

TRANSFORMING THE BASQUE COUNTRY INTO A SUSTAINABLE CITY-REGION

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This Monday 26 and Tuesday 27 November 2019 **NAIDER has attended the [XVIII EuskalHiria Congress 2019](#)**, which took place at the Kursaal Auditorium in Donostia-San Sebastián. The congress focused on the **presentation of the [new Urban Agenda for Euskadi – Bultzatu 2050](#)**, which promotes a reflection on the territory and the city from a territorial network perspective, that of the city-region and the new metropolitan areas.

The Agenda has been prepared based on the New Urban Agenda of the United Nations and is **[aligned with number 11 of the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#)**, whose purpose is to **achieve inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities**, where no person and no place is left behind. **The event brought together renowned politicians and agents**, such as Iñaki Arriola López (Minister of the Department of the Environment, Territorial Planning and Housing of the Basque Government), Elena Moreno Zaldibar (Deputy Minister of the Environment of the Basque Government), Gorka Urtaran Aguirre, Eneko Goia Laso and Juan Mari Aburto (Mayors of Vitoria, Donostia and Bilbao, respectively), among many others. Also present were representatives of the

European Commission and UN-Habitat, as well as other national and international representatives of recognized prestige.

During the first day (Monday, November 26) the importance of **aligning and integrating the various national and international agendas** to draw up the Urban Agenda for the Basque Country was highlighted: [2030 Agenda](#), Urban Agenda [European](#) and [Spain](#), [Euskadi Basque Country 2030 Agenda](#), [Klima 2050](#), [Udalsarea 2030](#)... . **The multi-level approach of the Agenda is essential to align the different objectives and proposals for sustainable development that exist on the national and international scene.** The idea of the city was also addressed from the point of view of an **integrated and transdisciplinary platform**, where the social, environmental, and economic dimensions are integrated into an urban environment, the city, which serves as a node for solutions. for the challenge of sustainable development.

On the second day (Tuesday 27) we highlight the panel on 'The Environmentally Sustainable City', through which different issues related to the **transformation of our cities towards an environmentally sustainable scenario were addressed.** Elena Moreno Zaldibar, Deputy Minister for the Environment of the Basque Government, highlighted the contributions of the Basque Government in environmental matters, while Gorka Urtarán Aguirre, Mayor of Vitoria-Gasteiz, focused on the challenges of **urban mobility** and in highlighting the difficulties of this sector, such as the existing conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists.

Salvador Rueda, Director of the Barcelona Urban Ecology Agency, focused his speech on **generosity as the driving force behind creating sustainable cities.** We all agree that if the different agents involved in the challenge of transforming our cities do not agree, there is no possible future. Salvador highlighted three types of agents in particular: **citizenship, politics, and technical solutions.** On the one hand, it is necessary to make a great effort so that citizens identify with sustainability, since this will make them feel that they are the direct beneficiaries of living in sustainable cities and, as a result, they will work to achieve it. On the other hand, the technical teams have to develop the technology and techniques necessary to solve the different challenges we face. Lastly, the political sphere must invest in priority issues that help transform our cities. Vitoria-Gasteiz was used as an example of a city that bases its success on synergies between the three types of groups mentioned (political, citizenship and technology), as occurred during the candidacy for the European Green City Award.

Finally, the speakers highlighted the importance of the circular economy, especially regarding the need to **reduce the production and consumption of plastics and the use of food that is thrown away.** Both challenges will be key pieces in the new [Basque Country Circular Economy Strategy 2030](#) .

At NAIDER we believe that the new Urban Agenda for the Basque Country should not remain just another document, as has been pointed out throughout the congress. Therefore, the document must be “grounded” and **move from words to action.** To put it into practice, it is necessary that all the environmental challenges addressed in the document (waste reduction, sustainable mobility, energy transformation...) **be integrated into our culture and become social priority aspects.** Our objective, at an individual level, must be to feel these challenges for sustainability as our own, as a personal commitment and a vital objective. It is necessary to avoid that all this is approached solely from a political perspective, for which we must introduce the cultural variable that allows to increase awareness about the various social and environmental problems.

Without integrating these challenges into our daily thoughts, without giving them the weight they deserve at a cultural level, environmental and social problems will continue to be unresolved problems, with the difference that there is less and less time left. If we manage to make these challenges a part of our culture, such as our language or other customs, the solutions will speed up. Let's remember: everything we feel as ours we tend to protect. And

that should be the feeling to develop towards the environment and social justice. Luckily, the new generations have been going strong, and we must be the ones who take the reins of environmental and social awareness at all levels.

Julen González Redín

PhD in Sustainable Development

There are no comments yet.