

PASAIA OUTER DOCK. MORE CEMENT NO THANKS

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The Gipuzkoa 2020-2030 Strategy, designed and promoted by After a three-year process in which hundreds of people and dozens of organizations have participated, the Strategic Office of the Provincial Council has made a clear commitment to moving towards the knowledge and innovation economy, an economy open to international markets, with a solid industrial base and high technological content. In this direction, public

economic and financial resources are essential for the permanent training of people, international benchmark research, scientific and technological development, support for presence in international markets, innovation and social cohesion. From this perspective, the outer basin of Pasaia **responds to some keys that have become obsolete** for Guipúzcoa and for the Basque Country as a whole: those that necessarily identify economic development with new and large infrastructures, keys in which the words environmental sustainability are almost always a nuisance, if not an empty shell.

Recent [reports of the Ministry of the Environment and the Department of the Environment of the Basque Government](#) regarding the Environmental Sustainability Report of the Infrastructure Master Plan of the Port of Pasaia seriously question the **economic and environmental viability of the project**, implicitly agreeing with those who in the last decade have opposed it for environmental, territorial, economic and country model reasons. The ministry's is an interim report, but its criticisms affect the waterline of the project. They predict a negative environmental evaluation that, if confirmed, will definitively truncate the construction of the outer dock.

The line of argument of the report of the Ministry of the Environment unfolds in two main directions. In the **environmental sphere**, it states that *"the selected alternative significantly and irreversibly alters the naturalness of the Special Conservation Area, made up of the Jaizkibel and Uليا Places of Community Interest. It irreversibly affects the most relevant environmental values of the coastline: landscape; geomorphology and marine biodiversity; dynamics and coastal processes; sedimentation of the seabed; marine vegetation and fauna, among others"*.

It also indicates that the area is included in the catalog of Especially Sensitive Marine Areas of Western European Waters, prepared by the International Maritime Organization, and as such "requires special protection as it is vulnerable to marine activities". Remember, also, that the outer dock collides with the Sectoral Territorial Plan for the Protection and Management of the Coast of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country, which classifies the place as a "special strict protection area". The second direction affects the economic-financial justification of the project. Based on the data provided by the port authority itself, the report questions whether to increase cargo by barely two million tons per year, 765 million euros are spent, plus access to the dock, plus the economic cost of environmental impacts, plus the amount of corrective and compensatory measures. It is not easy to justify to society that it is economically rational and efficient to invest that huge amount of public money in rolling cement, one of the most valuable ecological and scenic enclaves on the Cantabrian coast, to increase traffic by the equivalent of 7% of the annual movement. from the port of Bilbao -34 million tons in 2010-

The promoters have based the justification for the project on the need to have **new facilities that will accommodate growing freight traffic**. However, the analysis of the flows of the last decade indicates the weakness of the argument. In the year 2000, the port moved 4.6 million tons, while in 2010 there were barely 3.9 million. Before the current economic crisis, 2003 reached its peak -5.9 million- and since then the movement of cargo has only decreased. The report is, in this sense, very clear when it states that "port traffic does not seem to justify the operation in any way".

The ministry's report states that *"the unsustainability of the operation is revealed, without external contributions"*. In other words, the project can only be carried out if the State -that is, the taxpayer- puts most of the 1,000 million on the table. Even the novel idea of locating a new power generation

plant in the dock to replace the current coal-fired power station at the time is being questioned due to its incompatibility with the legal regulations on coasts and ports.

The Ministry of the Environment concludes its report by saying that, "*from the strict perspective of the protection of the maritime-terrestrial public domain, it is considered appropriate to deepen alternative 2, since it allows the pre-existing conditions of the coastline to be maintained unaltered exterior, favorably affects the regeneration of the bay and promotes reaching traffic volumes (2030) compatible with the normal development of port activity*". In other words, in the opinion of the ministry, the promoters of the outer dock are betting in the wrong direction.

The reports from the Ministry of the Environment and the Department of the Environment of the Basque Government have been **very critical**. It is surprising that some local politicians have come to the fore insisting that the outer dock project is stronger than ever. It is an overacting that could be interpreted as a contempt for the critical considerations of the ministry and the Basque Government. With the battery of considerations that have been put on the table, **what is foreseeable is a negative environmental assessment**. It would be, in my opinion, a triumph of economic rationality, environmental sustainability and **a vision of a modern country and of the future**. The keys to the prosperity of the historical territory of Guipúzcoa and the Basque Country have nothing to do with cement laminating one of its most valuable and best preserved coastal enclaves. Better not keep betting in the wrong direction.

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