. In February 2024, the Basque Government released its *Now 2030 Basque Country Proposal*, reaffirming its commitment to localising the SDGs.

The OECD has engaged in a policy dialogue with the Basque Country since 2023 to help strengthen its territorial approach to the SDGs. This report reflects the results of this dialogue and offers guidance on how to further harness the implementation of the SDGs to foster sustainable development in the Basque Country.

The policy dialogue drew on the experiences of a wide variety of stakeholders in the Basque Country as well as from peer policy makers from the City of Kitakyushu (Japan), the State of Paraná (Brazil) and Wales (United Kingdom). The OECD and the Basque Country also benefitted from the experiences and insights of numerous municipalities and public, private and non-profit sector organisations that took part in the policy dialogue to help develop the recommendations included in this report.

Both our institutions are proud of this journey and the results achieved. We look forward to continued collaboration to translate the policy recommendations into actions.



**Lamia Kamal-Chaoui,**

Director, OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship,  
SMEs, Regions and Cities



**Imanol Pradales,**

President of the Basque Government, Spain

# Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by the OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities (CFE) led by Lamia Kamal-Chaoui, Director, as part of the Programme of Work and Budget of the Regional Development Policy Committee (RDPC). It is the result of an 18-month policy dialogue with more than 100 stakeholders from public, private and non-profit sectors across all levels of government in the Basque Country, Spain.

The report was drafted by Lorenz Gross, Policy Analyst, and co-ordinated by Lorenz Gross and Stefano Marta, Head of the Smart and Sustainable Cities Unit, under the supervision of Aziza Akhmouch, Head of the Cities, Urban Policies and Sustainable Development Division in the CFE. The report benefitted from the statistical guidance of Marcos Díaz Ramírez, Economist, and Josep Espasa Reig, Data and Knowledge Scientist, CFE. Nadim Ahmad, Deputy Director, Soo-Jin Kim, Deputy Head of Division, Oscar Huerta Melchor and Ander Eizaguirre, Policy Analysts, CFE, provided inputs and comments on the draft.

The OECD Secretariat is grateful for the high-level political impetus from and commitment of Imanol Pradales, President of the Basque Government, Spain. Special thanks go to the excellent local team composed of: Asier Aranbarri Urzelai, Director of Social Innovation and the 2030 Agenda in the General Secretariat for Communication and Social Innovation of the Basque Government, Spain, and Mikel Hidalgo Bordegarai, Advisor in the General Secretariat for Communication and Social Innovation.

Warm thanks are conveyed to the international peer reviewers who participated in study missions and provided international best practices as well as guidance on the report: Filipe Braga Farhat from the State of Paraná, Brazil; Junko Ota from the Kitakyushu Urban Center of the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, Japan; and Robert Morgan from the Welsh Government, United Kingdom.

Thanks are extended to Jack Waters in the CFE for preparing the report for publication, as well as to Eleonore Morena for copy-editing the report.

# Table of contents

Preface	3
Acknowledgements	4
Abbreviations and acronyms	7
Executive summary	8
<b>1 Policies and strategies for sustainable development</b>	<b>12</b>
Key facts about the Basque Country, Spain	13
Policies and strategies for the SDGs	14
References	25
Annex 1.A. Additional information	29
<b>2 Sustainable development opportunities and challenges</b>	<b>32</b>
Measuring the distance to the SDGs in the Basque Country	33
Spotlight on synergies and trade-offs: Using the SDGs to address interlinked sustainability challenges	42
References	44
Notes	45
Annex 2.A. Additional information	46
<b>3 Multi-level governance and stakeholder engagement</b>	<b>51</b>
Multi-level governance of the SDGs in Spain	52
The SDGs as a tool to engage civil society, academia, the private sector and youth	59
References	64
Notes	67
<b>4 Policy recommendations</b>	<b>68</b>
Policy recommendations	69
References	80

## FIGURES

Figure 1.1. Location of the Basque Country, Spain	13
Figure 1.2. The OECD analytical framework for A Territorial Approach to the SDGs	16
Figure 1.3. Strategic priorities of the Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda	20
Figure 1.4. Contribution of the Basque Government budget to the SDGs	24
Figure 2.1. Distance to achieving the SDGs in the Basque Country, Spain	33

Figure 2.2. Percentage of population from 25 to 64 years old with at least tertiary education, 2022	36
Figure 2.3. Percentage of total electricity production that comes from fossil fuels (natural gas and oil, excluding coal), 2019	37
Figure 2.4. Long-term unemployment incidence, 2023	39
Figure 2.5. Mean Internet download speed for fixed connection, 2023	42
Figure 3.1. Structure of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda	56
Figure 3.2. Phases and steps for organisations to embrace the 2030 Agenda	63
Figure 4.1. The OECD Checklist for Public Action to implement A Territorial Approach to the SDGs	69
Annex Figure 2.A.1. Coverage of Eustat's SDG indicators	46

## INFOGRAPHICS

Infographic 4.1. Seven key recommendations for a territorial approach to the SDGs in the Basque Country, Spain	70
Infographic 4.2. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 1 to leverage the framework of the SDGs to define measures that address the Basque Country's main territorial development challenges – Part I	71
Infographic 4.3. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 1 to leverage the framework of the SDGs to define measures that address the Basque Country's main territorial development challenges – Part II	72
Infographic 4.4. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 1 to leverage the framework of the SDGs to define measures that address the Basque Country's main territorial development challenges – Part III	73
Infographic 4.5. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 2 to transform the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda into a long-term vision for sustainable development	74
Infographic 4.6. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 3 to enhance the administrative capacity of Basque municipalities to promote SDG localisation	75
Infographic 4.7. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 4 to set up a dashboard to track progress of the implementation of the Basque Government Programme and SDG Action Plan	76
Infographic 4.8. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 5 to extend the uptake of EUDEL's SDG budgetary alignment guide beyond the 15 pilot municipalities	77
Infographic 4.9. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 6 to foster sustainable public procurement practices, notably through including social clauses alongside environmental criteria	78
Infographic 4.10. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 7 to leverage the Basque Alliance for the SDGs to promote the uptake of the SDGs among public and private organisations in the Basque Country	79

## TABLES

Table 1.1. Primary commitments and flagship projects of the Basque Government to localise the SDGs	17
Table 3.1. Spain's sustainable development challenges and priorities	52
Annex Table 1.A.1. Priorities and work plan of the 2021-2024 Basque Action Plan for the SDGs	29
Annex Table 2.A.1. Indicators used to assess the dimension People in the Basque Country	47
Annex Table 2.A.2 Indicators used to assess the dimension Planet in the Basque Country	48
Annex Table 2.A.3. Indicators used to assess the dimension Prosperity in the Basque Country	48
Annex Table 2.A.4. Indicators used to assess the dimensions Peace and Partnership in the Basque Country	49

## BOXES

Box 1.1. Why a territorial approach to the SDGs?	15
Box 2.1. The importance of data-driven policies: The Basque Country's work on SDG indicators	34
Box 3.1. REDS, the sustainable development solutions network in Spain	55
Box 3.2. SDG localisation in Basque municipalities	58
Box 3.3. The Euskadi 2030 Gunea Practical Guide for Basque Organisations to implement the 2030 Agenda	62
Annex Box 1.A.1. Seven flagship projects for the localisation of the SDGs in the Basque Country	30
Annex Box 2.A.1. OECD methodology for measuring cities' and regions' distance to achieving the SDGs	46

# Abbreviations and acronyms

<b>5G</b>	Fifth-generation of cellular network technology
<b>CFE</b>	OECD Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities
<b>CO<sub>2</sub></b>	Carbon dioxide
<b>COVID-19</b>	Coronavirus Disease 2019
<b>ELoGE</b>	European Label of Governance Excellence
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>EUDEL</b>	<i>Euskal Udalen Elkarte</i> , Association of Basque Municipalities
<b>EUSKALIT</b>	Basque Foundation for Advanced Management
<b>GDP</b>	Gross domestic product
<b>GHG</b>	Greenhouse gas
<b>GVA</b>	Gross value added
<b>ISIC</b>	International Standard Industrial Classification
<b>Kg</b>	Kilogram
<b>LGBTQI+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex
<b>Mbps</b>	Megabits per second
<b>NEET</b>	Not in education, employment or training
<b>PM</b>	Particulate matter
<b>PPP</b>	Purchasing power parity
<b>R&amp;D</b>	Research and development
<b>RDPC</b>	Regional Development Policy Committee
<b>REDS</b>	<i>Red Española para el Desarrollo Sostenible</i> , Spanish Network for Sustainable Development
<b>SDG</b>	Sustainable Development Goal
<b>SME</b>	Small and medium-sized enterprises
<b>SSIFF</b>	San Sebastián International Film Festival
<b>UN</b>	United Nations
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
<b>USD</b>	United States Dollar
<b>VET</b>	Vocational Education and Training
<b>WHO</b>	World Health Organization

# Executive summary

With a population of 2.2 million, the Basque Country, Spain, is the 7<sup>th</sup> most populous region and 5<sup>th</sup> largest regional economy in Spain. Low rates of poverty, good health outcomes and high educational attainments are among its key strengths. However, the Basque Country is grappling with sustainable development challenges around renewable energy, housing and population ageing. The Basque Government has leveraged the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) framework to address these challenges since 2016.

## Key findings

### ***The Basque Country has low poverty, good health outcomes and high levels of education, and research and development***

- In 2022, average disposable income per equivalised household per day of the first quintile in the Basque Country was USD 31.3, higher than the average of Spanish regions (USD 25) and OECD member country regions (USD 30.5). Only 13.2% of its population had a disposable income below 60% of the national median, below the average of Spanish regions (21.3%) and OECD regions (20.8%).
- Average life expectancy (83.5 years) is higher than the OECD regional average (79.5), with more active physicians per 1 000 people (5.2 versus 3.1 in the OECD as whole). Its infant mortality rate of 3.0 deaths per 1 000 live births is also lower than the OECD average (5.5).
- In 2022, 56% of the Basque population aged 25-64 had completed tertiary education, above the OECD regional average (40%). Enrolment rates of 15-19 year-olds in educational institutions (95%) were also higher than in 90% of OECD regions. Less than 7% of 18-24 year-olds are early leavers from education and training, compared to 13% across the OECD.
- In 2021, the Basque Country allocated 2.3% of its gross domestic product to research and development (R&D), surpassing national (1.3%) and OECD (2.1%) averages, with R&D professions representing 3.6% of employment, above Spanish (2.0%) and OECD (1.5%) levels.

### ***Key sustainable development challenges relate to renewable energy, housing, mobility as well as unemployment and population ageing***

- Reliance on fossil fuels is a main sustainable development challenge in the Basque Country. In 2019, fossil fuels accounted for around 90% of electricity generation, while renewables represented only 10% (compared to more than 45% in Spanish regions and 35% in OECD regions on average).
- Housing costs place a significant strain on Basque household finances. In 2018, Basque households spent one-fifth of their income on housing, similar to the OECD regional average. Housing demand exceeds supply, particularly for municipal social housing, where waiting times can reach up to ten years in the Basque Country. In addition, with an average building age of 48 years, approximately 95% of the regional housing stock requires decarbonisation.
- Sustainable mobility is another challenge due to the lack of rapid public transport between the largest Basque cities. The Basque Country is heavily reliant on private cars, which account for 47% of trips of the population aged 20-64 compared to 12% by public transport. Air pollution levels are

high, with 99% of the population exposed to fine particulate matter PM2.5 concentrations above World Health Organization (WHO) air quality guidelines.

- In 2023, with an unemployment rate of 7.8%, the Basque Country ranked above the OECD average of 5.1% and was among the 25% of OECD regions with the highest unemployment rates. Long-term unemployment (38.4% of total unemployment) is particularly pronounced. Furthermore, youth unemployment (25.9%) is significantly higher than the OECD average (13.2%), although slightly below the average of Spanish regions (29.3%).
- The Basque Country has an ageing population. The share of people aged 65 and older increased from 8.3% to 23.5% between 1976 and 2022, and those aged 85 and more from 0.4% to 4.1%. The share of the population aged 65 and more is projected to reach 29.3% by 2036, requiring investments in healthcare, age-friendly infrastructure and housing. These challenges are compounded by a shrinking workforce, with the share of population aged 20-64 expected to decrease by more than 2%.

***The Basque Country has a comprehensive SDG localisation framework, including a dedicated action plan, sectoral strategies and a monitoring system***

- The Basque Country, Spain, initiated its journey to align its policies with the SDGs in 2016, culminating in the adoption of the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda in 2018. Subsequently, the 2021-2024 Basque Action Plan focused on the implementation of seven SDG flagship projects targeting specific policy areas such as energy, health, housing renovation and education, alongside activities to foster stakeholder engagement, collaborative governance and monitoring.
- Despite the absence of a long-term sustainable development vision, the Basque Country has framed a cross-cutting urban agenda centred around SDG 11 “Sustainable cities and communities”, including topics such as housing, mobility, urban innovation and resilience, alongside sectoral strategies in the fields of education, climate and demography, contributing to sustainable development. Moreover, the Now 2030 Basque Country Proposal, a roadmap on how to integrate the SDGs into local policies and strategies, reaffirms the Basque Country’s commitment to the SDGs.
- To monitor progress, the Basque Statistics Institute Eustat has set up an SDG portal with more than 330 indicators, which provides disaggregated data by province, county and municipality for most indicators. In addition, the Basque Government publishes annual monitoring reports on the 2030 Agenda.

***The Basque Country has set up a collaborative governance framework to localise the SDGs***

- With other Spanish autonomous communities, the Basque Country contributed to the elaboration of the Spanish sustainable development strategy and participates regularly in the national Sectoral Conference on Sustainable Development. It also hosts the global headquarters of the UN Local2030 Coalition Secretariat, which aims to accelerate SDG localisation worldwide.
- The General Secretariat for Communication and Social Innovation oversees inter-departmental co-ordination and implementation of the SDGs in the Basque Country, including pilot projects and establishing platforms for exchange. Its Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda acts as a space for collaboration, gathering Basque Government representatives, provincial and municipal councils to establish guidelines for SDG implementation. Municipal associations support local governments through strategic guidance, training and tools such as budget alignment guides – pilot tested by 15 municipalities – and a 2030 Agenda toolbox.

### ***Co-operation between stakeholders plays a key role to localise the 2030 Agenda in the Basque Country, but SDG awareness among the broader population is limited***

- The Basque Alliance for the SDGs unites around 90 entities from various sectors. Members commit to co-creating flagship projects, promoting citizen education and fostering dialogue with the Local2030 Secretariat. The alliance's steering group currently oversees over 70 projects aligned with the SDGs.
- Civil society organisations support the localisation of SDGs through awareness-raising campaigns and capacity-building activities, while universities have set up a joint SDG course and guidelines for universities to implement the 2030 Agenda. However, general awareness of the 2030 Agenda among the broader population remains limited, preventing them from playing an active role in SDG localisation. Less than 49% of people aged 15-29 years had heard of the SDGs according to a 2023 survey.
- Among private sector entities, mostly large companies have integrated the SDGs into their business models. To expand SDG uptake, industrial clusters and non-profit foundations, alongside Euskadi 2030 Gunea, a pilot group of 17 public and private organisations, support their members in transitioning to sustainable business practices, including through a dedicated guide to implement the 2030 Agenda.

## **Key recommendations**

### ***Policies, strategies and indicators***

- **Leverage the framework of the SDGs to define measures that address the Basque Country's main territorial development challenges related to energy, housing, mobility, population ageing and the labour market.** The Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda and the Basque Action Plan for the SDGs provide a good basis to advance SDG localisation. Moving forward, the Basque Country could consider developing more ambitious policies and measures that address its main development challenges to improve public service delivery, while taking into account synergies and trade-offs across various SDGs, such as:
  - **Energy (SDG 7 “Clean and affordable energy”, SDG 13 “Climate action”):** Set up policies to foster the energy transition towards renewable sources and phase out fossil fuels, by scaling up solar-energy pilot projects, educating citizens about the benefits of renewable energy and providing incentives to consumers to increase the demand for renewable energy, e.g. subsidies for the installation of solar panels or other renewable energy systems.
  - **Housing (SDG 11 “Sustainable cities and communities”):** Provide quality, low-carbon and affordable housing by expanding the existing housing renovation flagship project to enhance and renovate the building stock and urban spaces. Integrate green urbanism in regional planning as a catalyst for private investments, leverage sustainability bonds and land value capture, and establish revolving funds to finance the construction of affordable and social rental housing. Foster compact urban development and support community-led solutions such as housing co-operatives and community land trusts. Increase public housing supply by repurposing vacant properties and splitting larger units into smaller units where relevant.
  - **Mobility (SDG 11 “Sustainable cities and communities”, SDG 12 “Responsible consumption and production”):** Foster sustainable mobility by promoting a shift in the modal split towards more environment-friendly means of transport and expanding public transport with rapid rail connections between major cities, and restructure bus routes to improve access in smaller towns, which could be funded by a mix of user fares, indirect beneficiary taxes (e.g. from owners of land that increases in value when its accessibility improves) and

earmarked taxes. Implement measures to promote transit-oriented development alongside active mobility by adapting urban design to the prioritisation of pedestrian areas and traffic calming measures.

- **Population ageing (SDG 1 “No poverty”, SDG 3 “Good health and well-being”, SDG 10 “Reduced inequalities”)**: Address the challenges of an ageing population by making infrastructure more age-friendly, improving public space accessibility and promoting inter-generational living. Prepare for increased demand in the health sector by developing a regional workforce plan, collaborating with universities to train professionals and exploring innovative technologies like artificial intelligence for diagnosis and treatment.
- **Labour market (SDG 8 “Decent work and economic growth”, SDG 9 “Industry, innovation and infrastructure”)**: Tackle unemployment and outward migration by joining forces with universities and vocational schools to develop targeted upskilling and reskilling programmes and offering high-quality and relevant programmes that are aligned with the skills needs in the Basque Country and attractive to international students and workforce.
- **Transform the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda into a long-term vision for sustainable development.** Both the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda and the 2021-2024 Basque Action Plan for the SDGs are bound by the four-year government term. A long-term vision for sustainable development is needed to ensure policy continuity. Existing activities such as sectoral strategies contributing to SDG progress, the seven SDG flagship projects and the Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda, should be a starting point and reference for the development of the vision. Furthermore, it should build on an assessment of the impact of existing sustainable development policies and projects to identify lessons learned, areas of success and gaps.
- **Set up a dashboard to track progress of the Basque Government programme and the SDGs action plan.** Expand the existing online portal by adding a dedicated dashboard to visualise progress on the Basque Government programme related to the SDGs (such as the Basque Action Plan for the SDGs and the Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda) based on key performance indicators and measurable targets. This could help further increase transparency on the impact of regional policies and progress made.

### ***Multi-level governance and financing***

- **Enhance the administrative capacity of Basque municipalities to promote SDG localisation.** The Basque Government should provide targeted support for municipalities, such as capacity-building workshops and grants for urban development projects aligned with the 2030 Agenda. The Basque Government could also include fostering inter-municipal partnerships for public services delivery, loaning staff to smaller municipalities and leveraging support from the three main Basque universities in relation to specific challenges around housing, energy and mobility, through student capstone projects or dedicated research activities.
- **Expand the uptake of the existing SDG budgetary alignment guide beyond pilot municipalities.** EUDEL, the Association of Basque Municipalities, has established a guide to help municipalities align their budgets on the SDGs, which has been piloted first in 3 and later 15 municipalities. Going forward, the Basque Government, in collaboration with EUDEL, should scale up the tool beyond the 15 pilot municipalities, including through capacity-building workshops, peer-to-peer partnerships and an interactive webpage.

# 1 Policies and strategies for sustainable development

---

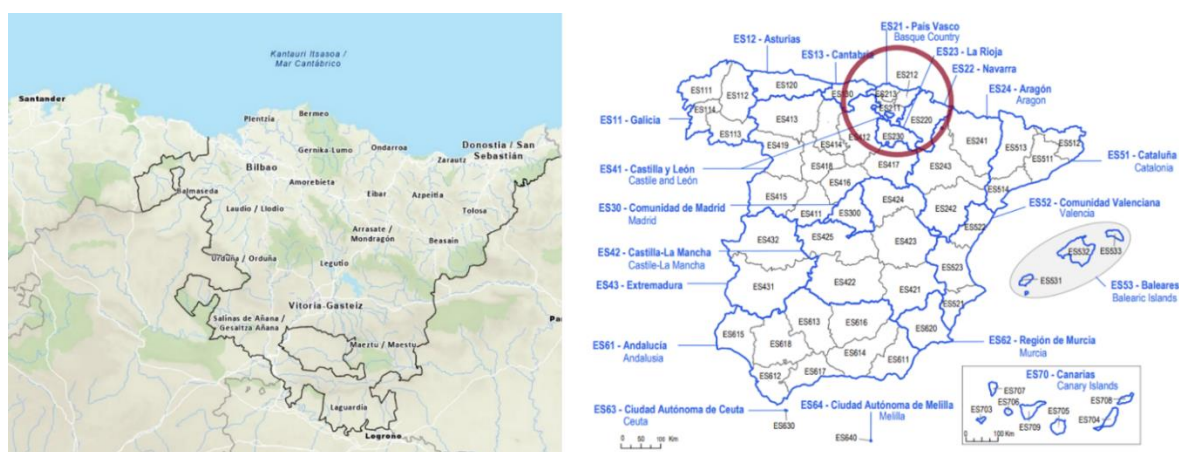
The Basque Country, Spain, initiated its journey to localise the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016. Key milestones include the adoption of the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda in 2018 aiming to align public policies with the SDGs, and the 2021-2024 Basque Action Plan to advance SDG localisation in the Basque Country centred around activities for public engagement, monitoring and the implementation of SDG flagship projects targeting specific policies areas such as energy, health, housing and education. In addition, the Basque Country has framed its urban agenda around SDG 11 and set up sectoral strategies in the fields of education, climate and demography. These efforts culminated with the adoption, in February 2024, of the *Now 2030 Basque Country Proposal*, which reaffirms the Basque commitment to the SDGs and provides a detailed roadmap on how to integrate the SDGs into local governance, policies and strategies.

---

## Key facts about the Basque Country, Spain

The Basque Country is one of the 17 autonomous communities in Spain. It is located in the north of the country bordering the autonomous communities of Cantabria, Castille and León, La Rioja and Navarra as well as the French region of Nouvelle-Aquitaine (Figure 1.1). Spanning an area of 7 234 square kilometres (km<sup>2</sup>), the Basque Country consists of the 3 provinces: Álava (Araba), Biscay (Bizkaia), and Gipuzkoa. In 2023, it was home to approximately 2.2 million people, about 4.5% of the Spanish population. Bilbao, Vitoria-Gasteiz – the capital of the Basque Country – and San Sebastián are the three largest of 251 municipalities, with a population of 342 484, 250 100 and 182 641 people respectively in 2023 (Eustat, 2024<sup>[1]</sup>). The majority of municipalities in the region have fewer than 10 000 inhabitants. The Basque Country is the second most densely populated region in Spain – 306 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> – after the Comunidad de Madrid.

Figure 1.1. Location of the Basque Country, Spain



Source: Basque Government (2024<sup>[2]</sup>), *geoEuskadi*, <https://www.geo.euskadi.eus/webgeo00-bisorea/es/x72aGeoEuskadiWAR/index.jsp> (accessed on 4 April 2024)

The Basque Country is among the largest and most affluent regional economies in Spain. In 2022, it contributed about EUR 105 billion – 5.9% – of the Spanish gross domestic product (GDP), thereby representing the fifth-largest regional economy in Spain behind the Comunidad de Madrid (19.4%), Cataluña (19.0%), Andalucía (13.4%) and Comunidad Valenciana (9.4%) (INE, 2023<sup>[3]</sup>). Furthermore, the Basque per capita GDP (in EUR, constant 2015 prices, purchasing power parity converted) of EUR 48 160 in 2022 was the second highest among Spanish autonomous communities, only exceeded by the Comunidad de Madrid (OECD, 2024<sup>[4]</sup>). The Basque economy relies primarily on services, which accounted for about 69.2% of gross value added (GVA) in 2020, followed by industry (23.3%), notably in automotive, energy and aeronautics (OECD, 2024<sup>[4]</sup>; SPRI, 2024<sup>[5]</sup>). The primary sector (agriculture, forestry and fishing) only contributed a minor part of GVA (0.6%). Most companies are small and medium-sized enterprises with 6.4 employees each on average (Eustat, 2024<sup>[6]</sup>). A particularity of the Basque economy is the widespread existence of co-operative companies, more than 3 700 of which were registered with the Council of Cooperatives of Euskadi at the end of 2024, including the Mondragón Corporation, one the Basque country's largest employers (Council of Cooperatives of Euskadi, 2024<sup>[7]</sup>). The Basque Country is also a popular tourism destination, reflected by more than 7.2 million overnight stays in 2023, mainly from domestic visitors from Catalonia and Madrid, followed by France and the United States (Eustat, 2024<sup>[8]</sup>). In 2022, the tourism sector accounted for about 5.5% of the Basque Country's overall regional product with its contribution exceeding 7% in the Gipuzkoa province (Eustat, 2023<sup>[9]</sup>).

Germany and France are the two largest international trading partners of the Basque Country. In 2022, the Basque Country registered a trade surplus of about 9% with an amount of total exports of EUR 32.7 billion and imports accounting for EUR 29.7 billion. Fifty percent of goods and services were exported to just 5 countries, notably Germany (15%) and France (15%), followed by the United States (7%), the Netherlands (6%) and the United Kingdom (6%) (Eustat, 2024<sup>[10]</sup>). Exports of the Basque Country are mainly driven by the tourism industry, motor vehicles including parts and accessories, petroleum oils as well as rubber tires (Eustat, 2024<sup>[11]</sup>). Germany also accounted for 13% of Basque imports, followed by France (9%), China (7%), the United States (7%) and Brazil (5%) (Eustat, 2024<sup>[12]</sup>). The most imported goods include petroleum oils and refined petroleum oils, vehicle parts and petroleum gas (Eustat, 2024<sup>[11]</sup>).

The Basque Country is home to several public and private universities and research institutes. Among academic institutions, the University of the Basque Country, established in 1980, is the largest university in the region with more than 45 000 students with campuses in all 3 provinces (University of the Basque Country, 2024<sup>[13]</sup>). Furthermore, the Basque Country hosts the University of Deusto, a private Jesuit university founded in 1886, with more than 10 000 students. Lastly, the Mondragón University, located in the eponymous municipality, is a private university, with around 6 700 students enrolled in the academic year 2022-23, (Mondragon University, 2024<sup>[14]</sup>). Another important actor in research and development (R&D) is the Basque Research and Technology Alliance, a collaboration between 16 technology centres and co-operative research centres that employs more than 3 700 researchers and invests about EUR 300 million annually in technology R&D (SPRI, 2024<sup>[5]</sup>).

The Basque Country has various challenges to address in the areas of energy, mobility, housing and adapting to an ageing population. A critical issue is population ageing that requires changes in the type and level of public services needed, notably education, health, public transport and housing. Furthermore, the Basque Country produces a low share of renewable energy and faces some resistance of residents to expand solar panels and wind energy plants. Decarbonisation of the economy and industry are critical steps to contribute to energy savings and environmental goals. The Basque Country also faces a housing challenge on two fronts: a high demand for affordable housing and an ageing housing stock that requires rehabilitation. Decarbonising the housing stock could contribute to greater affordability and living standards in the Basque Country. In addition, connectivity among the three largest cities in the region is mainly ensured by road and there is no fast railway connecting the Basque Country with the capital Madrid.

## Policies and strategies for the SDGs

### *The Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda*

The Basque Country started localising the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2016. As a first step, the 2016-20 strategic plans of the Basque Government focused on sustainable human development. This provided the basis for the Basque Government to develop the first Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda in April 2018 (Basque Government, 2018<sup>[15]</sup>), as a first attempt to foster a territorial approach to the SDGs (see Box 1.1).

The Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda analyses the alignment of the Basque Government programme with the SDGs. The document showed that 93 of the commitments of the Basque Government for the 2016-20 period were contributing to the SDGs, alongside 80 policy plans and strategies and 19 legislative initiatives (Basque Government, 2021<sup>[16]</sup>). The document also established the first set of 50 indicators (2-3 indicators for each of the SDGs) to measure the Basque progress on achieving the SDGs, which was refined and expanded in the subsequent year. Furthermore, following the publication of the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda, the Basque Government started publishing annual monitoring reports to map policies, strategies, and initiatives put in place (see Box 2.1 in Chapter 2 for more details on Basque SDG indicators and monitoring).

### Box 1.1. Why a territorial approach to the SDGs?

The UN 2030 Agenda was not designed specifically for cities and regions, but they play a crucial role in achieving the SDGs. The OECD estimates that at least 105 of the 169 targets underlying the 17 SDGs will not be reached without proper engagement and co-ordination with local and regional governments, as cities and regions hold core responsibilities that are central to sustainable development and well-being (e.g. water services, housing or transport). They also discharge a significant share of public investment (55% in OECD countries), which is critical to channel the required funding to meet the SDGs. Although the SDGs provide a global framework, the opportunities and challenges for sustainable development vary significantly across and within countries, regions and cities. However, the SDGs are also an integral part of the solution, as the varying nature of sustainable development challenges calls for place-based solutions, tailored to territorial specificities, needs and capacities (OECD, 2019<sup>[17]</sup>).

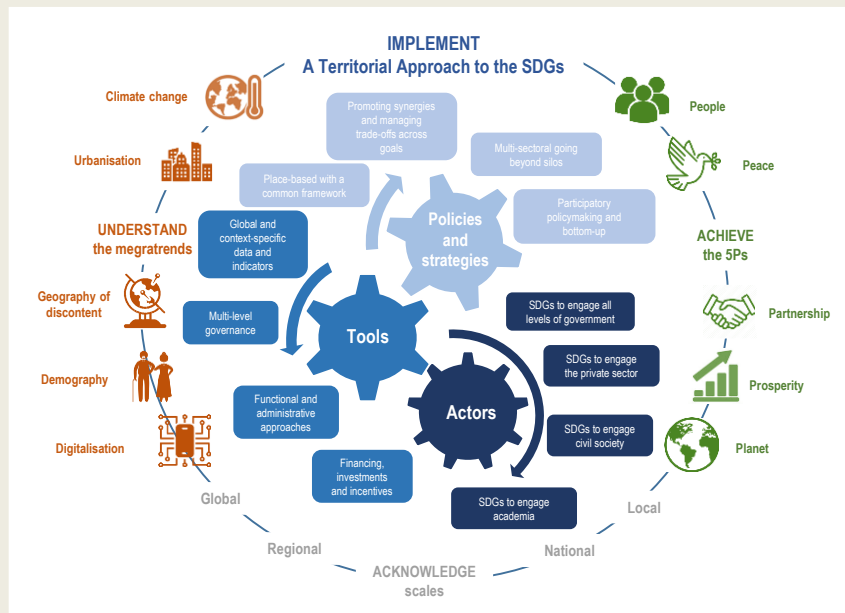
The SDGs can help advance conceptually the shift towards a new regional development policy paradigm and provide a framework to implement it, as:

- The 2030 Agenda provides a long-term vision for strategies and policies with a common milestone in 2030, while acknowledging that targeted action is needed in different places, since their exposure to challenges and risks varies widely, as does their capacity to cope with them.
- The interconnected SDG framework allows for promoting policy complementarities and managing trade-offs across goals. Indeed, the SDGs enable policy makers to address the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development concomitantly, building on the synergies and taking interlinkages into account.
- The SDGs allow for better implementing the concept of functional territories, a common framework that neighbouring municipalities can use to strengthen collaboration and co-ordinate actions.
- The SDGs can be used to promote multi-level governance and partnerships, including the engagement of various stakeholders in the policy-making process.

#### The OECD analytical framework for A Territorial Approach to the SDGs

The OECD has identified four critical megatrends influencing the achievement of the SDGs in cities and regions: i) demographic changes, in particular, urbanisation, ageing and migration; ii) climate change and the need to transition to a low-carbon economy; iii) technological changes, such as digitalisation and the emergence of artificial intelligence; and iv) globalisation and the related “geography of discontent”. The SDGs provide a framework for cities and regions to respond systemically to such global megatrends. The OECD analytical framework helps cities and regions implement a territorial approach to the SDGs through: i) policies and strategies; ii) tools; and iii) actors (Figure 1.2)

**Figure 1.2. The OECD analytical framework for A Territorial Approach to the SDGs**



Source: OECD (2020<sup>[18]</sup>), *A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals: Synthesis report*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e86fa715-en>.

### **The 2021-2024 Basque Action Plan, a Basque programme of priorities for the 2030 Agenda**

The 2021-2024 Basque Action Plan aimed to sustain localisation efforts through flagship projects centred around social inclusion, environment and energy, health and mobility, alongside public engagement and monitoring activities. In June 2021, the Basque Government approved its new Programme of Priorities for the 2030 Agenda, spanning the 2021-24 period, which takes the form of an action plan (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[19]</sup>). The plan builds on the implementation of the 2017-20 government programme, with two new identified challenges related to: i) social inclusion; and ii) moving from assessing the alignment of existing policies with the SDGs to developing dedicated new policies and projects for the SDGs. The action plan is structured around: i) social dissemination and public engagement; ii) co-ordination and collaborative governance; iii) alignment, implementation and evaluation; and iv) flagship projects; with specific actions for each stream (see Table A A.1 for more details).

As part of the 2021-2024 Basque Action Plan, the Basque Country has set up seven flagship projects to contribute to the SDGs. The goal of these flagship projects, which align with the government's seven principal commitments (Table 1.1), is twofold: first, to pinpoint initiatives that can serve as testbeds and catalysts of public policies for sustainable development, and, second, to present tangible outcomes of actions to achieve the SDGs (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[19]</sup>). In addition to the flagship projects, the 2021-2024 Basque Action Plan contains a list of 150 SDG-related commitments, which are part of the government's 2020-24 programme across 25 different areas of action, detailing both the responsible department in the Basque Government and the respective SDG they cover. The commitments encompass close to 700 initiatives that the Basque Government aimed to put in place as part of its 2020-2024 Government Programme.

**Table 1.1. Primary commitments and flagship projects of the Basque Government to localise the SDGs**

Dimensions of the 2030 Agenda	Primary commitment	Flagship project
People/Equity	Eliminate poverty and hunger, mitigate inequality and prevent exclusion	Ekitatea
	Expand inclusive education to foster a more cohesive, compassionate and sustainable society	Hezkuntzaren Auzolana - Education for All
Planet/Ecology	Combat climate change through ecosystem conservation and restoration, biodiversity protection and the advancement of decarbonisation and renewable energy	Energy-Ekiola + Climate-Ondarea
	Foster a green and inclusive ecosystem in transportation, cities and urban planning	Opengela
Prosperity/Solidarity	Ensure public health as a universally accessible local and global common good	Global Health
	Lay and enhance foundations for sustainable and co-operative practices in the economy and business sector	Basque Ecodesign Center
Peace/Human Rights	Contribute to a more peaceful world, upholding human dignity for fair and inclusive coexistence	"The Basque case: Lessons learned to prevent violence and protect of peace"

Source: Basque Government (2021<sup>[16]</sup>), *The Basque Programme of Priorities for the Agenda 2030 - 2021-2024 Action Plan*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/ENG-Programa-prioridades.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/ENG-Programa-prioridades.pdf).

Despite outlining SDG-related commitments, the 2021-2024 Basque Action Plan does not provide granular guidance to localise the SDGs. It mentions several strategies through which the Basque Country fosters synergies across policy areas, which can help generate co-benefits (see the spotlight on synergies and trade-offs in Chapter 2 for more information). These include the Climate Change Strategy of the Basque Country (KLIMA 2050), the Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda, the 2030 School Agenda and the Agenda for Vocational Training, the Biodiversity Strategy of the Basque Country 2030 as well as the SDG strategy of the University of the Basque Country. However, the 2021-2024 Basque Action Plan, as was the case for the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda, does not provide a long-term perspective that goes beyond a legislative term (Hidalgo Simón, Siragusa and Proietti, 2021<sup>[20]</sup>). This can have an impact on the longer-term progress of the SDGs, which requires policy continuity and commitment beyond electoral cycles. The new legislative term that started in 2024, provides the opportunity to develop a forward-looking vision for sustainable development in the Basque Country.

### ***The Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda and territorial development challenges***

The Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda, published in 2020, is the Basque Country's main urban development strategy. It was developed in collaboration with municipal and provincial representatives, universities, civil society organisations and the private sector, alongside an advisory council. Those representatives also contribute to the governance of the agenda through a dedicated forum responsible for monitoring its implementation (Basque Government, 2020<sup>[21]</sup>). The Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda provides a reference framework for urban policies to shape inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities by 2050. It makes references to relevant regional, national and international frameworks, including the New Urban Agenda, the Urban Agenda for the European Union (EU), the Spanish Urban Agenda, the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda, its land-use planning guidelines, the Basque Declaration, KLIMA 2050 as well as the 2030 Strategy of the Basque Network of Sustainable Municipalities (Udalsarea). Notably, it is anchored in SDG 11 "Sustainable cities and communities", and maps strategic priorities, actions and targets of Bultzatu against the targets of the 2030 Agenda and the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda.

The document highlights the main characteristics of the Basque Country in terms of urban development. These include its high degree of urbanisation in terms of population settlements, a polycentric system of cities, revolving around 3 metropolitan areas accounting for more than 70% of the population and a network of smaller mid-sized municipalities fostering rural-urban linkages. Furthermore, while the city of Bilbao is characterised by a trend of declining population, San Sebastián has seen moderate growth (5.5% between 1996 and 2018). Vitoria gained more than 16% of residents over the same time and is also the youngest among the 3 cities in terms of average age. Unemployment rates in the three municipalities are below the Spanish average. Per capita GDP sits in the higher end of the range for the country but income inequality poses a challenge, with people in the richest areas of the three capital cities earn three times more per person than those in the poorest areas. The strategy also acknowledges the uneven impact of climate change, particularly its acute vulnerability in coastal areas where 70% of the population reside (Basque Government, 2020<sup>[21]</sup>).

The Basque energy mix remains heavily reliant on non-renewable sources. About 90% of the Basque electricity generation relies on fossil fuels (see Chapter 2 for more details), compared to an OECD member country region average of 29%. The Basque Country produces on average 495 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions per gigawatt hour of electricity, which is more than 150 tonnes above the average of OECD regions (344 tonnes). In response, the Basque Energy Agency set up the Energy-Ekiola flagship project, which aims to establish 30 to 50 non-profit co-operative energy communities. In these communities, citizens, as prosumers, participate in the generation and management of local solar photovoltaic power stations, each producing 1 to 5 megawatt of renewable electricity to meet their energy demands (FEDARENE, 2022<sup>[22]</sup>). To incentivise participation and address the resistance of some parts of the Basque population to solar panels and wind energy plants set up close to residential areas or locations for leisure activities, such as mountains and hiking paths, the energy price for electricity produced through the Energy-Ekiola project was set for the next 25 years.

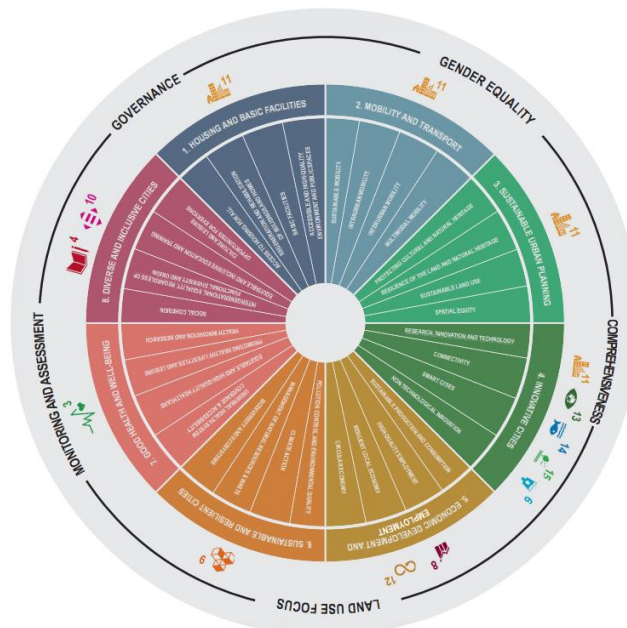
The Basque orography and land distribution patterns continue to favour extensive use of private cars. Overall, more than 50% of commutes rely on individual cars (Basque Government, 2020<sup>[21]</sup>). An additional challenge is the lack of rapid public transport supply between the three main cities of Bilbao, San Sebastián and Vitoria-Gasteiz on the one hand and between the Basque Country and the two largest cities in Spain, Barcelona and Madrid on the other. In both cases (except for a local train connection between Bilbao and San Sebastián, which however takes longer than the bus), no train connection exists yet, making bus and coach services the fastest public transportation option and generating a path dependency for road vehicles in the absence of solid alternatives. Furthermore, only municipalities with more than 50 000 residents in the Basque Country hold urban transportation policy prerogatives. In other cases, transportation falls under the responsibility of the provincial government, thereby subject to greater needs for co-operation across levels of government. In response to mobility challenges and related needs for decarbonisation, the Basque Country passed a new sustainable mobility law in November 2023 to create a technologically unified public transport system enhancing interoperability and user access, to position railway as a backbone of public transport, and promote active mobility such as the prioritisation of pedestrian areas and traffic calming measures, while encouraging greener public transport fleets as well as measures to reduce the use of private vehicles through dissuasive parking and low-emission zones. Furthermore, it mandates the Basque Country to develop a regional sustainable mobility plan, which is currently under development, while municipalities with more than 5 000 residents are yet to develop and set up their own municipal mobility plans (Basque Parliament, 2023<sup>[23]</sup>). Such plans aim to complement the Basque Sustainable Transport Master Plan 2030, published in 2017.

Quality and affordable housing are key challenges in the Basque Country. In 2020, around 10.5% of the Basque population lived in homes affected by some form of housing deprivation, e.g. leaks or damp in the walls, down from 14.2% in 2018, but up from 7.7% in 2008 and 8.8% in 2012 (Eustat, 2024<sup>[24]</sup>). In 2022, the average age of residential buildings was 48 years, suggesting significant opportunities for energy savings and decarbonisation efforts, with around 95% of the current housing stock in need of

decarbonisation. Additionally, about 75% of buildings are not accessible to the elderly and people with a disability. Furthermore, the demand for affordable housing exceeds the supply. This is notably the case for the municipal housing supply, as applicants can face waiting periods of up to 10 years to gain access. Furthermore, about 70% of people applying for municipal housing seek a one-person apartment, highlighting the need to adapt the housing supply to better reflect the needs and demand of the Basque population. In response, the Opengela project was implemented in several underprivileged neighbourhoods around the Basque Country (see Box A A.1 for more details) to enhance and renovate the building stock and urban spaces. In addition, the Basque Country has set up the Gaztelagun programme, a rental assistance scheme that benefitted about 1 500 young adults in 2022 (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[25]</sup>). Other support schemes for youth emancipation provide monthly rent subsidies for young people between 25 and 29 years of age with annual incomes between EUR 3 000 and EUR 28 000 (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[26]</sup>). These are complemented by a national programme providing young people who lack sufficient savings to purchase a home with access to a public guarantee granted by the government of Spain, which will cover the necessary 20% down payment required.

To address long-term challenges, the Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda sets out strategic priorities and action areas to be targeted by urban policy in the Basque Country. The strategy points out a total of 15 future challenges that the Basque Country will be facing until 2050. The challenges cover social cohesion (e.g. incorporating diversity as a basic element of the Basque identity, making people the central focus of public decision making), production and consumption (e.g. how to use redistribution to avoid social divides, finding a balance between paid and unpaid activities, addressing changes linked to economic and productive activity), urban planning (e.g. mobility, urban-rural linkages, housing and spatial planning) as well as governance (e.g. creating strong institutional and social frameworks, addressing the datafication of cities). To anticipate and address these challenges, Bultzatu sets out eight strategic priorities (housing and basic facilities; mobility and transport; sustainable urban planning; innovative cities; economic development and employment; sustainable and resilient cities; good health and well-being; and diverse and inclusive cities) and five cross-cutting principles (gender equality; comprehensiveness; land-use focus; monitoring and assessment and governance) (Figure 1.3). The strategic priorities are underpinned by 33 action areas and more than 100 actions to implement, but without specifying timeframes. A first monitoring report of the Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda was published in March 2023.

Figure 1.3. Strategic priorities of the Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda



Source: Basque Government (2020<sup>[21]</sup>), *bultzatu 2050 - Urban Agenda for the Basque Country*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/bultzatu\\_2050/es\\_def/adjuntos/bultzatu\\_2050/agenda\\_urbana\\_en.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/bultzatu_2050/es_def/adjuntos/bultzatu_2050/agenda_urbana_en.pdf).

The agenda does not foresee measurable targets but a subsequent monitoring report took stock of progress. The Bultzatu 2050 strategy outlines implementation tools such as sectoral plans and guidelines to achieve the different objectives. For all strategic actions, it also provides a selection of two to three related indicators. However, the strategy itself does not foresee any concrete, measurable targets that the Basque Country aims to achieve by 2050. For example, one of the actions under the housing objective, aimed at promoting the right to housing and basic facilities, is ensuring universal access to housing. The actions pointed out to achieve this objective remain rather vague, e.g. improving the rental housing stock available and co-ordination between the various actors involved in developing that stock or tackling energy poverty, to meet the most immediate needs of families that are vulnerable or at risk of social exclusion. In the first monitoring report in 2023, however, around 60 indicators, most including quantitative targets, were added to track progress of the Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda implementation.

### **Strategies and projects contributing to the SDGs in the Basque Country**

Several sectoral strategies represent an integral part of the Basque efforts to achieve the SDGs and address its main territorial development challenges. These include areas such as education and employment, environment and climate change as well as demographic change, notably population ageing.

#### *Education and employment (SDGs 4 and 8)*

To prepare for the labour market of the future, the Basque Country has set up a Vocational Education and Training Plan. Well-educated young adults in the Basque Country tend to move to the capital or abroad to start their career. Retaining talent is mainly challenged by housing affordability and linguistic requisites. At the same time, youth unemployment reached 25.9% in 2022, which is considerably above the average of OECD regions (17.0%). In response, the 6<sup>th</sup> Vocational Education and Training (VET) Plan seeks to enhance VET system capacities, e.g. improve training to: meet the needs of students and the labour market including training programmes for the energy transition; integrate digital technologies like artificial

intelligence, Internet of Things and fifth-generation of cellular network technology (5G); and encourage lifelong learning. The plan highlights that committing to the SDGs will benefit VET institutions by demonstrating their impact, attracting interest, promoting social values and sustainable development, forming alliances and showcasing their commitment to societal progress (Basque Government, 2022<sup>[27]</sup>). In addition, the Basque Education Law, approved in December 2023, emphasises the importance of sustainable development as a critical component of the Basque educational framework and mandates its integration into the educational curriculum (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[28]</sup>).

A dedicated Education for Sustainable Development Strategy aims at integrating the topic of sustainability into the Basque educational system. It sets out four main goals for 2030, which are: i) fostering actionable knowledge and skills among young people; ii) enhancing the skills and capabilities of educators and trainers; iii) equipping youth with the knowledge and tools to lead sustainability efforts; and iv) encouraging municipalities to develop community-based sustainability education programmes. To achieve these goals, the strategy foresees the development of certification systems for sustainable schools and creating guides and fora for sustainability education. Furthermore, it aims to facilitate collaborative work among sustainability education agents, provide capacity building, identify best practices and support youth participation in international fora (Basque Government, 2018<sup>[15]</sup>). A notable example is the 2030 School Agenda, through which schools, municipalities and government, conduct SDG awareness raising and capacity building for students (Basque Government, 2022<sup>[29]</sup>). A dedicated guide was produced by the Basque Network of Sustainable Municipalities, the Basque Government and Ihobe, a public environmental management company of the Basque Government. In 2023, about 49% of the young population aged 15 to 29 in the Basque Country were aware of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda (Basque Youth Observatory, 2023<sup>[30]</sup>). While this is a considerable result, it still implies space for improvement, including with regards to the effectiveness of the Basque Education for Sustainable Development Strategy.

#### *Climate change, energy transition and biodiversity (SDGs 7, 13, 14 and 15)*

The Climate Change Strategy of the Basque Country (KLIMA 2050) represents the roadmap of Basque climate action until 2050. Considering that 70% of the Basque population are living in coastal areas, which are more prone to floods and erosion, combatting climate change is of particular importance for the Basque Country. KLIMA 2050 was designed in 2015 to address climate change through both mitigation and adaptation measures. In terms of mitigation, its goal is to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 40% by 2030 and by 80% by 2050, compared to 2005 levels, while also achieving 40% renewable energy consumption by 2050, a share that had gone up to 18.2% by 2022 since the inception of the strategy in 2015. In terms of adaptation, the strategy aims to ensure the resilience of the Basque territory by integrating climate risks into urban planning, restoring natural habitats and strengthening the primary sector's capacity to cope with climate change. This includes actions such as elaborating vulnerability maps, enhancing green infrastructure, adapting agriculture and fisheries, protecting coastal areas from sea-level rise and improving climate monitoring and early-warning systems (Basque Government, 2015<sup>[31]</sup>).

The KLIMA 2050 strategy covers a broad range of themes, from energy to transport, urban planning, ecosystem preservation, agriculture and forestry, waste management, water, and infrastructure, innovation, knowledge and public services. It relies on 70 actions including the promotion of energy efficiency, the development of smart grid-schemes, sustainable agricultural and forestry practices as well as fostering climate change education amongst others (Basque Government, 2015<sup>[31]</sup>). However, the strategy does not contain specific information about the implementation of those actions, such as timelines, actors involved or quantifiable targets. The strategy was developed prior to the adoption of the SDGs but engaged across relevant ministries, underpinning its cross-cutting nature. The strategy also foresees bi-annual monitoring reports.

The Basque Energy Transition and Climate Change Act aims for climate neutrality and a just transition by 2050. Approved in February 2024 by the parliament, the new law established the first legal framework to

address climate change and promote the energy transition in the Basque Country (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[32]</sup>). The law covers multiple sectors, including agriculture and tourism. As part of a long-term Roadmap for Energy Transition and Climate Change in the Basque Country, it mandates various institutions and companies to create fossil fuel divestment plans, measure their carbon footprint and aim for a zero or even negative carbon footprint where technically and economically possible. It sets multiple targets, including a 45% reduction in emissions by 2030 compared to 2005, a 37% reduction in final consumption by 2050 compared to 2021 and a renewable energy share of at least 32% in final energy consumption, which is however comparatively less ambitious than the EU target of a 55% reduction in emissions by 2030 compared to 1990 (López, 2024<sup>[33]</sup>). It emphasises participatory governance and fairness, e.g. by involving citizens in new structures like the Citizen Assembly for Energy and Climate Transition of the Basque Country. It also recognises the importance of a gender perspective and the need for a just transition for all sectors of society, and requires the integration of energy and climate perspectives into government budgets. Furthermore, all municipalities with a population of more than 5 000 residents are required to develop municipal climate and energy plans within 2 years of the adoption of the law. The act foresees tax incentives for actions that promote adaptation to climate change or the reduction of GHG emissions. However, while it mandates the development of a public divestment plan from fossil fuel exploration and exploitation the law does not address private corporations, meaning there is no set timeline for phasing out fossil fuels, despite these companies being the primary contributors to GHG emissions (López, 2024<sup>[33]</sup>).

A biodiversity strategy complements the Basque environmental protection efforts. As a traditionally heavily industrialised territory, the Basque Country has a history of soil pollution spanning up to 16% of the territory until the 1990s (Ihobe, 2024<sup>[34]</sup>). Established in 2016, the biodiversity strategy aims to improve the conservation status of its natural environment, halt its deterioration and ensure that all stakeholders value the ecosystem services that contribute to human well-being. The strategy foresees actions such as implementing green infrastructure, developing management and recovery plans for threatened species, enhancing public awareness and education on biodiversity and fostering inter-institutional co-ordination and stakeholder participation to protect and restore the Basque Country's natural heritage. It explicitly aligns with the 2030 Agenda, particularly SDG 15, which aims to “protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.” The strategy also supports SDG 13 “Climate action” and SDG 14 “Life below water” (Basque Government, 2016<sup>[35]</sup>). A monitoring report, published in 2022, took stock of the status of biodiversity in the region through 35 environmental, economic and social indicators, covering various issues such as protected natural areas, the conservation status of species and Basque public investment in this area. It highlighted a protected status of about 24% of the Basque territory – slightly below the EU target of 30% – as well as progress made in species conservation, alongside economic and social benefits derived from biodiversity protection and sustainable tourism initiatives (Ihobe, 2022<sup>[36]</sup>).

### *Demographic challenge (SDGs 3, 10, 17)*

Addressing demographic challenges is one of the Basque priorities to contribute to a sustainable society, foster inter-generational solidarity and territorial cohesion. The Basque Country is among the European regions with the lowest birth rates and highest average ages of 45.7 years in 2022 (see the Chapter 2 section on measuring the distance to the SDGs in the Basque Country for detailed data). Between 1976 and 2022, the population aged 65 and older in the Basque Country more than doubled from 8.3% to 23.5%. As part of its objectives for the 2020-24 government term, the Basque Country has prioritised tackling demographic challenges, designating it as one of the ten key goals. This includes the elaboration of a dedicated strategy, published in 2022. The main objectives of the strategy are to support youth emancipation and increase the birthrate as well as developing measures to respond to depopulation and ageing of rural areas, attracting and integrating migrants and ensure healthy ageing of the Basque

population. The 6<sup>th</sup> Monitoring Report of the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda names the strategy as one of the main contributions to SDG 10 “Reduced inequalities” and SDG 17 “Partnership for the goals” (Basque Government, 2023<sup>[37]</sup>).

The Basque Strategy 2030 for the Demographic Challenge foresees short- and long-term actions. Short-term actions focus on expanding support programmes for dependent children, loan programmes for youth entrepreneurs, training and housing projects, free childcare for children aged 0-2, the Gaztelagun Programme and emancipation support schemes and mainstreaming of demographic aspects in public policies. Those with a long-term impact include measures to foster youth emancipation (e.g. mentoring programmes and youth employment stimulus plans), support projects to start a family (e.g. childhood guarantee programmes, financial assistance schemes for child rearing, extending maternal and paternal leave), support older people (e.g. detecting social and healthcare risk factors) and improve migrant integration (e.g. the development and annual assessment of the Basque Social Pact on Migration) (Basque Government, 2023<sup>[38]</sup>). Cross-cutting actions include a rural development act, approved in 2022, as well as foresight studies, outreach, communication and monitoring. Given the long-term nature of demographic shifts, the tangible impact of the strategy is yet to materialise.

### ***The Now 2030 Basque Country Proposal: Using the SDGs as a social contract***

In February 2024, the Basque Government released its *Now 2030 Basque Country Proposal*, reaffirming its commitment to localising the SDGs. In view of insufficient progress in achieving SDG targets and the lack of awareness among citizens, the proposal highlights three main action areas of SDG localisation that the Basque Country is committed to and presents a roadmap for other cities and regions to follow: i) a commitment to the institutionalisation of the SDGs, ii) a commitment to a greater socialisation, and iii) a commitment to a greater personalisation of the SDGs (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[39]</sup>).

In terms of institutionalisation, the proposal suggests the establishment of four pillars of co-ordination, planning, monitoring and collaboration. The first pillar is the creation of an executive, cross-cutting and co-ordination body for the SDGs, which the Basque Country has put in place through the General Secretariat for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda of the Basque Government, now called General Secretariat for Communication and Social Innovation (see Chapter 3 for more details). In addition, the *Now 2030 Basque Country Proposal* suggests the development of strategic planning documents, which entail goals, priorities, actions plans and budgetary alignment alongside assessment tools such as indicators or Voluntary Local Reviews. Lastly, the proposal advocates for the promotion of collaborative government models as exemplified by the Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda (see Chapter 3) (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[39]</sup>).

To address the lack of awareness of the 2030 Agenda among citizens and involve territorial stakeholder, the *Now 2030 Basque Country Proposal* focuses on the socialisation of the SDGs. Notably, it advocates for the launch of communication campaigns and initiatives such as through the Basque Country 2030 Agenda Award at the San Sebastián Film Festival (see Chapter 3) as well as educational tools, courses and publications. It also points out the relevance of special training on the 2030 Agenda, e.g. through universities in the Basque Country, and guides to integrate SDGs into companies and organisations daily work. Lastly, it mentions alliances, such as the Basque Alliance for the SDGs, for collaboration as important factors to raise awareness of the SDGs (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[39]</sup>).

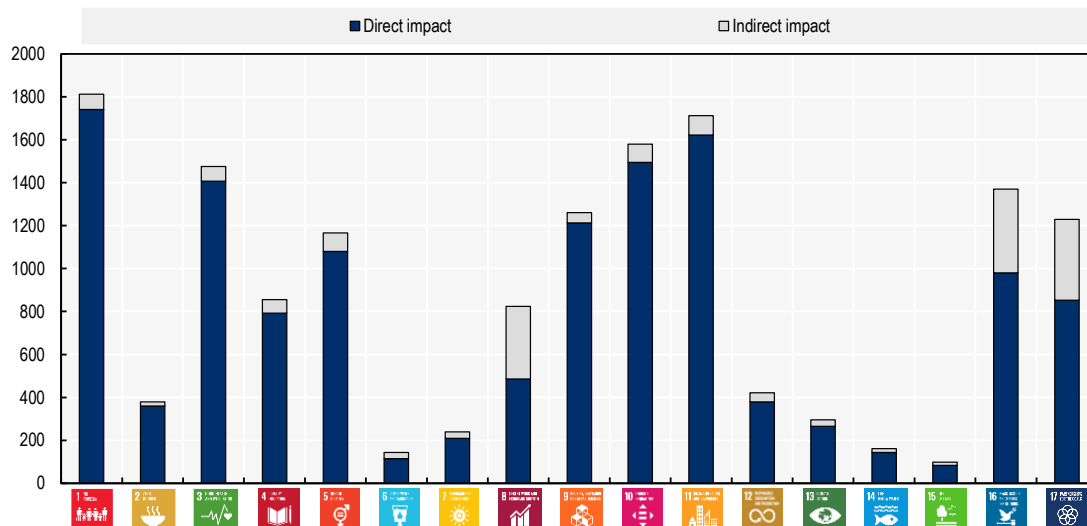
The third area of action is centred around engagement. To commit to greater personalisation, so that citizens adjust their behaviours to contribute sustainable development, it points out the need to advocate for the 2030 Agenda as a social contract that demands personal involvement and commitment, along with a readiness to collaborate with others and various groups. Furthermore, the area of action also suggests sharing a simple 2030 Agenda guide with the public to make the SDGs more accessible and understandable (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[39]</sup>).

## Budgeting, financing and procurement

The Basque Country allocates the most funding to SDGs related to poverty, inequality and sustainable cities and communities. In 2023, the Basque Government initiated an analysis of its budgetary alignment with the SDGs. It revealed that overall, 38% of the budget is spent on the People dimension (SDGs 1-5 and 10), 37% on the Prosperity dimension (SDGs 7-11), 7% followed by the Planet dimension (SDGs 6, 12-15), which is minimal in view of the challenges that the Basque Country is facing with regards to energy and climate (see Chapter 2 for details) while the rest is dedicated to Peace and Partnership (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[19]</sup>). When looking at individual SDGs, the SDGs on poverty, sustainable cities and communities and reduced inequalities (SDGs 1, 10 and 11) are those that receive the highest level of funding, while the water, energy and environment-related SDGs 6, 7, 14 and 15 are those with the least funding (Figure 1.4). In addition to the SDG alignment analysis at the regional level, a specific guide to align municipal budgets to the SDGs exists for municipalities (see Chapter 3 for more information).

**Figure 1.4. Contribution of the Basque Government budget to the SDGs**

Amounts in TEUR



Source: Basque Government (2024<sup>[19]</sup>), *7th Monitoring Report Multi-level 2030 Agenda Basque Country 2023*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/7-Informe-Seguimiento-2023-Agenda-2030-INGL-web.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/7-Informe-Seguimiento-2023-Agenda-2030-INGL-web.pdf).

Furthermore, the Basque Country has used bonds to raise further resources for sustainable development. As part of its Sustainable Finance Framework, the Basque Country issued six tranches of sustainable bonds between 2018 and 2022 worth more than EUR 3 billion to promote the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. The proceeds from these bond issuances were used to contribute to specific social, economic and environmental objectives including affordable housing, quality education and healthcare, employment generation, renewable energy and clean transportation. However, around 83% of the initiatives financed between 2018 and 2020 through the bonds addressed social objectives, while only 17% target environmental ones (Basque Government, 2021<sup>[16]</sup>). The former include different housing allowances and restoration programmes, including the Gaztelagun Programme, educational and employment support programmes including university grants, the development and maintenance of healthcare facilities and programmes, financing of family allowances and guaranteed minimum incomes. The latter related to renewable energy grants, climate change adaptation measures and public transportation infrastructure.

The selection criteria for these projects, conducted by the Basque Government Sustainable Bonds Committee, included their contribution to the SDGs (Basque Government, 2022<sup>[40]</sup>).

**The Basque Government uses environmental criteria in about half of its public procurement processes.** Public procurement has a great potential to channel public funds towards social and environmental outcomes. The OECD estimates that public procurement typically accounts for about 12% of GDP in OECD countries and nearly 30% of total government spending (OECD, 2020<sup>[18]</sup>). In 2022, nearly half of the Basque Country's procurement budget involved environmental criteria (Irekoa, 2023<sup>[41]</sup>). In 2023, the Basque Government introduced a new binding instruction to enhance the environmental aspect of public procurement, requiring all ministries and public entities to include minimum environmental clauses in their tender calls as part of its 2030 Green Procurement and Contracting Programme, which highlights the potential of public procurement to directly and indirectly contribute to economic transformation and the achievement of several SDGs (Basque Government, 2021<sup>[42]</sup>). The new instruction provides specific environmental criteria for various sectors, such as food, public lighting and transportation, and mandates their inclusion in contract specifications (Irekoa, 2023<sup>[41]</sup>).

## References

- Basque Government (2024), *7th Monitoring Report Multi-level 2030 Agenda Basque Country 2023*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/7-Informe-Seguimiento-2023-Agenda-2030-INGL-web.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/7-Informe-Seguimiento-2023-Agenda-2030-INGL-web.pdf). [19]
- Basque Government (2024), *Ayudas al alquiler de Vivienda del programa GAZTELAGUN [Rental Assistance for Housing under the GAZTELAGUN Programme]*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/gaztelagun\\_es/web01-tramite/es/](https://www.euskadi.eus/gaztelagun_es/web01-tramite/es/) (accessed on 7 August 2024). [25]
- Basque Government (2024), *Ayudas Emantzipa de emancipación juvenil [Emantzipa Youth Emancipation Aid]*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/ayuda\\_subvencion/2024/ayudas-emantzipa-de-emancipacion-juvenil/web01-tramite/es/](https://www.euskadi.eus/ayuda_subvencion/2024/ayudas-emantzipa-de-emancipacion-juvenil/web01-tramite/es/) (accessed on 7 August 2024). [26]
- Basque Government (2024), *geoEuskadi*, <https://www.geo.euskadi.eus/webgeo00-bisorea/es/x72aGoeuskadiWAR/index.jsp> (accessed on 4 April 2024). [2]
- Basque Government (2024), *Ley 1/2024, de 8 de febrero, de Transición Energética y Cambio Climático [Law 1/2024, of February 8, on Energy Transition and Climate Change]*, <https://www.boe.es/boe/dias/2024/03/12/pdfs/BOE-A-2024-4783.pdf>. [32]
- Basque Government (2024), *Ley 17/2023, de 21 de diciembre, de Educación de la Comunidad Autónoma del País Vasco. [Law 17/2023, of December 21, on Education of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country]*, Boletín Oficial del País Vasco, <https://www.euskadi.eus/bopv2/datos/2024/01/2400037a.pdf> (accessed on 8 August 2024). [28]
- Basque Government (2024), *Now 2030 Basque Country - Basque Model of Commitment to Localising the SDGs*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/Now-Basque-Country-ENG.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/Now-Basque-Country-ENG.pdf). [39]
- Basque Government (2023), *6th Monitoring Report - 2030 Agenda Basque Country 2022*, [https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/vlrs/2023-05/6th\\_monitoring\\_report\\_2030\\_agenda\\_basque\\_country.pdf](https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/vlrs/2023-05/6th_monitoring_report_2030_agenda_basque_country.pdf) (accessed on 3 April 2024). [37]

- Basque Government (2023), *Basque Strategy 2030 for the Demographic Challenge*, [38]  
[https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/eu\\_def/adjuntos/II-Operational-Document-Demographic-Challenge.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/eu_def/adjuntos/II-Operational-Document-Demographic-Challenge.pdf).
- Basque Government (2022), *6th Basque Vocational Education and Training Plan*, [27]  
[https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/legelabur/eu\\_def/adjuntos/6PLAN\\_FP\\_eng\\_2022.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/legelabur/eu_def/adjuntos/6PLAN_FP_eng_2022.pdf).
- Basque Government (2022), *Agenda 2030 Escolar - Educar en la cultura de la sostenibilidad [Agenda 2030 School Program - Educating in the Culture of Sustainability]*, [29]  
<https://www.euskadi.eus/agenda-21-escolar-educar-para-la-sostenibilidad/web01-a2inghez/es/> (accessed on 13 February 2025).
- Basque Government (2022), “Economic, environmental and social impact of sustainable bonds - Allocation and impact of the issue of the sustainable bond 2021”, [40]  
[https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/7071/eu\\_2333/adjuntos/2023/Impacto-bono-sostenible-2021\\_DEF\\_EN.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/7071/eu_2333/adjuntos/2023/Impacto-bono-sostenible-2021_DEF_EN.pdf) (accessed on 8 August 2024).
- Basque Government (2021), *Green Procurement and Contracting Programme of the Basque Country 2030*. [42]
- Basque Government (2021), *The Basque Programme of Priorities for the Agenda 2030 - 2021-2024 Action Plan*, [16]  
[https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/ENG-Programa-prioridades.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/ENG-Programa-prioridades.pdf).
- Basque Government (2020), *bultzatu 2050 - Urban Agenda for the Basque Country*, [21]  
[https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/bultzatu\\_2050/es\\_def/adjuntos/bultzatu\\_2050/agenda\\_urbana\\_en.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/bultzatu_2050/es_def/adjuntos/bultzatu_2050/agenda_urbana_en.pdf).
- Basque Government (2018), *Agenda Euskadi Basque Country 2030 - Basque Contribution to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, [15]  
[https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/06/basque\\_country\\_2017\\_en.pdf](https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2021/06/basque_country_2017_en.pdf).
- Basque Government (2016), *Biodiversity Strategy of the Basque Autonomous Community 2030 and First Action Plan 2020*, [35]  
[https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/biodiversidad2030/en\\_def/adjuntos/BiodiversityStrategy2030.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/biodiversidad2030/en_def/adjuntos/BiodiversityStrategy2030.pdf).
- Basque Government (2015), *Klima 2050 Basque Country - Climate Change Strategy of the Basque Country to 2050*, [31]  
[https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/klima2050/en\\_def/adjuntos/KLIMA2050\\_en.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/klima2050/en_def/adjuntos/KLIMA2050_en.pdf).
- Basque Parliament (2023), *Ley 11/2023, de 9 de noviembre, de movilidad sostenible de Euskadi [Law 11/2023, of November 9, on Sustainable Mobility in the Basque Country]*, Boletín Oficial del Estado (Official State Gazette), 8 Dec. 2023, [23]  
[https://www.boe.es/diario\\_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2023-25012](https://www.boe.es/diario_boe/txt.php?id=BOE-A-2023-25012).
- Basque Youth Observatory (2023), “Youth and Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals - Knowledge and opinions of the youth of the Basque Country”, [30]  
[https://www.gazteaukera.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/berriak\\_2023/en\\_6778/adjuntos/Berria\\_ODS\\_2023\\_en.pdf](https://www.gazteaukera.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/berriak_2023/en_6778/adjuntos/Berria_ODS_2023_en.pdf).

- Council of Cooperatives of Euskadi (2024), *Transforming and Illusioning from Cooperativism*, <https://kooperatibenkontseilua.eus/en/> (accessed on 4 April 2024). [7]
- Eustat (2024), *2030 Sustainable Development Agenda Indicators*, Basque Statistics Office, <https://en.eustat.eus/indicators/sdg.html> (accessed on 3 April 2024). [24]
- Eustat (2024), *Basque Country Tourism Data Explorer: Hotel Establishments*, Basque Statistics Office, [https://en.eustat.eus/tourism\\_data\\_explorer\\_euskadi\\_hotels.html](https://en.eustat.eus/tourism_data_explorer_euskadi_hotels.html) (accessed on 4 April 2024). [8]
- Eustat (2024), “Basque exports increased by 0.3% in 2023 and exceeded 32,600 million euros”, Basque Statistics Office, [https://en.eustat.eus/elem/ele0021800/not0021878\\_i.pdf](https://en.eustat.eus/elem/ele0021800/not0021878_i.pdf) (accessed on 4 April 2024). [11]
- Eustat (2024), *Export Rankings of the Basque Country by Countries. 2022*, Basque Statistics Office, [https://en.eustat.eus/elementos/ele0005700/export-rankings-of-the-basque-country-by-countries/tbl0005722\\_i.html](https://en.eustat.eus/elementos/ele0005700/export-rankings-of-the-basque-country-by-countries/tbl0005722_i.html) (accessed on 4 April 2024). [10]
- Eustat (2024), *Import Rankings of the Basque Country by Countries. 2022*, Basque Statistics Office, [https://en.eustat.eus/elementos/ele0005700/import-rankings-of-the-basque-country-by-countries/tbl0005723\\_i.html](https://en.eustat.eus/elementos/ele0005700/import-rankings-of-the-basque-country-by-countries/tbl0005723_i.html) (accessed on 4 April 2024). [12]
- Eustat (2024), *Population of the Basque Country by Territorial Area, Broad Age Groups Fulfilled, Sex and Period*, Basque Statistics Office, [https://en.eustat.eus/bankupx/pxweb/en/DB/-/PX\\_010154\\_cepv1\\_ep06b.px/table/tableViewLayout2/?idioma=i&idioma=i&idioma=i&idioma=i](https://en.eustat.eus/bankupx/pxweb/en/DB/-/PX_010154_cepv1_ep06b.px/table/tableViewLayout2/?idioma=i&idioma=i&idioma=i&idioma=i) (accessed on 4 April 2024). [1]
- Eustat (2024), “The number of people employed in the Basque Country has increased by 3.8% over the last five years”, Basque Statistics Office, [https://en.eustat.eus/estad/id\\_30/ti\\_Directory%20of%20economic%20activities/latest-press-release.html](https://en.eustat.eus/estad/id_30/ti_Directory%20of%20economic%20activities/latest-press-release.html) (accessed on 20 December 2024). [6]
- Eustat (2023), *Contribution of Tourism to the Basque Economy by Province and Year, Absolute Value and Percentage on the GDP p.m. Current Prices. 2010-2022*, Basque Statistics Office, [https://en.eustat.eus/elementos/ele0003400/contribution-of-tourism-to-the-basque-economy-by-province-and-year-absolute-value-and-percentage-on-the-gdp-pm-current-prices/tbl0003419\\_i.html](https://en.eustat.eus/elementos/ele0003400/contribution-of-tourism-to-the-basque-economy-by-province-and-year-absolute-value-and-percentage-on-the-gdp-pm-current-prices/tbl0003419_i.html) (accessed on 4 April 2024). [9]
- FEDARENE (2022), *EKIOLA: Prosumer PV Cooperatives in the Basque Country*, European Federation of Agencies and Regions for Energy and the Environment, <https://fedarene.org/best-practice/ekiola-prosumer-pv-cooperatives-in-the-basque-country/> (accessed on 17 May 2024). [22]
- Hidalgo Simón, A., A. Siragusa and P. Proietti (2021), *SDG Localisation and Multi-level Governance: Lessons from the Basque Country*, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg. [20]
- Ihobe (2024), *Soils*, <https://www.ihobe.eus/soil#:~:text=For%20decades%2C%20the%20intense%20industrial,been%20exposed%20to%20industrial%20activity.> (accessed on 18 May 2024). [34]

- Ihobe (2022), “Euskadi se acerca al objetivo de la Unión Europea para 2030 con una cuarta parte de su territorio protegido [Euskadi is approaching the European Union’s 2030 target with a quarter of its territory protected]”, <https://www.ihobe.eus/actualidad/euskadi-se-acerca-al-objetivo-union-europea-para-2030-con-una-cuarta-parte-su-territorio-protegido> (accessed on 8 August 2024). [36]
- INE (2023), *Results by Autonomous Communities and Autonomous Cities. 2019 Benchmark Revision Series (ESA 2010)*, Spanish National Statistics Institute, [https://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/en/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica\\_C&cid=1254736167628&menu=resultados&idp=1254735576581](https://www.ine.es/dyngs/INEbase/en/operacion.htm?c=Estadistica_C&cid=1254736167628&menu=resultados&idp=1254735576581) (accessed on 4 April 2024). [3]
- Irekia (2023), “The Basque Government requires environmental clauses to be included in tendering processes of its Ministries and public entities”, <https://www.irekia.euskadi.eus/mobile/en/news/84485-gobierno-vasco-obliga-incorporar-clausulas-ambientales-las-licitaciones-sus-departamentos-entidades-publicas> (accessed on 18 May 2024). [41]
- López, A. (2024), “Basque Energy Transition and Climate Change Act”, <https://naider.com/en/naiderlab/knowledge/expert-analysis/ley-1-2024-de-transicion-energetica-y-cambio-climatico/> (accessed on 7 August 2024). [33]
- Mondragon University (2024), *Memoria del Curso 2022-2023 [Report of the 2022-2023 Academic Year]*, [https://www.mondragon.edu/documents/20182/1134127/memoria\\_MU\\_motza\\_2024\\_gaz.pdf/ad2561ad-a899-4238-b704-6dc0547976b9](https://www.mondragon.edu/documents/20182/1134127/memoria_MU_motza_2024_gaz.pdf/ad2561ad-a899-4238-b704-6dc0547976b9). [14]
- OECD (2024), *OECD Data Explorer*, OECD, Paris, [https://data-explorer.oecd.org/?fs\[0\]=Topic%2C0%7CRegional%252C%20rural%20and%20urban%20development%23GEO%23&pg=0&fc=Topic&bp=true&snb=149](https://data-explorer.oecd.org/?fs[0]=Topic%2C0%7CRegional%252C%20rural%20and%20urban%20development%23GEO%23&pg=0&fc=Topic&bp=true&snb=149) (accessed on 4 April 2024). [4]
- OECD (2020), *A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals: Synthesis report*, OECD Urban Policy Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e86fa715-en>. [18]
- OECD (2019), *OECD Regional Outlook 2019: Leveraging Megatrends for Cities and Rural Areas*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/9789264312838-en>. [17]
- SPRI (2024), *Invest in Basque Country*, Basque Business Development Agency, <https://www.spri.eus/en/invest-in-basque-country/#b1> (accessed on 4 April 2024). [5]
- University of the Basque Country (2024), *Basic Facts and Figures*, <https://www.ehu.eus/en/en-basic-facts> (accessed on 4 April 2024). [13]

## Annex 1.A. Additional information

**Annex Table 1.A.1. Priorities and work plan of the 2021-2024 Basque Action Plan for the SDGs**

Priority	Aim	Principal areas of work and activities
<i>Social dissemination and public engagement</i>	Promote the dissemination of the 2030 Agenda and provide opportunities for citizen engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual information and outreach campaign on the SDGs</li> <li>• Setting up an Agenda 2030 Bond Programme to finance dissemination and/or training actions</li> <li>• Creation of a working group for the generation of educational tools and resources</li> <li>• Development of training programmes for public officials and private sector</li> <li>• Promotion of a framework for collaboration with the Basque Youth Council</li> </ul>
<i>Co-ordination and collaborative governance</i>	Update governance and collaboration mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation of a Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda with inter-departmental, inter-institutional and social participation</li> <li>• Plenary and working group meetings of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda</li> <li>• Setup of Guneak 2030 Agenda Collaboration Committees</li> <li>• Active participation in Spanish and international fora</li> </ul>
<i>Alignment, implementation and evaluation</i>	Adapt the alignment, monitoring and evaluation to achieve the SDGs to new government priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update of the tools and guidance published in the previous government period</li> <li>• Adaptation of the system of indicators to the new challenges and priorities of this programme</li> <li>• Creation of comparative indicators between countries, regions and cities by Eustat</li> <li>• Annual reporting on the fulfilment of commitments</li> <li>• Commissioning and preparation of prospecting studies and reports</li> </ul>
<i>Primary commitments and flagship projects</i>	Proactively engage in SDG implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of commitments of the Basque Government Programme and flagship projects outlined in the 2021-2024 Basque Action Plan</li> </ul>

Source: Basque Government (2021<sup>[16]</sup>), *The Basque Programme of Priorities for the Agenda 2030 - 2021-2024 Action Plan*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/ENG-Programa-prioridades.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/ENG-Programa-prioridades.pdf).

## Annex Box 1.A.1. Seven flagship projects for the localisation of the SDGs in the Basque Country

### Ekitatea

The Ekitatea project consists of seven programmes to tackle inequality in the Basque Country, including an income guarantee system and social emergency aid as well as special programmes to address basic needs of vulnerable groups, accommodation and integration support for homeless people, support for youth without family networks and an educational support programme outside school hours.

### Hezkuntzaren auzolana - Education for All

Hezkuntzaren auzolana is a cross-cutting project spanning all educational stages with a particular focus on vulnerable groups across the three areas of fairness and equality, diversity and social cohesion, e.g. focusing on early detection and interventions to address learning difficulties and ensuring professional skills development. The project also includes a partnership with the country of Malawi through the United Nations (UN) Connect MySchool exchange programme, a digital learning initiative for refugee children.

### Energy-Ekiola + Climate-Ondarea

The project includes two key initiatives: i) Energy-Ekiola, a collaborative effort between the Basque Energy Agency and the Mondragón Group, encouraging public engagement in renewable energy generation through solar farms and citizen co-operatives, which have however so far been deployed at a slower pace than the needs demand; and ii) Climate-Ondarea, aimed at sustainable natural resource use and ecosystem service improvement, focusing on enhancing natural heritage awareness in the Bay of Txingudi, whose marshland habitat restoration will be completed by the end 2024 and the Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve areas.

### Opengela

Between 2021 and 2026, the Opengela project foresees an enhancement and renovation of the building stock and urban spaces while implementing social measures to mitigate vulnerability, curb urban segregation and bolster social cohesion in underprivileged areas in up to 25 neighbourhoods. The project is based on two pilot programmes in Otxarkoaga (Bilbao) and Txonta (Eibar), which also saw the instalment of neighbourhood offices providing community services and support procedures related to the renovation of apartment buildings, including handling paperwork, co-ordinating with energy service providers and facilitating financial assistance. A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats analysis conducted in 2023 showed positive impacts in terms of health, employment and energy poverty, while also reporting challenges involved regarding the cross-cutting nature of the project and consolidation of funding sources.

### Global Health

The Basque Health Department and the Basque Agency for Development Cooperation initiated a collaboration agreement with the goal to promote health-related development co-operation initiatives. The agreement led to the initiation of a health co-operation programme with a hospital in Guinea-Bissau, including the provision of medical and administrative staff. One of the focus areas of the collaboration is the access to vaccinations. From 2021 to 2023, the Basque Government donated EUR 1.6 million to the COVAX mechanism, a worldwide initiative aimed at equitable access to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccines, distributing over 3 million vaccines to lower-income countries.

### Basque Ecodesign Center

The Basque Ecodesign Center project aims to pilot innovative circular economy methodologies and projects, involving small and medium-sized enterprises and local supply chains, to enhance competitiveness and minimise environmental impacts. It features a public-private partnership with the Basque Government, major Basque companies and 9 cluster promotion organisations, with 18 major companies participating, representing 170 000 jobs and EUR 53 billion in turnover. Currently, there are 40 projects underway and the initiative also supports education by integrating university and vocational students through the Basque Circular HUB.

### “The Basque case: Lessons learned to prevent violence and protect peace”

This flagship project aims at contributing to SDG 16 and involved the preparation of a report on lessons from the Basque experience in violence prevention and peace protection. Completed in 2023 and distributed to the United Nations and other international bodies in January 2024, it serves as a guide for addressing conflict and violence in various contexts.

Source: Basque Government (2021<sup>[16]</sup>), *The Basque Programme of Priorities for the Agenda 2030 - 2021-2024 Action Plan*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/ENG-Programa-prioridades.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/ENG-Programa-prioridades.pdf); Basque Government (2024<sup>[19]</sup>), *7th Monitoring Report Multi-level 2030 Agenda Basque Country 2023*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/7-Informe-Seguimiento-2023-Agenda-2030-INGL-web.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/7-Informe-Seguimiento-2023-Agenda-2030-INGL-web.pdf).

## 2 Sustainable development opportunities and challenges

---

The Basque Country, Spain, is performing well on United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 1 “No poverty” with low relative poverty rates and SDG 3 “Good health and well-being” due to high life expectancy, low child mortality and a high number of active physicians. It also stands out in SDG 4 “Quality education” with a high share of tertiary-educated residents and low dropout rates, and in SDG 9 “Industry, innovation and infrastructure” with significant research and development (R&D) investment and employment. However, the Basque Country lags significantly behind in relation to environmental challenges due to its heavy reliance on fossil fuels, which translates in a low performance in relation to SDG 7 “Affordable and clean energy” and SDG 13 “Climate action”. Additionally, the Basque Country lags in SDG 8 “Decent work and economic growth” indicators, including unemployment, youth and long-term unemployment, and new firm creations.

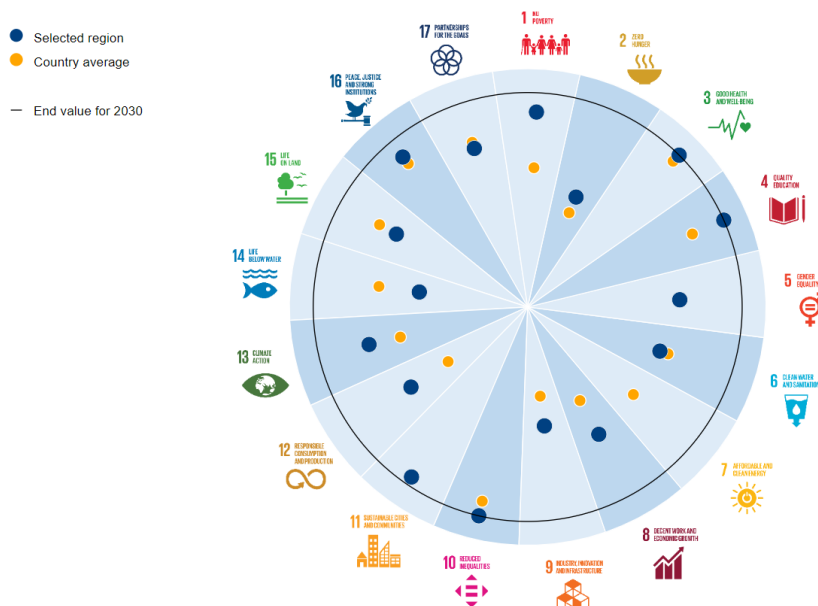
---

## Measuring the distance to the SDGs in the Basque Country

The OECD has developed a localised indicator framework for the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that allows for international comparisons across several dimensions of sustainable development. Based on this framework, the following section provides an overview of the performance of the Basque Country in relation to the SDGs, compared to around 400 OECD member country regions. The structure of the section follows the five critical dimensions or “5Ps” of the 2030 Agenda (i.e. People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace and Partnerships) and is based on a selection of 72 indicators from the OECD localised indicator framework for measuring distance to the SDGs, covering relevant aspects of 16 out of the 17 SDGs).<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the Basque Country has also developed its own SDG indicator framework, including interactive SDG dashboard with more than 330 indicators covering all SDGs (Box 2.1).

Overall, the Basque Country performs well in most of the SDGs of the People dimension, but is far from achieving the SDGs in the Planet dimension. The Basque Country shows good results notably in SDG 1 “No poverty”, due to a low share of relative poverty and SDG 3 “Good health and well-being” as reflected by a high life expectancy, low infant and child mortality rates and high rates of active physicians (Figure 2.1). Furthermore, the Basque Country showcases a strong performance in SDG 4 “Quality education”, such as high share of population with tertiary education and a low share of dropouts from education. High research and development (R&D) expenditure and employment adds to the strengths (SDG 9 “industry, innovation and infrastructure”). However, the Basque Country lags significantly behind in relation to environmental challenges due to its heavy reliance on fossil fuels, which translates in a low performance in relation to SDG 7 “Affordable and clean energy” and SDG 13 “Climate action”, which are also among those SDGs with the lowest funding provided by the Basque Government. In addition, the Basque Country is lagging behind other OECD member country regions in several indicators of SDG 8 “Decent work and economic growth”, notably unemployment, including long-term and youth unemployment as well as new firm creations. A decrease in cropland over the last two decades and low productivity of the primary sector (SDG 2 “Zero hunger”) add to the challenges.

**Figure 2.1. Distance to achieving the SDGs in the Basque Country, Spain**



Source: OECD (2024<sup>[1]</sup>), *Measuring the Distance to the SDGs in Regions and Cities (visualisation tool)*, <http://www.oecd-local-sdgs.org> (accessed on 15 December 2024).

### Box 2.1. The importance of data-driven policies: The Basque Country's work on SDG indicators

The Basque Country has set up an interactive SDG dashboard with more than 330 indicators. As part of the Basque Statistics Plan, the Basque Statistics Institute Eustat initiated the statistical development of indicators to measure the region's progress on the 2030 Agenda. The main objectives were to: i) develop indicators that are comparable with other regions and countries following a harmonised methodology; ii) allow for geographical disaggregation; and iii) set up the reference dashboard for monitoring progress of the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda and other strategies related to the SDGs. This work resulted in the establishment of a dedicated web platform, Eustat's SDG portal, in January 2023, which replaced a previous SDG monitoring panel of the Basque Government. It currently contains 336 indicators, which cover all 17 SDGs and about 55% of the SDG indicators defined by the United Nations. However, the coverage varies quite considerably. While there are more than 35 indicators available for SDGs 3, 4, 8 and 16, SDGs 13, 14 and 15 are only covered by SDGs 5, 1 and 7 indicators respectively.

The SDG dashboard allows for comparisons over time as well as breakdowns by provincial, county and municipal level. The data series for these indicators start in 2010 and allow for comparisons over a period of more than ten years. To highlight temporal trends, the portal offers visual representations depicting the progression of these trends as positive, stable or neutral. Since 2022, the portal also contains a territorial breakdown into three provinces Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, the 21 counties and 253 Basque municipalities for most of the indicators. Moreover, for certain indicators, the portal includes a gender-specific breakdown, which can help enhance the understanding of SDG 5 "Gender equality", by highlighting areas where gender-based differences exist. The Basque Government and Eustat have also initiated the development of a matrix to measure and assess the impact of different public policies on the SDGs. Since 2017, the Basque Government has published seven monitoring reports, constituting the Basque Voluntary Local Review. These reports contain updates about achievements and areas for improvement and summarise the main actions undertaken by the Basque Government to localise the SDGs. These reports also use the SDGs indicators of the Basque Country

Sources: Basque Government (2024<sup>[2]</sup>), *7th Monitoring Report Multi-level 2030 Agenda Basque Country 2023*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/7-Informe-Seguimiento-2023-Agenda-2030-INGL-web.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/7-Informe-Seguimiento-2023-Agenda-2030-INGL-web.pdf); Eustat (2019<sup>[3]</sup>), *Indicators for the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals at the Autonomous Region Level - Agreement of the central statistical bodies of the Autonomous Regions*, Basque Statistics Office; Basque Government (2023<sup>[4]</sup>), *6th Monitoring Report - 2030 Agenda Basque Country 2022*, [https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/vlrs/2023-05/6th\\_monitoring\\_report\\_2030\\_agenda\\_basque\\_country.pdf](https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/vlrs/2023-05/6th_monitoring_report_2030_agenda_basque_country.pdf) (accessed on 3 April 2024).

## People

The Basque Country has a low relative poverty rate and the average disposable income of the first quintile slightly exceeds the average of Spanish and OECD regions. SDG 1 aims to "End poverty in all its forms everywhere". In 2022, the average disposable income per day of the first quintile (equivalised household in USD purchasing power parity [PPP], constant prices of 2010) in the Basque Country, was USD 31.3. This is about USD 6 higher in comparison to the average of Spanish regions (USD 25.0) and similar to the average of OECD regions (USD 30.5). During the same period, only 13.2% of the Basque population had a disposable income below 60% of the national median. The corresponding average of all Spanish regions (21.3%) and OECD regions (20.8%) was considerably higher. Transfers and taxes led to a decrease of the poverty rate (national poverty line) by 23.5% in 2022, slightly larger than in Spanish regions on average (21.2%), but considerably above the corresponding average of OECD regions (14.3%). The share of

population satisfied with efforts to deal with poverty reached an average of 45.7% between 2019 and 2023, which is higher than both the Spanish (41.5%) and OECD averages (38.9%).

The cropland area in the Basque Country has slightly decreased in recent decades and productivity in agriculture, forestry and fishing is below the average of OECD regions. SDG 2 aims to reduce the number of people worldwide suffering from hunger and achieve zero hunger by 2030. Sustainable food production systems and the implementation of resilient agricultural practices are important contributors. In the Basque Country, around 24% of land area were categorised as cropland in 2022, following a slight decrease in cropland by 0.7 percentage points (p.p.) between 2000 and 2022, a period when the average cropland area in Spanish and OECD regions decreased by 2.1 and 1.3 p.p. respectively. The productivity (gross value added [GVA] per worker) in agriculture, forestry and fishing (in constant 2015 USD PPP) of USD 37 253 in 2022 is lagging behind the average of Spanish regions (USD 44 800) and even more so behind the average of OECD regions (USD 73 163).

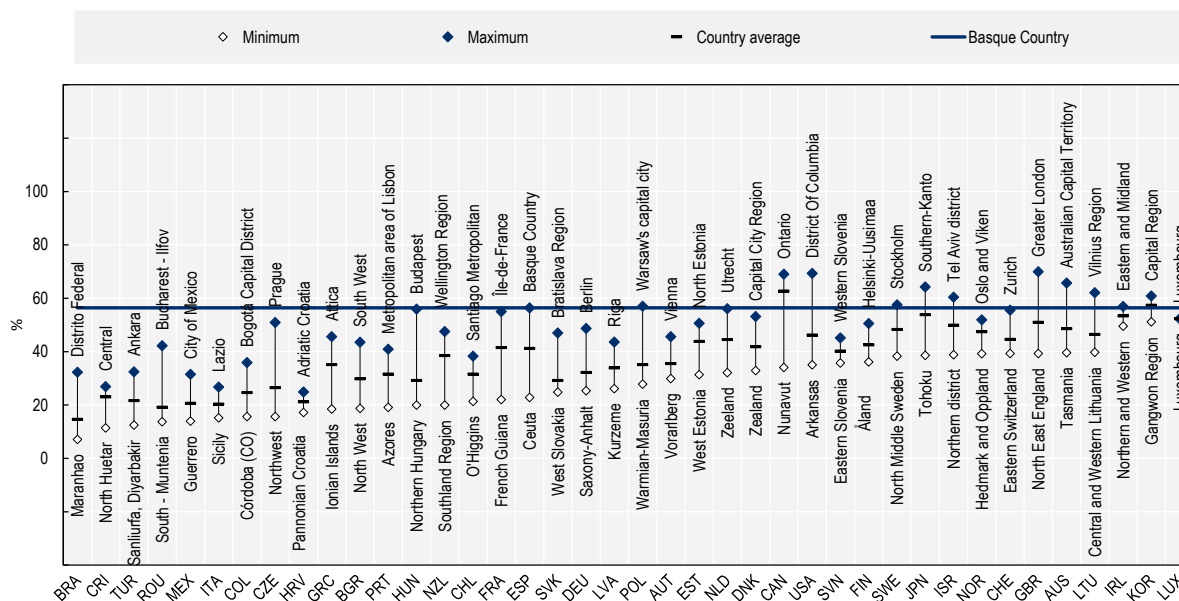
The Basque Country has low infant mortality rates, a high life expectancy and a high satisfaction rate with healthcare. SDG 3 has the objective to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all ages. It is an area where the Basque Country shows better outcomes than most OECD regions on average. Its infant mortality rate of 3.0 deaths of children 1 year old or younger per 1 000 live births in 2022 is slightly above the national average (2.6). At the same time, it compares favourably to the average of OECD regions of 5.5 deaths. Average life expectancy is high, reaching 83.5 years in 2022, which is above both the Spanish average (83.0 years) and the average of OECD regions (79.5). Overall, only 7% of OECD regions exhibit a higher life expectancy than the Basque Country. With an estimated 5.2 active physicians per 1 000 people in 2021, the Basque Country has a higher density of physicians than both Spanish regions on average (4.5) and OECD regions (3.1) on average. The hospital beds rate (hospital beds per 10 000 people) of 33.1 in 2022 exceeds the average of Spanish regions (29.4) but does not come close to the average of OECD regions overall (43.3). In line with these results, on average about 78% of the Basque population were satisfied with the availability or quality of healthcare between 2019 and 2023, 10 p.p. higher than in Spanish regions on average (68%) and 9 p.p. above the average of OECD regions (69%). During the same period, satisfaction with life as a whole (6.4 on a scale from 0 to 10) was similar to both the average of Spanish regions (6.4) and OECD regions (6.5). In terms of obesity rates (13.1% among the adult population in 2020), the Basque Country shows better results than both the average of Spanish regions (15.6%) and even more if compared to the average of OECD regions (24.9%).

The Basque Country showcases high enrolment rates in educational institutions and a low share of dropouts from education and training. SDG 4 “Quality education” aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Enrolment in educational institutions is a crucial prerequisite for achieving this goal. In 2022, around 95% of the population between 15 and 19 years in the Basque Country were enrolled in public or private institutions. This more than in nine out of ten OECD regions with available data. The corresponding rates in Spanish regions on averages and the OECD regions reached 88% and 83% on average. Moreover, education dropout rates were comparatively low. In 2018, about 6.9% of the 18-24 year-old population were categorised as early leavers from education and training (8.8% if considering Eustat data from 2019), less than half of the average of Spanish regions (17.7%) and considerably below the average of OECD regions (13.0%). The gender gap in the rate of early leavers was about 5% with men dropping out of school more frequently than women.

Another strength of the Basque Country is the high share of tertiary education degrees. Higher education was one of the areas where the Basque Country exhibited its strongest results. In 2022, about 56% of the population between 25 and 64 years of age had completed tertiary education, although proportion of males exceeded that of females by 6.9 p.p. (Figure 2.2). In comparison, the corresponding averages of Spanish regions (41%) and OECD regions (40%) were both below the 50% mark. In the 2024 version of the European Union (EU) Social Progress Index, which aims to assess social progress for EU regions as a complement to traditional measures of economic progress based on socio-economic and environmental indicators (EC, 2024<sup>[5]</sup>), the Basque Country ranked 44<sup>th</sup> out of 236 regions, up from 48<sup>th</sup> in 2020 and 102<sup>nd</sup>

in 2016 (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[6]</sup>). Furthermore, more than a third (34.1%) of the Basque population aged between 25 and 64 participated in education and training in 2022, compared to 28% in Spanish regions on average and 24% in OECD regions, emphasising a focus on lifelong learning.

**Figure 2.2. Percentage of population from 25 to 64 years old with at least tertiary education, 2022**



Note: Brazil (2015); Latvia (2018); Chile, Colombia, Japan, Korea, New Zealand, Türkiye (2020); Australia, Estonia, United States (2021).

Source: OECD (2024<sup>[11]</sup>), *Measuring the Distance to the SDGs in Regions and Cities (visualisation tool)*, <http://www.oecd-local-sdgs.org> (accessed on 15 December 2024).

On average, the Basque Country shows better results than OECD regions on gender indicators, but it has not yet achieved full gender equality. Ensuring gender equality and empowering all women and girls is at the core of SDG 5, which envisions a society without discrimination against women and without differences in social and economic outcomes based on gender. In the Basque Country, there was a male-female gender gap in the employment rate of 9.1 p.p. in 2023. This gap was considerably smaller than the average of Spanish regions (11.1 p.p.) and OECD regions (15.3), yet 39% of OECD regions exhibit smaller gender gaps. When only considering part-time employment incidences, the Basque gender gap rises to 18.3 p.p., which exceeds the average of Spanish regions (14.8), although remaining slightly below the average of OECD regions (19.6). At the same time, the perception of women being treated with respect and dignity in their country is comparatively high in the Basque Country, with 7%, about 3 p.p. less than in Spanish regions on average, but about 12 p.p. above the average of OECD regions. Research and development (R&D) is one of the sectors, where a clear gender gap can be observed. In 2021, about 38% of R&D staff was female, slightly below the average of Spanish regions (42%) but above the average of OECD regions (32%).

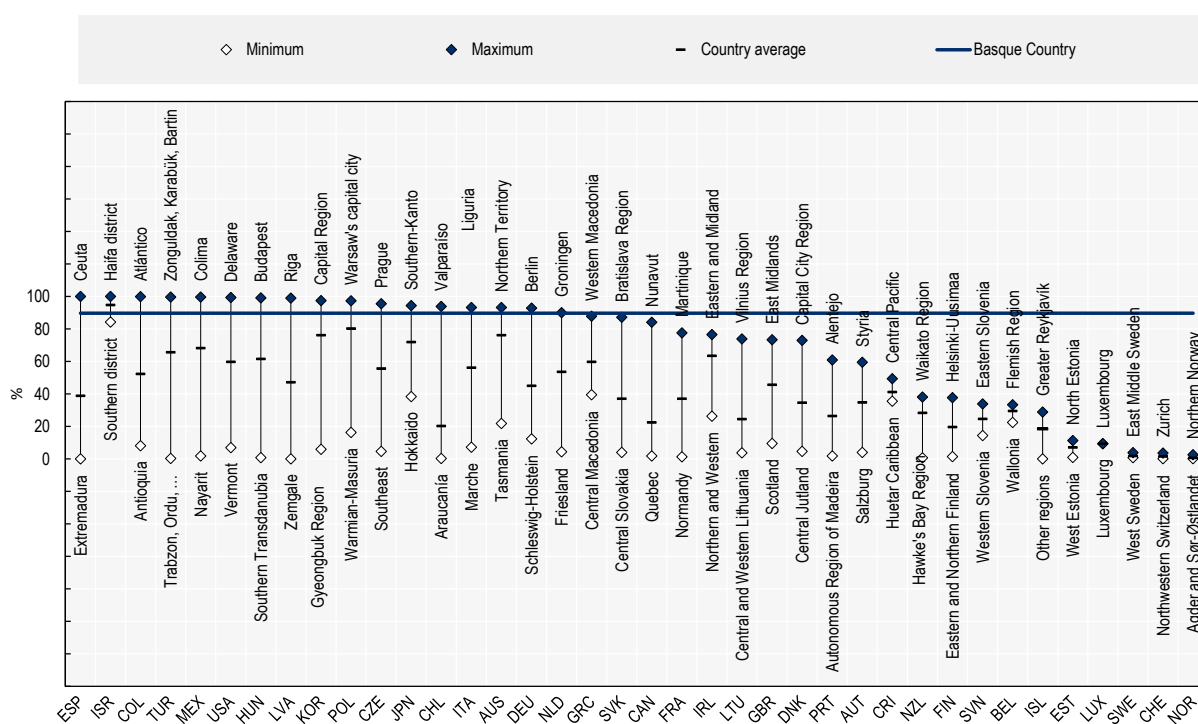
## Planet

About eight out of ten Basque are satisfied with the quality of water. SDG 6 addresses a basic human need: access to water and sanitation. One of its targets is to improve water quality by 2030. Between 2019 and 2023, around 83% of the Basque population on average reported being satisfied with the quality of water. This satisfaction rate is higher than both the average of Spanish regions (77%) and the average of OECD regions (81%). In terms of the share of population connected to at least secondary wastewater

treatment, an indicator to capture water quality, the Basque Country (80%) lags slightly behind the average of Spanish regions (88%) but is above the average of OECD regions (69%) The volume of water bodies in the Basque Country remained stable over the past decades, registering a slight decrease of 0.03 p.p. between 2000 and 2022, which is roughly comparable to Spanish (0.0 p.p.) and OECD (-0.11 p.p.) averages. Overall, water bodies account for about 1.0% of total land area in the Basque Country.

The largest share of electricity production in the Basque Country relies on fossil fuels. SDG 7 aims to ensure access to clean and affordable energy. It is one of the SDGs, where the Basque Country has significant room for improvement. In 2019, fossil fuels (specifically natural gas and oil, with coal excluded) accounted for approximately 89.8% of electricity generation (Figure 2.3). This places the Basque Country among the 15% of OECD regions with the highest reliance on fossil fuels for electricity production. In comparison, OECD regions on average only had a share of 56% in the same year. A minor share of electricity production only – 10.2% – was based on renewable sources, compared to more than 45% in Spanish regions and 35% in OECD regions on average.

**Figure 2.3. Percentage of total electricity production that comes from fossil fuels (natural gas and oil, excluding coal), 2019**



Source: OECD (2024<sup>[1]</sup>), *Measuring the Distance to the SDGs in Regions and Cities (visualisation tool)*, <http://www.oecd-local-sdgs.org> (accessed on 15 December 2024).

The Basque Country produces more carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions per capita than Spanish regions on average, but less than OECD regions. SDG 13 “Climate action” has the objective to take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts. One of the key levers to achieve this goal is to lower greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In 2022, the Basque population emitted about 7.2 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent per person compared to 6.7 tonnes in Spanish regions on average and 10.8 in OECD regions. Overall, about 40% of OECD regions exhibited lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions rate than the Basque Country. Only about 43% of

the Basque population were satisfied with the efforts to preserve the environment between 2019 and 2023, comparable to the average of Spanish regions (40%), but below the average of OECD regions (47%).

The Basque performance on SDG 12 “Responsible consumption and production” is slightly better than the average of OECD regions. SDG 12 highlights the urgent need to decouple economic growth from intensive resource use to reduce the negative impact of human activity on the planet. In the Basque Country, the municipal waste rate in kilograms (kg) per capita reached 368 kg in 2020, which is below the average of Spanish regions of 473 kg and the average of OECD regions of 428 kg. Overall, about 70% of OECD regions produce more municipal waste per capita than the Basque Country. In 2020, 47% of this waste got recycled. This share corresponds roughly to the average of OECD regions (46%). The number of motor road vehicles per 100 people (46.9) in the Basque Country is slightly below the average of Spanish regions (53.0) and the average of OECD regions (54.4). In about 31% of OECD regions, people possess fewer vehicles per person than in the Basque Country, one of the main sources of GHG emissions.

The area covered by forests in the Basque Country remained stable over the past two decades. To measure the achievement of SDG 15 “Life on land”, the OECD localised indicator framework uses the indicators of tree cover loss (from 2000 to 2022, in p.p.) and terrestrial protected areas as a percentage of total area. Both indicators reflect the main purpose of SDG 15, which is to protect and restore territorial ecosystems by combatting deforestation and desertification. Around 24% of the total area of the Basque Country had a protected status in 2024. Moreover, the Basque Country has registered an increase in tree cover between 2000 and 2022 (+0.3%). This value is equal to the average of regions in Spain and compares favourably to the average of OECD regions (-0.4%). This has implications for the achievement of other environment-related SDGs, given that forest protection, or alternatively, tree restoration, is one of the most effective strategies for climate change mitigation (Bastin et al., 2019<sup>[7]</sup>). The overall share of tree cover as a percentage of total area is furthermore high compared to regions in Spain and the OECD, reaching 58.0% in 2022. The respective Spanish and OECD averages were both below 40%.

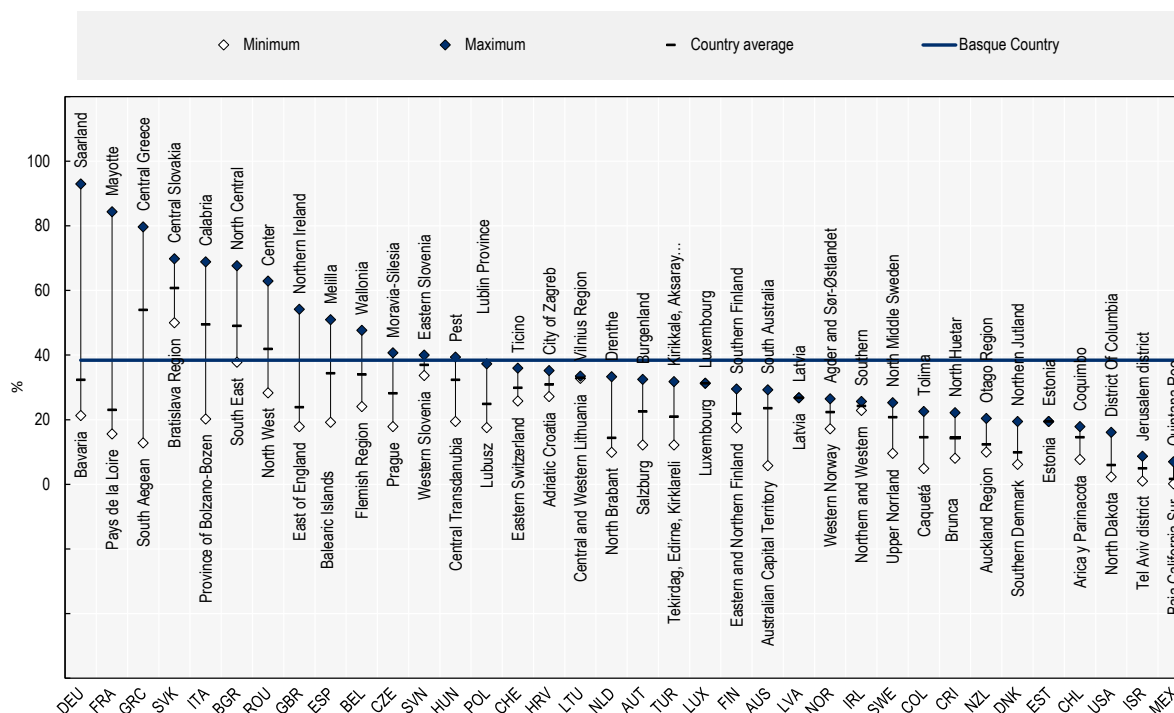
### **Prosperity**

The Basque Country experienced a small annual increase in real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and GVA per worker between 2013 and 2022. Sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all (SDG 8 “Decent work and economic growth”) are means to achieve a more sustainable economy. Between 2013 and 2022, the real GDP per capita growth rate in the Basque Country was 1.03% per year, similar to the average of Spanish regions (1.2%) and moderately below OECD regions (1.47%). The annual value added per worker reached 0.47% in the same period, more than 4 times the average of Spanish regions (0.1%), but only half of the average of OECD regions (1.0%).

Unemployment, including long-term and youth unemployment are higher than in OECD regions on average, but lower than in Spanish regions on average. Unemployment in the Basque Country (7.8% in 2023) is considerably lower than in its Spanish peer regions (12.4% on average). At the same time, it exceeded the average of OECD regions (5.1%) by about 2.7 p.p., thus belonging to the 25% of OECD regions with the highest unemployment rates. Unemployment is marked by a gender gap of 1.7 p.p., about half the average of Spanish regions, but higher than in OECD regions overall (0.77%). In addition, the foreign-born population shows higher unemployment rates (22.3% in 2019) than the Basque population overall. Long-term unemployment of more than 12 months is common in the Basque Country, accounting for 38.4% of all unemployment. This rate exceeds the average for Spanish regions (34.4%) and surpasses the average across OECD regions (18.2%) considerably. Furthermore, youth unemployment is a challenge in the Basque Country. In 2023, about 1 in 4 youth aged between 15 and 24 (25.9%) were unemployed. Despite ranking below the average of Spanish regions (29.3%), the youth unemployment rate in the Basque Country exceeded the average OECD regions (13.2%) by more than 10 p.p., thus ranking among the 13% of OECD regions with the highest unemployment rates (Figure 2.4). Furthermore, around 10% of

the young population aged between 18 and 24 years were not in education, employment or training (NEET), a share, which is below the average of Spanish regions (13.4%) and OECD regions (15.9%). Part-time employment incidences in the Basque Country (15.8% in 2023) correspond to the median of OECD regions but exceed the average of Spanish regions (13.2%).

**Figure 2.4. Long-term unemployment incidence, 2023**



Note: New Zealand (2014); Australia (2016); Norway (2018); France (2019); United States (2020); Czechia, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Romania, (2021); Austria, Chile, Colombia, Netherlands, United Kingdom (2022).

Source: OECD (2024<sup>[1]</sup>), *Measuring the Distance to the SDGs in Regions and Cities (visualisation tool)*, <http://www.oecd-local-sdgs.org> (accessed on 15 December 2024).

Firm creation and their contribution to employment in the Basque Country are lower than in OECD regions on average. Another key aspect of SDG 8 is the promotion of full and productive employment. The creation of long-lasting firms is a key tool to do so. In 2020, the Basque Country had a firm creation rate of about 7%, slightly below the average of Spanish regions (7.5%) and about 2 p.p. below the average of OECD regions (9.2%). Around 2.2% of employment in the Basque Country in the same year was associated to newly created firms, again slightly below the corresponding shares in Spanish regions (2.7%) and OECD regions (2.8%) on average. Among newly founded companies in the Basque Country, around 60% survive at least 3 years, which is more than in other Spanish regions (55%) and OECD regions (59%) on average. However, the net firm creation rate, which is the firm birth rate minus the firm death rate, is considerably lower than in a national comparison (1.2%) and OECD regions on average (2.5%).

Satisfaction with roads, highways and public transport in the Basque Country is high. SDG 9 has the objective to build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation. Regarding SDG Target 9.1 on developing high-quality, reliable and sustainable infrastructure, the Basque Country shows good results. Between 2019 and 2023, on average 76% of the Basque population reported to be satisfied with roads and highways. This value is higher than the corresponding shares in 77% of OECD regions and exceeds both the average of Spanish (74%) and OECD regions

(65%). Similarly, on average around 73% of the Basque population stated to be satisfied with the quality of public transport<sup>2</sup> in the city or area where they live, while the same was the case for only around 67% in Spanish regions on average and 64% in OECD regions. It has to be noted that this perception may not reflect the challenges related to the lack of rapid rail or bus connections between the largest cities in the Basque Country pointed out in Chapter 1.

Manufacturing plays an important role in the Basque Country's economy and exhibits higher productivity than 60% of OECD regions. SDG Target 9.2 aims to promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation. In the Basque Country, manufacturing accounts for a higher share of employment and GVA than in both Spanish and OECD regions on average. In 2022, manufacturing made up 17.4% of employment, while the corresponding value in Spain reached 9.8%. In OECD regions, manufacturing accounted for about 12% of people in employment. In 2022, manufacturing productivity, measured as GVA per worker in constant 2015 USD PPP, stood at USD 101 085, surpassing that of 67% of OECD regions. By comparison, the average manufacturing productivity in Spanish regions was USD 87 719, below the average of OECD regions of USD 110 941.

Regarding SDG Target 9.5 on scientific research, the Basque Country shows a strong performance. In 2021, R&D represented 2.3% of the Basque Country's GDP thereby considerably exceeding the average of Spanish regions (1.3%) and OECD regions (2.1%). In addition, in the Basque Country, R&D professions represent 3.57% of employment, significantly surpassing the averages of both Spanish (2.0%) and OECD regions (1.5%). Moreover, the Basque Country outperforms the majority (53%) of OECD regions in patent applications (Patent Cooperation Treaty) per million people. In 2022, it registered 20.1 patent applications per million people, ahead of the Spanish regions' average of 16.8 but still behind the average of OECD regions of 52.5.

In the Basque Country, income inequality is less pronounced than in OECD regions on average. SDG 10 has the objective to reduce inequality within and among countries. With an average disposable income of USD 32 335 (in USD PPP, constant prices of 2010) in 2022, the Basque Country belongs to the upper half of OECD regions in terms of disposable income, compared to an average of USD 26 090 in Spanish regions and USD 34 334 in OECD regions. Overall, income inequality is lower than in more than 60% of OECD regions. The Gini index of disposable income (after taxes and transfers) in 2022 reached 0.3 on a scale from 0 to 1, which is the same as the national average of Spanish regions (0.30) and below the average of OECD regions (0.35). The ratio between the average disposable income of top and bottom quintiles underlines these results. In 2022, the ratio was 5.08 and thus lower than in Spanish regions overall, where the average disposable income of the top quintile was 5.5 times the average disposable income of the bottom quintile. The average ratio across OECD regions stood at 6.96 in 2019, reflecting more pronounced income inequality than in the Basque Country. Overall, 16% of the population had a disposable income that was lower than 50% of the regional median income. This is a lower rate than in Spanish regions (20%) and OECD regions (21%) on average. Transfers and taxes play a role in lowering inequality in the Basque Country. However, they reduced the Gini index by only 6% in the Basque Country, compared to an average reduction of 10% across all Spanish regions, while still achieving a greater impact than in OECD regions on average (-5%).

Only half of the Basque population is satisfied with the affordability of housing. With over half of the world's population residing in urban areas, achieving SDG 11 to develop inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and communities is crucial. Housing is vital in this context, as outlined in SDG Target 11.1, which aims to ensure access to adequate, safe and affordable housing and essential services for all. Between 2019 and 2023, on average, about 52% reported to be satisfied with the affordability of housing. This is more than in Spanish regions on average (42.5%) and similar to the average of OECD regions (50.4%). In 2018, the Basque population had to spend 21% of their income on housing, compared to 26.4% in Spanish regions on average and 23.2% in OECD regions. In terms of rooms per person, the Basque Country (2.0 rooms per person in 2021) shows the same statistics as Spanish regions on average (2.0 rooms per

person), while people in OECD regions have on average about 0.2 rooms fewer at their disposal than in the Basque Country (1.83).

Air pollution levels in the Basque Country are lower than in most OECD regions, but still exceed World Health Organization (WHO) air quality guidelines. Another important target of SDG 11 is to reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality. In the Basque Country, air pollution, partially driven by the intensity of the usage of private cars and the carbon intensity of the housing stock, is less of a challenge than in most OECD regions, even though there is space for improvement. In 2020, the average annual exposure to fine particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) was 8.0 micrograms per cubic metre of air ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ), which is lower than in Spanish regions on average (9.8  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) and OECD regions on average (12.32  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ). However, on the one hand, about 99% of the Basque population were exposed to more than 5  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$  of PM<sub>2.5</sub>, which is the WHO air quality guideline. Overall, between 2019 and 2023 around 74% of the Basque population reported to be satisfied with the quality of air, similar to the average of Spanish region (74%) and OECD regions at large (79%).

### ***Peace and Partnership***

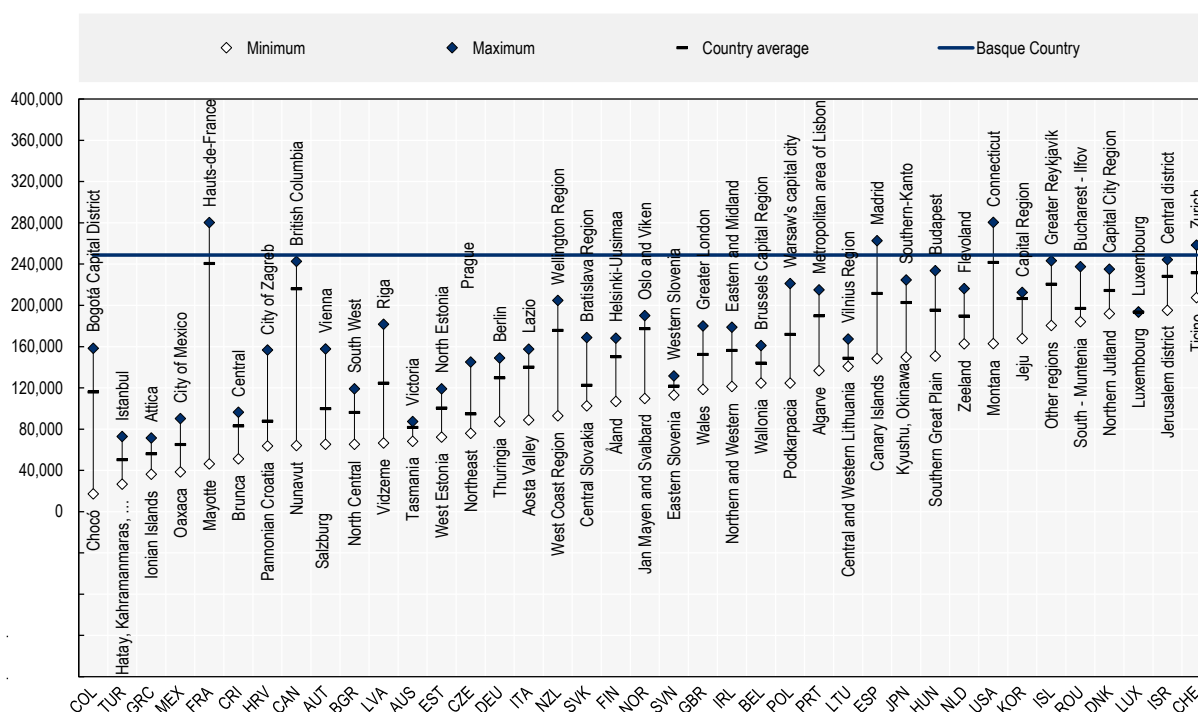
The Basque Country is characterised by low homicide rates and a high level of perceived security among its residents. SDG 16 “Peace, justice and strong institutions” aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, ensure access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. With a homicide rate of 0.4 per 100 000 people in 2022, the Basque Country ranked among the 10% of OECD regions with the lowest homicide rates, below the average of Spanish regions (0.7) and OECD regions (1.1). Nevertheless, between 2019 and 2023, on average about 3.4% of the population reported to have been assaulted or mugged, which considerably below the national average of regions in Spain (4.3%) and OECD regions at large (4.0%), but still higher than in 55% of OECD regions. A high level of perceived safety adds to the overall good performance in safety-related indicators in the Basque Country. Between 2019 and 2023, on average 87% of the Basque population felt safe walking alone at night around the area they live in. In comparison, in Spanish regions on average, this was the case for 81%. In OECD regions, only 70% felt safe walking alone at night in their neighbourhood.

In terms of indicators related to trust in institutions, the Basque Country shows room for improvement, notably in terms of corruption. Between 2019 and 2023, on average, 59% of the Basque population had confidence in the judicial system and courts, a higher percentage than in regions in Spain on average (50.4%) and in OECD regions on average (52.9%). However, 78% believed that corruption is spread throughout the government in the country and only 39% had confidence in the national government. In terms of corruption perception, the Basque values were considerably higher than in Spanish regions (69%) and OECD regions (65%) on average. Confidence in the national government aligns with the average of Spanish regions (38%) but remains below the average of OECD regions (44.2%). On a more positive note, 86% of the Basque population have confidence in the local police force, which is a larger share than the average of Spanish regions (83%) and OECD regions (73%). Yet, voter turnout in the 2019 elections was comparatively high, reaching 69%. This is similar to voter turnouts in regions in Spain overall (70%) and in OECD regions on average (68%).

The Basque population considers their region to be a good place to live for migrants, racial and ethnic minorities and the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTQI+) community. Looking at the period from 2019 to 2023, on average, 87% considered their place of residence to be a good place to live for migrants, about 5 p.p. more than in Spanish regions on average and 17 p.p. higher than in OECD regions on average. About 84% considered their place of residence to be a good place to live for racial and ethnic minorities, which is the same share as the average of regions in Spain (82%) and considerably higher than in OECD regions on average (75%). During the same period, 92% reported that their place of residence is a good place to live for gay or lesbian people, which is in line with the average of Spanish regions (90%) and higher than in OECD regions overall (70%).

The Basque Country has a good broadband coverage and high Internet download speeds. SDG 17 aims to strengthen the means of implementation and realise the global partnership for sustainable development. The OECD uses the indicators of the share of co-patent applications with foreign regions (as a percentage of co-patent applications), the percentage of households with broadband Internet access and Internet speed to measure how advanced connectivity is. In terms of co-patent applications with other regions, the Basque Country is showing average results compared to most OECD regions. In 2023, about 21% of co-patents were filed with foreign regions as opposed to 25% in Spanish regions on average and 18% in OECD regions. Access to broadband Internet, however, is very high. In 2023, 97% of households in the Basque Country had access to broadband Internet. This value equals the average of Spanish regions and considerably exceeds the average of OECD regions (83%). Furthermore, the mean Internet download speed for fixed connections (in megabits per second, Mbps) of around 248 750 in 2023 considerably exceeds the Spanish and OECD averages of 211 360 Mbps and 172 230 Mbps respectively (Figure 2.5).

**Figure 2.5. Mean Internet download speed for fixed connection, 2023**



Source: OECD (2024<sup>[11]</sup>), *Measuring the Distance to the SDGs in Regions and Cities (visualisation tool)*, <http://www.oecd-local-sdgs.org> (accessed on 15 December 2024).

## Spotlight on synergies and trade-offs: Using the SDGs to address interlinked sustainability challenges

The SDGs provide a forward-looking vision for the Basque Country to respond to global challenges and trends that affect the regional policy environment. Building on the data analysis and assessment, this section explores the region's main interlinked sustainability challenges and relevance to the SDGs, notably the impacts of population ageing, housing, mobility as well as climate change.

A main regional development challenge for the Basque Country is population ageing. Between 1976 and 2022, the share of population aged 65 and above more than doubled from 8.3% in 1976 to 23.5% in 2022,

while the proportion of people aged 85 and above more than quadrupled from 0.4% to 4.1% of the total population of the Basque Country (Eustat, 2023<sup>[8]</sup>). At the same time, 44.3% of those living in single-person households are elderly of more than 65 years of age, which can have significant impacts on well-being and overall health. While the overall population is set to increase by around 85 000 people between 2021 and 2036 to around 2.3 million as a result of migration, the process of population ageing is expected to accelerate over the next decade. Notably, the share of under 20-year-olds (18.2% in 2021) is projected to reach 15.3% in 2036, while the share of adults between 20 and 64 is expected to go down by about 2%. The projected increase among the population aged above 65 years of age is the most pronounced one, up by 6.0% from 23.3% in 2021 to 29.3% in 2036 (Eustat, 2022<sup>[9]</sup>).

The ageing trend will have considerable impacts on different policy areas in the Basque Country. In terms of the health system, the Basque Country will face an increased demand for medical services, both in terms of hospitals and emergency treatments as well as long-term elderly care, notably in the context of a family-centred care system as in Spain (SDG 3). Furthermore, ageing will also require considerable investments to make infrastructure more age-friendly. This includes improving the accessibility of public spaces, e.g. the establishment of pedestrian-friendly pathways, accessible (public) buildings. It also concerns public transport (SDGs 9, 11), notably the need to develop innovative transport solutions, expanding the public transport network and frequency of services, increased need for low-floor buses and trams, as well as elevators and escalators in stations. Similarly, the housing stock will need to be adapted to the changing demographic profile of the Basque Country in the coming years as well, for instance through the establishment of age-friendly residential units and community housing projects (SDG 11). This is particularly relevant considering that three out of four buildings in the Basque Country are not accessible for the mobility-impaired population.

The population ageing will also have impacts on the regional economy considering that an increasing share of labour force workers will leave in the coming years. While a smaller workforce may lead to a decrease in unemployment rates due to lower competition for jobs, it might also mean more challenges for employers to fill vacancies (SDG 8). While the Basque Country's level of education is very high compared to most OECD regions, the region will need to address the challenge of retaining well-educated young adults to further spur economic development and mitigate the impacts of an ageing population. Through its 2030 Strategy for the demographic challenge, the Basque Country has set out a roadmap for the coming years to address population ageing.

Transitioning to renewable energy sources can provide important co-benefits. At the same time, expanding the electricity production based on renewable sources while also striving to phase out fossil fuels is another means to reduce GHG emissions and improve air quality (SDG 11). This can provide health benefits to the local population, e.g. by lowering the mortality rate due to diseases of the circulatory or respiratory systems for the under-65-year-old population, which is considerably higher in the Basque Country (261 deaths per 100 000 people in 2022) than in Spanish regions (166) and OECD regions (161) (SDG 3). Through initiatives such as the Energy-Ekiola flagship project, the Basque Country has set up a scheme to expand solar-powered electricity production, but further awareness raising and communication efforts are needed to overcome “not-in-my-back-yard” tendencies and resistance among parts of the local population. Furthermore, a provisional version of a Renewable Energy Sectorial Territorial Plan was approved in December 2024, aiming to identify and the most suitable sites for renewable energy projects in the Basque Country (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[10]</sup>). Going forward, joint communication efforts and renewable energy pilot projects between the Basque Government and industrial clusters, notably the net-zero cluster (see Chapter 3 for more details), could help foster community involvement (SDG 17). This cluster could also play a key role in demonstrating the socio-economic and environmental benefits of renewable energy transition projects.

Mobility and climate are interlinked challenges in the Basque Country. Mobility is not only a challenge in terms of population ageing (SDG 3) as mentioned above, but also due to its environmental footprint in the Basque Country, transportation mainly relying on private motor road vehicles. According to the Basque

mobility survey, in 2021, Basque adults aged 20 years or more made 39% of their trips on weekdays by car compared to 44% on foot. Six percent of trips were taken by inner- or intercity buses and 6% by railway with an additional 2% of trips by bike. If only considering the population between 20 and 64, cars even account for 47% (Government of the Basque Country, 2023<sup>[11]</sup>). This might be due to the lack of rapid public transportation supply between the three main cities of Bilbao, San Sebastián and Vitoria-Gasteiz on the one hand and between the Basque Country and the two largest cities in Spain, Barcelona and Madrid, on the other. In both cases (except for a local train connection between Bilbao and San Sebastián), there are no train connections, making bus and coach services the fastest public transportation option. Consequently, the reliance on individual motor vehicles dominates, contributing to elevated air pollution levels – with 99% of the Basque population exposed to PM2.5 concentrations exceeding WHO air quality guidelines of 5 µg/m<sup>3</sup> of PM2.5 annual mean exposure (SDGs 11, 12) – increased energy consumption from motor road vehicles reliant on fossil fuels (SDG 7) and the impact of road infrastructure on the natural environment, such as deforestation and loss of biodiversity (SDG 15).

The SDGs offer a framework to systematise the interconnections between urban planning, mobility and climate, while assessing how sustainable mobility measures influence other policy areas. For instance, municipalities with more than 5 000 residents are mandated to: develop new sustainable development plans, which could strive to integrate land use, housing and transport planning; manage urban freight and logistics; and expand public transport supply, while also enhancing rail and cycling infrastructure, fostering transit-oriented development and setting up charging infrastructure for electric vehicles. These efforts could be assessed in terms of their impacts on GHG emissions (SDG 13), housing costs (SDG 11), access to green spaces (SDG 15) and overall well-being (SDG 3) amongst others.

Considering that 95% of the housing stock in the Basque Country requires decarbonisation, there are also important interlinkages to consider between the SDGs related to housing (SDG 11), energy (SDG 7) and climate (SDG 13). For example, decarbonising the Basque housing stock will substantially lower energy consumption below the national average of 6.7 tonnes per capita. Given that buildings contribute to nearly 40% of global energy-related CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and up to 70% in large cities, investments in decarbonising buildings offer significant potential to reduce overall GHG level in the Basque Country (OECD, 2022<sup>[12]</sup>). While new buildings and energy-efficient renovations are necessary to achieve climate objectives both in the Basque Country and globally, they may however also contribute to increases in housing prices, threatening affordability. The SDG framework can assist the Basque Country in evaluating the impact of climate measures such as housing decarbonisation (SDG 13) on inequality (SDG 10). They can also help manage associated trade-offs such as between improved environmental outcomes and increasing housing costs, in particular for vulnerable population groups.

## References

- Basque Government (2024), *7th Monitoring Report Multi-level 2030 Agenda Basque Country 2023*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/7-Informe-Seguimiento-2023-Agenda-2030-INGL-web.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/7-Informe-Seguimiento-2023-Agenda-2030-INGL-web.pdf). [2]
- Basque Government (2024), *Aprobada la versión provisional del Plan Territorial Sectorial de Energías Renovables [Provisional Version of the Renewable Energy Sectoral Territorial Plan Approved]*, <https://www.irekia.euskadi.eus/es/news/98304-aprobada-version-provisional-del-plan-territorial-sectorial-energias-renovables> (accessed on 13 February 2025). [10]

- Basque Government (2024), "Euskadi is the leading region in Spain in terms of social progress according to the European Commission", <https://www.irekia.euskadi.eus/en/news/93823-euskadi-the-leading-region-spain-terms-social-progress-according-the-european-commission> (accessed on 9 August 2024). [6]
- Basque Government (2023), *6th Monitoring Report - 2030 Agenda Basque Country 2022*, [https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/vlrs/2023-05/6th\\_monitoring\\_report\\_2030\\_agenda\\_basque\\_country.pdf](https://sdgs.un.org/sites/default/files/vlrs/2023-05/6th_monitoring_report_2030_agenda_basque_country.pdf) (accessed on 3 April 2024). [4]
- Bastin, J. et al. (2019), "The global tree restoration potential", *Science*, Vol. 365/6448, pp. 76-79, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.aax0848>. [7]
- EC (2024), *EU Social Progress Index 2.0 - 2024 Edition*, European Commission, [https://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/information-sources/maps/social-progress\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/information-sources/maps/social-progress_en) (accessed on 9 August 2024). [5]
- Eustat (2023), "Between 1976 and 2022 the population aged 85 and over rose from 0.4% to 4.1% of the total population of the Basque Country", Basque Statistics Office, [https://en.eustat.eus/estad/id\\_1280/ti\\_statistical-overview-of-elderly-persons/ultima-nota-prensa.html](https://en.eustat.eus/estad/id_1280/ti_statistical-overview-of-elderly-persons/ultima-nota-prensa.html) (accessed on 16 May 2024). [8]
- Eustat (2022), "The population of the Basque Country set to rise by 85,000 people between 2021 and 2036", Basque Statistics Office, [https://en.eustat.eus/elementos/not0020005\\_i.pdf](https://en.eustat.eus/elementos/not0020005_i.pdf). [9]
- Eustat (2019), *Indicators for the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals at the Autonomous Region Level - Agreement of the central statistical bodies of the Autonomous Regions*, Basque Statistics Office. [3]
- Government of the Basque Country (2023), *Encuesta de Movilidad 2021 [Mobility Survey 2021]*, <https://www.euskadi.eus/gobierno-vasco/-estadistica/encuesta-de-movilidad-2021/> (accessed on 21 November 2024). [11]
- OECD (2024), *Measuring the Distance to the SDGs in Regions and Cities (visualisation tool)*, OECD, Paris, <http://www.oecd-local-sdgs.org> (accessed on 15 December 2024). [1]
- OECD (2022), *Decarbonising Buildings in Cities and Regions*, OECD Urban Studies, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/a48ce566-en>. [12]
- OECD (2020), *A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals: Synthesis report*, OECD Urban Policy Reviews, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e86fa715-en>. [13]

## Notes

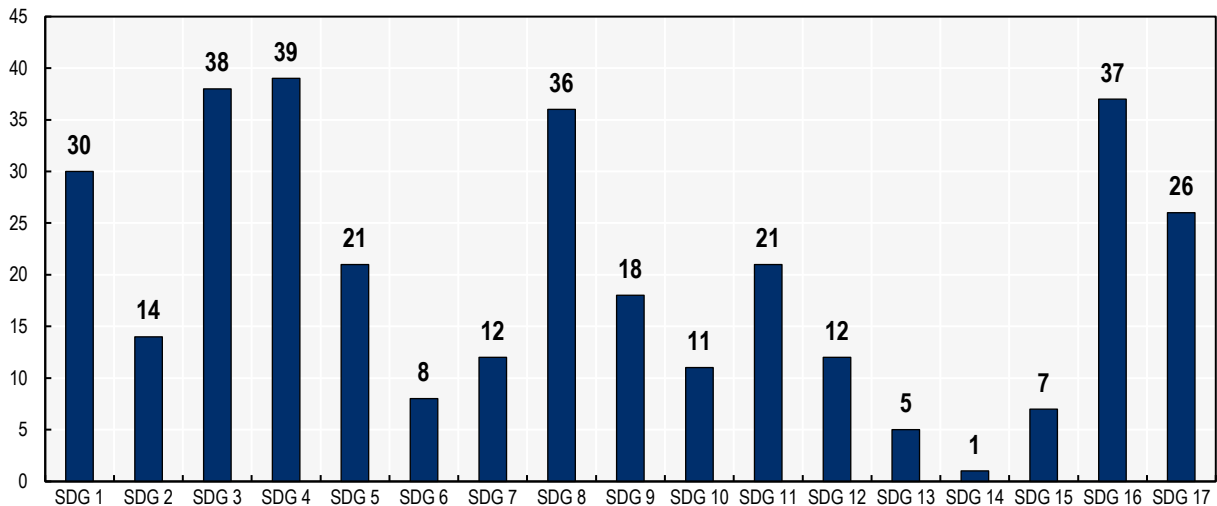
<sup>1</sup> For more information on the methodology of the assessment, see Box A A.2.

<sup>2</sup> The survey question did not make a distinction between intra- and inter-city public transport.

## Annex 2.A. Additional information

**Annex Figure 2.A.1. Coverage of Eustat's SDG indicators**

Number of indicators per SDG



Source: OECD elaboration based on an internal presentation provided by Eustat.

### Annex Box 2.A.1. OECD methodology for measuring cities' and regions' distance to achieving the SDGs

The OECD has developed a framework to localise SDG targets and indicators and measure the distance of regions and cities to reaching each of the 17 SDGs. This consensual, comparable and standardised framework allows to benchmark performances within countries and across regions and cities to support public action across levels of government.

In the context of OECD countries, around 105 out of the 169 SDG targets have been identified as very relevant to regions and cities. Through an extensive literature review and expert consultation, the 169 SDG targets from the UN indicator framework have been classified according to their level of relevance for subnational levels of government (place-relevant). Subsequently, a subset of these SDG targets has been selected based on their applicability to the context and specificities of OECD countries (OECD-relevant). The result is a selection of 105 SDG targets and 135 indicators for OECD member country regions and cities (also referred to as the “OECD subnational SDG targets and indicators”).





With its 135 indicators, the OECD localised framework covers at least 1 aspect of each of the 17 SDGs for both regions and cities. Nevertheless, the coverage in terms of indicators and targets is higher for regions than for cities. Although the set of indicators aims to cover the broad spectrum of all 17 SDGs, the coverage in terms of indicators also varies widely across SDGs.


To evaluate the achievements of a city or region on the SDGs, the OECD localised framework defines end values to shed light on the global trends in OECD regions and cities towards the SDGs, based on

available indicators, and to provide technical guidance for governments on a possible way to use the SDG indicator framework as a tool to advance local development plans and sustain evidence-based policies. By defining end values for 2030, regions and cities can assess where they stand today and seize how much distance they must travel to reach the intended end value. When they are not inferable from the UN framework, the OECD defines end values for indicators based on the knowledge of experts in the field or based on the best performance of regions and cities in that indicator. The OECD localised indicator framework attributes end values to 88% of its indicators, of which 65% are defined using the criteria of “best performers”. The framework also normalises the SDG indicators from 0 to 100 – where 100 is the suggested end value of an indicator to be achieved by 2030 – and aggregates headline indicators that belong to the same SDG to provide an index score for each of the 17 SDGs. The distance to the target or goal is the number of units the index needs to travel to reach the maximal score of 100.






Sources: OECD (2020<sup>[13]</sup>), *A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals: Synthesis report*, <https://doi.org/10.1787/e86fa715-en>; OECD (2024<sup>[11]</sup>), *Measuring the Distance to the SDGs in Regions and Cities (visualisation tool)*, <http://www.oecd-local-sdgs.org>. (accessed on 15 December 2024).

**Annex Table 2.A.1. Indicators used to assess the dimension People in the Basque Country**


SDG	Indicator	Source
	Average disposable income per day of the first quintile (equivalised household, in USD purchasing power parity [PPP], constant prices of 2015)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of population living below the 60% of national median disposable income	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Decrease in poverty rates (national poverty line) due to transfers and taxes (%)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of population satisfied with efforts to deal with poverty	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Productivity (gross value added [GVA] per worker) in agriculture, forestry, and fishing (International Standard Industrial Classification [ISIC] Rev.4) (in constant 2010 USD PPP)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Change in cropland (from 2000 to 2022, percentage points)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Cropland as a percentage of total area in 2022	OECD Environment Database
	Life expectancy at birth	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of people satisfied with the availability or quality of healthcare	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Active physicians rate (active physicians per 1 000 people)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Hospital beds rate (hospital beds per 10 000 people)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Obesity rate of adults (%)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Infant mortality rate (number of deaths of children 1 year old or younger per 1 000 live births)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Satisfaction with life as a whole (from 0 to 10)	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Percentage of population from 15 to 19 years old enrolled in public or private institutions	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of early leavers from education and training, for the 18-24 year-old population	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of population from 25 to 64 years old with at least tertiary education	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Gender gap in tertiary education (female-male, percentage points)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Gender gap in the rate of early leavers (male-female, percentage points)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas

	Gender gap in part-time employment incidence (female-male, percentage points)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of population that believe women are treated with respect and dignity in their country	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Gender gap in employment rate (male-female, percentage points)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Female research and development personnel as a percentage of total research and development employment	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas

### Annex Table 2.A.2 Indicators used to assess the dimension Planet in the Basque Country


SDG	Indicator	Source
	Percentage of population connected to at least secondary wastewater treatment	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of population satisfied with quality of water	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Change in water bodies (from 2000 to 2022, percentage points)	OECD Environment Database
	Water bodies as percentage of total area in 2022	OECD Environment Database
	Percentage of total electricity production that comes from renewable sources	OECD based on Global Power Plant Database
	Percentage of total electricity production that comes from fossil fuels (natural gas and oil, excluding coal)	OECD based on Global Power Plant Database
	Municipal waste rate (kilograms per capita)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of municipal waste that is recycled	Eustat
	Number of motor road vehicles per 100 people	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of population satisfied with the effort to preserve the environment	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Carbon dioxide (CO <sub>2</sub> ) emissions per capita (tonnes of CO <sub>2</sub> -equivalent per person)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Change in tree cover (from 2000 to 2022, percentage points)	OECD Environment Database
	Tree cover as a percentage of total area in 2022	OECD Environment Database
	Terrestrial protected areas as a percentage of total area	OECD based on World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA)


### Annex Table 2.A.3. Indicators used to assess the dimension Prosperity in the Basque Country

SDG	Indicator	Source
	Annual growth rate of real gross domestic product (GDP) per capita (%)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Annual growth rate of real GVA per worker (%)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Unemployment rate (%)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Gender gap in unemployment rate (percentage points)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Unemployment rate of the foreign-born (%)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Long-term unemployment incidence (%)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Part-time employment incidence (%)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of young population (from 18 to 24 years old) not in education, employment or training (NEET)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Youth unemployment rate (%)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and

		local areas
	Firm creation rate (%)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Employment rate associated to newly created firms (%)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Three-year survival rate of firms (%)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Net firm creation rate (%) (firm birth rate minus firm death rate)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of population satisfied with roads and highways	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Percentage of population satisfied with public transportation	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Productivity (GVA per worker) in manufacture (ISIC Rev.4) (in constant 2015 USD PPP)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Manufacturing employment as a percentage of total employment	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Research and development expenditure as a proportion of GDP (%)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Research and development personnel as a share of total employment	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Patent applications (Patent Cooperation Treaty) per 1 000 000 people	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Average disposable income per equivalised household (in USD PPP, constant prices of 2015)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Gini index of disposable income (after taxes and transfers) (from 0 to 1)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Ratio between average disposable income of top and bottom quintiles	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Median disposable income per equivalised household (in USD PPP, constant prices of 2015)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of population living below the 50% of regional median disposable income	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Decrease in Gini index due to transfers and taxes (%)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of household expenses dedicated to housing costs	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of population satisfied with affordability of housing	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Rooms per person	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Exposure to fine particulate matter (PM2.5) in µg/m³ (micrograms per cubic metre), population weighted	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of population satisfied with quality of air	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Percentage of people exposed to more than 5 µg/m³ of PM2.5	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of people exposed to more than 10 µg/m³ of PM2.5	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas

**Annex Table 2.A.4. Indicators used to assess the dimensions Peace and Partnership in the Basque Country**

SDG	Indicator	Source
	Homicides per 100 000 persons	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of population that feel safe walking alone at night around the area they live	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Confidence in judicial system and courts	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Percentage of population that believes corruption is spread throughout the government in the country	OECD based on Gallup World Poll

	Percentage of population that have confidence in the national government	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Percentage of population that believe their place of residence is a good place to live for migrants	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Percentage of population that believe their place of residence is a good place to live for gay or lesbian people	OECD based on Gallup World Poll
	Share of Patent Cooperation Treaty co-patent applications that are done with foreign regions (in % of co-patent applications)	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Percentage of households with broadband Internet access	OECD Database on Regions, cities and local areas
	Mean Internet download speed for fixed connection (in megabits per second)	Ookla data

# 3

## Multi-level governance and stakeholder engagement

---

Led by its General Secretariat for Communication and Social Innovation, the Basque Country, Spain, takes a participatory approach to localising the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda fosters collaboration between the government and territorial stakeholders, including the three provinces, and co-operation with municipalities is facilitated through associations and networks that provide strategic guidance and awareness activities. The Basque Alliance for the SDGs includes around 90 organisations and companies committed to advancing the 2030 Agenda, although integration of the SDGs is mainly limited to large companies. Furthermore, despite activities of different civil society actors, there is still a lack of awareness among the population of the 2030 Agenda.

---

## Multi-level governance of the SDGs in Spain

The Basque Country is part of a multi-level governance system to localise the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In co-operation with the Spanish Government, the Basque Government and the city of Bilbao, the Basque Country hosts the global headquarters of the United Nations (UN) Local2030 Coalition Secretariat, a network and platform led by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and co-chaired by rotating UN agencies, which aims to accelerate the localisation of the SDGs worldwide by fostering innovation and collaboration among local and regional institutions, the private sector and civil society (Local2030, 2024<sup>[1]</sup>; Basque Government, 2024<sup>[2]</sup>). One of the objectives of the Basque Country in relation to the Local2030 Coalition Secretariat is to support the localisation of the SDGs at the international level by sharing its own experience (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[2]</sup>). The Local2030 Secretariat is based on a collaborative agreement by the Spanish Government, the Basque Government, Bilbao City Council and the Bilbao Bizkaia Kutxa Foundation, representing a good example of multi-level governance.

### *Spain's sustainable development strategy*

In 2020, Spain adopted a national sustainable development strategy based on consultations with a wide range of stakeholders. The strategy emphasises the importance of a multi-level and multi-sectoral approach to implementing the SDGs, including autonomous communities, local governments, the private sector, civil society organisations and citizens. It identifies eight main structural challenges that require comprehensive and transformative solutions (Table 3.1). These include poverty, the impact of climate change, gender equality, public services delivery, sustainable economic development, employment, democracy and demographic change (Government of Spain, 2020<sup>[3]</sup>). For each area, the strategy outlines broad, strategic actions with a medium- to long-term outlook to accelerate change, complemented by strategic frameworks, reforms, new regulations and other measures and targets to be reached by 2022, 2025 or 2030 (Government of Spain, 2020<sup>[3]</sup>).

**Table 3.1. Spain's sustainable development challenges and priorities**

Challenge	Accelerating policies	Examples of action priorities	Examples of targets
<b>Poverty and inequality</b>	Eradicate poverty and foster a social transition by enhancing social protection systems, improving redistributive capacities and updating regulatory frameworks to ensure they are accessible to everyone, particularly the most vulnerable.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National Strategy to Prevent and Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion.</li> <li>- Family protection and child poverty assistance programmes to support the most vulnerable families.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By 2030, reduce the proportion of men, women, children and adolescents at risk of poverty and/or exclusion by at least half.</li> <li>- By 2030, eradicate severe material deprivation suffered by children and adolescents and reduce the rate of relative child poverty by half.</li> </ul>
<b>Climate and environmental emergency</b>	Deploy cross-cutting actions to address the effects of the climate and ecological emergency, including in production, mobility and energy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implementation of the provisions of the Energy Transition and Climate Change Act.</li> <li>- 2021-2030 Spanish Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By 2030, a 23% reduction in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions compared to 1990 levels, as a prelude to climate neutrality by 2050.</li> <li>- By 2030, achieve a penetration of renewable energy in final energy consumption of at least 42%.</li> </ul>
<b>Gender inequality and discrimination</b>	Eradicate discrimination and violence against women and girls, ensuring equal pay and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2021-25 Strategic Plan for Effective Equality of Women and Men.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By 2023, consolidate the Joint Responsibility Plan, as a public policy aimed at</li> </ul>

	opportunities in employment, promoting women's participation in all areas of life and addressing systemic barriers in health, education and economic rights.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of a fiscal policy that has a gender perspective.</li> </ul>	<p>guaranteeing the right to care of families with children up to the age of 14, by setting up a professional care exchange.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By 2030, implement Strategic Equal Opportunities Plans as a specific and comprehensive instrument for public policies on eradicating discrimination and violence affecting women.</li> </ul>
<b>Shortcomings of a concentrated and dependent economic system</b>	Support a new economic model that prioritises people and the planet, ensuring sustainable development across all political actions to mitigate the negative impacts of necessary transformations, supported by a diversified and strategic productive economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Long-term Strategy for a Modern, Competitive and Climate Neutral Spanish Economy in 2050.</li> <li>- Spanish Circular Economy Strategy, which lists a series of goals for the Spanish productive framework for 2030, including a 30% reduction effort in domestic material consumption in relation to the 2030 gross domestic product (GDP).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By 2030, transform the industrial framework, notably small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), adapting it to the challenges of ecological transition and digital transformation, and increasing its share of the Spanish GDP to 20%.</li> <li>- By 2030, reduce food waste throughout the food chain, decreasing household and retail food waste by 50% per capita and food production and supply chain food waste by 20%.</li> </ul>
<b>Job insecurity</b>	Enhance the quality of employment across all facets of decent work, including health, safety, fair pay and collective bargaining; and address employment stability as a crucial factor in overcoming structural unemployment challenges.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase the rate of employment to bring it closer to the European Union (EU) average and increase stable and quality employment growth.</li> <li>- Guarantee stability in employment through the simplification and reclassification of forms of labour contracting.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By 2030, eliminate wage poverty by increasing wage earnings, including increasing the minimum wage to 60% of the average salary, in compliance with the European Social Charter.</li> <li>- By 2030, guarantee equal pay for equal work as a mechanism to eradicate the salary gap affecting women.</li> </ul>
<b>Public services delivery</b>	Enhance public services by ensuring strong, inclusive and well-resourced systems for health, education and social care, reinforcing the welfare state to guarantee a social transition.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promotion of personal autonomy and care for dependent persons.</li> <li>- Social Services Framework Act, which sets out the catalogue of basic benefits guaranteed to the population, regardless of in which part of the country they reside.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By 2030, promote inclusive education, attention to diversity, as well as specific training on equality, harassment and ill-treatment in schools and teachers' ongoing training.</li> <li>- By 2030, strengthen the universal public social services system, guaranteeing a minimum portfolio of shared services that are managed in a decentralised way and in agreement with the autonomous communities.</li> </ul>
<b>Injustice, threats to human rights, democratic principles and sustainability of the planet</b>	Reconfigure social, economic and global governance models to build fairer, more resilient societies that address systemic challenges, prioritise climate and social emergencies through integrated mechanisms and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New Law on Cooperation for Sustainable Development.</li> <li>- Progressive increase in investment in official development assistance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By 2030, ensure Spain's external action and bilateral relations are fully aligned and coherent with the principles of the 2030 Agenda and Human Rights.</li> <li>- By 2030, actively promote a</li> </ul>

	frameworks aligned with sustainable development and human rights principles.		rule-based, open, non-discriminatory and fair multilateral trading system that contributes to the achievement of the SDGs.
<b>Revitalisation of rural areas and addressing demographic change</b>	Tackle the demographic challenge by implementing a national strategy to ensure social and territorial cohesion, equal rights and opportunities between rural and urban areas, focusing on revitalising regions at risk through access to quality public services, economic opportunities and gender equality measures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Digitalisation Strategy for the Agri-Food and Forestry Sector and Rural Areas</li> <li>- Specific budgets assigned to Integral Support Plans for Women in Rural Areas.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- By 2030, promote sustainable and cultural tourism as the driving force of the economic activity and the glue for territorial cohesion.</li> <li>- By 2025, enable the development of entrepreneurship through a network of territorial innovation centres or interconnected rural hubs, with the goal of creating new economic opportunities and quality employment.</li> </ul>

Source: Government of Spain (2020<sup>[3]</sup>), *Sustainable Development Strategy 2030*, <https://www.mdsocialesa2030.gob.es/agenda2030/documentos/eds2030-english.pdf>.

Spain's sustainable development strategy also highlights the contribution and performance of the Spanish autonomous communities and local authorities. This includes mentions of Basque initiatives such as the Climate Change Strategy of the Basque Country (KLIMA 2050), the Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda, the Basque Employment Strategy 2030 and the Inter-Institutional Entrepreneurship Plan of the Basque Country. In addition, the Spanish sustainable development strategy contains specific data for six out of the eight policy areas, although reduced to a few indicators (Government of Spain, 2020<sup>[3]</sup>). It also contains more than 130 indicators to measure progress (Government of Spain, 2020<sup>[3]</sup>), which are used in monitoring reports and Voluntary National Reviews.

The implementation of the SDGs in Spain is governed through three main institutions. These are the Delegated Government Commission for the 2030 Agenda, the Sectoral Conference for the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Council. The Delegated Government Commission brings together 15 ministries and is responsible for the co-ordination, elaboration, implementation and evaluation of plans and strategies for Spain's compliance with the 2030 Agenda. It focuses on inter-ministerial co-ordination and is assisted by a technical working group open to participation from all ministries. The Sectoral Conference for the 2030 Agenda is a multi-level governance body gathering the General State Administration, the autonomous communities, the autonomous cities of Ceuta and Melilla, and local administrations through the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces. Lastly, the Sustainable Development Council is an advisory body, which convenes 60 representatives from academia, the business sector, unions, environmental, social and human rights organisations, and organisations in the field of international co-operation, as well as 13 advisory councils at the national level (Spanish Ministry for Social Rights and the 2030 Agenda, 2024<sup>[4]</sup>).

### **Collaboration between national and subnational governments**

The Spanish Government has been collaborating with the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces in different ways. This includes for example dedicated funding for 89 municipalities to carry out SDG localisation projects and producing a guide for municipalities with fewer resources. Spanish autonomous communities and municipalities also participated in the elaboration of the national sustainable development strategy through 400 contributions on policy priorities and possible actions to be implemented until 2030.

The Spanish Government has created a governance body to facilitate multi-level co-ordination and policy coherence for sustainable development. Together with its support body, the Sectoral Commission for the 2030 Agenda, it seeks to facilitate the integration of SDG localisation activities of Spanish municipalities, provinces and autonomous communities into the national strategy (Government of Spain, 2020<sup>[3]</sup>). The Basque Country regularly participates in the meetings of the Sectoral Conference for the 2030 Agenda and contributes to national and international events on SDG localisation, including conferences organised by the Spanish Network for Sustainable Development (Box 3.1) and the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (Basque Government, 2021<sup>[5]</sup>).

### **Box 3.1. REDS, the sustainable development solutions network in Spain**

The Spanish Network for Sustainable Development (REDS) was created in 2015 as part of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network. REDS is a multi-stakeholder network that gathers universities, public administration, the private sector and civil society with the objective of implementing the SDGs in Spain.

One of its three areas of action is the localisation of sustainable development policies, including in the Basque Country. REDS has for example published a report on SDG progress in Spanish cities and collaborated on a report about the contribution of Basque municipalities to the SDGs together with the Basque Network of Sustainable Municipalities (Udalsarea). Through its platform “The day after” (*El día después*), launched together with different organisations, including the Basque electric utility company Iberdrola, REDS also provides a space for collaboration to provide lessons learned from the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and strengthen efforts to implement the SDGs in Spain.

REDS has also set up unicitES, a municipal-academic partnership, which promotes the development of research projects, in which students, universities and municipal professionals work together to co-create solutions and contribute to sustainable urban transformation by solving specific challenges faced by cities to achieve climate neutrality. The University of the Basque Country was one of the first pilots to participate in the partnership.

Source: Interview conducted with representatives from REDS during the OECD fact-finding mission in the Basque Country in December 2023.

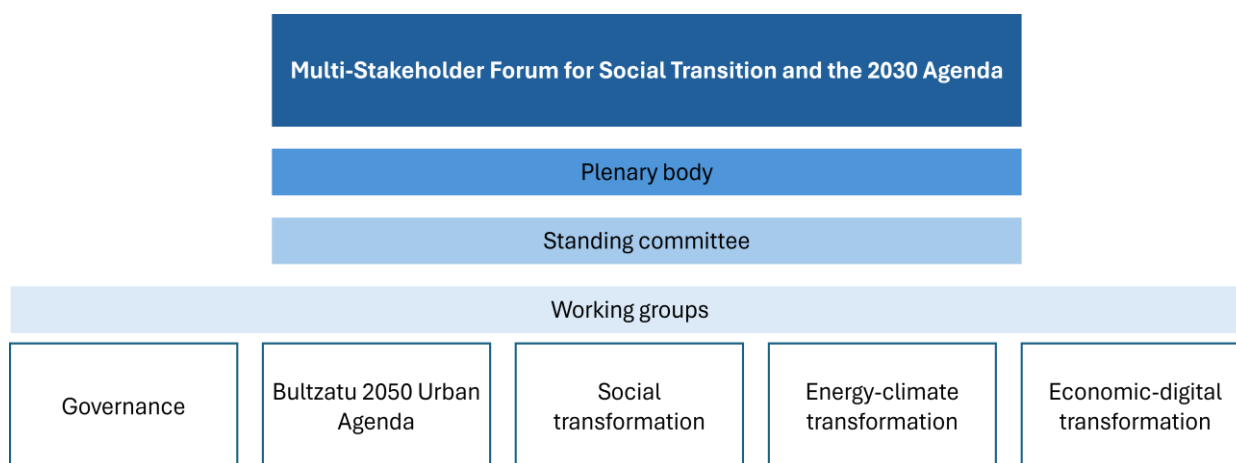
### ***The institutional framework for the SDGs in the Basque Country***

Since 2021, the General Secretariat for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda has been responsible for the implementation of the SDGs in the Basque Country. Initially, between 2016 and 2020, the oversight of the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda was under the responsibility of the General Secretariat for External Action. Through an inter-departmental committee, it monitored the actions of the different departments of the Basque Government responsible for the implementation of sectoral policies related to the 2030 Agenda. It also reported on the progress made toward achieving the set objectives while maintaining continuous dialogue with the national government of Spain and international partners. Its work was supported by an inter-institutional committee as well as sector-specific fora linked to various ministries. The Inter-Institutional Committee on External Action gathered the Basque Government, the three provincial councils, the Association of Basque Municipalities (EUDEL), and the councils of the three Basque capital cities (Basque Government, 2021<sup>[6]</sup>). In the following legislative period, 2021-24, the Basque Government reformed its institutional framework for the 2030 Agenda. As part of its efforts to localise the SDGs, the Basque Government created the General Secretariat for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda, which was transformed into the General Secretariat for Communication and Social Innovation following the

Basque parliamentary elections in 2024. One of its main responsibilities is the interdepartmental co-ordination and streamlining of the 2030 Agenda in the Basque Country, alongside the update of the Bizi Berri Plan (the Basque Government's plan for monitoring and adapting to the COVID-19-pandemic impact) and co-ordination of inter-departmental work to address demographic challenges and develop the Basque Social Pact on Migration (Basque Government, 2021<sup>[6]</sup>). It is also responsible for the setup of pilot projects related to the 2030 Agenda, establishing multi-stakeholder platforms for exchange as well as setting up international alliances.

In 2021, the Basque Country established the Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda as a space for collaboration between the government and territorial stakeholders. The Multi-Stakeholder Forum is one of the most important governance mechanisms for the localisation of the 2030 Agenda in the Basque Country (Figure 3.1). It gathers representatives from different ministries of the Basque Government, the three provincial councils and the councils of their capital cities, and EUDEL (Basque Government, 2021<sup>[6]</sup>). The forum's main objective is to help establish directives and strategic guidelines for the implementation of the SDGs in the Basque Country and develop non-binding initiatives and proposals to the government on how to improve SDG localisation in the Basque Country. Furthermore, it proposes actions to ensure the Basque participation in internal fora and networks and supports the inter-institutional and multi-level co-ordination on the 2030 Agenda across the Basque Country (Basque Government, 2021<sup>[6]</sup>). As such, it represents the central framework for multi-level governance and co-operation in the Basque Country.

**Figure 3.1. Structure of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda**



Source: OECD elaboration based on Basque Government (2021<sup>[6]</sup>), *Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/Multi-Stakeholder-Forum.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/Multi-Stakeholder-Forum.pdf) (accessed on 12 April 2024).

The Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda consists of a plenary body and standing commission and different working groups. The plenary body, chaired by the Basque president and co-chaired by the General Secretariat for Communication and Social Innovation, includes different representatives from the Basque Government, local governments, academia, the third sector and different research alliances. They jointly define the strategy for SDG implementation in the Basque Country, promote joint activities and monitor and assess its outcomes. The standing committee also gathers representatives from those institutions as well as the co-ordinators of the different working groups and is responsible for developing proposals for policies and activities across the five working groups, promoting co-ordination within the forum and setting up mechanisms to monitor the forum's work, e.g. through reports. Lastly, the forum entails five working groups focusing: on i) governance; ii) the Bultzatu 2050

Urban Agenda; iii) social transformation; iv) energy-climate transformation; and v) economic-digital transformation. While the governance working groups focuses mostly on inter-institutional and international co-ordination, the other working groups have a more thematic focus.

## ***SDG localisation in Basque provinces and municipalities***

### *Localising the SDGs in the three provinces*

Representatives from the three provincial councils of Alaba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa are members of the plenary body of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda, the standing commission as well as the five working groups. The three provinces work on the localisation of the SDGs in their respective territories, albeit to different degrees.

Stakeholder engagement plays a key role for the localisation of the SDGs in the province of Álava. The province of Álava started working on the SDGs in 2017 pursuing three main objectives: i) incorporating the agenda in public policies in the province and its municipalities; ii) broadening awareness of the agenda and forming alliances with public and private actors to advance the SDGs in Araba; and iii) developing broader collaborate strategies with the other provinces and the Basque Government. Initially, challenges included a general lack of awareness and the need for dedicated training within the province's administration. The pandemic, while initially a hurdle, underscored the urgency of addressing increasing inequalities, climate threats and the impacts of digitisation and the global geostrategic situation, thus acting as a catalyst for the provincial commitment to the SDGs. The province therefore established the Álava Alliance for Sustainable Development, which promotes sustainable development efforts across diverse Álava society sectors, through its more than 100 members, including companies, public institutions and collectives. This open, voluntary, participatory alliance aims to foster concrete projects that embody and disseminate sustainable practices and awareness among the population. It also tries to compensate for the lack of resources in the smaller municipalities through collaboration and economies of scale.

In Gipuzkoa, the 2030 Agenda has been integrated into local governance since 2017, focusing on creating a multi-level, multi-actor strategy for sustainable development. Notably, the provincial government aligned its budget and policies with specific targets and indicators to ensure that the SDGs are central to government activity with the aim of dealing with the impact of an ageing population, digitalisation and environment and climate concerns. The province has also made efforts to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda among municipalities and private sector through its Etorbizuna Eraikiz programme, which fosters collaborative governance and citizen participation through public fora, pilot projects to test innovative solutions to address different social, economic and environmental challenges and the collaboration with universities and research centres (Zurutuza and Errazkin, 2022<sup>[7]</sup>; Government of Gipuzkoa, 2024<sup>[8]</sup>).

In 2019, the province of Bizkaia started assessing how its policies contribute to the 2030 Agenda. Bizkaia has linked its government plan to the SDGs focusing on 130 main actions to drive sustainable development indicators established at the provincial level to monitor its progress on the SDGs, which are integrated into Basque Statistics Institute Eustat's SDG portal presented in Chapter 2. Furthermore, in collaboration with University College London, the province developed a proposal to employ tax policies as a lever to advance the 2030 Agenda. The province also collaborates with its municipalities to help them localise the SDGs, notably those municipalities that lack sufficient resources and capacity to do so on their own.

### *SDG localisation in Basque municipalities and the role of municipal associations*

The collaboration between the Basque Government and municipalities is facilitated through EUDEL, the Association of Basque Municipalities, and Udalsarea, the Basque Network of Sustainable Municipalities. EUDEL, for example, represents Basque municipalities in the plenary body, standing committee and different working groups of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda. In

addition, Basque municipalities have also been involved in the elaboration of the Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda and jointly developed local climate and energy plans with the Basque Government through the Town Council Pact for Climate and Energy. Furthermore, 65 of the Basque municipalities have also developed their own SDG localisation projects or are in the process of doing so. One example is the city of Bilbao (Box 3.2).

### Box 3.2. SDG localisation in Basque municipalities

Several municipalities in the Basque Country are actively engaged in localising the SDGs, but there are considerable differences in terms of the depth of their engagement with smaller municipalities often challenged by limited resources and capacity. SDG localisation work in Basque municipalities often started several years after the 2030 Agenda was first published.

- For example, the city of Bilbao published an action plan in 2023 aimed at integrating the SDGs into its policies and strategies. The process began in 2019, aligning the 100 actions from the 2019-23 mandate plan with corresponding SDGs. This alignment served as a strategic framework to reinforce social cohesion and municipal strategies for sustainable development.
- Another example is the city of San Sebastián, which leveraged the SDGs for city transformation and stakeholder engagement in its 2030 city strategy adopted in 2021.
- Finally, the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz released its 2030 Urban Agenda in 2022. Following a citizen participation process and various communication and awareness initiatives, the agenda integrates the city's sectoral strategies into a unified vision for the city's future development based on the framework of the SDGs. The strategy is underpinned by an indicator system to monitor its implementation in the coming years until 2030. As part of its activities to foster sustainable development, Vitoria-Gasteiz has also aligned its municipal budget with the 2030 Agenda, assessing the contribution of different spending items to different SDGs.

Sources: City of Bilbao (2023<sup>[9]</sup>), "Bilbao presenta el Plan de Acción "Bilbao Sostenible: Agenda 2030 y ODS", su compromiso por el desarrollo humano sostenible [Bilbao presents the Action Plan "Sustainable Bilbao: Agenda 2030 and SDGs", its commitment to sustainable human development]", <https://bilbaoconventionbureau.bilbao.eus/en/bilbao-presents-the-sustainable-bilbao-2030-agenda-and-sdgs-action-plan-its-commitment-to-sustainable-human-development/> (accessed on 6 May 2024); City of San Sebastián (2022<sup>[10]</sup>), *Documento Técnico - Estrategia 2030 Donostia/San Sebastián E2030DSS* [Technical Document - Strategy 2030 Donostia/San Sebastián E2030DSS], [https://www.donostiafutura.com/media/uploads/publicaciones/20211202\\_Documento\\_Tecnico\\_E2030dss.pdf](https://www.donostiafutura.com/media/uploads/publicaciones/20211202_Documento_Tecnico_E2030dss.pdf).

EUDEL is actively supporting Basque municipalities in localising the SDGs. A key objective is to strengthen public services in municipalities and help them localise the SDGs. EUDEL has established an internal commission on the 2030 Agenda, set up a framework agreement with the Basque Government to enhance co-ordination across levels of government in the Basque Country and promote the localisation of the SDGs in Basque municipalities. Many of them require the support of the association since about 80% of the 251 municipalities have a population of fewer than 5 000 people and therefore often lack capacity.

EUDEL has developed tools for strategic guidance and awareness-raising activities for municipalities. These include a report on the contribution of Basque Government to the 2030 Agenda, which highlights local actions and projects aligned with the SDGs and a guide on how to align municipal budgets with the SDGs (EUDEL, 2023<sup>[11]</sup>). This guide follows a standardised approach to municipalities of all sizes by helping them to analyse how municipal actions can help contribute to the SDGs and align the municipal budget with the SDGs through a spreadsheet tool. The guide has been developed as collaborative project with first 3 and later 15 municipalities, with technical staff sharing feedback throughout the process. Furthermore, together with the Basque Government, EUDEL has published a 2030 Agenda Toolbox for local governments. This toolbox provides various resources, including training courses, guides and

practical tools, designed to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda at the local government level (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[2]</sup>). Since 2017, EUDEL has also been involved in the implementation of the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) project, aimed to steer joint action of local governments towards effective and efficient municipal management, with a focus on sustainable development. The ELoGE methodology consists of a benchmarking toolkit designed to evaluate adherence to 12 principles of good governance, including sustainability and long-term orientation (EUDEL, 2024<sup>[12]</sup>).

Another important association in the Basque Country is Udalsarea, the Basque Network of Sustainable Municipalities. Created in 2002, Udalsarea has been working on local sustainability for more than 20 years, notably on climate change adaptation and mitigation and the enhancement of the circular economy in the Basque Country. Its membership includes 198 out of the 251 municipalities in the Basque Country as well as the 3 provinces and the Basque Government. Its three main strategic objectives are to: i) promote the localisation of the 2030 Agenda and position Udalsarea 2030 in the Basque 2030 Agenda ecosystem; ii) promote sustainable local action; and iii) strengthen alliances and give visibility to sustainable local action (Udalsarea, 2023<sup>[13]</sup>). To do so, Udalsarea is engaged in awareness-raising activities on the 2030 Agenda, offers capacity-building activities for municipal public servants and territorial stakeholders and provides advisory services for its members. It also produces reports, for example a guide on how to address the SDGs at a local level and a stocktake. Furthermore, it hosts the Basque Country's Local Sustainable Development Observatory that compiles and provides access to information on local sustainability actions, including status updates, indicators, and reporting across municipalities (Udalsarea, 2024<sup>[14]</sup>). Through its online software application e-mugi, Udalsarea furthermore facilitates the management and monitoring of local sustainability plans and policy evaluations. The application supports the calculation of sustainability indicators and provides internal and public communication material on sustainable development (Udalsarea, 2024<sup>[15]</sup>).

## **The SDGs as a tool to engage civil society, academia, the private sector and youth**

### ***The Basque Alliance for the SDGs***

Through the Basque Alliance for the SDGs, about 90 organisations and companies work together to foster the 2030 Agenda in the Basque Country. In October 2023, the Basque Government and Guneak, a civic participation space in the Basque Country, established the Basque Alliance for the SDGs. The alliance is an initiative aimed at fostering collaboration on the 2030 Agenda between different territorial stakeholders, endorsed by approximately 90 entities from the private sector, civil society organisations, research institutes, public institutions as well as sports and cultural organisations (Basque Government, 2024<sup>[16]</sup>; Basque Government, 2024<sup>[2]</sup>). Through their participation in the alliance, those entities commit to: i) collaborate on identifying shared sectoral priorities and flagship projects to advance the 2030 Agenda; ii) use the Basque guide on implementing the 2030 Agenda in companies and organisations (see Box 3.3); iii) establish dissemination, education and citizen participation projects centred around the SDGs; iv) encourage civic engagement for sustainable development in the Basque Country; and v) foster dialogue and collaboration with the Local2030 Secretariat (Basque Government, 2023<sup>[17]</sup>). The Steering Group of the Basque Alliance consists of eight institutions,<sup>1</sup> including civil society organisations, foundations and universities that are in charge of more 70 different projects aligned with the SDGs. Through its activities, the alliance aims to evaluate its systemic impact on the SDGs, identify strengths and opportunities for improvement, develop new collaborative strategies to boost competitiveness of public and private organisations in the Basque Country, and identify and involve future key stakeholders (dot., 2024<sup>[18]</sup>).

### **Civil society**

Civil society is an important actor in the Basque Country for the localisation of the 2030 Agenda. Civil society, which accounts for about 2.4% of the Basque GDP, is represented in the Basque Alliance for the SDGs with close to 30 civil society organisations. A civil dialogue roundtable seeks to promote and facilitate dialogue with the Basque Government in areas such as talent attraction and retention to address demographic change. Some foundations also raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda in the Basque Country, such as the Kutxa Foundation, which has set up the Hitzetatik Ekintzetara programme to sensitise citizens to the 2030 Agenda through workshops, concerts, discussions and public events, focusing on one specific SDG per year, e.g. SDG 2 “Zero hunger” in 2023 and SDG 11 “Sustainable cities and communities” in 2024. Culture also plays a significant role for the Basque Country as part of its efforts to localise the SDGs, including as a tool for community and stakeholder engagement. The Basque Government has for example initiated the elaboration of a dedicated SDG 17+1, focused on ensuring that linguistic and cultural diversity are recognised and promoted as essential components of sustainable development. This includes the definition of culture-specific targets and their interlinkages with other SDGs.

Civil society organisations in the Basque Country support SDG localisation through awareness-raising campaigns, capacity building and collaboration among stakeholders. UN ETXEA, the Basque Country Association for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also seeks to support the implementation of the SDGs in the Basque Country through awareness-raising campaigns, the preparation of briefing material on the SDGs, training and capacity building for territorial stakeholders (UN ETXEA, 2024<sup>[19]</sup>). For example, the Factoría 4.7 – Ibero-American Platform for Education for Sustainable Development project aims to transform education for sustainable development in Ibero-America through innovation and shared learning and the Regional Centre of Expertise on Education for Sustainable Development. Another example is Sareen Sarea, which brings together 18 entities from the third sector, has developed a strategic vision including 400 actions that promote the achievement of the SDGs in the Basque Country (Sareen Sarea, 2022<sup>[20]</sup>). Furthermore, in 2023, in collaboration with private non-profit foundation EUSKALIT and under leadership of the Basque Government, it provided training and capacity building for the third sector on the integration of the SDGs into internal management procedures, including through the advanced management model developed by EUSKALIT (see below) and using SDG indicators (Sareen Sarea, 2023<sup>[21]</sup>).

The San Sebastián International Film Festival (SSIFF) is engaged in the promotion of the 2030 Agenda. In 2018, the SSIFF started to produce an annual gender report about the films represented at the festival. The SSIFF also provides an annual sustainability report, including external auditing to measure its sustainability impact in areas such as lighting, food and mobility. The film festival also features a dedicated Agenda 2030 Euskadi Basque Country Award, in collaboration with the Basque Government. This award honours the film that most effectively embodies the principles of sustainability and solidarity outlined in the 2030 Agenda (SSIFF, 2023<sup>[22]</sup>). As part of the festival, the SSIFF also released a short clip to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda.

However, despite the activities of different actors from civil society on the SDGs, there is still a lack of awareness among the population of the 2030 Agenda and its importance. One of the main challenges that civil society organisations are facing is to connect the SDGs to the lives of citizens on the ground. While awareness-raising efforts have led to a broad understanding of the SDGs among public servants and political leader, for certain parts of the population, the SDGs remain an abstract rather than tangible agenda.

### **Academia**

Several universities in the Basque Country are engaged in the promotion of the 2030 Agenda. Starting from the 2022/23 academic year, the University of the Basque Country, Mondragón University and

University Deusto, have been offering a joint postgraduate programme on Strategic Integration, Monitoring, and Communication of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs (University of the Basque Country, 2024<sup>[23]</sup>). The three universities are also represented in the Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda and collaborate in the advisory board of Arantzazulab, a laboratory for innovation in governance and democracy aiming to increase citizen participation in public policy making (Arantzazulab, 2024<sup>[24]</sup>).

The University of Deusto contributes to sustainability through the Deusto Cities Lab and helped develop a guide for universities to support SDG implementation. The Deusto Cities Lab project promotes sustainable human development in urban environments through research projects, learning programmes, open innovation initiatives and urban laboratories as well the development of citizen participation projects (University of Deusto, 2024<sup>[25]</sup>). Furthermore, representatives from the University of Deusto alongside other Spanish universities and REDS (Box 3.1) have elaborated the Spanish version guide for universities on how to start working on the 2030 Agenda, based on a Sustainable Development Solutions Network report. The University of Deusto mainly targets SDG 4 “Quality education”, SDG 5 “Gender equality” and the cross-cutting topics of ecology and social justice through different academic programmes and research projects.

The EHUagenda 2030 is a strategic plan designed to align the University of Basque Country’s operations with the SDGs. Key objectives include: i) connecting activities from students, faculty, researchers, and administrative staff with the SDGs, ensuring these goals are interwoven into every university function; ii) designing and implementing policies for teaching and learning, equality, inclusion and environmental management with clear targets; iii) creating an indicator framework to facilitate reporting of the university’s progress towards the SDGs; and iv) forming partnerships with territorial stakeholders to support a shared commitment to the 2030 Agenda (University of the Basque Country, 2019<sup>[26]</sup>). The EHUagenda 2030 includes three sectoral plans targeting specifically SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities), and health, energy, sustainable infrastructure, cities and climate action. The agenda emphasises the interconnectedness and synergies between these goals, highlighting their mutual dependencies as part of the university’s overall strategy (OECD, 2022<sup>[27]</sup>).

The University of the Basque Country has developed a methodology to monitor progress on the 2030 Agenda in the field of higher education. Alongside the establishment of a website that showcases all programmes and actions carried out by the university that contribute to the 2030 Agenda. The website highlights the university’s specific contributions to 12 of the 17 SDGs, including its commitment to language and cultural diversity, referred to as SDG 17+1. The university’s contributions and progress towards the 2030 Agenda are measured through 58 indicators across 35 reference targets (OECD, 2022<sup>[27]</sup>), although the EHUagenda 2030 has not yet been revised or updated since its first publication in 2019.

### **Private sector**

Basque companies are at different stages of using the SDGs. Among private sector entities, it is mostly the large companies that have integrated the SDGs into their business model and strategies. In addition, some SMEs in the Basque Country are actively working to contribute to the SDGs and consider them as a competitive advantage, but their uptake is not well spread overall. A key advantage of the private sector in the Basque Country is the number of co-operative companies, which are owned by their members, and operate for their mutual benefit. More than 3 680 co-operatives are registered in the region. Since their business models focus on member welfare, democratic governance, community involvement and long-term sustainability, they are more likely to integrate sustainable development considerations in their daily operations.

The Basque Environment Cluster Aclima has integrated the SDGs into its strategic planning. Owned by 133 organisations from the private and public sector, technology centres and universities, the cluster accounts for 3% of the Basque domestic product and gathers 6 000 professionals. Since 2019, Aclima has

oriented its action towards the SDGs with a strategic plan for 2023-26 based on the 2030 Agenda and aimed at the ecological transition through actions related to sustainable urban regeneration, resources efficiency, sustainable construction and the circular economy (Aclima, 2023<sup>[28]</sup>). Creating partnerships between the different organisations of the cluster is one of the core principles for Aclima to meet sustainability targets. Therefore, and in addition to the individual activities of the 133 organisations, Aclima is also a member of the Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda as well as the Basque Alliance for the SDGs.

BBK Kuna, a social innovation centre, brings together different institutions from non-governmental organisations, academia, the private sector and citizens to jointly address sustainable development challenges in the Basque Country. With a focus on the province of Bizkaia, BBK Kuna finances the development of social innovation projects such as population ageing, climate change and digitalisation and offers educational offers and training related to these topics. The SDGs represent the main framework around which BBK Kuna's activities evolve, complemented by an additional SDG 17+1 about the Basque language, culture and multi-lingual training.

EUSKALIT, a private non-profit foundation in the Basque Country, supports the private sector in transitioning to sustainable business practices. The main objective of the Basque Foundation for Advanced Management (EUSKALIT) is to promote the advanced management model, a comprehensive framework designed to enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of public and private organisations (EUSKALIT, 2018<sup>[29]</sup>). As part of its activities and by means of a participation process with more than 100 representatives from the public and private sector, EUSKALIT has developed a framework to integrate the SDGs into corporate management systems. This framework consists of a self-assessment framework with 50 questions as well as an external assessment by entities affiliated with EUSKALIT. To complement the framework, EUSKALIT has also created an SDG and Advanced Management Club, which brings together professionals with knowledge of the SDGs and corporate management, which are ready to deploy the SDGs within their own organisation and to support others in doing so. The SDG Club is a public entity, supported by the Basque Government. It has currently around 60 members and collaborates with approximately 1 500 assessors, 22% of them chief executive officers, 46% directors and 32% other staff of companies in the Basque Country. So far, 12 pilot organisations have undergone the SDGs self-assessment and on-site evaluation by assessors.

A dedicated handbook guides private and public organisations in the Basque Country to implement the 2030 Agenda. In 2019, the Basque Country initiated the creation of a pilot group named Euskadi 2030 Gunea. This group was established to promote the 2030 Agenda across various sectors of the Basque Country's economic and social sectors. Euskadi 2030 Gunea consists of 17 organisations from different fields, including education, industry, professional associations, public agencies, civil society organisations and technology centres (Basque Government, 2019<sup>[30]</sup>). One of the initial responsibilities of the pilot group was to determine how to adapt the SDGs to the environmental, social and economic conditions of the Basque Country. Ultimately, after consultations with various actors in the Basque Country and their experience on the SDGs, the group developed and published an SDG implementation guide for public and private organisations. This guide serves as an introductory resource to help organisations understand the 2030 Agenda and serves as a practical tool to support the implementation process (Box 3.3) (Basque Government, 2019<sup>[30]</sup>).

### **Box 3.3. The Euskadi 2030 Gunea Practical Guide for Basque Organisations to implement the 2030 Agenda**

The Euskadi 2030 Gunea Practical Guide for Basque Organisations aims to support public and private entities in the Basque Country to implement the 2030 Agenda and contribute to the SDGs. Developed by the Euskadi 2030 Gunea, a pilot group of 17 different organisations from the Basque Country, the

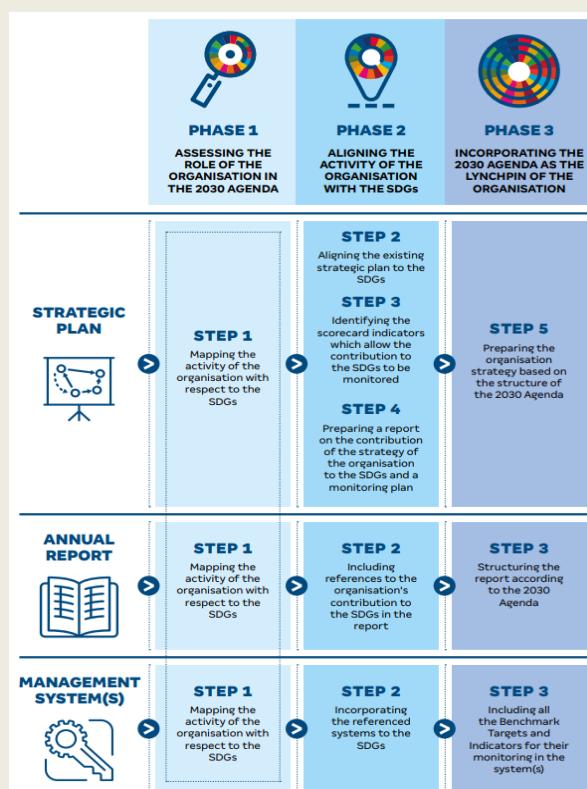
guide provides an initial screening tool for Basque organisations to focus their analysis on 84 identified benchmark targets out of the 169 SDG targets. These are split into 2 categories: 28 common targets for all Basque organisations and 56 sector-specific targets, dependent on the sector, the activity and the size of each organisation. The guide points out how organisations in the Basque Country can contribute to these specific 84 targets, considers interlinkages with other targets and provides practical case studies of organisations of the Basque Country and their activities related to specific targets.

Furthermore, the guide outlines three methods to integrate the 2030 Agenda within organisations: through strategic planning, annual reporting or the management systems in place. This integration follows a structured, three-phase model:

- Phase 1: Assessing the role of the organisation in the 2030 Agenda.
- Phase 2: Aligning the activities of the organisation with the SDGs.
- Phase 3: Embedding the 2030 Agenda as a central element of the organisation.

The process involves multiple steps, including mapping activities against the SDGs, aligning strategic plans, identifying indicators for tracking SDG contributions, and developing reporting and follow-up plans. Each component – strategic plan, annual report, and management systems – has specific steps for mapping, integrating and detailing contributions to the SDGs, along with structuring reports and systems around the 2030 Agenda framework (Figure 3.2).

**Figure 3.2. Phases and steps for organisations to embrace the 2030 Agenda**



Source: Basque Government (2019<sup>[30]</sup>), *Euskadi 2030 Gunea - Practical Guide for Basque Organisations*, [https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/PRACTICAL%20GUIDE%20FOR%20BASQUE%20ORGANISATIONS\\_1.pdf](https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/PRACTICAL%20GUIDE%20FOR%20BASQUE%20ORGANISATIONS_1.pdf).

## Youth

Youth engagement represents a key pillar in the Basque strategy to fulfil the 2030 Agenda. Between 2021 and 2024, the General Secretariat for Social Transition and the Agenda 2030 had a dedicated youth directorate to foster inter-ministerial and inter-institutional co-ordination in youth policies and demographic challenges. In 2023, the directorate established a strategy as part of its Youth Plan to promote youth emancipation along the five areas of employment, housing, income, cohesion and resilience to address unemployment and job insecurity, as well as with high housing costs, and tackling economic and social imbalances caused by a high emancipation age. Notably, the plan foresees the creation of new jobs for youth, a higher youth quota in public housing developments, economic support programmes to incentivise young adults to leave their parental homes earlier alongside personalised accompaniment service to foster pathways to independence (Basque Government, 2023<sup>[31]</sup>). The Youth Plan also outlines its contribution to several SDGs, including those related to poverty, economic growth, strong institutions and partnerships. Furthermore, the Basque Government supports youth commitment to the SDGs by the provision of targeted information material, e.g. on debunking anti Agenda-2030 narratives and combatting misinformation about the SDGs and sustainable development at large.<sup>2</sup>

The SDGs on health, education, decent work and economic growth are priorities for youth in the Basque Country. The Basque Youth Observatory publishes regular youth statistics, including on sustainability, covering indicators such as sustainable consumption patterns and public transportation usage among the 15-29 year-olds. A survey conducted by the Basque Youth Observatory in 2023 with a representative sample of more than 1 000 young people aged 15 to 29 showed that about half (48.7%) of the respondents had heard of the SDGs. This was notably the case for those with higher education (57.3%) as well as for respondents from Bizkaia (53.0%) more than those in Gipuzkoa (44.8%) and Álava (42.1%). They mostly associate the SDGs with environmental protection and climate action as well as reduction of inequalities, gender equality and social justice. When asked about priorities for the Basque Country, youth considered SDG 3 “Good health and well-being”, SDG 4 “Quality education” and SDG 8 “Decent work and economic growth” to be most important. Youth in the region considers the Basque Government (53%) and the associations and non-governmental organisations (34%) to be the 2 actors that are promoting SDG localisation the most (Basque Youth Observatory, 2023<sup>[32]</sup>).

The Basque Youth Observatory is engaged in capacity building for the 2030 Agenda. Together with the Basque Government, the Basque Youth Observatory has been organising dedicated courses on the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs (two in 2023 and one in 2024). The objective of these three half-day courses is to raise awareness of the 2030 Agenda, lead to a better understanding among people working with youth such as youth workers and to integrate the SDGs into programmes and projects developed with and for young people (Basque Youth Observatory, 2024<sup>[33]</sup>).

## References

- Aclima (2023), “Presentation given during the OECD fact-finding mission to the Basque Country in December 2023”. [28]
- Arantzazulab (2024), *About Arantzazulab*, <https://arantzazulab.eus/en/about-arantzazulab/> (accessed on 20 November 2024). [24]
- Basque Government (2024), *7th Monitoring Report Multi-level 2030 Agenda Basque Country 2023*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/7-Informe-Seguimiento-2023-Agenda-2030-INGL-web.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/7-Informe-Seguimiento-2023-Agenda-2030-INGL-web.pdf). [2]

- Basque Government (2024), *Allianza Vasca por los ODS [Basque Alliance for the SDGs]*, <https://www.euskadi.eus/alianza-vasca-por-los-ods/web01-a2lehetr/es/> (accessed on 12 April 2024). [16]
- Basque Government (2023), *Allianza Vasca por los ODS [Basque Alliance for the SDGs]*. [17]
- Basque Government (2023), *Basque Strategy 2030 to Promote Youth Emancipation*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/II-Operational-Framework-Promote-Youth-Emancipation.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/II-Operational-Framework-Promote-Youth-Emancipation.pdf). [31]
- Basque Government (2021), *Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/Multi-Stakeholder-Forum.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/Multi-Stakeholder-Forum.pdf) (accessed on 12 April 2024). [6]
- Basque Government (2021), *The Basque Programme of Priorities for the Agenda 2030 - 2021-2024 Action Plan*, [https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs\\_interes\\_transicionsocial/es\\_def/adjuntos/ENG-Programa-prioridades.pdf](https://www.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/docs_interes_transicionsocial/es_def/adjuntos/ENG-Programa-prioridades.pdf). [5]
- Basque Government (2019), *Euskadi 2030 Gunea - Practical Guide for Basque Organisations*, [https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/PRACTICAL%20GUIDE%20FOR%20BASQUE%20ORGANISATIONS\\_1.pdf](https://www.urbanagendaplatform.org/sites/default/files/2021-10/PRACTICAL%20GUIDE%20FOR%20BASQUE%20ORGANISATIONS_1.pdf). [30]
- Basque Youth Observatory (2024), “CURSO en Vitoria-Gasteiz - La agenda 2030 y los Objetivos de Desarrollo Sostenible”, [https://www.gazteukera.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/ovj\\_plan\\_formacion/en\\_10717/adjuntos/ods\\_Gasteiz\\_c.pdf](https://www.gazteukera.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/ovj_plan_formacion/en_10717/adjuntos/ods_Gasteiz_c.pdf) (accessed on 16 May 2024). [33]
- Basque Youth Observatory (2023), “Youth and Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals - Knowledge and opinions of the youth of the Basque Country”, [https://www.gazteukera.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/berriak\\_2023/en\\_6778/adjuntos/Berria\\_ODS\\_2023\\_en.pdf](https://www.gazteukera.euskadi.eus/contenidos/informacion/berriak_2023/en_6778/adjuntos/Berria_ODS_2023_en.pdf). [32]
- City of Bilbao (2023), “Bilbao presenta el Plan de Acción “Bilbao Sostenible: Agenda 2030 y ODS”, su compromiso por el desarrollo humano sostenible [Bilbao presents the Action Plan “Sustainable Bilbao: Agenda 2030 and SDGs”, its commitment to sustainable human development]”, <https://bilbaoconventionbureau.bilbao.eus/en/bilbao-presents-the-sustainable-bilbao-2030-agenda-and-sdgs-action-plan-its-commitment-to-sustainable-human-development/> (accessed on 6 May 2024). [9]
- City of San Sebastián (2022), *Documento Técnico - Estrategia 2030 Donostia/San Sebastián E2030DSS [Technical Document - Strategy 2030 Donostia/San Sebastián E2030DSS]*, [https://www.donostiafutura.com/media/uploads/publicaciones/20211202\\_Documento\\_Tecnico\\_E2030dss.pdf](https://www.donostiafutura.com/media/uploads/publicaciones/20211202_Documento_Tecnico_E2030dss.pdf). [10]
- dot. (2024), *Guneak 2030*, <https://feeldot.com/en/projects/guneak-2030> (accessed on 27 November 2024). [18]
- EUDEL (2024), *ELoGE*, Association of Basque Municipalities, <https://eloge.eudel.eus/eng/##> (accessed on 11 April 2024). [12]

- EUDEL (2023), “Localización de los ODS en los Ayuntamientos Vascos [Localisation of the SDGs in Basque municipalities]”, Presentation held during the fact-finding mission of the OECD to the Basque Country in December 2023, Association of Basque Municipalities. [11]
- EUSKALIT (2018), *Advanced Management Model 2018*, [https://www.euskalit.net/archivos/201901/mga\\_ingles.pdf?0](https://www.euskalit.net/archivos/201901/mga_ingles.pdf?0) (accessed on 23 April 2024). [29]
- Government of Gipuzkoa (2024), *Etorkizuna Eraikiz Model*, <https://www.etorkizunaeraikiz.eus/documents/33991264/38274051/Etorkizuna+Eraikiz+Model+en.pdf/1bc1bc00-54af-922b-c0ea-5834fd96f9b0>. [8]
- Government of Spain (2020), *Sustainable Development Strategy 2030*, <https://www.mdsocialesa2030.gob.es/agenda2030/documentos/eds2030-english.pdf>. [3]
- Local2030 (2024), *About Us*, <https://www.local2030.org/about-us.php> (accessed on 8 April 2024). [1]
- OECD (2022), “Inclusive growth and resilience in Bilbao, Spain”, *OECD Regional Development Papers*, No. 30, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/de9c64d6-en>. [27]
- Sareen Sarea (2023), “Sesiones de aprendizaje sobre la gestión de los ODS en las entidades del Tercer Sector Social de Euskadi [Learning sessions on the management of the SDGs in the entities of the Third Social Sector in the Basque Country]”. [21]
- Sareen Sarea (2022), *10 Claves fundamentales para la Agenda 2030 y los ODS [10 Key Principles for the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs]*, <https://sareensarea.eus/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/10-CLAVES-POSICIONAMIENTO-SAREEN-SAREA.pdf>. [20]
- Spanish Ministry for Social Rights and the 2030 Agenda (2024), *Gobernanza [Governance]*, <https://www.mdsocialesa2030.gob.es/en/agenda2030/gobernanza.htm> (accessed on 3 May 2024). [4]
- SSIFF (2023), “Six films at the San Sebastian Festival compete for the Agenda 2030 Euskadi Basque Country Award”, San Sebastian International Film Festival, <https://www.sansebastianfestival.com/2023/news/1/21014/in> (accessed on 12 April 2024). [22]
- Udalsarea (2024), *e-mugi*, <https://www.udalsarea2030.eus/e-mugi-access> (accessed on 11 April 2024). [15]
- Udalsarea (2024), *Observatory*, <https://www.udalsarea2030.eus/observatory> (accessed on 11 April 2024). [14]
- Udalsarea (2023), “Udalsarea 2030”, Presentation held during the OECD fact-finding mission in December 2023. [13]
- UN ETXEA (2024), *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, Basque Country Association for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, <https://unetxea.org/en/2030-agenda/> (accessed on 6 May 2024). [19]
- University of Deusto (2024), *Cities Lab Katedra*, <https://www.deusto.es/es/inicio/somos-deusto/centros-universitarios/catedras/cities-lab-katedra> (accessed on 19 November 2024). [25]

- University of the Basque Country (2024), *Especialización Universitaria Integración Estratégica, Seguimiento y Comunicación de la Agenda 2030 y ODS* [Strategic Integration, Monitoring, and Communication of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs], [23]  
<https://www.ehu.es/es/web/graduondokoak/especializacion-universitaria-integracion-estrategica-seguimiento-comunicacion-agenda-2030-ODS> (accessed on 9 April 2024).
- University of the Basque Country (2019), *EHUagenda 2030 for Sustainable Development*, [26]  
<https://www.ehu.es/documents/4736101/11938005/EHUagenda-2030-ENG.pdf/487b2c83-51e1-d0e2-dcd1-af419b2b5c26?t=1559656838000>.
- Zurutuza, S. and O. Errazkin (2022), “The contribution of Etorikizuna Eraikiz to the 2030 SDGs Agenda”, [7]  
<https://www.etorkizunaeraikiz.eus/documents/33991264/40680589/the-contribution-ee-2030-SDG-agenda.pdf/f992b86e-394f-1053-44fb-71f953c1e3fb>.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The Bilbao Bizkaia Kutxa Foundation, EUSKALIT, UN ETXEA, Kutxa, Fundación Vital, Mondragón Corporation, Arantzazulab and the University of Deusto.

<sup>2</sup> For more information, see [Erronkak-5-CAST.pdf \(euskadi.eus\)](#).

# 4 Policy recommendations

---

This chapter offers policy recommendations and an action plan to enhance the territorial approach to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the Basque Country, Spain. The recommendations range from developing targeted policies to address challenges around renewable energy, housing, mobility and population ageing to strengthening the collaboration between the Basque Government, the Association of Basque Municipalities and Basque municipalities to enhance their administrative capacity to promote urban development and SDG localisation. Furthermore, the chapter recommends setting up a dashboard in Basque Statistics Institute Eustat's 2030 Sustainable Development Indicators to track progress of the implementation of the Basque Government Programme and SDG Action Plan.

---

## Policy recommendations

The following policy recommendations were developed based on a policy dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders in the Basque Country. They follow the OECD Checklist for Public Action to implement A Territorial Approach to the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Figure 4.1). The key recommendations (Infographic 4.1) and associated actions outlined in this chapter provide the province with strategic directions and a menu of options for the implementation of the OECD recommendations in the short term (less than one year), medium term (more than one year, less than three years) and long term (more than three years). While some measures constitute actions that the province can take in the short run, others require joint efforts from different levels of government, and with other stakeholders, civil society and the private sector.

**Figure 4.1. The OECD Checklist for Public Action to implement A Territorial Approach to the SDGs**



Source: OECD (2020<sup>[1]</sup>), *A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals - Policy Highlights*, OECD, Paris.

## Infographic 4.1. Seven key recommendations for a territorial approach to the SDGs in the Basque Country, Spain

 <p><b>Policies and strategies</b></p>	<p><u>Recommendation 1</u></p> <p>Leverage the framework of the SDGs to define measures that address the Basque Country's main territorial development challenges related to energy, housing, mobility, population ageing and the labour market</p> <p><u>Recommendation 2</u></p> <p>Transform the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda into a long-term vision for sustainable development</p>
 <p><b>Multi-level governance</b></p>	<p><u>Recommendation 3</u></p> <p>Enhance the administrative capacity of Basque municipalities to promote SDG localisation through co-ordinated support from the Basque Government in collaboration with the Association of Basque Municipalities, EUDEL</p>
 <p><b>Data and information</b></p>	<p><u>Recommendation 4</u></p> <p>Set up a dashboard to track progress of the implementation of the Basque Government Programme and SDG Action Plan</p>
 <p><b>Financing and budgeting</b></p>	<p><u>Recommendation 5</u></p> <p>Extend the uptake of EUDEL's SDG budgetary alignment guide beyond the 15 pilot municipalities</p> <p><u>Recommendation 6</u></p> <p>Foster sustainable public procurement practices, notably through including social clauses alongside environmental criteria</p>
 <p><b>Engagement</b></p>	<p><u>Recommendation 7</u></p> <p>Leverage the newly created Basque Alliance for the SDGs to promote the uptake of the SDGs among public and private organisations in the Basque Country</p>

## Policies and strategies

### Infographic 4.2. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 1 to leverage the framework of the SDGs to define measures that address the Basque Country's main territorial development challenges – Part I

#### Recommendation 1

*Leverage the framework of the SDGs to define measures that address the Basque Country's main territorial development challenges related to energy, housing, mobility, population ageing and the labour market*

The Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda and Basque Action Plan for the SDGs provide a good baseline and groundwork to advance SDG localisation in the Basque Country. Moving forward, the Basque Country could consider developing more ambitious policies and measures that address its main territorial development challenges such as a carbon-intensive electricity production, the need for quality and affordable housing, overreliance on private cars, an ageing population as well as difficulties to attract and retain talent. The SDGs can provide the framework to guide the development of such policies and measures, including to assess and manage potential synergies and tradeoffs between them and catalysing needed finance.



#### Actions



**Energy** (SDG 7 “Clean and affordable energy”, SDG 13 “Climate action”): Set up ambitious policies to phase out fossil fuels and foster the energy transition towards renewable sources, by:

- Putting in place measures to implement the Basque Energy Transition and Climate Change Act, including by setting GHG emission reduction targets for energy-intensive industries, expanding its public divestment mandate to include private corporations with deadlines for fossil fuel phase-out in industry and further promoting community-owned renewable energy production projects.
- Supporting the expansion of renewable energy production by scaling up solar-energy projects like Energy-Ekiola, while considering potential trade-offs in terms of negative impacts on nature and biodiversity as a result of the construction of wind farms and solar plants (SDG 15 “Life on land”).
- Engaging citizens in awareness raising and education campaigns about the environmental, economic and social benefits of renewable energy (e.g. lower air pollution, lower cost) to overcome public resistance to renewable energy infrastructure projects, notably wind farms, e.g. via the new Citizen Assembly for Energy and Climate Transition.
- Providing incentives to consumers to increase the demand for renewable energy and reduce demand for fossil fuels, e.g. rebates or subsidies for the installation of solar panels or other renewable energy systems at home or collaborating with energy providers to offer attractive renewable energy plans, notably in the case of public suppliers.



**Housing** (SDG 11 “Sustainable cities and communities”): Provide quality, low-carbon and affordable housing by::

- Expanding the Opengela pilot project to additional neighbourhoods and provide incentives to real estate developers and private real estate owners to decarbonise the housing stock. While improved housing quality can generate positive impacts on residents' health and well-being (SDG 3 “Good health and well-being”), potential tradeoffs regarding housing affordability (SDG 10 “Reduced inequalities”, SDG 11 “Sustainable cities and communities”) also need to be considered. Green bond issuances as part of the Basque Sustainable Finance Framework could help finance these investments.
- Increasing and adapting the public housing supply to maintain housing affordability in the Basque Country. This may require adapting the public housing supply to the Basque population's profile and demand, e.g. by splitting existing public housing options into smaller units where relevant, purchasing or constructing new public housing units where most needed and aiming for quality compact development, repurposing vacant housing and fostering community-led housing solutions such as housing co-operatives and community land trusts. Integrate green urbanism in regional planning as a catalyst for private investments, leverage sustainability bonds and land value capture and establish revolving funds to finance the construction of affordable and social rental housing.
- Conducting a comprehensive housing and land-use reform to improve the access to quality and affordable housing as part of a broader urban and social policy strategy focused on building communities and neighbourhoods where residents can access the services and amenities they need. This reform should ensure the provision of a wide array of housing options, including both homeownership and rentals, to suit people at different income levels and in different life situations. Unlocking the potential of the rental market, including social rental housing, for example by ensuring adequate tenure protection, would help foster residential mobility, which is essential for improving labour market efficiency, and promote social inclusion.

## Infographic 4.3. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 1 to leverage the framework of the SDGs to define measures that address the Basque Country's main territorial development challenges – Part II



**Mobility:** (SDG 11 "Sustainable cities and communities", SDG 12 "Responsible consumption and production"): Foster sustainable mobility by:

- Lowering the carbon footprint of mobility by promoting a shift in the modal split towards more environmental-friendly means of transportation than fossil-fuel powered private vehicles. This could for example be achieved by expanding the public transport supply between the three largest cities of the Basque Country, notably the establishment of rapid railway connections, including to cities such as Barcelona and Madrid and restructuring bus routes to cover small cities with limited public transport access to improve inter-city connections and reduce reliance on private vehicles, which could be funded by a mix of user fares, indirect beneficiary taxes (e.g. from owners of land that increases in value when its accessibility improves) and earmarked taxes.
- Leveraging the new urban mobility plans at the local level to encourage higher-density, mixed-use development and promote transit-oriented development, which can lead to quality-of-life improvements for residents, through closer access to amenities and better transport options like public transport, walking and cycling, at the same time as reducing greenhouse gas emissions through reduced dependence on private vehicles.
- Putting in place measures to promote active mobility, e.g. cycling and walking by adapting urban design to the prioritisation of pedestrian areas and traffic calming measures as outlined in the new sustainable mobility law. These should be accompanied by measures to enhance safety, e.g. by lowering speed limits in urban contexts and establishing protected bike lanes. While these can have positive impacts on air pollution (SDG 11 "Sustainable cities and communities"), public health and well-being, e.g. respiratory diseases (SDG 3 "Good Health and Well-Being) and economic activity, e.g. in retail businesses (SDG 8 Decent Work and Economic growth), potential trade-offs, including traffic congestion (SDG 11 "Sustainable cities and communities"), extended commuting times for those using cars (SDG 11 "Sustainable cities and communities") and potentially reduced accessibility for residents from suburban or rural areas (SDG 10 "Reduced inequalities") also need to be taken into account.



**Population ageing:** (SDG 1 "No poverty", SDG 3 "Good health and well-being", SDG 10 "Reduced inequalities"): Address the challenges of an ageing population by:

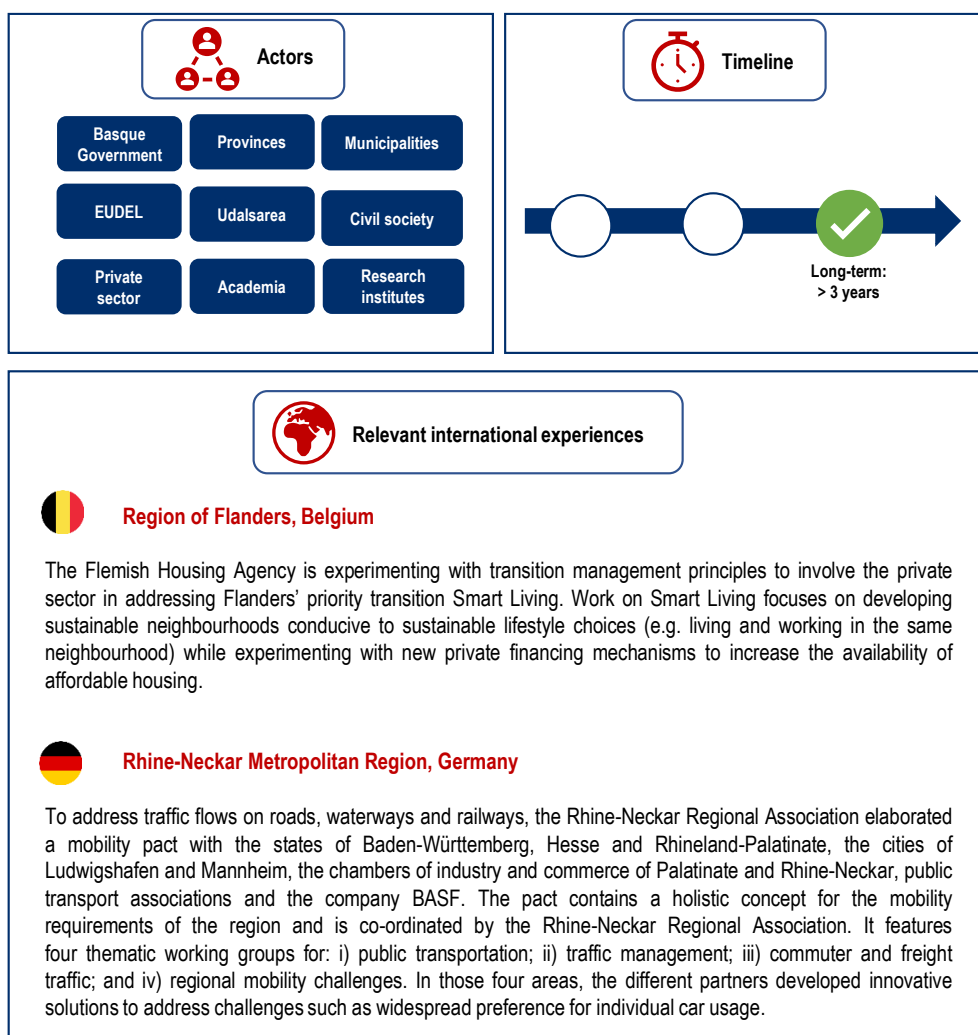
- Making infrastructure more age-friendly in anticipation of an elderly society, including by improving the accessibility of public spaces, e.g. the establishment of pedestrian-friendly pathways, accessible (public) buildings. Expand the number of low-floor buses and trams, as well as elevators and escalators in stations, incentivise the gradual transition from cars to public transport for the elderly by expanding public transport supply in those areas with a large share of elderly and user friendly-tools to plan their public transport trips, and adapt the housing stock, e.g. through the establishment of age-friendly residential units. While these measures can provide co-benefits such as a better inclusion of the elderly (SDG 10 "Reduced inequalities"), improved well-being (SDG 3 "Good health and well-being"), accessibility and mobility (SDG 11 "Sustainable cities and communities"), their impact on public budget also needs to be considered since associated cost could strain available resources to address other vulnerable groups of population, e.g. low-income households (SDG 1 "No poverty", SDG 10 "Reduced inequalities") or implement policies to foster economic activities, such as education, innovation and support for start-ups (SDG 4 "Quality education", SDG 8 "Decent work and economic growth", SDG 9 "Industry, innovation and infrastructure").
- Promoting intergenerational living and exchange to ensure that the elderly remain an active part of the community and avoid social isolation, thereby improving well-being.
- Anticipating the increased demand for professionals in the health sector (doctors, nurses, care workers) by developing a regional health workforce plan, collaborating with universities and educational centres to train health professionals and patients in line with future needs and explore the use of innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence to diagnose diseases and develop targeted treatments.



**Labour market:** SDG 8 "Decent work and economic growth", SDG 9 "Industry, innovation and infrastructure"): Tackle unemployment and outward migration among the youth by:

- Developing strategies to retain young talent in the Basque Country and address out-migration tendencies among the young and educated workforce, e.g. by using the findings from Basque Youth Observatory surveys to address the main concerns (health, education and economic opportunities). Affordable housing policies should also target young families or people at the beginning of their careers.
- Collaborating with the three main universities in the Basque Country to offer high-quality programmes that are aligned with skills needs and attractive to international students and workforce. Since job opportunities and educational institutions are mostly concentrated in and around Bilbao, San Sebastián and Vitoria (SDG 10 "Reduced inequalities") or overemphasising higher education at the cost of vocational training, complementary measures for rural areas are also needed.
- Addressing the high share of long-term unemployment incidences in the Basque Country by joining forces with universities and vocational schools to develop targeted upskilling and reskilling programmes tailored to the needs of the Basque labour market, offering personalised support for job seekers, financial incentives for employers to hire long-term unemployed individuals or support mechanisms for the long-term unemployed to start their own business.

## Infographic 4.4. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 1 to leverage the framework of the SDGs to define measures that address the Basque Country's main territorial development challenges – Part III



## Infographic 4.5. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 2 to transform the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda into a long-term vision for sustainable development

### Recommendation 2

*Transform the Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda into a long-term vision for sustainable development*

The Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda and the Action Plan 2021-2024 are both strategies that focus on a time-bound four-year government term. A long-term vision for sustainable development is needed.



#### Actions

- **Leverage sectoral strategies contributing to SDG progress, the seven SDG flagship projects, and the Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda as a starting point and reference for the development of the vision**, alongside the assessment of the impact of existing sustainable development policies and projects to identify lessons learned, areas of success and gaps.
- **Integrate short-, medium- and long-term objectives and milestones as well as key performance indicators that the Basque Country aims to achieve by 2030, 2040 and 2050** (e.g. share of commutes by public transport, share of renewable sources in total electricity production, reduction of long-term unemployment incidences) into the sustainable development vision to provide a clear roadmap for the Basque Country's sustainable development progress over the next decades.
- **Leverage the Multi-Stakeholder Forum for Social Transition and the 2030 Agenda and the Basque Alliance for the SDGs as platforms for co-designing the Basque long-term vision** with stakeholders through dedicated working groups, public hearings and awareness-raising activities for greater impact and relevance.
- **Regularly review the long-term vision and consider adjustments and regular updates** (e.g. every five years) to integrate economic, societal and ecologic transformations of the vision to remain relevant and timely in the long run.



#### Actors



#### Timeline



#### Relevant international experiences



##### Region of Southern Denmark, Denmark

Southern Denmark's regional development strategy – Southern Denmark of the Future 2020-2023 – focuses on promoting holistic regional development through a framework of interlinked SDGs. It includes six strategic tracks with corresponding priority SDGs and four cross-cutting themes. Each of the tracks (green transition, climate and resources; clean water and soil; skills for the future; healthy living conditions; an attractive region, rich in experiences; mobility for all) is implemented through specific sub-strategies. The SDGs helped ensure coherence across strategic tracks and consider interlinkages between the goals, for instance to guarantee that an initiative designed to solve mobility issues does not cause adverse impact on the climate or environmental goals.

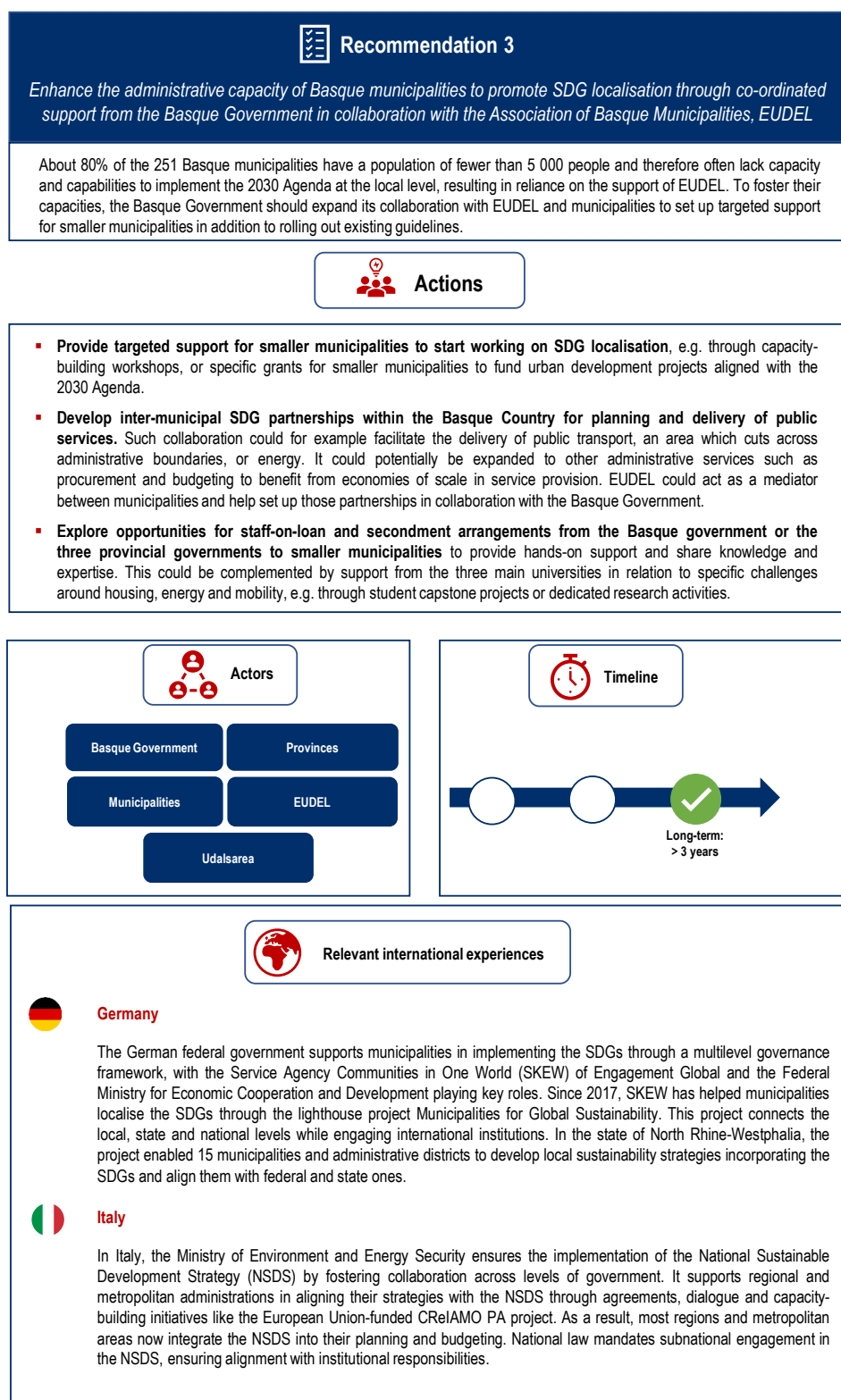


##### Autonomous Province of Bolzano-Bozen, Italy

To foster the UN 2030 Agenda, the Autonomous Province of Bolzano-Bozen, Italy, set up its sustainable development strategy *Everyday for Future – Together for Sustainability*. *Everyday for Future* defines seven fields of action that were derived from the SDG framework to promote sustainability across policy areas, such as the conservation of the natural environment, the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, competitiveness and social justice. To achieve these objectives through concrete policies and measures, the province put in place several sectoral strategies, notably a cross-departmental climate plan, a strategy for the agricultural sector as well as a tourism development concept and a sustainable mobility and logistics plan.

## Multi-level governance

### Infographic 4.6. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 3 to enhance the administrative capacity of Basque municipalities to promote SDG localisation



## Data and information

### Infographic 4.7. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 4 to set up a dashboard to track progress of the implementation of the Basque Government Programme and SDG Action Plan

#### Recommendation 4

*Set up a dashboard to track progress of the implementation of the Basque Government Programme and SDG Action Plan*

The Basque Government, together with EUSTAT, has already set up an online portal with SDG indicators and produces annual monitoring reports about its activities on the SDGs. As a next step, the online portal could be expanded by adding dedicated dashboards that visualise progress on the main government plans related to the SDGs, including the overall Basque Government Programme, and in particular its SDG Action Plan and the Bultzatu 2050 Urban Agenda. This would enable further increased transparency on the impact of regional policies and progress made in different policy areas.

#### Actions

- **Develop and incorporate key performance indicators and measurable targets into the EUSTAT web portal** to illustrate the progress of the implementation of Basque Government plans for the SDGs and their development over time to provide transparency for territorial stakeholder interested in monitoring sustainable development in the Basque Country.
- **Expand, where possible, the territorial breakdown of the indicators shown in the EUSTAT web portal**, to the provincial and municipal levels for a better understanding of territorial disparities and design place-based responses. While this is currently already possible for some indicators, data gaps remain. In addition, adding some comparisons to other regions in Spain could help contextualise the achievement and challenges of the Basque Country and learn from frontrunners.
- **Integrate additional data sources into the web portal**, such as sensor data, for example on air pollution, to provide more regular updates than through a static database or report with yearly updates.

#### Actors



#### Timeline



#### Relevant international experiences



##### City of Bonn, Germany

The city of Bonn, Germany, uses the German version of its voluntary local review to report on its progress on the 2030 Agenda and the 17 SDGs. The second edition published in 2022 follows the Sustainable Municipality reporting framework developed by the German Council for Sustainable Development. The new format combines quantitative indicators and qualitative reporting aspects in sustainability reporting. The report also maps the developments in the municipal fields of action of sustainability since the adoption of the Bonn Sustainability Strategy in February 2019.

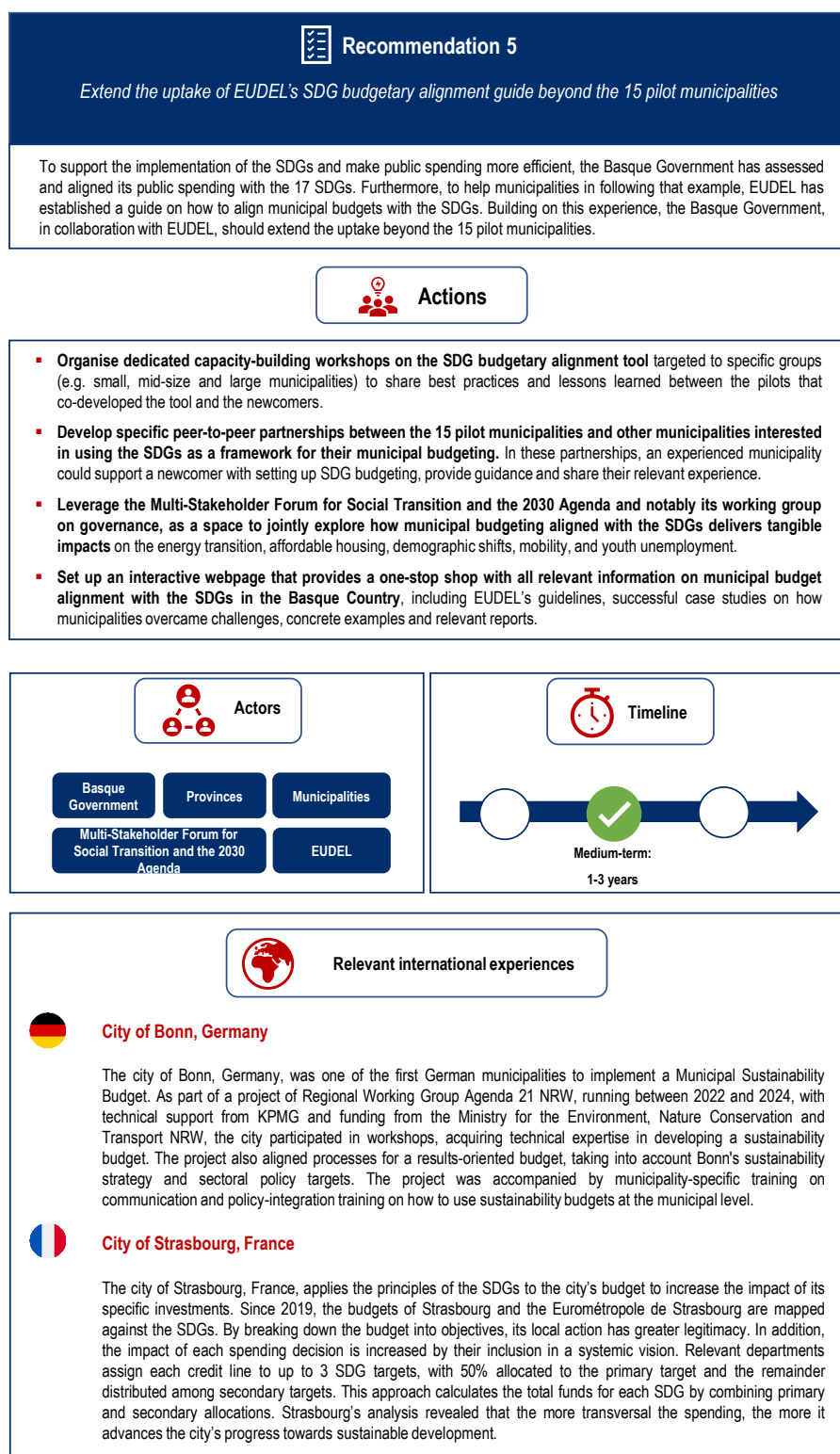


##### Municipality of Harelbeke, Belgium

The municipality of Harelbeke, Belgium, invested in building an SDG indicator set with a focus on measuring the achievement of specific municipal policy objectives. Indicators are based on existing data, accompanied by a concrete target value. These indicators are monitored annually. To visually present local data to citizens and territorial stakeholders, the municipality developed the "Harelbeke in figures" online dashboard, which is set up in line with the SDGs.

## Financing and budgeting

### Infographic 4.8. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 5 to extend the uptake of EUDEL's SDG budgetary alignment guide beyond the 15 pilot municipalities



## Infographic 4.9. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 6 to foster sustainable public procurement practices, notably through including social clauses alongside environmental criteria

### Recommendation 6

*Foster sustainable public procurement practices, notably through including social clauses alongside environmental criteria*

The Basque Government already uses environmental criteria in about half of its public procurements processes and acknowledges the importance of public procurement as a contributor to the SDGs. Moving forward, the Basque Government could further promote sustainability criteria in its Green Procurement and Contracting Programme.

### Actions

- **Further promote the uptake of appropriate environmental criteria (e.g. use of renewable energy or low-carbon construction material) in public procurement alongside social criteria (e.g. respect of human rights, fair trade, focus on employment of minorities) and socio-economic criteria (e.g. promotion of small and medium-sized enterprises' participation, local businesses) in the Basque Green Procurement and Contracting Programme for awarding public tenders to contribute to environmental protection, innovation, job creation and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises.**
- **Explore a 2030 Agenda impact assessment to analyse how procured goods or services contribute to achieving specific goals of the SDGs, including in selected sectors (e.g. construction or healthcare). This could be complemented by an annual monitoring and reporting mechanism to promote transparency and accountability of public procurement and compliance with laws and regulations.**
- **Provide training and capacity-building opportunities for public servants in the procurement departments of the Basque Government, provinces and municipalities to sensitise them to sustainable development and the 2030 Agenda.** These training activities could be conducted in collaboration with universities, think tanks or policy centres in the Basque Country with relevant expertise in sustainable public procurement to improve skills and competences of the procurement workforce.

### Actors



### Timeline



### Relevant international experiences



#### City of Barcelona, Spain

The city of Barcelona, Spain, has been promoting sustainable public procurement since 2017, guided by a mayoral decree that introduced social, environmental, ethical and innovation measures into municipal contracts. The decree also established the Social and Environmental Public Procurement Guides, which remain central to the city's approach. The latest Public Procurement Objectives Plan focuses on updating social and environmental clauses, promoting reserved contracting, analysing supply chain risks and applying diversity conditions in over 50% of personal services contracts, supported by detailed guidelines and resources for contracting units.

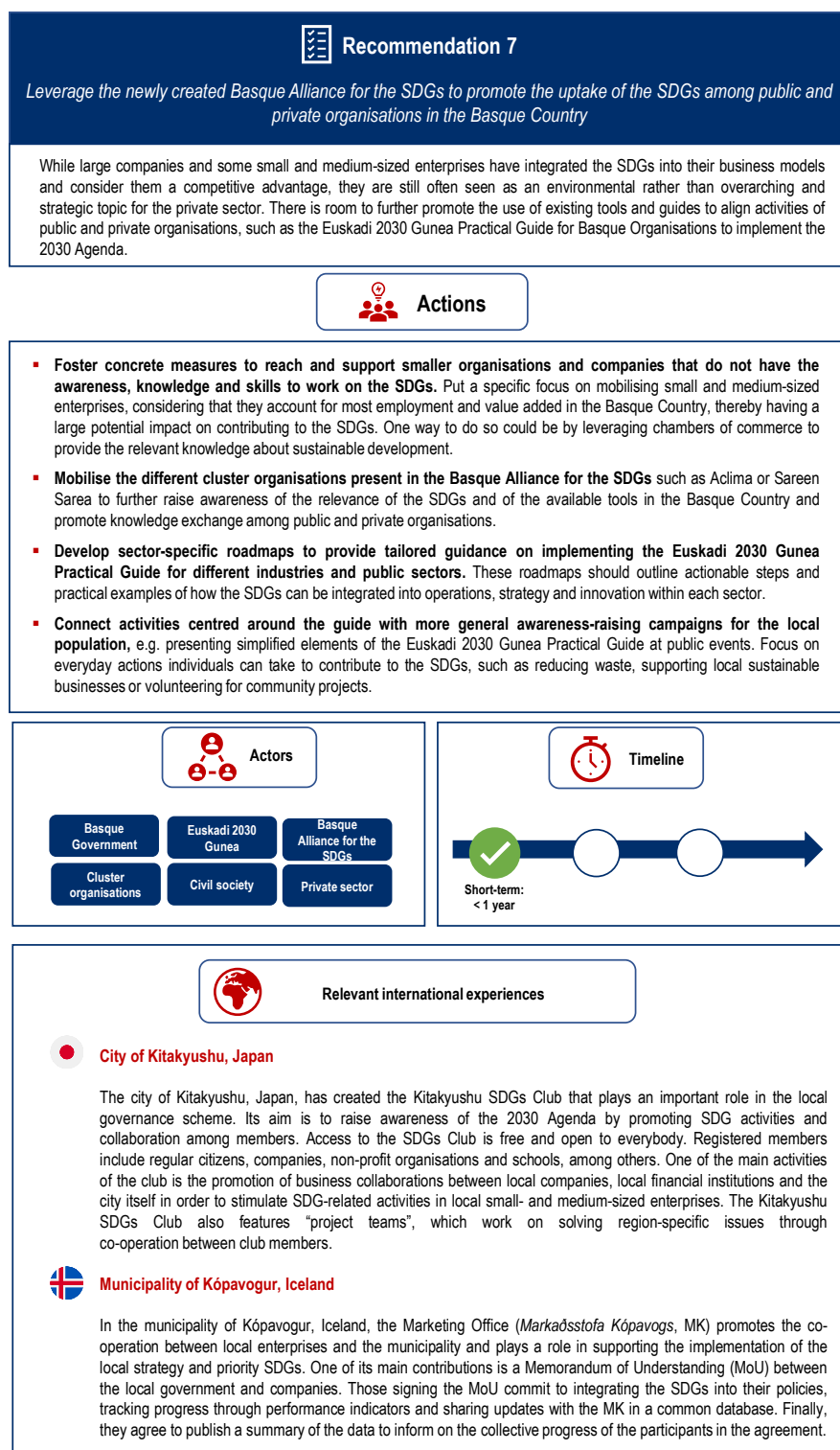


#### City of Malmö, Sweden

The city of Malmö, Sweden, has integrated sustainability requirements into its procurement processes to align purchases with the three dimensions of sustainable development. For example, the city has prioritised procuring Fairtrade-certified goods, such as coffee and tea, achieving a high proportion of such items. Additionally, Malmö has enhanced its initiatives to promote reuse by establishing an internal municipal procurement service for furniture, books, appliances and office equipment. In 2023, Malmö joined the Circular and Fair ICT Pact to emphasise its commitment to sustainable information and communication technology purchasing.

## Engagement

### Infographic 4.10. Action plan to implement OECD Recommendation 7 to leverage the Basque Alliance for the SDGs to promote the uptake of the SDGs among public and private organisations in the Basque Country



## References

OECD (2020), *A Territorial Approach to the Sustainable Development Goals - Policy Highlights*, [1]  
OECD, Paris.

Sign up for our Newsletter



[www.oecd.org/cfe/](http://www.oecd.org/cfe/)

Follow us on

OECD\_Local  |  oecd-local



[oecdcoquito.blog/](http://oecdcoquito.blog/)

