

Local Innovation Calls in the Basque Country: Co-Financing of Good Ideas to Make Them Come True



Case Study Database

A compilation of good practices and lessons learned to bring innovative subnational solutions to global problems

Introduction

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015, brings together 17 goals and 169 targets that, until 2030, govern global development programmes in which global transformations will be pursued that contribute to ending extreme poverty, fighting inequalities and injustices and tackling climate change.

The goals and targets included in Agenda 2030 are universal and encompass the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. Among them, there is one dedicated to sustainable urban development that aims to achieve safe and sustainable cities and human settlements, while underlining the importance of the regional and subregional dimension for this development.

Project Summary

Within this framework, the Basque Country has developed a call to boost innovation at the local level in order to improve the mainstreaming of the sustainability agenda.

88 projects proposed by local authorities/administrations have been co-financed by the Basque Regional Government between 2008 and 2020.

To achieve this, the governance of the sustainability agenda in the Basque Country and the leadership of Ihobe (the Basque Environmental Agency), have been the keystone elements for its success.

Author

Ihobe,
Basque Environmental Agency

Key Information

Location

Basque Country, Spain

Areas of focus

Sustainable Development Goals; Agenda 2031; multi-level governance and mainstreaming sustainability

Founded in

2008

Investment

2,317,140 € financed by the Basque Regional Government

Aichi Biodiversity Targets addressed

Strategic goals A, B, C, D and E

Sustainable Development Goals addressed

All SDGs. Mostly SDGs 3, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13 and 15

Water purification pond in Oñati (Call 2018)



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BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

General context

The Basque Country has a total population of 2,178,949 and an area of 7,235 km². The population density is 301 inhabitants/km² and 65% of the population is settled on the coastline. 251 municipalities spread over its three provinces. Only 3% of these municipalities have over 50,000 inhabitants, and 60% have a population of under 2,000. Due to the territorial and demographic characteristics of the region, the municipalities themselves differ widely, ranging from extremely urban and industrial large towns and cities to rural and agricultural villages or coastal tourist destinations (Figure 1).



FIGURE 1. DIFFERENT TYPOLOGIES OF MUNICIPALITIES FOUND IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY: BILBAO (BIZKAIA), ZERAIN (GIPUZKOA), ALAVA PLAIN (ARABA), COASTAL AREA OF URDAIBAI (BIZKAIA)

For many years now, the marked consequences of the Basque Country's industrial activities on the environment, as well as the effects of other sectors, such as the residential and transport industries, have prompted the Basque institutions (the Basque Regional Government, the Provincial Councils and the Local Councils) to implement a wide variety of actions aimed at moving the region towards a more sustainable development model.

Chronology of local sustainability policies in the Basque Country

Udalsarea 2030 is the Basque Network of Sustainable Municipalities, a consolidated, dynamic and innovative network composed of the three levels of public administration in the Basque Country (the Basque Government, the three Provincial Councils and local administrations) and other supramunicipal public bodies, with specific involvement by local organizations. Created in 2002, it has become a reference in terms of networking and local action at the national and international level (Figure 2).



FIGURE 2. THE EVOLUTION OF UDALSAREA 2030 NETWORK

The development of Local Agenda 21 was established as a priority objective and commitment of Basque sustainability policies by the 1st Environmental Framework Programme¹ and its successive environmental framework planning. These include actions aimed at supporting the implementation of Local Agenda 21 in all Basque municipalities, an initiative which had been actively pursued throughout the decade 2000-2010.

Local sustainability plans based on Agenda 21 are municipal policies that promote a natural transition towards the Local 2030 Agendas. The evolution of the contribution of Basque municipalities to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) in the period 2015-2019 (Figure 3), in which the majority were still Agenda 21 policies, shows that they represent a good starting point for the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level.

¹ https://eu.euskadi.eus/contenidos/documentacion/eavds20022006/en_def/adjuntos/PUB-2002-025-f-l-001.pdf

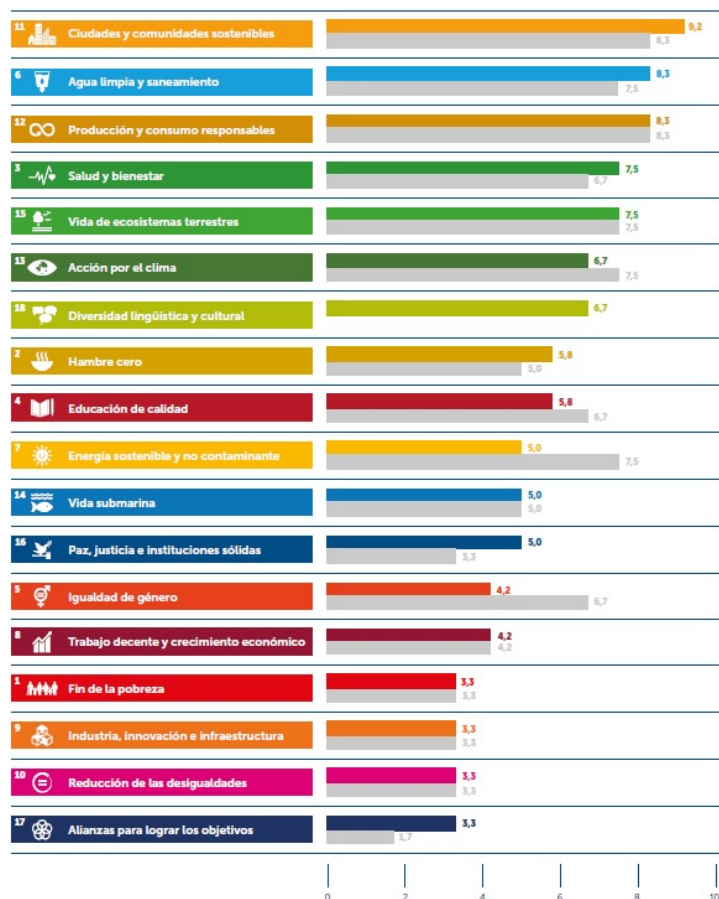


FIGURE 3. CONTRIBUTION INDICES TO EACH SDG BASED ON THE INFORMATION AVAILABLE, THE LEVEL OF INTERVENTION AND THE ACHIEVEMENTS MADE FROM THE LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY ACTION PLANS OF THE BASQUE MUNICIPALITIES. IN GREY ARE THE COMPARISON WITH THE INDICES OF THE FIRST REPORT.

As it has been mentioned before, the specific characteristics of the local sustainability governance in the Basque Country helped create the suitable context to develop this Case Study:

- **Coordination and alignment of local sustainability with supramunicipal policies:** the relationships between the regional and local levels are fluid in regards to the sustainability policies. This helps to align objectives and develop (international, national and regional) policies at a local level and to formulate and implement the regional policies from a local perspective.

- **The strategic approach** to define the local sustainability in which municipalities are involved:
 - The definition of **Strategic Plans** for 3-4 years (Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Objectives) to develop network activities, the specific actions to be taken (list of services), the monitoring instruments and the operating bodies.
 - The design of mid and long-term services which are aimed at helping and encouraging the local sustainability processes to mature. **The AIDAR strategic marketing instrument** (Figure 4) consists of formulating and implementing services in stages, defined in accordance with the degree of maturity of the process among municipalities.

A ttention:	those municipalities which have not yet initiated a LA21 process.
I nterest:	those which are compiling or have compiled a LAP.
D emand:	those with a LAP underway and which are members of Udalsarea 21.
A ction:	those Udalsarea 21 members who carry out LAP monitoring and follow up.
R ecognition	those municipalities which are members of Udalsarea 21, carry out LAP monitoring and follow up and have more mature processes.

FIGURE 4. AIDAR STRATEGY FOR DEVELOPING SERVICES PER STAGE TO FOSTER LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

The case study presented here explains an advanced service focused on fostering the action and recognizing the most innovative municipalities.

- The development of a networking culture and shared services: the services are grouped into the following categories: information, training, methodology, computer services, finance, consulting and technical assistance and recognition activities. This case study is focused on financial services.

Planning the greening of an industrial estate to promote interurban green infrastructure and climate resilience in Lezo (Call 2018).



KEY ACTIVITIES AND INNOVATIONS

The call for grants was designed in 2008 to promote innovation among the local entities that are members of the Udalsarea 2030 Network, as part of an advanced service of the membership to the network. The objective was to facilitate the implementation of transformative and demonstrative projects at local level, to help pilot them and to reward the most advanced municipalities in the application of sustainability policies with financing to make their ideas come true. Since then, 88 demonstrative projects of 100 different local administrations have been financed with 2,317,140 € from the Basque Regional Government.

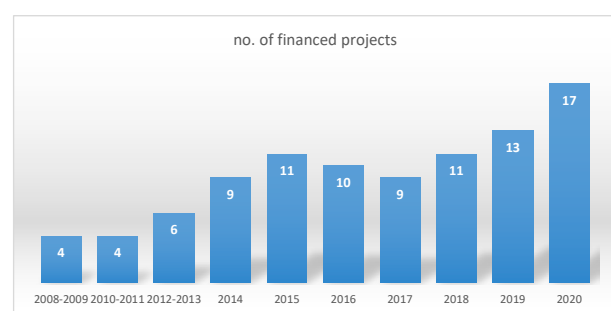


FIGURE 5. NUMBER OF PROJECTS FINANCED BY CALL BETWEEN 2008 AND 2020

At the beginning (2008-2013), few projects were financed at biennial grant calls (Figure 5). Since 2014, annual calls were launched and have financed, on average, 10 project per call. This trend is more evident since the 2018 call.

The format of the call has evolved since 2008, both in terms of the themes to be financed and in the way of managing each call. This evolution through the years was due to the contributions made by the participating municipalities, the lessons learned by the managing staff of the calls and the suggestions collected by the members of the Udalsarea 2030 Network (Figure 6).

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Co-financing of the project													
Ideas competition													
Maximum amount of financing established													
Possibility of previous contrast to enable the refocusing of proposals													
Design approach for projects that can be financed by European calls (LIFE, Horizon 2020, Interreg ...) and to promote public-private collaboration													
Prepare a good practice template that explains the methodology to facilitate the transfer and replication of the project													
Incorporation of the economic perspective and the generation of green employment to promote a comprehensive vision of sustainability													
Piloting transformative projects for the Basque Country													
Projects with biennial execution													

FIGURE 6. EVOLUTION OF THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE LOCAL INNOVATION CALL SINCE 2008

The total investment since 2008 has been 2,317,140 € to co-finance projects that cost 6,498,017 € (Figure 7). In 2021, the ongoing call will co-finance 19 projects up to 514,288 €.

The call consists of co-financing projects to assure a real commitment of the local government. The first two calls differ from the rest because there was no maximum funding threshold. Since 2012, a maximum per project was established, which which had varied through the years. The percentage of financing has also evolved throughout the years (Table 1).

TABLE 1. CO-FINANCING PERCENTAGE AND MAXIMUM AMOUNT PAID PER PROJECT BY THE BASQUE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

Call	Co-financing percentage	Maximum amount co-financed per project
2008-2009	70%	-
2010-2011	70%	-
2012-2013	70%	50,000 €
2014	60-100%	15,000 €
2015	60-90%	15,000 €
2016	60-90%	25,000 €
2017	60-90%	25,000 €
2018	90%	25,000 €
2019	90%	25,000 €
2020	90%	25,000 €



Remodeling building and urban space with district heating system in Zerain (Call 2014).

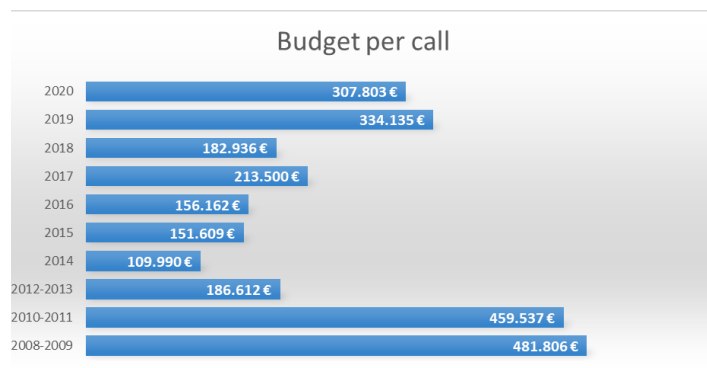


FIGURE 7. TOTAL BUDGET PER CALL

Between 2008 and 2020, the innovation call has involved 38 different municipalities and 9 district-supramunicipal entities (groups of municipalities), encompassing up to approximately 100 municipalities from the 190 involved in the Udalsarea 2030 Network. Furthermore, some of those local bodies have repeatedly demonstrated throughout the years the interest/need for innovating at the local level and the usefulness of this call for municipalities: 23 municipalities have promoted 1 project thanks to the call. The maximum has been reached by 2 municipalities promoting up to 7 projects each (Table 2).

Apart from the 2 county capitals that have developed up to 7 and 6 innovation projects each, there are 13 small towns and villages with more than 2 projects awarded (Table 2). In general, the municipalities that participate in the call usually repeat the experience in the following years.

TABLE 2. NUMBER OF PROJECTS PROMOTED BY MUNICIPALITIES

no. of projects promoted by the same municipality	no. of municipalities
1	23
2	11
3	1
6	1
7	2



Butterfly oasis in Cuadrilla Rioja Alavesa (group of 15 municipalities) to improve climate resilience and tourist attraction in small municipalities (Call 2019).

One remarkable case is that of Amurrio (Araba/Álava), a municipality of 10,330 inhabitants that has had 7 innovative projects awarded since 2015 (Figure 8).

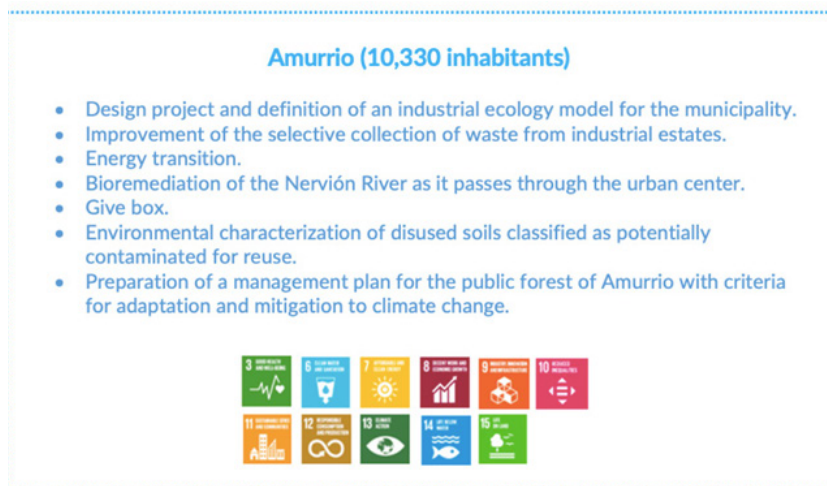


FIGURE 8. PROJECTS FINANCED SINCE CALL 2015 TO AMURRIO MUNICIPALITY. SEE ALSO FIGURE 19

The topics of the call have evolved following the regional priorities established by the Basque Regional Government and the new priorities defined at the international level, such as the Paris Agreement or the Covenant of Mayors (Figure 9). Likewise, the definition of new regional and international policies has marked the evolution of the issues to be addressed. Moreover, the publication of the Basque Declaration² in 2016 and the Climate Emergency Declaration in 2019 became relevant milestones that modified the priorities of the grant calls and type of projects.

² <https://sustainablecities.eu/endorse-the-basque-declaration/>

In general, the call has typically financed climate change and natural heritage projects, becoming the central axis of innovation on a local scale in the Basque Country since 2008 (Figure 9). Circular economy and the efficient use of resources have also been promoting transformative changes since 2015 and 2017, respectively.

Project theme	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Air quality; Noise	3		1					1					
Climate change	1		1				7	4	5	2	5	1	3
Natural Heritage			1		2		2	2	2	4	2	3	3
Polluted soils												1	1
Edification, rehabilitation, urbanization and sustainable urban regeneration			1		2								
Green Public Procurement					1								
Improving the overall quality of the Local Agenda 21 process					1								
Circular Economy								4	3	1	1	3	4
Efficient use of resources										2		2	6

FIGURE 9. EVOLUTION OF THE FINANCED THEMES OF THE LOCAL INNOVATION CALL SINCE 2008. IN BLUE THE THEMES INCLUDED IN EACH CALL. THE NUMBER OF FINANCED PROJECTS COINCIDING (IN WHITE) AND NOT COINCIDING (IN BLACK) WITH THE TOPIC OF THE CALL. AN EMPTY TABLE CELL MEANS THAT NO PROJECT WAS FINANCED.



Creation of a peri-urban allotment in a previously degraded area that guarantees food security and promotes biodiversity in Santurtzi (Call 2012). See also infographic in Figure 18

ALTAMIRAGAIN HANDITZEA ETA BIRMOLDATZEA. EKINTZA-PLANA

AMPLIACIÓN Y REMODELACIÓN DE ALTAMIRAGAIN. PLAN DE ACCIÓN



Redesign of a sustainable urban park in Lezo that promotes health in post-COVID scenarios (Call 2020)

In the case of the 21 biodiversity projects, the 2018 call clearly marked a change in the project themes awarded as climate change became the priority. Between 2008 and 2018, most of the projects were related to agriculture and green infrastructure, whereas beyond 2018 the projects were focused on nature-based solutions and the economic and social services of green infrastructure (Table 3).

In the case of the 29 climate change projects, at the beginning only mitigation projects were presented. 2018 was also the turning point for climate action from an adaptation perspective was promoted in the call. This was supported by the conclusions of the 1st revision of the Basque Climate Change Strategy to 2050, which stated that climate change adaptation should be promoted in the short term. In consequence, since 2018, 11 adaptation projects were promoted among local stakeholders (Table 4).

Subarea		2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	no. of projects
Mitigation	Renewable energy	1						1	1		1*				3
	Energy efficiency							2		2	1*				5
	Mobility							2	1						4
	Rehabilitation (urban)			1					2		1				3
	Waste							2							2
Mit-Adapt	Citizen awareness									1					1
	Forest management													1	1
Adaptation	Water management													1	1
	Rehabilitation (urban)											1			1
	Town planning									2		4	1	1	8
		Climate change mitigation										Climate change (adaptation, mitigation)		Regional Policy Context	
												Climate change (adaptation, mitigation)		Call changes	
												Promotion of green infrastructure, ecosystem services and renaturalization		Climate change a priority in the call. Promotion of Nature Based Solutions	

*: One project had both energy efficiency and renewable energy objectives. The project has been accounted for as energy efficiency for budget purposes.

TABLE 4. NUMBER OF CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECTS FINANCED BY THE INNOVATION CALL BETWEEN 2008 AND 2020, ORGANIZED BY SUB-AREAS

At the same time, the awarding of the grant and the presentation of the finished projects was used to recognize the work of these municipalities in the development and application of advanced sustainability policies in the Basque Country, among the other members of the Udalsarea 2030 Network. In some cases, this recognition has transcended the geographical scale of the Basque Country (table 5):

TABLE 5. PROJECTS FINANCES IN THE CALLS THAT HAVE OBTAINED EXTERNAL RECOGNITION

Municipality	Project	Acknowledgment
Navaridas (200 inhab.)	Navaridas 20.25 "Wineries, culture and society": environmental actions (Call 2017)	1 st prize in "Biodiversity and Economic Boost" category and 2 nd prize in "Hábitats" category in the III edition of the Awards for Good Local Practices for Biodiversity ³ , promoted by the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP)
Vitoria-Gasteiz (248,087 inhab.)	BlrGURPIL project, RE-inventing the wheel: Circularization of bicycle tire waste through the manufacture of application elements in cycling mobility (Call 2019)	Acknowledged ⁴ in CONAMA 2021 (National Environment Congress)
Udaltalde Nerbioi Ibaizabal (9 municipalities; 107,832 inhab.)	Supramunicipal Energy Observatory and the Citizens Energy Portal (Call 2016)	Special mention in ICLEI Transformative Action Award 2017 ⁵

As it had been mentioned before, 88 projects have been financed since 2008. However, there were only 99 awarded proposals, as 11 projects rejected the financial help. The main reasons were the following:

- Lack of commitment (political, co-financing budget) from the municipality: 5 proposals. In 2 cases, an external consultancy built a proposal that did not involve policy makers and the project was not ultimately supported.
- Impossibility of meeting the deadlines established in the call: 4 proposals. Although a biennial deadline was established, several problems with permits or public procurement regulations delayed deadlines.
- Lack of agreement with key stakeholders: 1 proposal. The project was not carried out due to a lack of agreement with cattle ranchers.

The main lesson from the canceled projects is that it is necessary to guarantee their viability by obtaining political support, a budgetary commitment from the municipality, the collaboration of key agents and a good plan for the actions before applying to the call.

³ <http://www.udalsarea21.net/Noticias/ficha.aspx?IdMenu=962e7b38-0afb-4923-ab28-976208ff08c3&Cod=c55e3257-3652-48c4-8e16-6b8d00fc6bca&Idioma=es-ES>

⁴ <https://blogs.vitoria-gasteiz.org/medios/2021/05/28/vitoria-gasteiz-proyector-en-conama-su-green-deal-de-la-mano-de-cientificas-investigadores-y-un-pacto-por-el-clima-de-los-medios-de-comunicacion/>

⁵ https://sustainablecities.eu/transformative-actions-database/?c=search&action_id=t0bhcihl

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

The different projects improve the local environment (urban, peri-urban, rural), in some cases leading to significant reductions. In the case of the 21 biodiversity projects, several environmental co-benefits were addressed, such as water depuration or climate change (Figure 10).

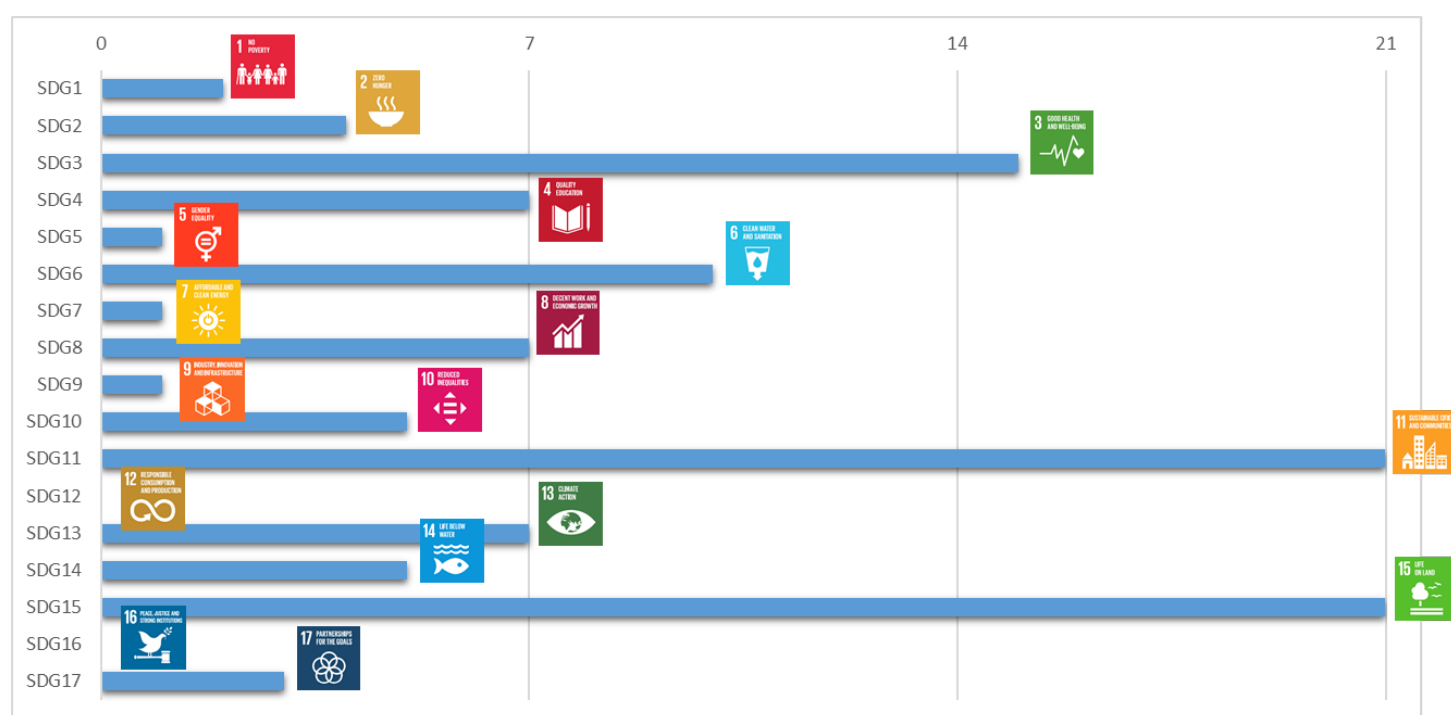


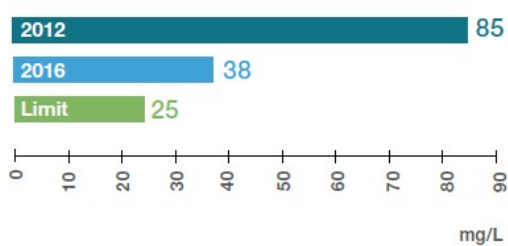
FIGURE 10. CONTRIBUTION TO THE SDGs OF THE BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS FINANCED BY THE LOCAL INNOVATION CALL BETWEEN 2008 AND 2020

For example, the wastewater treatment plant with macrophyte plant filters in Etxabarri-Ibiña (Zigoitia, 1,707 inhab.) harnessed an existing lagoon and implemented floating macrophyte plant filters (6,291 plants), helping the landscape integration of the plant. Data showed a reduction of the organic load and improved biological (Biochemical Oxygen Demand - BOD) and chemical (Chemical Oxygen Demand - COD) indicators due to the macrophyte filter action (Figure 11).

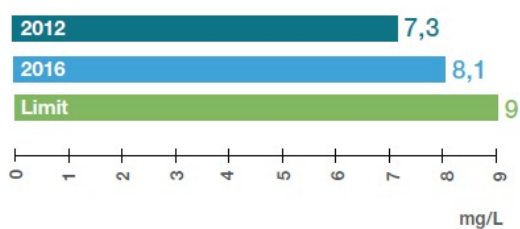


Before

BOD

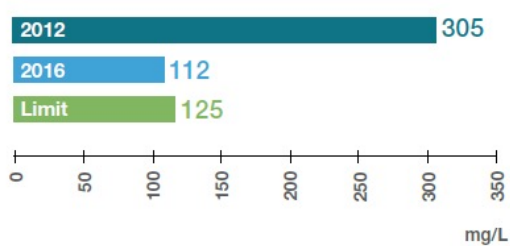


P



After

COD



Solids

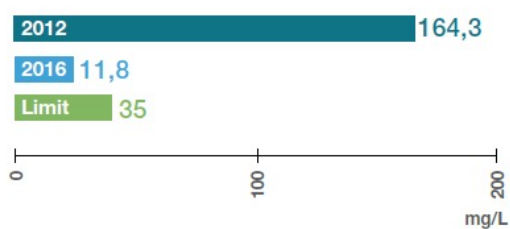


FIGURE 11. SITE EVOLUTION (ABOVE) AND WATER QUALITY INDICATORS (BELOW) IN THE ZIGOITA PROJECT (CALL 2012-2013)

In the case of the 29 climate change projects, the main co-benefits were related to affordable and clean energy associated with mitigation projects (Figure 12). For example, the 7 climate change projects of the 2014 call allowed for the reduction of emissions by about 24,000 tons of CO₂. As a positive externality, some of these projects addressed the reduction of waste (511 kg / year reduced) or the generation of jobs⁶.

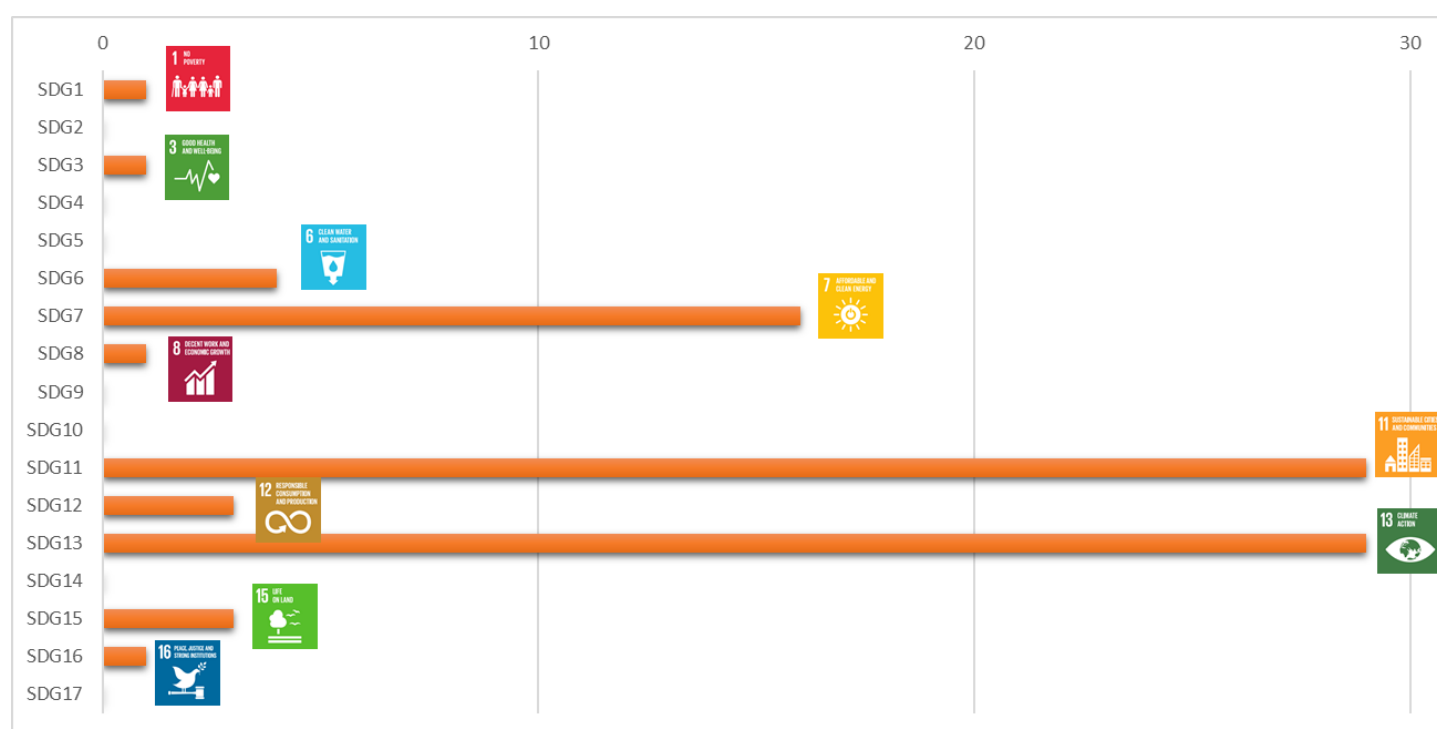


FIGURE 12. CONTRIBUTION TO THE SDGs OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECTS FINANCED BY THE LOCAL INNOVATION CALL BETWEEN 2008 AND 2020

For example, the Donostia – San Sebastian City Council (182,391 inhab.; Call 2014), through *Smartkalea*, has promoted responsible energy consumption in homes located in the center of the old part of the city, paying special attention to homes that may suffer from energy poverty. To this end, it carried out an energy saving and efficiency campaign and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the domestic sector using smart electricity meters. Through this type of initiative, the families participating have achieved an average reduction of 10%. This data implies a reduction in GHG emissions amounting to 1,661 kg CO₂ in one year.

⁶ <http://www.udalsarea21.net/Noticias/ficha.aspx?IdMenu=962e7b38-0afb-4923-ab28-976208ff08c3&Cod=6808860d-8db3-48a8-a457-e39d11248964&Idioma=es-ES>

SOCIOECONOMIC IMPACTS

The total investment of the Basque Regional Government between 2008 and 2020 has been 2,317,140 € to co-finance projects that cost 6,498,017 €. Considering the results of a previous economic impact analysis of local sustainability policies in the Basque Country⁷, we may conclude that:

- The innovation call would have generated 16,24,042.5 € in the economy of the Basque Country between 2008 and 2020.
- 43 jobs would have been generated between 2008 and 2020.
- Tax return would have amount to 2,599,206.8 €.

One of the most remarkable results is that, thanks to the call, local innovation has been promoted among small municipalities and district-supramunicipal bodies. In the case of projects managed by municipal entities, which account for 76% of all financed projects, most have populations of less than 6,000 inhabitants (median = 6,259). The 67 projects financed to municipalities can be grouped into following:

- County capitals (>182,391 inhabitants): 13 projects.
- Big towns (40,176-76,953 inhabitants): 4 projects.
- Small towns and villages (124-29,762 inhabitants): 51 projects. From those, 10 projects were run by villages with less than 800 inhabitants.

One of the objectives of the call is to mainstream the regional policies. Thus, important work has been done to promote projects at the district-supramunicipal level to scale local innovative responses and to have a greater impact from a regional perspective. In consequence, 21 projects (24% of the total) were proposed and managed by 9 supramunicipal entities that include 68 municipalities. In the case of Udaltalde 21 Nerbioi Ibaizabal, a group of 9 municipalities (107,832 inhab.) have joined forces in a working group to address the climate challenge and have developed a regional energy observatory. This initiative had 3 modules: 1) Accounting and management of municipal energy supply within each municipality; 2) Regional energy observatory and analysis for all municipalities through the comparison and benchmarking of consumption and emissions; and 3) Energy portal for citizens as well as social and economic stakeholders, with energy information from the city councils and the municipalities.

The financed proposals can execute a specific action and/or the preliminary study that allows establishing the viability of a project (Table 6). In general, the calls have financed approximately 50% of preliminary studies and 50% execution projects at all themes except from the case of 'Efficient use of resources' which is mostly financing preliminary studies.

TABLE 6. NUMBER OF PROJECTS, CO-FINANCING BUDGET AND TOTAL BUDGET PER TYPE OF PROJECT

Type of project	no. of projects	Co-financing budget	Total budget
Preliminary study	41	834,270 €	1,123,661 €
Execution	43	1,387,523 €	5,139,224 €
Preliminary study and subsequent execution	4	75,346 €	235,133 €
Total	88	2,297,140 €	6,498,017 €

⁷ <http://www.udalsarea2030.eus/publicaciones/impacto-economico-politicas-sostenibilidad-local-capv>

In the case of preliminary studies, 12 of the projects (29% of all preliminary studies) have continued beyond the call that financed them through the development of actions on the ground from other sources of funding. For some projects, participating in the call has given the opportunity to develop solid project proposals that have served to help in financial hunting from the scope of national and/or international calls. For instance, in the case of Bakio (2,627 inhab.; Call 2018), the creation of marshland and interior flooded forest around the Estepona river in the urban center (Figure 13) is going to be financed by a LIFE IP project: LIFE Urban Klima 2050⁸ (LIFE18 IPC/ES/000001). This will help pilot the implementation of the Climate Change Strategy of the Basque Country - KLIMA 2050 in the urban context.



FIGURE 13. IMAGES OF HOW THE FLOOD FOREST AND FLOOD (ESTEPONA RIVER) MARSH WILL LOOK IN BAKIO (CALL 2018)

⁸ <https://urbanklima2050.eu/en/>

TABLE 7. NUMBER OF PROJECTS, TOTAL CO-FINANCING BY THE BASQUE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT AND TOTAL BUDGET PER THEMES ON THE INNOVATION CALL BETWEEN 2008 AND 2020

Project theme	no of projects	Total co-financing	Total budget
Air quality; Noise	5	335,885 €	475,168 €
Climate change	29	663,374 €	1,439,255 €
Natural Heritage	21	670,459 €	3,647,542 €
Polluted soils	2	47,988 €	56,034 €
Edification, rehabilitation, urbanization, and sustainable urban regeneration	3	87,850 €	135,000 €
Green Public Procurement	1	16,997 €	29,661 €
Improving the overall quality of the Local Agenda 21 process	1	17,402 €	24,860 €
Circular Economy	16	307,469 €	514,629 €
Waste recovery (including renewable raw materials)	16	307,469 €	514,629 €
Efficient use of resources	10	149,716 €	175,869 €
Total	88	2,297,140 €	6,498,017 €

Several social and economic co-benefits were addressed; health (SDG 3), education (SDG 4), economic growth (SDG 8), inequality reduction (SDG 10) and partnerships (SDG 17), among others (Figure 9). The Elburgo City Council (637 inhab.; Call 2014) BIOHAZI project created two municipal demonstration spaces to support agroecological entrepreneurship⁹, thanks to the fact that 2 people were allowed to start their own business projects in this rural area while municipally owned brownfields were devoted to use (Figure 14).

50% of the call budget has been invested to finance biodiversity and climate change projects. The 21 biodiversity related projects up to 3,000,000 € have been co-financed (on average 18% of the total budget) by the Basque Regional Government and 30 climate change projects up to 1,400,000 € co-financed (on average 46%) by the regional government (Table 7).

In the case of the 21 biodiversity projects, 670,459 € were invested by the Basque Regional Government to co-finance up to 3,647,542 € actions (Table 8).

TABLE 8. NUMBER OF BIODIVERSITY PROJECTS, TOTAL CO-FINANCING BY THE BASQUE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT AND TOTAL BUDGET PER SUB-AREA ON THE INNOVATION CALL BETWEEN 2008 AND 2020

Subareas	no of projects	Total co-financing	Total budget
Agriculture	Periurban	2	270,130 €
	Economy	3	53,500 €
	Invasive Alien Species	1	13,411 €
	Ecosystem Services	1	13,500 €
Water purification; NBS		5	147,983 €
Green infrastructure	Ecosystem Services	2	30,000 €
	Health	2	42,500 €
	Opportunity spaces	3	66,335 €
	Tourism	1	8,100 €
	Society	1	25,000 €



FIGURE 14. LOCATION AND MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF THE BIOHAZI PROJECT (CALL 2014) FOR AGROECOLOGICAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

Videos:

- [The agroecological entrepreneurial experience in BIOHAZI \(Available only in Spanish\)](#)
- [How the BIOHAZI project has changed \(Available only in Spanish\)](#)

In the case of the 29 climate change projects, 663,374 € were invested by the Basque Regional Government to co-finance up to 1,439,255 € interventions (Table 9).

TABLE 9. NUMBER OF CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECTS, TOTAL CO-FINANCING BY THE BASQUE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT AND TOTAL BUDGET PER SUB-AREA ON THE INNOVATION CALL BETWEEN 2008 AND 2020

Subareas		no of projects	Total co-financing	Total budget
Mitigation	Renewable energy	3	129,556 €	301,565 €
	Energy efficiency	5	67,731 €	81,359 €
	Mobility	4	138,904 €	209,359 €
	Rehabilitation (urban)	3	55,000 €	211,469 €
	Waste	2	11,590 €	12,878 €
	Citizen awareness	1	14,907 €	21,296 €
Mitigation; Adaptation	Forest management	1	24,300 €	27,000 €
Adaptation	Water management	1	22,500 €	25,000 €
	Rehabilitation (urban)	1	25,000 €	203,870 €
	Town planning	8	173,886 €	345,459 €

Among the social and economic co-benefits of the climate change projects, clean energy (SDG7) and responsible consumption (SDG12) were found (Figure 10). Balmaseda City Council (7,684 inhab.; Call 2015) promoted the rehabilitation of a block of apartments through innovation in its design and the engagement of different stakeholders (Figure 15). To that end, local guilds were trained to specialize in rehabilitation interventions for comfort and energy efficiency improvement; property and local administrators were provided with a methodology for managing rehabilitation works in communities of co-owners; new urban and municipal tools were detected for the promotion and facilitation of sustainable rehabilitation, and a programme was created to support neighbors and help finance rehabilitation.

Through co-creation, the project helped to raise awareness among neighbors, train guilds and property managers for subsequent similar interventions and create support tools in the City Council.



FIGURE 15. RENOVATED APARTMENT BLOCK IN BALMASEDA (CALL 2015)

GENDER IMPACTS

The innovation call is not focused on gender specific policies, although SDGs can have a positive impact on reducing gender disparities.

The administrative management of the financed projects ensures equal gender opportunities in accessing the contracts.



POLICY IMPACTS

In the case of sustainable rehabilitation, the Sustainable Rehabilitation Ordinance developed by the group of municipalities of Debabarrena (8 municipalities, 55,660 inhab.) during the 2012-2013 call helped to boost this topic among different municipalities, such as Balmaseda (call 2015) with its proposal for sustainable rehabilitation mentioned previously.

Legazpi City Council (8,409 inhab.) developed, thanks to the 2018 call, a study on the implementation of sustainable drainage, lamination and water treatment systems for the municipality and development of a specific action (Figure 16). It has paved the way for the deployment of adaptation projects, becoming a reference for other municipalities at the regional level and in the city council itself to the systematic incorporation of this diagnosis and opportunities for improvement in the implementation of sustainable urban drainage systems in future urban interventions.

Regeneration of a degraded peri-urban space in Errenteria under 6 road linear infrastructures (highway, road, train) to improve river connectivity, reduce the risk of flooding, promote mobility and generate spaces as thermal refugia (Call 2019).



SUDS LEGAZPI



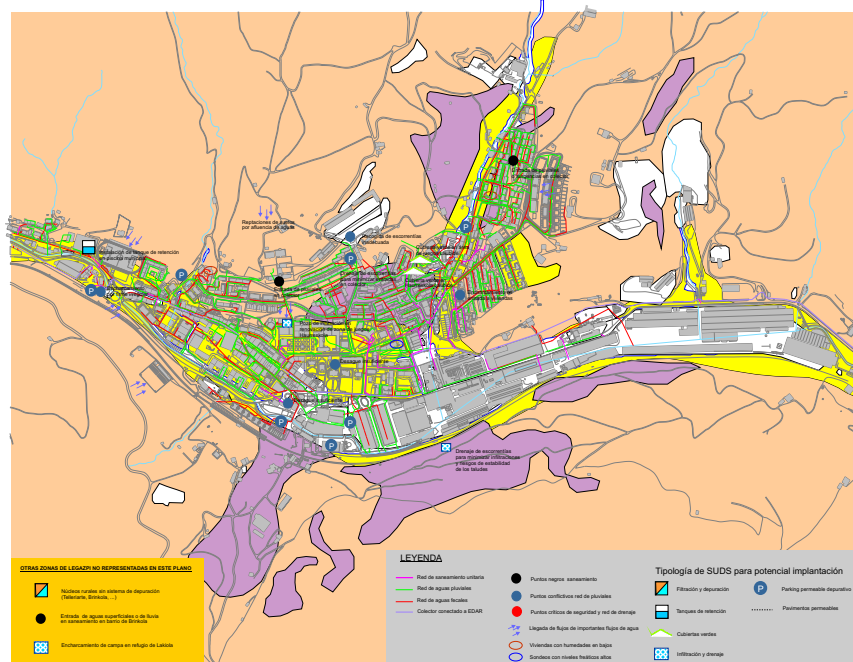
LEGAZPI UDALA

ENDARA



Gestión de las aguas en origen

POTENCIACIÓN DE SUDS POR ZONAS



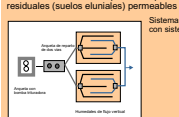
Zona para potenciar actuaciones preventivas

Áreas de fuerte pendiente y áreas con litologías desfavorables (Coluviales)

- Refuerzo de plantaciones para fijar suelos y desecar zonas.
- Incrementar sangraderas en pistas y reconducción de aguas a zonas más adecuadas.
- Realizar sostenimientos de bioingeniería, permeables y con vegetación para fijar y extraer flujos hipodérmicos.

Zona para potenciar Suds filtración y políticas ambientales

Suelos rurales donde se pueden implementar Suds de infiltración aprovechando los suelos residuales (suelos aluviales) permeables



Sistemas de depuración en humedal de flujo vertical reforzado con sistema de fitodepuración

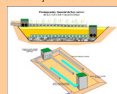


FIGURE 16. ACTIONS PROMOTED IN LEGAZPI FROM THE DIAGNOSIS: DIAGNOSIS MAP, INCORPORATION OF SUSTAINABLE URBAN DRAINAGE SYSTEMS TO A SCHOOL PLAYGROUND, LIVE ROOF CONSTRUCTION AND SUSTAINABLE URBAN DRAINAGE SYSTEMS IN A PUBLIC PLAYGROUND (CALL 2018).



Design of a kindergarten playground to reduce the heat effect and increase its educational potential in Vitoria-Gasteiz (Call 2020).

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The local innovation calls have become a very important tool to promote solutions to present and future challenges. Thus, the local innovation call is well valued by regional and local political authorities. An evaluation of the degree of satisfaction with the different services of the Udalsarea 2030 network is periodically made among the members and it is a service well valued by the members. For this reason, the call is recognized as an important tool for the development of regional policies in the Basque Country and for financial hunting, obtaining additional funds from national and/or European calls.

At the beginning, the budget was obtained from the fees that members paid annually to be part of the Udalsarea 2030 Network. As the public and international projection of the finished projects has become more noticeable and it has been shown that the call is successful for the development of a local innovation demonstration project, additional funding has been obtained. Since 2020 a new funding call has been developed, and the areas of innovation must be aligned to the prioritized measures from the climate change framework. The creation, design and management of the new funding programme is included in the budget of the Urban Klima 2050¹⁰ IP LIFE project (LIFE18 IPC/ES/000001). This budget will assure annual calls of at least 250,000 € each, up to 2025. In 2021, an additional source of financing came from the PIMA national call run by the Spanish Ministry of Ecological Transition for promoting climate change adaptation at the regional level.

¹⁰ <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/life/publicWebsite/project/details/5189>

PARTNERSHIPS

A key element of success in this Case Study is Ihobe, the Environmental Agency of the Department of Economic Development, Sustainability and Environment of the Basque Government, which manages the call. On one hand, the institution identified the challenges to foster innovation, it dynamized the call and it mobilized the local entities, identifying synergies among stakeholders and conceptually reorienting proposals. On the other hand, as the technical secretariat of Udalsarea 2030 Network, it has built throughout the years a relationship of closeness and trust with municipalities, which makes it a leading agent that develops projects that are positive for local entities and for the region.

Moreover, Udalsarea 2030 is an example of a public administration multilevel partnership, with its members being the regional government and its bodies, supramunicipal entities and municipalities. The case of the innovative calls for its members is a clear example of a governance structure that allows a fluent relationship between the regional government and municipalities, which aligns regional priorities to the project proposals. Moreover, the different government departments and organizations involved in the network oversee the awarded projects from the beginning, including their proposals and suggestions and throughout the entire project.

FIGURE 17. DRY TOILETS INSTALLED IN A GREEN AREA OF ERRIGOITI (CALL 2020)



REPLICATION AND APPLICABILITY

The present case study is closely linked to the development of the sustainable agenda in the Basque Country. The local-regional governance context reflected in the Udalsarea 2030 Basque Network of Sustainable Municipalities is one of the pillars for its success. The replication of the experience in other regions should also consider the enabling context (governance, integration, collaboration and support) that promotes innovation at a local level. One of the main lessons learned is that the *what* (local innovation projects) is as important as the *how* (innovation calls) and *with whom* (with a dynamizing organization integrated into a regional-local governance system).

When it comes to the replicability of the finance projects, the innovation call itself is fully devoted to fostering the applicability of the new regional tools. For instance, to illustrate the philosophy of transfer and search for replicability, the 2020 call text included the following statements:

- *“The objective of the call is to aid for the development of pilot projects for innovation and demonstration in priority areas that can be transferable, and that entails a reduction of environmental impacts”.*
- *“The demonstrative nature of the project is linked to the transferability and the ability to replicate the pilot projects that, based on indicators of results prior to the intervention, allows to compare and demonstrate the technical and economic feasibility of actions that involve a positive effect on relevant environmental aspects for, in case of obtaining positive results, promoting its implementation from the administration itself”.*

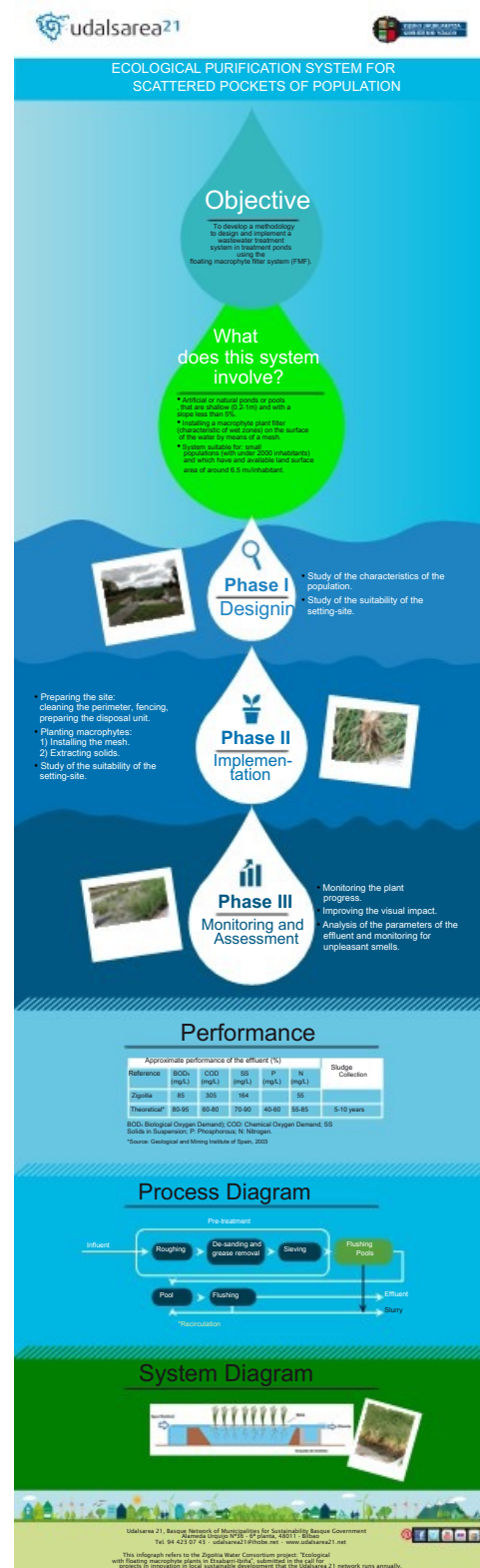
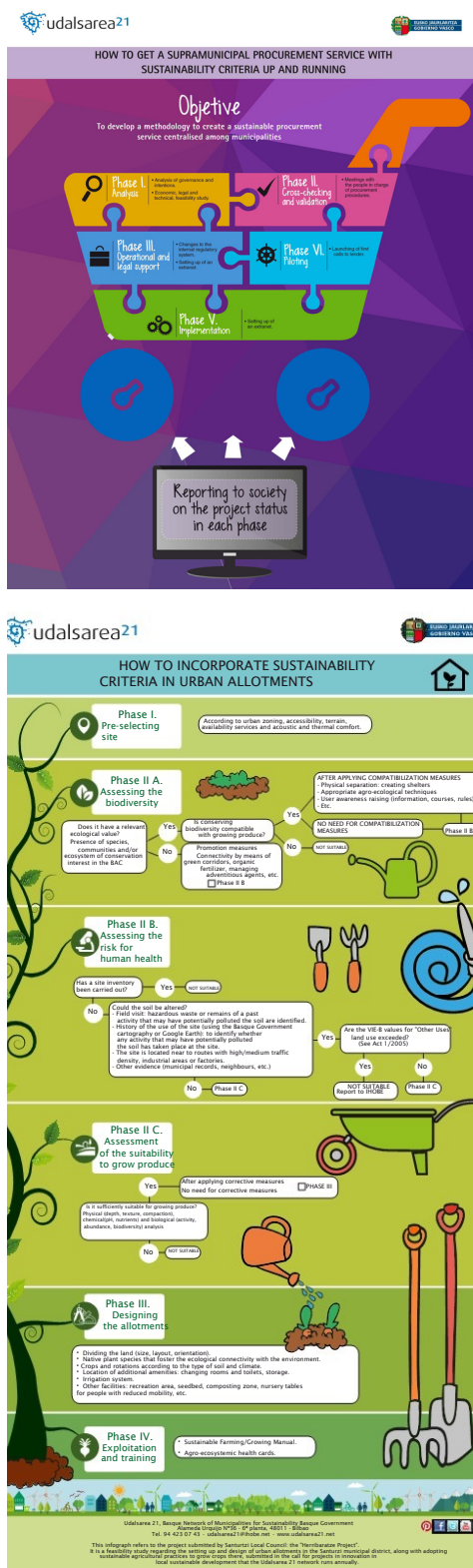
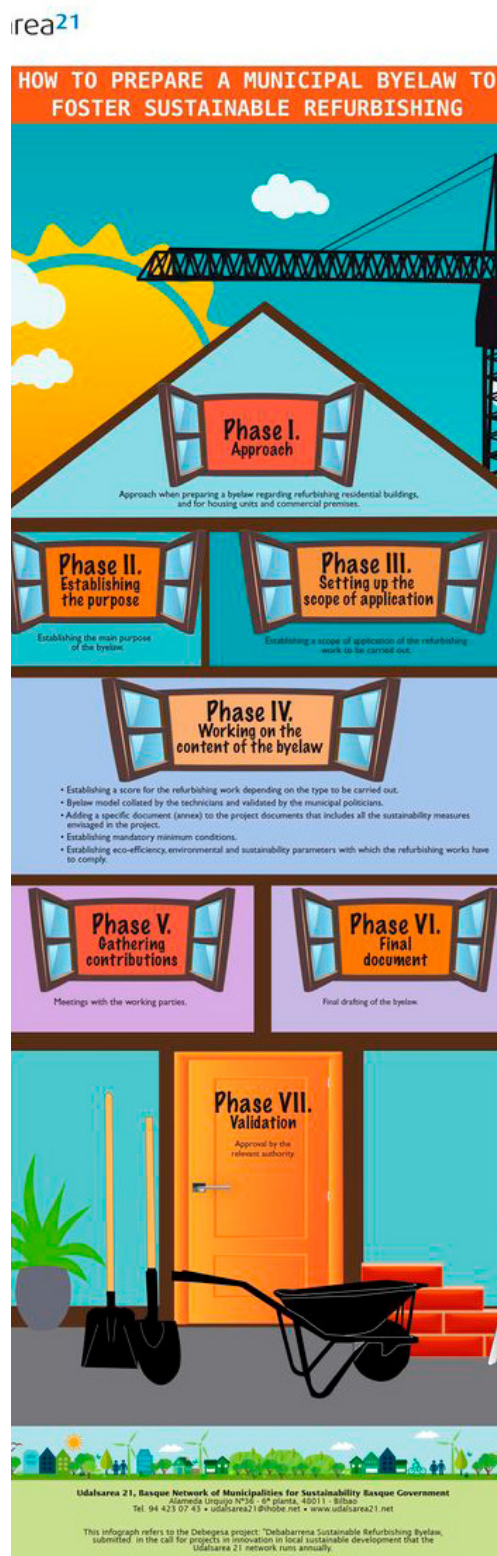
Moreover, the evaluation criteria grants 35 points out of 100 points to the *“Innovative character, demonstration, of transformation and/or motivation of the need to implement the proposal”*.

The basis of the innovation call also includes, since 2015, the obligation for the awarded local entity to elaborate a good practice on the project that will be posted on the Udalsarea 2030 website¹¹ and with the following categories: location, cost, description, outcomes and contact information.

In some cases, infographics (Figure 18) or videos¹² were also created to explain the transferable action in a simple and graphic way to inspire other municipalities.

¹¹ <http://www.udalsarea2030.eus/iniciativa-local>

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4fwzoiT0wbo>

FIGURE 17. EXAMPLES OF INFOGRAPHICS OUT OF INNOVATIVE PROJECTS¹³

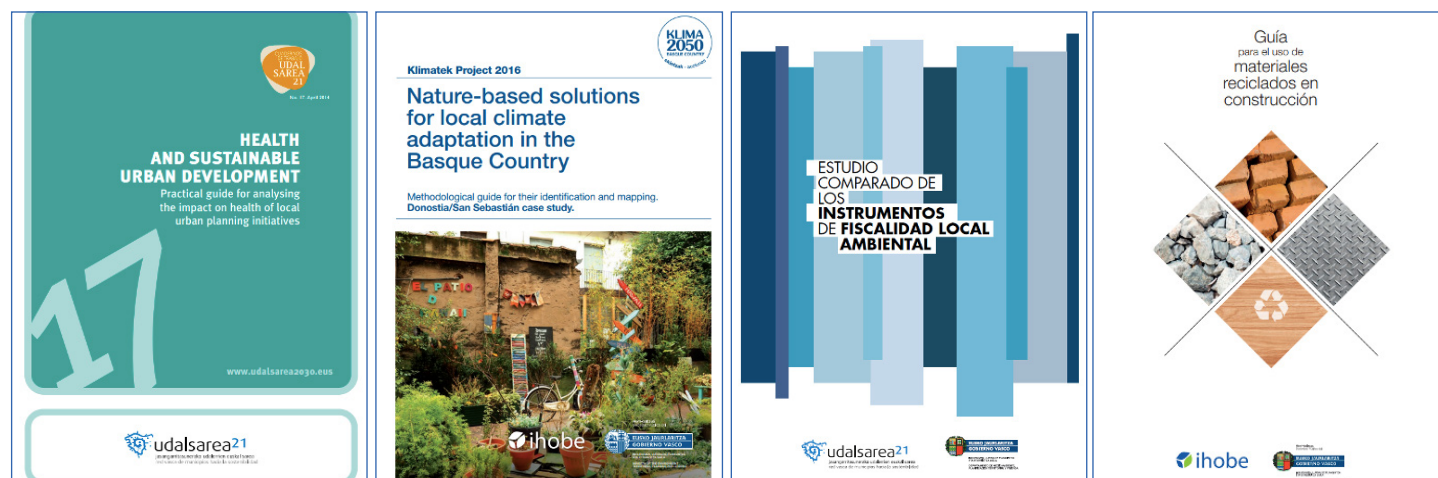
¹³ <https://www.pinterest.com/udalsarea21/best-practices-on-local-agenda-21-processes/>

The innovation call has been one of the instruments of the regional government to implement and/or pilot new tools to mainstream framework or sectoral environmental policies at the local level (Table 10).

TABLE 10. TIMELINE OF THE MAIN REGIONAL TOOLS INCLUDED IN THE CALL TO MAINSTREAM LOCAL ACTION

Year of inclusion in the call	Regional Tool	Type of projects
2014	For the analysis of the effect on health of local urban planning initiatives ¹⁴	In projects related to urban planning. Recommended between 2014 and 2019. Compulsory since 2019.
2018	Application of the methodology for the use of nature-based solutions for adaptation at the local level ¹⁵	In projects related to climate adaptation and biodiversity.
2018	For the analysis of local taxation to promote environmental improvement ¹⁶	Voluntary since 2018. Included as evaluation criteria to award more points in the evaluation. Compulsory for all projects since 2019.
2019	EMAS Certificate	Included as evaluation criteria granting 3 points out of 100.
2020	Guide for the use of recycled materials in construction ¹⁷	In projects where construction materials are used, they must incorporate a minimum of 40% recycled material, primarily recycled aggregates from the recovery of Construction and Demolition Waste (CDW) and recycled iron and steel aggregates derived from the recovery of steel slag.

Some projects have the potential to be continued after they are concluded. In this manner, 11 out of the 88 awarded projects (their results, the designed instruments or the piloted solutions/tools) were transferred to other calls devoted to finance local action related to sustainability.



In the other 10 cases, once the projects were completed, they serve to promote other projects by the same entity (as a continuity of the topic) or to inspire other municipalities. For example, in the case of sustainable rehabilitation or the use of sustainable urban drainage systems for climate action mentioned previously. In some cases, the innovative approach had been maintained and other project proposals have been submitted in subsequent innovation calls. For instance, ecosystem services, waste reduction and water purification (Table 11).

¹³ <https://www.pinterest.com/udalsarea21/best-practices-on-local-agenda-21-processes/>

¹⁴ <http://www.udalsarea2030.eus/we-publish-publications/health-and-sustainable-urban-development-practical-guide-for-analysing-the-impact-on-health-of-local-urban-planning-initiatives-5>

¹⁵ <http://www.udalsarea2030.eus/we-publish-publications/nature-based-solutions-for-local-climate-adaptation-in-the-basque-country>

¹⁶ <http://www.udalsarea2030.eus/publicaciones/estudio-comparado-instrumentos-fiscalidad-local-ambiental-4>

¹⁷ <https://www.ihobe.eus/publicaciones/guia-para-uso-materiales-reciclados-en-construccion-3>

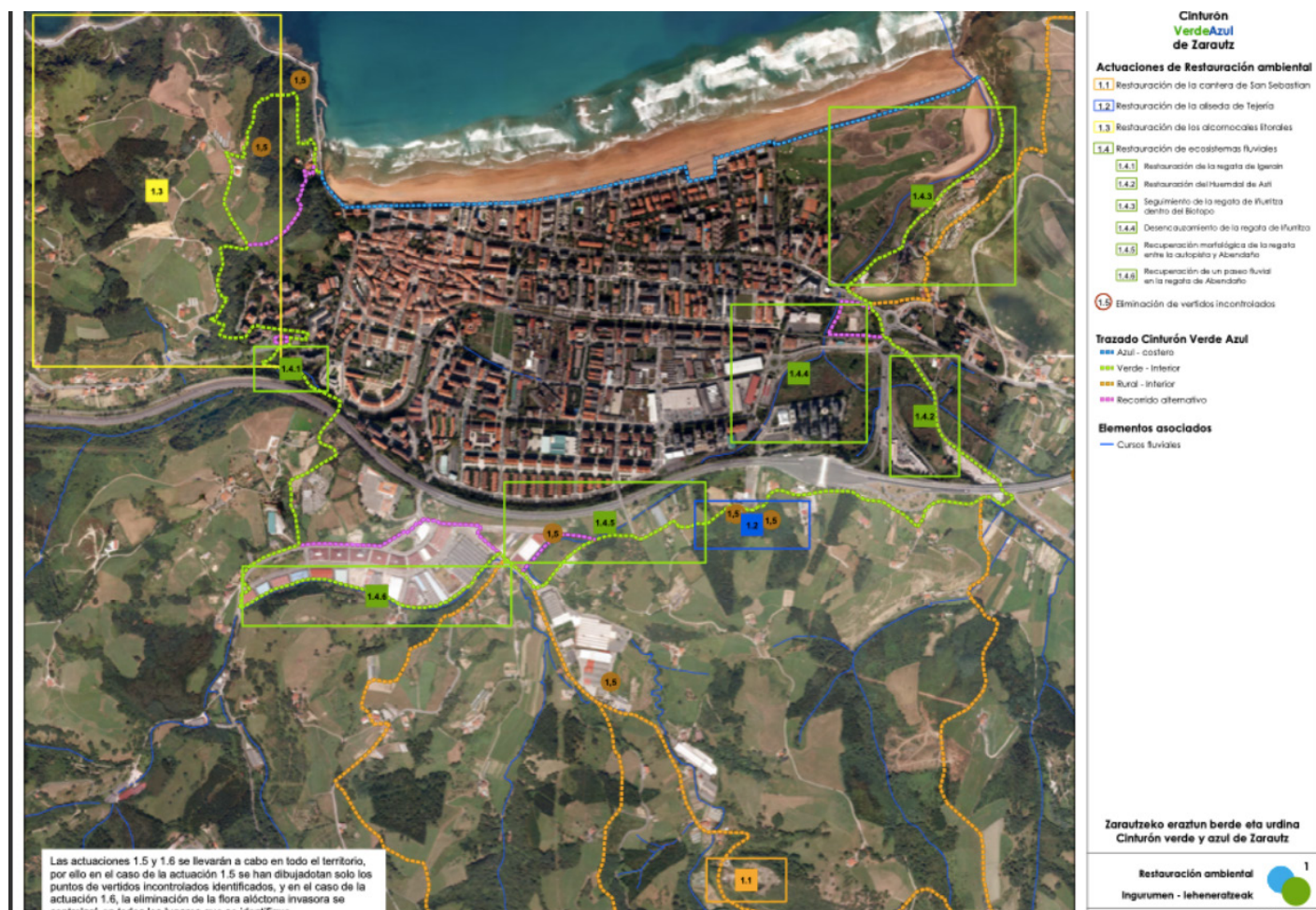
TABLE 11. TIMELINE OF PROJECTS FINANCED BY THE CALL ABOUT ECOSYSTEM SERVICES, WASTE REDUCTION AND WATER PURIFICATION

Ecosystem services	Waste reduction		Water purification
	Industrial-level	Citizen-level	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental and cultural diagnosis prior to the renewal of the General Urban Planning Plan (Legutio; 1,802 inhab.; Call 2014) Design of the urban biodiversity strategy and enhancement of the natural heritage using technology (Deba; 5,453 inhab.; Call 2015) Prospecting project for local varieties and promoting ecosystem services (Cuadrilla de Ayala; 5 municipalities; Call 2017) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Amurrio EKOIZtu (Amurrio; 10,330 inhab.): design and definition of an industrial ecology model (Call 2015); improvement of the selective collection of waste from industrial estates (Call 2016). Intelligent waste management in industrial estates in the region (Udalalde Nerbioi Ibaizabal; 9 municipalities; Call 2017). Diagnostic study and alternatives for the re-introduction into the production circuit of the secondary raw materials of bulky waste (Vitoria-Gasteiz; 248.087; Call 2019). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstration project for the prevention and upcycling of PET packaging waste from the tourism sector (Donostia-San Sebastián; 182,391 inhab.; Call 2017). Give Box (Amurrio; 10,330 inhab.; Call 2018). Food waste reduction for a more sustainable food system (Orduña; 4,233 inhab.; Call 2020). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecological treatment plant with floating macrophyte plant (Zigoitia; 1,707 inhab.; Call 2012-2013). Bioremediation of the Nervión River as it passes through the urban center (Amurrio; 10,330 inhab.; Call 2018). Project for a new ecological sanitation and purification (Ibarrangelu; 621 inhab.; Call 2018). Conversion of a septic tank into a vertical flow ditch-wetland (Errigoiti; 490 inhab.; Call 2019). Proposal for the dissemination and implementation of bathrooms in a green area and in the municipal shelter (Errigoiti; 490 inhab.; Call 2020).



FIGURE 19. GIVE-BOX DEVELOPED IN AMURRIO (CALL 2018) TO REDUCE THE WASTE AT CITIZEN LEVEL

Green-blue ring for the improvement of green infrastructure, tourism, and the health of the citizens of Zarautz (Calls 2016 and 2017)



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about this project, please visit
<http://www.udalsarea2030.eus/>

You can also contact us at info@regions4.org to set up an informative meeting, solve doubts and get support in implementing similar projects.



Case
Study
Database



RegionsWithNature

ABOUT

Regions4 (formerly known as the nrg4SD) is a global network that solely represents regional governments (states, regions and provinces) before UN processes, European Union initiatives and global discussions in the fields of climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development. Regions4 was established in 2002 at the World Summit in Johannesburg and currently represents over 40 members from 20 countries in 4 continents. Through advocacy, cooperation and capacity building, Regions4 empowers regional governments to accelerate global action.

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Chaussée d'Alsemberg 999- B-1180, Brussels, Belgium

www.regions4.org

info@regions4.org

@Regions4SD

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