



**8TH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE ON
SUSTAINABLE CITIES & TOWNS**

BASQUE COUNTRY | BILBAO | 27 - 29 APRIL 2016

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#Basque2016

The Basque Country becomes the European capital of sustainability during the 8th European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns

- **The 8th European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns, taking place in Bilbao (Basque Country) from 27-29 April, is the flagship event in Europe in 2016 for discussing and exchanging on local sustainability.**
- **Over 800 representatives from local and regional governments, European and international institutions, multilateral organisations, members of the research community, private sector and civil society will take part in the 8th European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns.**
- **The Basque Declaration will be presented and adopted by the Conference on 27 April. The document outlines new pathways for European cities and towns to create productive, sustainable and resilient cities for a liveable and inclusive Europe.**
- **Join the conversation by using the hashtags #Basque2016 and #BasqueDeclaration**

The 8th European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns – “Transformative Action: the potential for Europe”, taking place from 27-29 of April in Bilbao, Basque Country, focuses on the pressing need for action by local governments to change unsustainable pathways and shape Europe’s future. Following the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the COP21 Paris Climate Summit, this conference is the flagship event in Europe in 2016 for discussing local sustainability.

Bilbao / Freiburg, April 2016.- The three-day conference is a platform for local leaders to express ideas, experiences and expectations related to urban development, as well as to analyse the key role of cooperation between local governments, the private sector, civil society and the business sector in order to implement comprehensive measures.

Among others, Iñigo Urkullu, *Lehendakari* (President) of the Basque Government, and Markku Markula, President of the European Committee of the Regions, will welcome the participants to the 8th European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns in the opening session. The following two plenaries will address how policy frameworks, such as the UN SDGs, the Paris Climate Agreement and the EU Urban Agenda, affect cities and urban areas.



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The Basque Declaration

The Basque Declaration will be presented and adopted by the Conference during a ceremony held on 27 April, from 12.30 to 13.00. The Basque Declaration outlines new pathways for European cities and towns to create productive, sustainable and resilient cities for a liveable and inclusive Europe.

Following the achievements of the Aalborg Charter (1994) and the Aalborg Commitments (2004), the Basque Declaration focuses on how cities can move forward to and achieve more sustainable development. The document acknowledges the need for a technological, socio-economic, and socio-cultural transformation of societies, in order to ensure quality of life for citizens, while respecting the limits of local and global ecosystems and natural resources.

The Basque Declaration will be one of the main outcomes of the 8th European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns. Representatives of local and regional governments will acclaim the #BasqueDeclaration.

Mayors' Session

Around 50 Mayors from all over Europe will meet in a private session that will take place in Bilbao's Iberdrola Tower in the afternoon of 27 April. Mayors will share their views on the current situation in Europe, as well as their ideas on how to overcome challenges related to sustainability, inclusion and citizen engagement, among others.

A wide range of topics

During the afternoon of the first day of the Conference, a total of 11 breakout sessions covering a wide range of topics, from health to circular economy, efficiency and mobility, will take place. Four subplenaries, focusing on finance, innovation, standards, and smart cities will follow.

A reception for all participants will be hosted by the Basque Government in the Guggenheim Museum. The reception will also mark the 20 years of ICLEI's work on sustainable procurement.

Productive cities, innovation market and mobile workshops

The second day will start with the plenary "The Productive City – A concept for transformative actions", where Jeb Brugmann, the founder of ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, will



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share his ideas on how cities and urban regions can generate social and economic value based on their own resources, while making local economies more resilient.

During the innovation market, local, national and regional governments, NGOs, scientific and research organisations, and other stakeholders will present their initiatives, policy processes and research projects, in line with the theme of the Conference, “Transformative Action: the potential for Europe”. There will be a total of 20 speed presentations, 25 roundtable dialogues and 35 poster presentations.

In the afternoon, participants will have the opportunity to choose from one of nine mobile workshops organised in the counties of Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa and Araba, which show good practices in the Basque Country. In each of the three counties a total of three experiences have been selected based on environmental, social and economic criteria. Participants will be shown, for instance, the regenerating constructed and natural areas of Vitoria-Gasteiz, and the Mutriku wave energy plant – a pioneering marine technology in Europe.

Global and EU Urban Agendas

The third and last day of the Conference will start with a debate on how the Global Urban Agenda and the EU Urban Agenda interrelate with the political reality in European cities. Representatives of different cities, such as Tirana (Albania), Almada (Portugal), and Dunkerque (France), will explain how they have transformed or plan to transform their cities.

In the last plenary, “Reviving the European spirit from the local level”, Thomas Kastrup-Larsen, Mayor of Aalborg (Denmark), where the Aalborg Charter (1994) and the Aalborg Commitments (2004) were presented, will ‘hand the baton’ to Bilbao and the Basque Country. Ana Oregi, Minister of Environment of the Basque Government, will share with the audience how she thinks cities in the Basque Country and European cities can find sustainable solutions to current challenges.

Youth and the Conference

The participation of youth in the Conference has been promoted by the initiatives Young Ambassadors and the Youth Forum. The Young Ambassadors is a group of 30 people who have been trained to take part in the Conference to assist participants in any requests they may have related to the event, the city of Bilbao or the Basque Country. The programme is aimed at improving their employability. The Youth Forum, part of Agenda21 for Schools, will be represented by 20 students that will contribute to the Conference with their ideas and views.



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The organisers

The 8th European Conference on Sustainable Towns & Cities is co-organised by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, the Basque Government, Bizkaia County Council and Bilbao City Council, with the involvement of Udalsarea 21 - Basque Network of Municipalities for Sustainability, and the support of Araba County Council, Gipuzkoa County Council, Donostia/San Sebastián City Council and Vitoria-Gasteiz City Council.

The Basque commitment to urban sustainability

The Basque Country reflects the capacity of European cities to transform, having changed from being focused on industry to embracing a modern service-based economy. Its newly adopted Environmental Programme for 2020 shows a firm commitment to improving the environment and aligns with current European and international strategies on job creation, enhancing standards of living, and building a low-carbon economy.

European Conferences on Sustainable Cities and Towns

The 8th European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns in Bilbao, Basque Country, builds on the legacy of the previous conferences in Aalborg (Denmark, 1994 and 2004), Lisbon (Portugal, 1996), Hannover (Germany, 2000), Seville (Spain, 2007), Dunkerque (France, 2010), and Geneva (Switzerland, 2013).

The conference venue

The 8th European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns will take place in the [Euskalduna Conference Centre and Concert Hall](#); one of the flagships of Bilbao of the 21st Century. Designed by architects Federico Soriano and Dolores Palacios as a vessel permanently under construction that stands in a dock on the site of the former Euskalduna Shipyard, the Conference Centre received the 2001 Enric Miralles award at the 6th Biennial of Spanish Architecture.

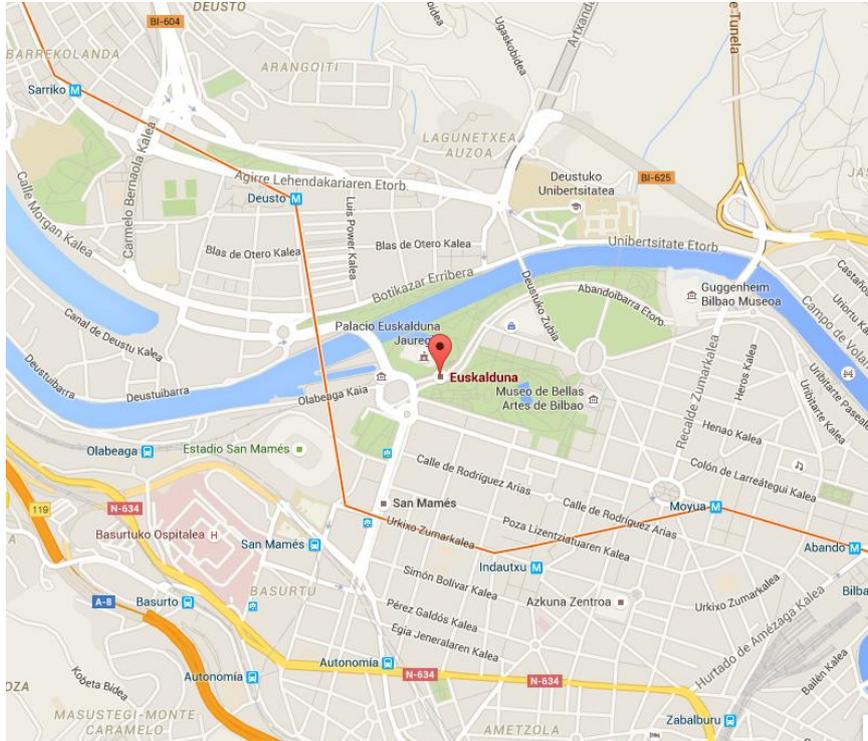
[How to go from the Bilbao airport to the city centre](#)



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Press passes and logistics

Press passes / conference badges will be available at the Conference registration desk. The registration desk will be open on Wednesday 27 April from 8:00 to 9:30, and on Thursday 28 and Friday 29 April, from 8:45 to 9:30.

An ID card or passport will be required when borrowing the headphones for simultaneous interpretation (English, Spanish and Euskera).

Media will have access to a press room in the conference venue. More information will be provided at the registration desk.

The venue will have WiFi. The password will be provided at the Conference.