

PLENTZIA EXPLORES REGENERATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE ARPILLAO AREA THROUGH INNOVATION AND THE BLUE ECONOMY

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Plentzia City Council is promoting a strategic reflection process to identify opportunities for the comprehensive regeneration of the Arpillao area, one of the most distinctive spaces along its seafront. The work, currently in development, aims to define a future vision for this enclave that combines urban revitalisation with economic activation linked to marine knowledge, innovation and sustainability.

The initiative arises from the convergence of several factors that open a window of opportunity for the municipality. On the one hand, there is a need to intervene in the Arpillao area to improve its functionality and its relationship with the seafront. On the other, Plentzia is home to PiE-Plentziako Itsas Estazioa (University of the Basque Country), the only experimental marine biology and biotechnology research centre in the Basque Country, which welcomes around 180 international postgraduate and doctoral students each year. The proximity of this scientific infrastructure to the Arpillao area creates an opportunity to incorporate uses linked to research, advanced training, science communication and entrepreneurship in the marine bioeconomy.

The strategic activation process includes a multidimensional diagnosis of the area — addressing urban planning, environmental, marine interface and socio-economic aspects — a benchmarking of international coastal regeneration experiences linked to marine science, and a proposal for uses and strategic lines tailored to the reality of Plentzia. Among the references analysed are initiatives such as Roscoff's Blue Valley (France) and the Blue Living Lab at Nausicaá (Boulogne-sur-Mer), which have successfully articulated marine innovation ecosystems with tangible economic and social impact in their territories.

This reflection takes place at a significant planning moment for Plentzia, which has recently launched the tender for the drafting of its new General Urban Development Plan. This urban review process provides a favourable framework to ensure that decisions regarding the future of Arpillao are integrated into a coherent, long-term municipal vision.

At a regional scale, the project connects with the Uribe-Kosta 2026–2036 Strategic Plan, which identifies the blue economy as one of the key opportunity areas for the region under the concept of the "Uribe Kosta Blue Lab". Promoted by the Association of Municipalities through Behargintza, the plan highlights the potential of the coastline and marine knowledge as levers for economic diversification, talent attraction and the creation of skilled employment. Plentzia's initiative aligns with this regional vision, providing a concrete project around which part of this strategy can be articulated.

The work considers three development vectors: marine biotechnology as a high-growth sector with applications in food, health, cosmetics and the environment; marine biotourism as a means to diversify and reduce the seasonality of the local economy; and marine literacy as a tool to connect citizens and visitors with the coastal ecosystem. The proposal also includes a roadmap with implementation phases, a governance model and the enabling conditions required to move forward in an orderly manner.

In a context in which the European Union is expected to significantly increase funding allocated to the blue bioeconomy from 2026 onwards, Plentzia City Council seeks to position both the municipality and the region to seize these opportunities, transforming an urban regeneration challenge into a forward-looking project based on science, innovation and the sustainable development of the coastline.

