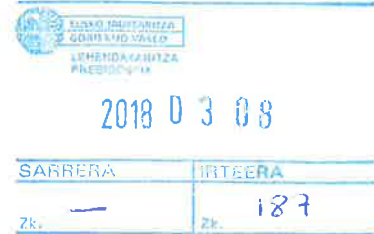




*Euskadiko Lehendakaria*  
*El Lehendakari de Euskadi*



Vitoria-Gasteiz, 2018-03-08

**Mukelani Dimba**  
**Head of Development**  
**International School for Transparency**

Dimba jaun agurgarria,

Euskal Autonomia Erkidegoaren ordezkari gorena gisa, eta gure herriko erakundeen hiru mailen izenean (Eusko Jaurjaritza; Arabako, Bizkaiko eta Gipuzkoako foru aldundiak; Bilboko, Donostiako eta Gasteizko udalak), adierazi nahi dizuet gure asmoa eta konpromisoa dela Subnational Government Pilot Programen parte hartzea: gobernu irekiaren oinarrietatik abiatzen den baterako hautagaitza bat, giza garapen iraunkorriari begira eraikitzeko eta gure lurraldean Agenda 2030 ezartzen aurrera egiteko.

Euskadi Espainiako iparraldeko autonomia erkidego bat da, 2,2 milioi biztanle dituena. Europar Batasuneko autogobernu mailarik gorenetako bat dauka, eta horrek aukera eskaintzen dio era autonomoan garatzeko gure politika publikoen zati handi bat.

Herri ireki bat. Antzinako kultura bat, baina irekia, kanpora begiratzen duena ikasteko eta partekatzeko. Euskadin bi hizkuntza ofizial bizi dira elkarren ondoan: gaztelania eta euskara (Europako hizkuntzarik zaharrena, 5.000 urte baino gehiagokoa). Berrikuntzari irekita, iberiar penintsulako berrikuntza polo europar bakarra da Euskadi. Lankidetzari irekita, gure Auzolana kontzeptuak ongizate komunaren filosofia biltzen du, euskal mugimendu kooperatiboan gauzatu eta mundu osoan ezagutzen dena: elkarren artean lan egiteko era berezi bat da, erantzunkidetasunean eta lankidetzan oinarritutakoa.

Horrela ulertzen dugu gobernu irekia Euskadin, elkarren arteko prozesu bizi gisa, eta horrela eraman dugu gure gobernuen jarduerara (eskualde, foru eta toki gobernuetara), partekatutako bali publikoa sortzea bultzatzen duten baliabideen bitartez.

Gure erronkek, testuinguru globalizatu baten, gobernu irekian sakontzeko eskatzen digute. Berrikuntza publikorako lankidetzari laborategi bat izan nahi dugu, gizarte zibilarekin batera diseinatzeko gobernu irekiaren eredua Euskadin.

Hautagaitza hau aukera ona da erakundeen artean lan egiteko eta gure prozesuak bizkorragoak bihurtzeko Open Government Partnership sarearen laguntzaz (OGP). Baita sare horrentzat eta OGPko kideentzat ikasteko baliabide eta lankidetzari eragile aktiboak izan gaitzen ere, gure esperientziak partekatuz. Gure itxaropena eta asmoa da kontuan izango duzuela gure hautagaitza eta aukera izango dugula batera egiteko bide zoragarri hau.

Adeitasunez agurtzen zaituzte,

Dear Mr. Dimba,

As the highest representative of the Basque Country, and on behalf of all three levels of institutional bodies in this land (Basque Government, Provincial Councils of Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, and City Councils of Bilbao, San Sebastián and Vitoria), I would like to express our willingness and commitment to take part in the Subnational Government Pilot Program: a joint bid based on Open Government principles to build upon sustainable human development and to get 2030 Agenda properly implemented within our territory.

The Basque Country, known as Euskadi in Basque, is an Autonomous Region in northern Spain with almost 2.2 million inhabitants. We boast one of the highest levels of self-governance in the European Union, allowing us to implement many public policies of our own with a great deal of autonomy.

We have an ancestral but open culture, looking beyond our borders to learn and share experiences. In the Basque Country there are two official languages: Basque (also known as Euskera, the most ancient living language in Europe) and Spanish. Open to innovation, we are the only European innovation hub on the Iberian Peninsula. Open to collaboration, our concept of Auzolana has been an expression of this common good philosophy in the form of the worldwide acknowledged Basque cooperative movement. It is our own form of community work based on cooperation.

This is how we view Open Government in the Basque Country: as a living, community-based process. And this is what our governments (regional, provincial and local) are putting into practice, using tools that promote the creation of shared public value.

The challenges we face in a globalized environment are forcing us to take these principles of Open Government even further. We want to become a cooperative laboratory of public innovation to codesign an open government model for the Basque Country together with civil society.

This candidacy represents an opportunity for Basque institutions to cooperate with each other and to speed up our processes with the help of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) network. It will also allow us to become a resource for learning and an active role-player for the OGP network and its members by sharing our experience. We truly hope that you will consider our candidacy favorably so that we can travel down this exciting path together.

Sincerely,

**Iñigo Urkullu Renteria**  
**Lehendakari (President) of the Basque Country**

## OPEN GOVERNMENT IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY – CHALLENGES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

Territorial mobility forms a part of the everyday life of all people in the Basque Country (with a land area of 7,200 km<sup>2</sup>): a local inhabitant might work in Vitoria, live in Bilbao and visit the family in San Sebastián. We live in a very close-knit community. **The lives and political participation of the Basque people take place in spaces and times that have nothing to do with defined powers or institutional limitations.**

This calls for constant reviews and transformation. And we feel like **cooperation among institutions** is the **foundation for building a strong Open Government model** that requires us put the experience, knowledge and proposals of the people into all of the activities performed by the government.

We are almost like “a little country” with a **large number of decentralized powers at three different institutional levels**, the perfect place to **experiment and test proposals** that can later be put into practice in other cities, regions and countries with varying degrees of development in Open Government policies. An innovation laboratory which shows, through actions, **that strong inter-institutional coordination reinforces co-creation processes** and lays a solid base for the development of a more open government and region. We believe that this is precisely why **the Basque model may be of interest to the OGP network.**

For our candidacy, the **first goal** we have set is that we must **improve our coordination of Open Government policies** from the lowest levels of government, the Municipal Governments (Bilbao, San Sebastián, Vitoria), on up to the three Provincial Governments that work at that level in the provinces of Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, and including the policies and projects implemented by the Basque Government. Our goal is to work with citizens to co-design an **action plan that sets out two types of engagement:**

- **Horizontal commitments** which seek transversality in our actions. The same commitments for the same government levels, incorporating different perspectives and visions for experimentation through some common values: involvement and collaboration.
- **Vertical commitments** which seek prioritization and exemplification. The three institutional levels will agree on and develop highly structured actions and processes which lay the bases for a common open government model.

**In the Basque Country, we are already working towards achieving Open Government.** Our institutions have already developed Open Government Plans and participative strategies related to accountability. **And we are doing so in a connected way**, participating in networks, such as the United Regions Organization (ORU/FOGAR), the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) network and the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy (IOPD).

We certainly have a **very strong political commitment to Open Government**, and we are putting it into practice in our organizations. We have close to 90 people on staff working directly in Open Government units, all clearly committed to promoting and investing in this challenge. Within the framework of this postulation, **we have set up an inter-institutional working group which has already detected potential actions and commitments** to be developed over the coming years. To continue this work, being part of the *Subnational Government Pilot Program* will be a **milestone in our learning process.**

### TRANSPARENCY AND OPEN DATA

The Basque Country has online transparency portals that work quite well. They have been evaluated by highly acknowledged bodies like Transparency International with excellent results, reaching the top of transparency rankings (all of our institutions were scored above 80 points out of 100, with some even earning a score of 100).

Open Data Euskadi has 4,126 open data sets and became the first open data portal in Europe outside of the UK when it was created in 2010. This precedent means that we are able to have open federated data portals available today at most of the institutions which form part of this bid. All three Basque Country capitals also promote the smart city model, with a common digital culture strategy: gathering, monitoring and publishing data to provide high-quality services to the people, while allowing them to develop open applications.

**Being more transparent will involve...** open data which helps us to improve public services, enhancing information through linked data. It will also involve steering our model so that open data does not only address the potential held by government, but also the demands made by people and business opportunities.

## ACCOUNTABILITY

All of our Basque institutions have applications to track the government's programs and budgets, with systems available to evaluate public policies. We also rely on a strong network of observatories for the analysis and evaluation of quantitative and qualitative information both of a general nature and on specific sectors (some have received awards, including the [Basque Housing Observatory](#), at the UNPSA Awards of 2012). This means there is an ensemble of spaces for territorial analysis and gathering very significant information to guide the government's activities and provide feedback on the Open Government strategies.

**To continue progressing in more effective accountability...** Regional, Provincial and Municipal Governments will work together on data visualization tools to foster the understanding and critical use of public information.

## CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT AND PUBLIC-PRIVATE COOPERATION

We have made a determined commitment to achieving stable cooperation between political representatives and their constituents when discussing, proposing and evaluating public initiatives and policies, as a way to make politics more diverse and plural, while also contributing to improvements in the democratic quality of institutional decisions. These new systems have allowed us to enrich our political action cycle by redesigning our internal processes and innovating the way we devise and implement our public policies through citizen engagement. Our institutions are taking important steps in this direction, making information more accessible, creating new spaces and processes (both online and offline) for accountability.

We also have an excellent track record of acknowledging the value of citizen engagement through our demanding and pioneering regulatory rules at the Spanish level (e.g., special provincial rules in [Araba](#) and [Gipuzkoa](#), and the [Law on Local Institutions in the Basque Country](#)). In order to improve the instruments used to implement these rules, we have developed promotion plans to help us add citizen participation on a cross-cutting basis throughout our institutions. Likewise, we have developed more innovative initiatives for co-creation with the people, including the [White Paper on Democracy and Citizen Engagement for the Basque Country](#) (which earned the ORU/FOGAR Award and the UNDP Award of 2016, involving over 500 people and 150 organizations). It has direct applications in specific fields within public management (healthcare, education, the environment, economic development). Another example of public-private cooperation, in this case for strategic planning, was the "[Etorkizuna Eraikiz](#) – Building the Future" project, which was created to define the future of the province of Gipuzkoa using an experimental foundation of new governance (through Gipuzkoa-Lab: a collaborative space in which strategic and experimental projects are designed and implemented for that territory).

In addition to carrying out numerous participatory projects, we have formal bodies for consultation and participation that act as an ongoing channel for cooperation with civil society. Each of the institutions involved in this bid can provide several examples of such spaces and entities, which form part of our attempt to give civil society a voice and a way to exert influence, even groups whose right to political participation has not been recognized, like [children](#). Inter-institutional spaces have also been created for training staff in the local administration, as well as technical assistance and subsidies to promote citizen engagement. We are also taking important steps to simplify the language used in government and make it easier for the people to participate through digital platforms which put easy reading standards into practice. Since 2010, the Basque Country has had the Spanish-language [Irekia](#) platform for Open Government in place. Irekia offers automatic subtitling of videos and reading tools for online support (UN Public Service Award of 2015).

**For increased and better engagement, we want to...** implement easy reading and simplified language tools. Universal design is key to seek out people who feel disconnected and do not regularly participate and to get them involved.

We are committed to moving towards a **mixed model in which formal and informal participation** (which often arises from citizen's initiatives) **can coexist and complement each other**. By combining the two models from a vantage point of using many different channels, bringing institutions closer to the places where people actually are and where things are happening (instead of the other way around), we may achieve our actual goal: getting all people to participate, if they wish to do so, in producing public value.

**This will mean....** mapping and analyzing the activities carried out by our entities in order to rationalize them and equip them with the proper tools to work in a more transparent and collaborative way.

## TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT AND INNOVATION

In order to create more dynamic and effective relationships and interactions with the people, it is essential for us to speed up the digitalization process in the internal and external procedures carried out by Basque government. We are developing a “**Citizen’s Toolkit**” so that any person can view and access all of the administrative procedures under way in the Basque Country and the Spanish State as a whole. Becoming more digital allows us to improve our relationships and cooperate to provide a full range of services to the people, while remaining transparent in our internal processes, as well. All Basque public administration entities are undergoing a process or have already put in place a unified “Customer Service” system for the citizenry (provided by people for people, it is peer-to-peer, all-encompassing, multi-channel and proactive).

**We want this to develop into ...** an integrated and inter-institutional service that is an approachable and accessible gateway for all citizens.

## INTEGRITY

Last of all, we are not oblivious to the need to restore and strengthen public activities and the reputation of institutions and holders of public responsibility again. We have put in place mechanisms and tools for institutional integrity that broaden the concept of public office and service, including a system for oversight and guarantee that attempts to ensure that the general interest holds the highest priority (including the Law Regulating the Code of Conduct and Conflicts of Interest Among Public Officers). Furthermore, all bodies of the Basque administration have enacted ethical codes of conduct for holders of public positions and public entities in order to monitor them through public ethics commissions made up of internal and external role-players. In some cases, this integrity system has been complemented by codes governing public employment, contracts and subsidies, thereby adding an external dimension to institutional integrity.

**We seek to develop a process under constant construction...** through citizen guarantee mechanisms beyond the administration and risk prevention instruments in which all actions count.

## AND IN THE FUTURE...

Based on our achievements and challenges, we have identified some **innovative initiatives** that are proof of the potential of open government in the Basque Country:

- Open Big-Data Euskadi, to develop our Open-data towards inter-institutional Big Data.
- “Open Eskola” - open learning space, to foster the physical spaces of openness and citizen engagement. Explore the need to turn them into experimentation labs.
- Map public processes and fields of public action to eliminate the corruption risk.
- Scale-up experimental governance practices to other institutions, incorporating and linking citizen engagement to strategic planning and the building of our shared future.

All of this prior diagnosis work will undoubtedly help us to design and implement an ambitious Open Government action plan, in conjunction with the citizen’s driving force. **The Basque Country is already an open place, but we are hoping to make it even more so.**