

# The Role of Multi-Level Governance in Shaping Regional Growth and Competitiveness in the Basque Country

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## Abstract

In light of ongoing debates in England over the urgency of new devolution deals to ‘level up’ the country, this article investigates how devolved powers have been used to transform and sustain the economy in one of the most economically successful regions in Europe: the Basque Country. Drawing upon interviews conducted with Basque politicians, researchers and practitioners, the article examines the role that multi-level governance and public-private collaboration have played in shaping the region’s economic development, as well as the challenges that derive from its complex institutional structure. The article concludes by suggesting that one of the most significant takeaways from the Basque experience is the importance of using devolution to build a collaborative web of actors and institutions at regional and local level with an enduring common knowledge and purpose that far outlives any one government, as well as the social capital needed to sustain that.

**Keywords:** devolution, multi-level governance, economic growth, competitiveness, Basque Country, levelling up

## Introduction

IT HAS LONG been recognised that extensive economic benefits for regions and communities can be derived from devolved governance structures, which empower subnational authorities to design and implement economic development strategies and policy suited to the local area. One of the most notable examples in this regard is the Basque Country, by which we are referring here to the region (autonomous community) in northern Spain with a population of just over 2 million.<sup>1</sup> It survived the collapse of heavy industry in the 1970s and ‘80s to become one of the leading regions in Europe both in terms of GDP per capita and in having a low percentage of the population at risk of poverty or exclusion.<sup>2</sup> Within Spain itself, the

eternal, heavily politicised debate over whether or not the Basques benefit from having a different funding model from most other regions has detracted from a wider understanding and appreciation of the role of effective governance in shaping Basque economic outcomes. This article therefore focuses on how the Basque system of multi-level governance and public-private collaboration has contributed to the region’s economic development, which offers useful insights for other country and regional contexts.

The analysis is informed by a series of meetings and interviews conducted in late 2021 and early 2022 with a range of decision makers and stakeholders from both the public and private sectors, with direct experience of the design and implementation process of Basque economic strategy and policy. Interviewees included high-level representatives (past and present) of the Basque regional and provincial governments, heads of cluster

<sup>1</sup>The Basque Country in a wider sense can also refer to a larger area encompassing neighbouring Navarre and parts of southern France.

<sup>2</sup>M. J. Aranguren Querejeta, P. Canto, E. Magro, M. Navarro, J. R. Wilson and J. M. Valdalisio, ‘Long-term regional strategy for inclusive competitiveness: the Basque Country case, 2008–2020’, Basque Institute of Competitiveness-Deusto

Foundation, 2021; <https://www.orquestra.deusto.es/images/investigacion/publicaciones/informes/cuadernos-orquestra/210008-Basque-Country-Territorial-Strategy.pdf>

associations and representatives of other relevant organisations such as the Basque Institute of Competitiveness (Orkestra) and the Basque Innovation Agency (Innobasque)—see Appendix.

## Decentralisation in the Basque Country

Under Spain's decentralisation model, established in the Constitution of 1978, the Basque Country, like Spain's other regions known as autonomous communities, has three political and administrative levels of government—regional, provincial and municipal. In the Basque case, in terms of subregional levels of administration, there are three provinces—Araba/Álava, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa—each headed by a provincial government (*Diputación*), and 252 municipalities. What is unique to the Basque Country is the significant role afforded to the three provinces, otherwise known as Basque 'historical territories' (*territorios históricos*). For historical reasons, the Basque region, like neighbouring Navarre, has extensive fiscal autonomy. Under the terms of its Economic Agreement (*Concierto Económico*), it is the Basque provincial governments that are responsible for raising taxes, most of which they then transfer to the regional government for its spending competences. An additional level between the provinces and the municipalities is that of the twenty counties. They do not have an administrative or governmental body as such, but do have the county development agencies, also called local development agencies, created in the late 1980s.

Core competences in the sphere of economic development are held by the regional and provincial governments: the former is responsible for industrial and competitiveness policy; the latter are responsible for 'economic promotion' within their territories. 'Economic promotion' is understood as embracing all activities designed to promote local economic growth. In terms of the main departments and entities designed to fulfil these competences, at regional government level, the Department of Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment houses the Basque Business Development Agency (SPRI), the main regional government entity for

supporting and promoting Basque industry first created in 1981.<sup>3</sup> At provincial level, each of the three governments has a Department for Economic Promotion. The local authorities are also involved in economic promotion, since economic development also falls under their remit and they often have a designated department and councillor (*concejala*) for this area. The most important players at the local level are the town halls of the provincial capitals, most notably Bilbao, which is capital of the province of Bizkaia (the source of approximately half of Basque GDP) as well as of the Basque region overall.

Basque academics have divided the evolution of Basque industrial policy from the 1980s until the 2010s into three main phases, starting with the 1980s, when the new regional government concentrated its efforts on a restructuring of the economy at a time of severe economic crisis owing to the decline in heavy industry.<sup>4</sup> The regional government's determination back then to build on its existing strengths in industry, at a time when the wider political and academic climate did not look favourably on such a focus, provided the grounding for its economic transformation thereafter. In the 1990s, improving competitiveness then became the core focus, with efforts to foster greater industrial diversification and internationalisation. Third and finally, the 2000s onwards were characterised by an increasingly ambitious programme aimed at fostering innovation and a diversification of the economy towards more science-based sectors, combined with increasing internationalisation.

In terms of process, the Basque regional government leads on strategy design and policy making in the field of economic development, but a gradual evolution from very hierarchical decision making in the early 1980s—necessitated by the circumstances of the time—towards more collaborative approaches, with input from other levels of administration and the private sector,

<sup>3</sup>S. Royo, 'The politics of adjustment and coordination at the regional level: the Basque Country', Center for European Studies Working Paper Series, no. 171, 2009; [https://ces.fas.harvard.edu/uploads/files/Working-Papers-Archives/CES\\_171.pdf](https://ces.fas.harvard.edu/uploads/files/Working-Papers-Archives/CES_171.pdf)

<sup>4</sup>For example, J. M. Valdaliso, 'The Basque Country: past trajectory and path dependency in policy- and strategy-making', in J. M. Valdaliso and J. R. Wilson, eds., *Strategies for Shaping Territorial Competitiveness*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2020, pp. 113–130.

has taken place. This began with some initiatives in the 1980s, such as the creation of the first technology centres, which would become a key meeting point for government and businesses and evolve into strong networks of applied research centres that form a key part of the Basque economic ecosystem to this day. Another major initiative came in the 1990s with the launch of the government's pioneering programme to cluster economic activity. The clusters would provide a means thereafter for greater input from businesses into influencing the regional government's economic strategy and industrial policies. Collaborative efforts increased further in the 2000s, one of several examples being the launch and development in 2004 of the Basque Competitiveness Forum (*Foro de Competitividad Euskadi*), which brought together representatives from the business sector, academia, trade unions, political parties and the government to help inform policy making. While these initiatives took place at the regional level, moves towards cooperation were also taking place at provincial and local levels of administration. From around 2005, for example, the county development agencies, particularly in the province of Gipuzkoa, where they were most active, started to transition from providers of services to firms into facilitators of networks designed to address local economic development through cooperation among public and private actors and institutions in the area.<sup>5</sup> Since then, public sector innovation labs, conceived of as spaces which bring together politicians and civil society in a participatory process to inform public policy, have also been set up at both local and provincial level in Gipuzkoa.<sup>6</sup>

Such collaborative initiatives and networks should serve a dual purpose. On the one hand, they should facilitate a more efficient implementation of regional policy through the

positive impact of mutual learning and coordination effects and the corresponding creation of social capital among socioeconomic actors and wider society. In turn, they provide a means to channel feedback from a wide range of stakeholders within the region into the regional government-led policy-making process, adding value. However, such a complex institutional structure with different levels of governance and various networks runs the risk of overlapping competences and coordination problems which might undermine those goals. The aim of the analysis that follows is therefore to address how such collaborative governance—which draws upon inputs from different levels of government and a range of public and private stakeholders—has worked in the Basque Country in the field of economic development, what coordination challenges have occurred and why. This will be achieved by examining firstly the role of a selection of regional-level public and private organisations, from the clusters through to two of the newer organisations created in the mid-2000s, the Basque Institute of Competitiveness (Orkestra) and the Basque Innovation Agency (Innobasque); and secondly, different levels of government within the region and the relationship between them. All interviewees were asked not only about the role of the organisations or governments they have taken part in, but also about their work with and perception of the role of others in the system. Comments are not usually attributed directly to specific interviewees—in part owing to their occasionally sensitive nature, but also because all key findings were raised by more than one interviewee and usually several, which points to the level of shared perceptions across the system as to what works well and where there is room for improvement.

## Regional-level organisations

The Basque regional government's efforts to cluster economic activity, launched in the early 1990s under the leadership of Jon Azua, Minister for Energy and Industry, became one of the first clear examples of its attempt to promote more participatory economic governance with a view to co-creating value. Moreover, the clusters have become a model of success in this regard ever since. The key linchpin of their success lies in the way they provide the Basque government with strategic intelligence to help

<sup>5</sup>M. Estensoro and M. Larrea, 'The evolution of Basque local development agencies from service providers to facilitators in knowledge networks', in N. Bellini, M. Danson and H. Halkier, eds., *Regional Development Agencies: The Next Generation?*, London, Routledge, 2012, pp. 226–244.

<sup>6</sup>A. Unceta, X. Barandiaran and N. Restrepo, 'The role of public innovation labs in collaborative governance—the case of the Gipuzkoa lab in the Basque Country, Spain', *Sustainability*, vol. 11, no. 21, 2019, pp. 1–16.

inform policy, with the gains from that strategic intelligence outweighing the relatively small cost of the policy itself. The clusters enjoy a fluid, two-way relationship with the Basque government, primarily via the Basque government's Business Development Agency (SPRI), but also via other government agencies where relevant, most notably the Basque Energy Agency (EVE). Basque efforts to generate the necessary social capital for clusters to become effective participants in policy making have also facilitated this reciprocal relationship. For example, one of the cluster directors interviewed mentioned the Microeconomics of Competitiveness (MOC) short course regularly run by the Basque Institute of Competitiveness, which has contributed to generating a common language and knowledge base among those actively involved in Basque economic development.

The Basque clusters have become the emblematic example of successful collaborative dynamics shaping economic policy in the Basque Country. To what extent, however, have other institutions and networks created since then, as part of a new wave in the 2000s, achieved similar success? By the 2000s, the fundamental networks and institutions of the Basque economic ecosystem—most notably SPRI, the clusters, the technology centres and the technology parks in which many Basque businesses and clusters are based—were already in place. New institutional initiatives in the 2000s are therefore not comparable in terms of size, role or reach, but rather were designed to add further value to an already existing Basque economic ecosystem. The aim of this section is to consider whether and in what ways two of these—the Basque Institute of Competitiveness (Orkestra) and the Basque Innovation Agency (Innobasque)—founded in 2006 and 2007 respectively, achieved this.

In the case of Orkestra, this was an originally private initiative that secured public backing and came to be funded through a mix of public and private financing. The idea came initially from Jon Azua, by then a former government minister. His vision of the Institute was that it should be linked to, but independent from a Basque university, in order to give it more flexibility in terms of structure, funding and recruitment. Orkestra's mission was to undertake transformative research and activities, working alongside practitioners, with a view

to improving the Basque Country's competitiveness. Financial support for Orkestra in its first four-year trial period came from the Basque government and, thanks to lobbying efforts, a handful of leading Basque businesses. Today, around 60 per cent of Orkestra's financing continues to come from a mix of public and private stakeholders—the Basque government is its largest funder—while the remaining c.40 per cent comes from competitive research grants and teaching activities. While Orkestra conceives of those that provide stable financing and sit on the board as its 'formal' stakeholders, the research and activities it conducts are designed to involve and be useful to all relevant Basque actors and institutions, including groups from civil society, business and government.

Interviewees not only from within Orkestra, but also those outside it who have been involved in its activities, suggest that its core contribution has been achieved through the kind of research it conducts—not *for* stakeholders, but *with* them. This has not always been easy to achieve, and when Orkestra was first created, it was initially focused on writing reports for its funders on areas of interest identified by them, as they largely set the agenda. Quite quickly, however, Orkestra started to move away from that towards more of an action research approach to investigating and understanding regional competitiveness. This involved working with stakeholders to understand their problems and then developing research agendas based on an understanding of where those fit within the international state of the art on such questions. There were some tensions in the early years as this transition took place, as some stakeholders had expectations of the kind of research Orkestra should conduct—seeing it, for example, as a quasi-government organisation that should carry out the research the government requested. Orkestra's directors, however, were very clear that their role was not to write reports for the government or any other formal stakeholder in this way, but rather to work with them to conduct rigorous, independent research that supported the overall goal of increasing the region's competitiveness.

Regarding the Basque Innovation Agency, Innobasque, the initiative for this came from the regional government at the time, which approached Pedro Luis Uriarte to lead

it. Uriarte is well known in Basque circles as the Basque Economy and Treasury Minister who negotiated the Basque fiscal autonomy model under the first regional government of 1980–1984, before moving into the private sector. The aim of Innobasque was to support the Basque Country to become not just a leading European reference in terms of innovation, but *the* leading European reference by 2030. Uriarte's vision and influence were key in this regard. Under his input, Innobasque was set up as a private, non-profit initiative with both public and private financial support, in order to allow for independence from the government and flexibility in terms of organisation and activities. Innobasque would work closely with a new public institution established at the same time, the Basque Council of Science, Technology and Innovation, that also counted on private support. Innobasque sought to provide a space above existing public institutions and private structures (for example, the clusters) that could bring them together to discuss overarching objectives and challenges in relation to innovation-driven transformation that they all shared. It also needed to work to achieve a strong social commitment to that ambition, and the bulk of its activities were designed with that in mind. As a first, major step, Uriarte wrote to 425 key leaders from a wide range of professions and sectors, inviting them to join the initiative and form part of Innobasque's governing body. He attracted a large audience; almost all invitees (420, according to Uriarte himself) responded positively and were on the stage at the launch event at the landmark Euskalduna Conference Centre in Bilbao. This generated a significant impact and momentum from day one, and also became fundamental to financing Innobasque's activities, as Innobasque relied on members paying a membership fee to supplement the public funds from the Basque government and the provincial governments. In its first years, Uriarte explained, it secured approximately 1,000 members.

Beyond key leaders and decision makers, however, Innobasque sought to generate awareness among wider society about the importance of innovation to the Basque Country's continued economic development and competitiveness. Innobasque was to play a facilitating role so that society would take on

the task of turning the Basque Country into a reference point for innovation. In its first two to three years in particular, the activities Innobasque carried out were very ambitious in terms of number, scope and reach, covering topics related to technological and scientific innovation, social and business transformation, entrepreneurship, talent and internationalisation. Not all, however, viewed Innobasque's intense activity entirely positively. Some of the key concerns centred around its funding model. Some within government were uncomfortable with the fact that Innobasque received a lot of public funding and yet its management was independent of the government. In addition, given Innobasque's reliance on a mix of public and private funding, existing private organisations like some of the clusters, which were already working on innovation challenges, became concerned that they might end up competing with it for fee-paying members. It was not always so easy, in practice, to ensure that Innobasque's 'umbrella' activities, bringing together all actors and institutions working on innovation challenges, did not end up encroaching on already existing work in that area by others and competing with them for funding.

Following those first years, Innobasque's role changed somewhat. For some, this was inevitable—it was to be expected that its awareness-raising activities would decrease once the message was out there about the importance of innovation. Others, however, point to the fact that it was also an evolution necessitated by the circumstances—its purpose and position within the existing Basque ecosystem needed to be rethought. It began to report more directly to the regional government—though its President and Director are not political appointments—and became responsible, first and foremost, for ensuring the implementation of the government's Science, Technology and Innovation Plan (PCTI) by supporting the government with forecasting, monitoring and evaluation activities, thereby moving beyond the primarily awareness-raising agenda of its early years. Such evaluation activities had been identified as a missing loop in the cycle: they were undertaken to inform the drafting of each new PCTI, but not so much thereafter to assess its implementation. Given that the responsibility for the Plan was shifted from the Department of Industry to the President's Office (Lehendakaritza) during the Basque Socialists'

time in office (2009–2012), that ability for Innobasque to contribute to an overarching purpose, bringing together various departments and areas to work on innovation challenges continued, albeit in a different fashion to its first years. While Innobasque primarily works at the regional level and reports to the regional government, it has also made moves in more recent times to work with the provincial governments to bring some of the key initiatives down from the Basque PCTI and wider competitiveness strategy into the county development agencies. This brings us onto the question of institutional relations between the Basque regional government, provincial governments and municipal structures, and the ways in which they help or hinder regional development and competitiveness.

## Multi-level governance within the Basque region

As indicated earlier, the core competences in terms of economic development lie with the Basque regional and provincial governments. Both have an important role, as there are significant differences between the business and industrial landscape in each of the provinces, and the provincial governments must offer strategies and initiatives adapted to these different economic realities, within the broader scope of the region-wide strategies. However, there is a clear overlap between the regional government's industrial policy competence and the provincial governments' responsibility for economic promotion, which raises the need for coordination. As the provincial governments have their own resources and competences, they launch initiatives in the sphere of economic development with a degree of independence from the Basque government, and not always in tune with it. In most cases, there is no fundamental disagreement in terms of the strategic line on growth and competitiveness, but rather each institution, when leading on a process, wants to assert ownership, defend its own territory and be able to promote its achievements to voters as the result of its own initiatives. That is what leads to occasional overlaps, duplication of efforts and even dissent. Interestingly, competition in the Basque Country, when it comes to designing and implementing strategies related

to economic development, therefore tends to take place more between the different government levels rather than between different parties. Both regional and provincial governments are usually led by the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV), which has long been the dominant party in the region, but the overall vision of economic and social development in the Basque region is not drastically different across different parties, so political differences among parties in this regard have not been insurmountable on the rare occasions when others have been in power.

The main formal contact between the regional and provincial governments is via high-level committees that bring together ministers from both levels either once per year or every six months. The most important of these is the Basque Council of Public Finances (CVFP) since this governs the distribution of finances between the different government levels. Also significant in terms of economic development is the Basque Council of Science, Technology and Innovation mentioned earlier, which decides the smart specialisation strategy and, like the CVFP, includes the three heads (*Diputados Generales*) of each provincial government. To inform the design of its regional strategy, the Basque government, primarily via SPRI (and also, more recently, Innobasque), establishes steering groups in the different priority areas, which incorporate the clusters and other relevant actors in the Basque Country's economic ecosystem. The provincial governments have not traditionally had a clear role within that process, but efforts have been made in recent times to incorporate them, and thereby to facilitate greater coherence between regional and provincial government strategies. Beyond such high-level committees, however, it is the level of implementation where most challenges persist. There is often relatively little coordination between the regional and provincial governments in the technical day-to-day implementation of the key aspects of Basque economic strategies.

There is no doubt that there are many examples of provincial initiatives that have complemented regional initiatives in a way that is conducive to boosting efficiency. In terms of specific institutions, one example mentioned by an interviewee is that of the Automotive Intelligence Centre (AIC) created by the provincial government of Bizkaia in 2006.

That largely complemented rather than duplicated the work of regional-level structures, such as the existing Basque automotive cluster, since it centred on a series of issues particularly relevant to Bizkaia. The challenge occurs more when defining a focus that complements rather than duplicates that of existing regional-level institutions is not so straightforward. This helps to explain, for example, why it has taken the provincial government of Bizkaia a lot longer to get its Energy Intelligence Centre (EIC) off the ground. While firms and other institutions, such as the clusters, generally have very good relations with both regional and provincial governments, it can put them in a difficult position if there is a degree of overlap between regional- and provincial-level initiatives and they are called upon to participate in both.

Notwithstanding these challenges, some of the most interesting examples of where provincial initiatives can complement regional ones concern those where the provincial governments work together with municipal structures. A broad consensus has been reached that the best way to reach the smallest firms—which make up a huge part of the Basque business landscape—is to work with the provincial governments that, in turn, draw upon input from municipal structures such as the county development agencies. This is particularly so in Gipuzkoa, where the agencies have come to play a particularly important role because the boundaries of the counties there were developed by the local authorities rather than being imposed from above, and because of the different geography of Gipuzkoa, where economic activity is more dispersed and less heavily centred on the provincial capital compared to Bizkaia or Álava. While the county development agencies were originally created in the late 1980s to deal with the problem of unemployment, they later developed a wider remit to work with and support local firms on wider policy issues. In this regard, the relationship between firms, the county development agencies and the provincial government in Gipuzkoa has developed into a very interesting example of collaborative governance, where the agencies work with the provincial government in ways that can boost efficiency, rather than duplicating its efforts. This collaboration manifests itself through

the way in which the provincial government supports the county development agencies and draws upon the insights from those to shape its programmes and policy in relation to topics such as innovation, rather than simply funding a team at provincial level. This forms part of wider initiatives in the province designed to bring together politicians, economic actors and civil society representatives to help inform and shape policy making, such as participatory action research projects.<sup>7</sup>

## Key findings and learnings

To conclude, the Basque Country's economic success stems in no small measure from the complex system of institutions and networks that have gradually developed over the decades and that make up the region's economic governance structure. These have served to generate an intricate web of connections and a common language, purpose and knowledge base in the sphere of economic development that far outlive any specific government, minister or business leader. Essentially, the idea is one of sowing the seeds of collaboration via institutions and networks that will continue to radiate ever-increasing connections and knowledge thereafter. This is encapsulated in Jon Azua's comment, when interviewed, that his department's efforts in the 1990s should be seen as a strategy to cluster economic activity rather than a cluster policy, since clusters should continue to develop and grow beyond any specific government; or in Pilar Kaltzada's comment that the role of Innobasque—where she was the first Communications Director—was to serve as a facilitating entity that could activate innovation-related knowledge and networks in society, rather than simply constituting a source of knowledge in and of itself. The institutions and networks that Basque regional governments have initiated or facilitated have allowed not just for a more effective implementation of regional strategies and policies in relation to economic development, but also valuable input from a range of institutions

<sup>7</sup>J. Karlsen and M. Larrea, 'The contribution of action research to policy learning: the case of Gipuzkoa Sarean', *International Journal of Action Research*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2014, pp. 129–155.

and actors into shaping policy design in the first place. Efforts at provincial and local level have often served to complement these, for example, by providing a means to reach the smallest firms that make up so much of the Basque economic landscape and incorporating them into the policy feedback loop.

Challenges have nevertheless occurred, primarily in terms of coordination between different institutions and government levels to avoid duplication of efforts in such a complex network. While collaborative governance as a concept is generally welcomed by all, putting it into practice where that requires relinquishing a degree of institutional control is often easier said than done. The most notable challenge in the Basque case concerns the relation between regional and provincial governments, where a lack of coordination and therefore duplication of efforts can occur, in particular when it comes to policy implementation. The competition between regional and provincial government levels to assert ownership of economic development activities is particularly significant in the Basque Country owing to the unusually important role the provincial governments have as tax collectors for the region, but it points to the wider coordination challenges multi-level governance structures in general can face. The Basque case also reveals the fine balance that needs to be achieved between creating new institutions to add further value to an already existing economic governance system, while ensuring that they do not encroach on the work and funding of others. The contrast between Orkestra and Innobasque analysed here is emblematic in this regard, in the sense that Orkestra filled a clear gap from the outset, while Innobasque's role ultimately needed to be rethought somewhat, since it came too close initially to work already being undertaken by other organisations within the system.

These challenges and caveats, however, do not detract from the fact that the Basque case is first and foremost a very positive example of how devolution has enabled the design and implementation of governance structures, strategies and policies shaped to local realities and informed by local knowledge, thereby facilitating the region's economic development and competitiveness. The Basque

Country is unusual in terms of its extensive fiscal autonomy and this dimension is not likely to be mirrored elsewhere. What is largely translatable to other contexts, however, is the way in which actors and institutions in the region have worked to create an enduring common knowledge and purpose in terms of the region's economic trajectory and the networks and knowledge needed to sustain and advance it, avoiding the short-termism linked to particular government terms so often seen elsewhere.

## Appendix

### A.1 List of interviewees (in chronological order by interview date)

- **21 October 2021:** *Jesús Valdaliso*, Professor of Economic History, University of the Basque Country.
- **10 November 2021:** *James Wilson*, Research Director, Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness; extensive experience of working with the Basque clusters.
- **23 November 2021:** *Jon Azua*, consultant with extensive private sector experience; former Basque Deputy President and Minister for Industry and Energy (1991–1995). *Juan José Ibarretxe*, former President of the Basque government (1999–2009); Deputy President (1995–1999).
- **25 November 2021:** *Xabier Barandiaran*, advisor to the head of the provincial government of Gipuzkoa; leads on the Etorkezuna Eraikiz ('Building the future') collaborative governance programme. *Xabier Ortueta*, Director General of the Advanced Manufacturing Cluster (AFM).
- **29 November 2021:** *José Ignacio Hormaeche*, Director General, Basque Energy Cluster.
- **30 November 2021:** *Guillermo Dorronsoro*, management consultant specialising in innovation strategy and R&D&I financing; former Dean, Deusto Business School.
- **1 December 2021:** *Pedro Luis Uriarte*, Basque Economy and Treasury Minister under the first Basque government, 1980–1984; Vice-Chairman and CEO, BBVA, 1994–2001; head of the Basque Innovation Agency (Innobasque), 2007–2011.

- **10 December 2021:** *Pilar Kaltzada*, communications consultant; former Director General of Communications, Innobasque, 2007–2011.
- **20 December 2021:** *Alaitz Landaluze*, Director of Innovation Policies, Innobasque.
- **4 January 2022:** *Miren Larrea*, Senior Researcher at the Orkestra-Basque Institute of Competitiveness; close involvement in action research processes at local and regional level.

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