

# **A BASQUE COUNTRY COMMITTED TO CLIMATE CHANGE**

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The recent invitation to the lehendakari to preside over the alliance of regions associated with the public-private organization [The Climate Group](#) has been, in the words of its director general, Mark Kenber, in recognition of the proactive work that this country has been developing in recent years in the fields of clean and intelligent energy and in the face of climate change. Since 2009, this political agenda has had the direct involvement of the lehendakari in its promotion and development, which has resulted, to a large extent, in its incorporation into the main current of the work of the

Government.

The Cancun Conference (Mexico) last December provided significant progress on issues such as adaptation to climate change, technology transfer to developing countries, financial aid to them and the preservation of forests and jungles. tropical. However, not only has the international community failed to contain greenhouse gas emissions, the ultimate meaning of international negotiations, but in the past decade these have been placed above the most pessimistic scenario of those prepared by the Intergovernmental Panel of Experts on Climate Change (IPCC) in the late 1990s. The main cause of the acceleration in emissions is the dependence on fossil fuels from the intense industrialization of China and India. In 2009, 53% of total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, the main greenhouse gas, originated in developing countries, especially emerging ones; 44%, in the developed countries; the remaining 3% was generated by international aviation and shipping.

With less than a year and a half left until the end of the Kyoto Protocol -December 2012-, the great pending challenge continues to be formalizing a binding agreement that involves the large emitters -China, the United States, Europe, Brazil, India, Russia, Indonesia and Japan - and establish a credible roadmap for the decarbonisation of the international economy in the medium and long term, in line with what is demanded by the IPCC. Moving in this direction is the main objective of the Durban (South Africa) conference in December this year, although the results of the preparatory meetings in Bangkok and Bonn have not been encouraging.

The European Union will comply with the requirements of the Kyoto Protocol. In the 2008-2012 implementation period, it foresees an average reduction in its emissions of 14%, beyond the 8% committed in Kyoto. In addition, it has formally agreed to a 20% decrease by 2020 and has expressed its willingness to reach 30% if other relevant issuers agree to take equivalent steps. Likewise, the European Commission has recently presented a long-term roadmap (2050), which establishes a cost-efficient trajectory to reduce European emissions by 80%, an objective already approved by the Council of Europe and which responds to as demanded by the IPCC.

In this context, the emissions of the Basque Country in 2009 were only 6% higher than those of the reference year (1990). It is a good result in view of the trajectory of previous years, although the decisive thing will be to control them once the Basque economy grows significantly again. To this end, the Government has presented to the Basque Parliament the [Climate Change Bill](#).

If the law is approved, the Basque Country will be the second European region, after Scotland, to have its own legal standard on this subject. The bill has been met with a dispute with the Provincial Councils over a matter of powers over forests, important carbon sinks contemplated in the bill, which we hope will be adequately redirected.

The objective of the law is to lay the foundations for this country to progressively move towards an economy with a lower emissions footprint and prepare for adaptation to the impacts derived from climate change. The central instrument will be the so-called carbon budgets, which will assign the maximum amounts that the Government departments and the different institutions of the country can emit annually, thus guaranteeing an emissions mitigation trajectory that keeps us aligned with

the climate objectives of the European Union.

The preparation of the bill has had a broad process of participation and inter-institutional comparison, as well as between social and business agents, the world of science, technology centers and experts.

The recognition that The Climate Group has made of the Basque Country's trajectory has also taken into account the existence of an energy strategy based on energy efficiency and renewable energy. The energy sector causes 40% of the greenhouse gas emissions in the Basque Country, so its commitment to the task of continuing to progress towards an economy with lower emissions is essential.

In the transport sector, the commitment to sustainable mobility, especially the railway, is clear. Subway, tram, commuter trains, and railway. The metro project for Donostialdea, making great use of existing networks, is in this sense a step in the right direction. Strong support for electric vehicles is another emerging element of extraordinary importance for the future of sustainable development.

This trajectory also includes the scientific research program on the impacts of climate change in the Basque Country and the consolidation of the specialized research center, the [Basque Center for Climate Change](#) (BC3).

In short, the first steps to consider the Basque Country one of the European regions most committed to climate change have already been taken. Now it is necessary to consolidate them with the approval of the Climate Change Law. My hope and wish is that it be done unanimously by the parliamentary forces, as happened in [Scotland](#).

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