



THE CONTEXT:
SUSTAINABILITY
AT THE HEART
OF INTERNATIONAL,
EUROPEAN
AND BASQUE
POLICIES



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EUSKO JAURLARITZA



GOBIERNO VASCO

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As established by the **United Nations 2030 Agenda** and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the global challenge of this century is how to achieve worldwide development that balances social, economic and environmental considerations.

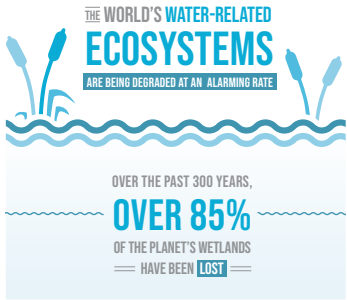
Despite the undoubted progress made in the last recent years towards achieving these objectives, we are currently facing a conjunction of crises on an international scale with a direct impact on Basque society. Health crises, war conflicts, increased inflation, supply chain interruptions or labor market pressures are global concerns, often of an urgent nature, which have a direct impact on the day-to-day reality of the Basque Country in the form of significant price increases and difficulties in the supply of raw materials and products.

Like security crises or geopolitical tensions, the environmental crisis on an international scale also has a direct reflection on Basque reality. Climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss are environmental challenges with important consequences for our development model. The effects of climate change are easily observable in recurrent fires, increasingly frequent and long-lasting droughts and extreme weather events for which we are not yet sufficiently prepared. According to the United Nations' 2022 Sustainable Development Goals Report, one in eight deaths in Europe is related to pollution, especially affecting the most vulnerable sectors of population.



Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda

(Source: United Nations)



MEETING DRINKING WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE TARGETS BY 2030 REQUIRES A **4X** INCREASE IN THE PACE OF PROGRESS

UNSUSTAINABLE PATTERNS

OF CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION ARE ROOT CAUSE OF

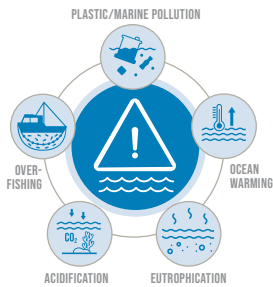
TRIPLE PLANETARY CRISES



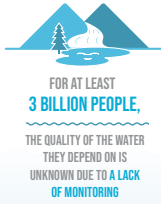
TOO MUCH FOOD IS BEING LOST OR WASTED
IN EVERY COUNTRY EVERY DAY



OUR OCEAN
THE PLANET'S LARGEST ECOSYSTEM
IS ENDANGERED



PLASTIC POLLUTION IS CHOKING THE OCEAN
17+ MILLION METRIC TONS OF PLASTIC ENTERED THE OCEAN IN 2021
PROJECTED TO DOUBLE OR TRIPLE BY 2040



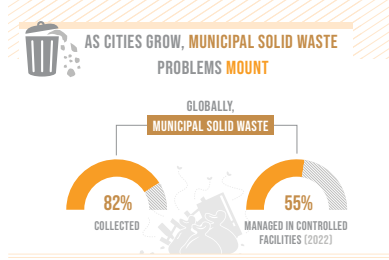
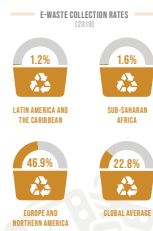
733+ MILLION PEOPLE



OUR RELIANCE ON **NATURAL RESOURCES** IS INCREASING

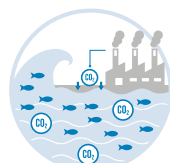
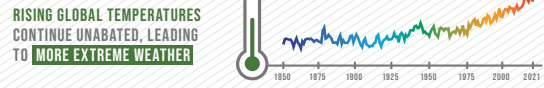
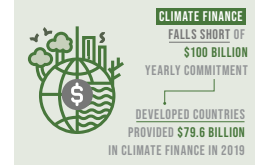
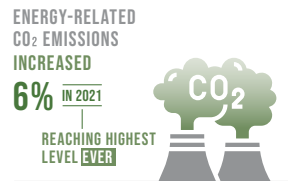
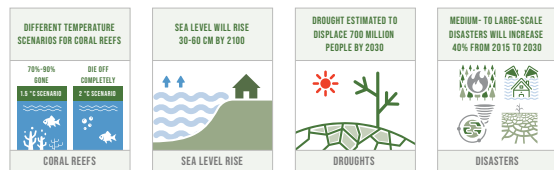


VAST MAJORITY OF THE WORLD'S ELECTRONIC WASTE IS NOT BEING SAFELY MANAGED



CLIMATE CHANGE
IS HUMANITY'S **"CODE RED"** WARNING

OUR WINDOW TO AVOID CLIMATE CATASTROPHE IS CLOSING RAPIDLY

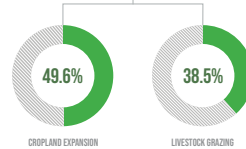


INCREASING ACIDIFICATION IS THREATENING MARINE LIFE AND LIMITING THE OCEAN'S CAPACITY TO MODERATE CLIMATE CHANGE

THE OCEAN ABSORBS AROUND 1/4 OF GLOBAL ANNUAL CO₂ EMISSIONS

10 MILLION HECTARES OF FOREST ARE DESTROYED EVERY YEAR

ALMOST **90%** OF GLOBAL DEFORESTATION IS DUE TO **AGRICULTURAL EXPANSION**



BIODIVERSITY IS LARGELY NEGLECTED IN COVID-19 RECOVERY SPENDING



AROUND **40,000 SPECIES** ARE DOCUMENTED TO BE AT RISK OF EXTINCTION OVER THE COMING DECADES

Summary of the status of the Sustainable Development Goals directly linked to environmental sustaina

(Source: Sustainable Development Goals Report 2022)

<https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2022/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2022.pdf>

All these tensions at global scale only further highlight the need to address sustainability and environmental improvement in a decisive and coordinated manner. It should not be forgotten that the environment is one of the pillars on which the socioeconomic model is based at all levels, and priority attention to this vector will only improve our resilience in the face of global challenges.

ACCESS TO A CLEAN, HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENT IS A UNIVERSAL HUMAN RIGHT

This was recognized by the United Nations General Assembly in July 2022 in a resolution that states that the right to a healthy environment is related to existing international law and affirms that full implementation of multilateral environmental agreements is required.

It also recognizes that the impact of climate change, unsustainable management and use of natural resources, air, land and water pollution, inadequate management of chemicals and waste, and the consequent loss of biodiversity interfere with the enjoyment of this right, and that environmental harm has negative implications, both direct and indirect, for the effective enjoyment of all human rights.

The resolution calls on States, international organizations and companies to intensify their efforts to ensure a healthy environment for all.

From the European level, the response to these challenges has been pursued for more than 40 years. From then until now, the European Union's successive Environmental Action Programmes have provided an environmental and climate policy context that has contributed to maintaining the focus on environmental objectives and integrating the environment into other areas of European policy, leading the world not only in the adoption of environmental commitments, but also in the achievement of specific strategic objectives such as the reduction of CO₂ emissions.

The eighth **General Programme of Action of the Union on the Environment until 2030**, adopted in April 2022, raises the need to accelerate the ecological transition towards a climate-neutral, sustainable, non-toxic, resource-efficient, renewable energy-based, resilient, competitive and circular economy in a fair, equitable and inclusive manner, as well as the need to protect, restore and improve the state of the environment, including among others halting and reversing the loss of biodiversity. It supports and reinforces an integrated approach to policy and implementation based on the European Green Deal.

The eighth General Programme of Action of the Union on the Environment until 2030, adopted in April 2022, raises the need to accelerate the ecological transition towards a climate-neutral, sustainable, non-toxic, resource-efficient, renewable energy-based.

To this end, it includes six priority thematic objectives and up to 34 favourable conditions to achieve these goals by establishing a monitoring framework.

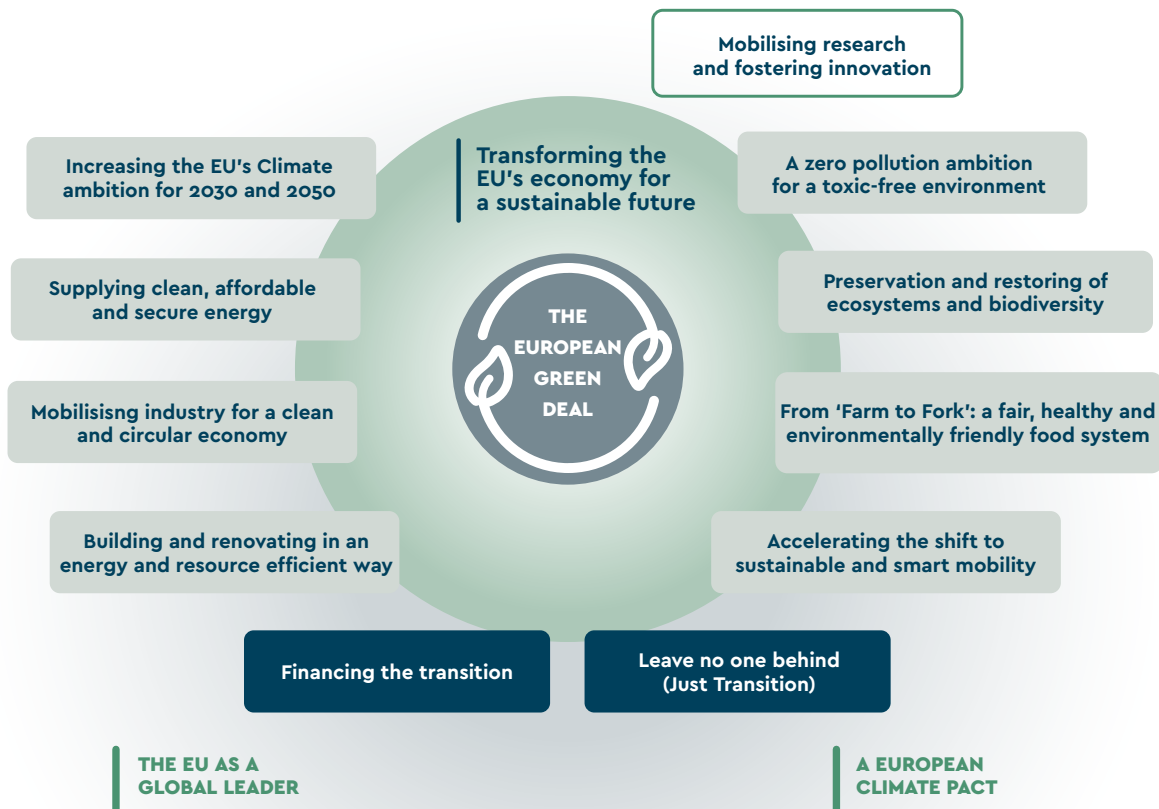
OBJECTIVES OF THE 8TH EUROPEAN EFP

- Rapid and predictable reduction of GHG emissions and increase removals by natural sinks to achieve the 2030 GHG emissions reduction target, ensuring a fair transition that leaves no one behind.
- Continued progress in increasing and mainstreaming adaptive capacity, strengthening resilience and adaptation, and reducing the vulnerability of the environment, society, and the entire economy to climate change.
- Evolution towards a welfare economy that returns to the planet more than it takes from it, and acceleration of the transition towards a non-toxic circular economy.

- Achieving the zero pollution goal, also in relation to harmful chemicals and with regard to light and noise pollution, and the protection of the health and well-being of people, animals and ecosystems from negative environmental risks and impacts.
- Protecting, conserving and restoring marine, terrestrial and inland water biodiversity, halting and reversing biodiversity loss and improving the state of ecosystems, their functions and the services they provide and improving the state of the environment, in particular air, water and soil, as well as fighting desertification and soil degradation.
- Promoting the environmental sustainability aspects, and reducing in a significant manner the main climate and environmental pressures associated with Union production and consump-

tion, in particular within the fields of energy, industry, buildings and infrastructure, mobility, tourism, international trade and the food system.

The achievement of the goals of the Eighth European Environmental Programme is therefore based on the application of the **European Green Deal** which, since its presentation in December 2019, is the European Union's response to the environmental and climate challenges that we face globally. It is a roadmap for making the European Union's economy sustainable, transforming challenges into opportunities in all areas of climate and environmental action, and making this transition fair and inclusive for all European citizens. It proposes actions to promote the efficient use of resources by moving to a clean and circular economy, to stop climate change, reverse biodiversity loss and reduce pollution. It covers all sectors of economy, with special emphasis on transport, energy, agriculture, industry and construction.



Elements that comprise the European Green Deal

(Source: Communication from the Commission of 11 December 2019)

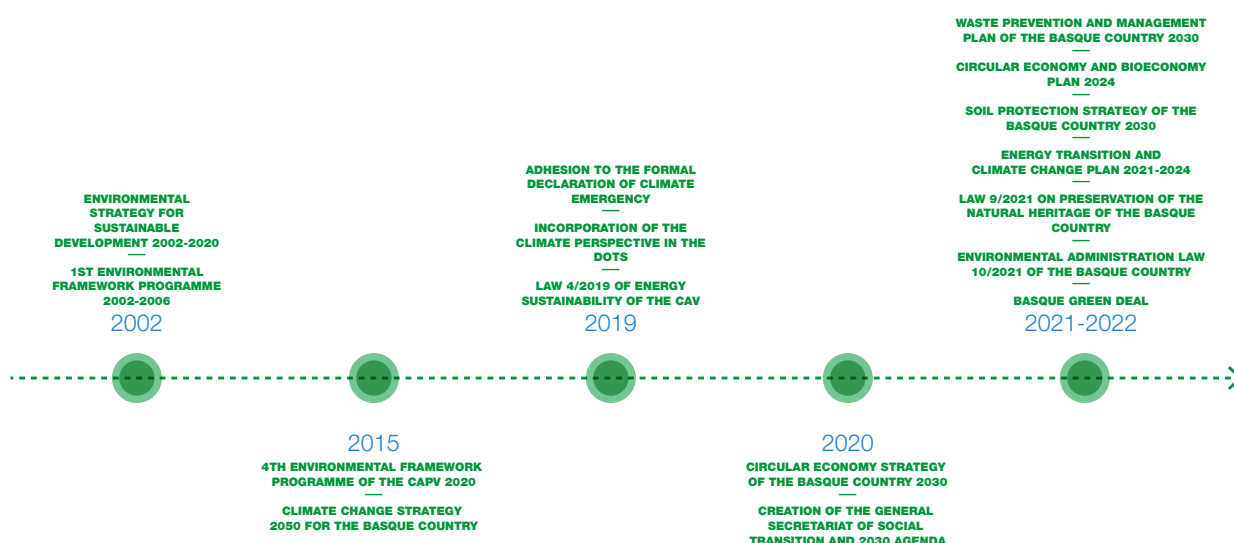
In line with the evolution of European policy, the **Basque Country** also has an extensive and relevant track record in responding to global and local environmental challenges, with a growing level of ambition and commitment over time.

This long journey has been shaped through the generation and implementation of legislative and planning instruments, and also the daily management of services and programmes, as well as through organizational decision-making with a view to improving the effectiveness of these instruments.




In this long path, we can differentiate two main stages based on the initial situation and the type of instruments used. A first stage, whose beginning is in the eighties, in which the essential goal was to “put out the fires” of the great environmental problems arising from an industrial policy in which the dimension of environmental sustainability was practically non-existent. And a second stage has developed basically in the first two decades of the 21st century, in which the Basque Administrations have been adding the necessary management tools to ensure respect for our environment, along with incentives to achieve public and private organizations have progressively included the environmental dimension within their strategies.

During the last years, and especially from 2015 with the incorporation of the concept of sustainability, this progress has been accelerated in an important way, developing and including this concept in different sector policies, instruments and through the active involvement of the Basque Country in international initiatives and programmes.

With the creation in 2020 of the General Secretariat for Social Transition and 2030 Agenda, the Basque Government accepted as its own the priorities and objectives of sustainable development of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and a year later developed the **Basque programme of priorities of the Agenda 2030** vision to contribute to building a culture of social agreement and collaboration, a team culture. A social agreement of ethical substrate, understood as a widely shared projection of principles, values and challenges useful for the purpose of overcoming the current crisis context with a more cohesive and fair society.



Highlights of the Basque Country’s sustainability path over the last 20 years

 Axes	 Driving commitments	 Flagship projects
1. People. Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eradicate poverty and hunger, reduce inequalities and prevent exclusion. 	I. Ekitatea Project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deepen inclusive education to promote a more cohesive, supportive and sustainable society. 	II. Project Hezkuntzaren auzolana. An education for all
2. Planet. Ecology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reverse climate change: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - preservation, ecosystems restoration and biodiversity, - and decarbonisation and renewable energies. 	III. Project Energy-Ekiola + Climate-Ondarea
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote a green and inclusive city, mobility and urban planning ecosystem. 	IV. Project Opengela
3. Prosperity. Solidarity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share public health, as a common good, local and global, that reaches all people. 	V. Global Health Project
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and develop bases of sustainability and co-responsibility in the economy and business. 	VI. Basque Ecodesign Center Project
4. Peace. Human Rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to a peaceful world, based on the respect for human dignity for a fair and inclusive coexistence. 	VII. The Basque case project: lessons learned for the prevention of violence and protection of peace

Driving commitments and emblematic projects of the Basque Government within the field of the 2030 Agenda

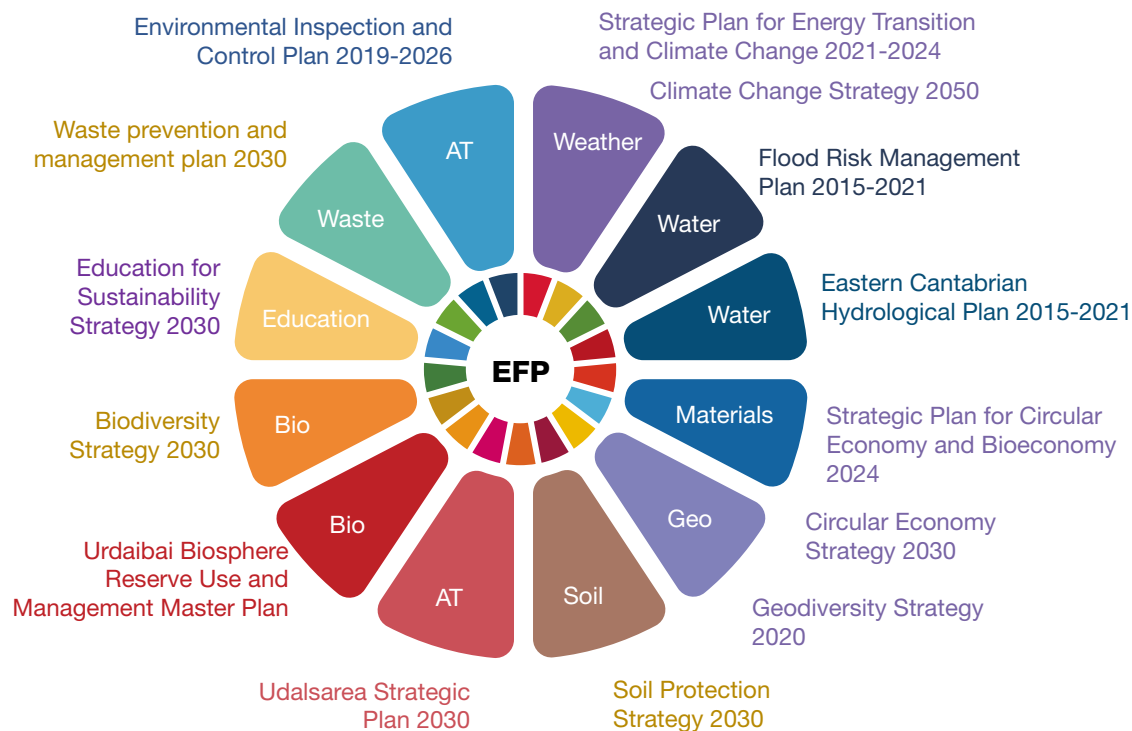
(Source: Basque programme of priorities of the Agenda 2030)

Parallel to this great transversal strategic commitment towards sustainability in all its aspects, and following the example of the European Union, in 2021 the Basque Government also proposed its own roadmap to achieve a more environmentally sustainable future, **the Basque Green Deal**. This roadmap includes the objectives of reduction of emissions and renewable energy generation, but is not limited to those areas, since it was born as an economic model with industry and technology as main levers, so that science, technology, circular economy, industry, energy transition or food chain itself are aligned with the same goal: fair and sustainable development.

Thus, the Basque Green Deal is structured around five main lines of work:

- The commitment to renewable energy.
- Sustainable industry.
- Sustainable mobility.
- Biodiversity protection and reduction of pollution.
- Food “from the field to the table”.

The commitment of the Basque Green Deal in environmental issues has been materialized to date in a very complete corpus of strategic and interrelated **sector environmental planning** focused on the different environmental vectors and their specific challenges.



Main environmental plans and strategies in force in the Basque Country

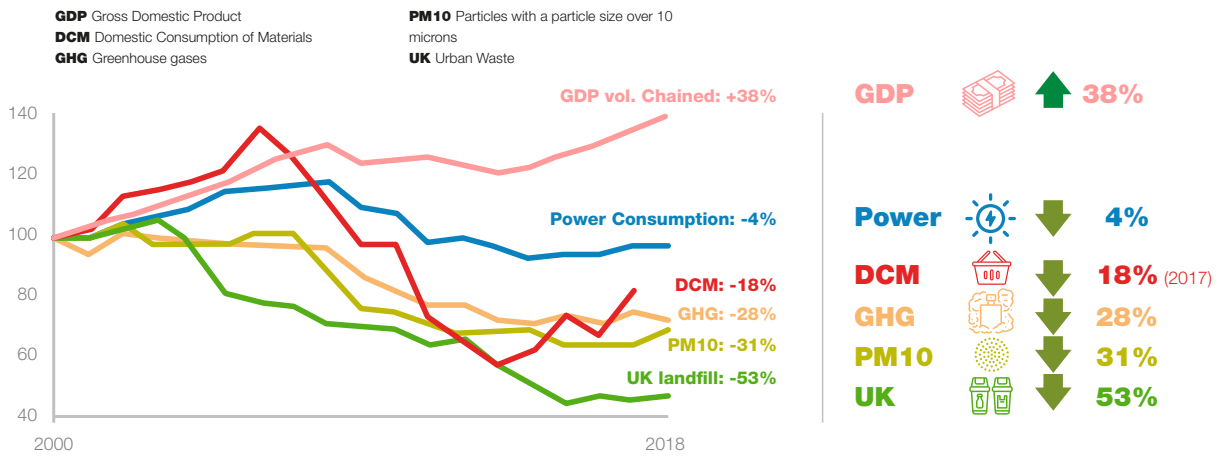
The development of this wide range of plans and strategies, as well as the Basque Green Deal itself, marks the final stage of implementation of the previous EFP, the designated **Environmental Framework Programme of the CAPV 2020** (4th EFP). The 4th EFP was adopted in December 2014 and it considered six strategic objectives, 75 priority actions and six key cross-cutting projects.

At the end of its validity period, the assessment of the 4th EFP (see Annex 2 – Final assessment report of the 4th Environmental Framework Programme 2020) verified its strategic importance to achieve coordinated progress on the most relevant environmental issues in the Basque Country, as well as on other elements related to the governance of environmental vectors and in increasing the recognition that environmental protection is not only compatible, but necessary, for economic development that generates employment and prosperity. More specifically, the assessment of the 4th EFP allowed to demonstrate that:

- Environmental policy in the Basque Country is in a permanent process of transformation. A transformation always in line with Europe and for the sake of a greater result by global effort expended. For this, it is crucial to move from mainly normative interventions

to interventions with a greater inclusion of the environmental dimension in sector policies. Breaking down sector silos by adding environmental sustainability should be the key to a new stage. For example, circular economy in industry and construction, climate action in energy and transport policy, environmental determinants in people’s health or sustainable food and the protection of biodiversity in rural development policy.

- The sector environmental policies of recent decades have borne fruit, but maintaining the current “business as usual” trend may prove insufficient to properly address current challenges. Some of the most outstanding results obtained in environmental terms are the absolute decoupling of the Basque economy with variables such as Greenhouse Gases, the consumption of materials, particles in the atmosphere or urban waste to landfill.
- The direction is adequate, but the current intensity is no longer enough. The articulation of a prosperous, modern and advanced society is only possible by protecting and respecting our natural resources. By doing so, environmental sustainability is fully integrated into the Basque Country



Evolution of the decoupling between economic growth and the main environmental features in the Basque Country

(Source: Environmental Framework Programme Assessment Report 2020)

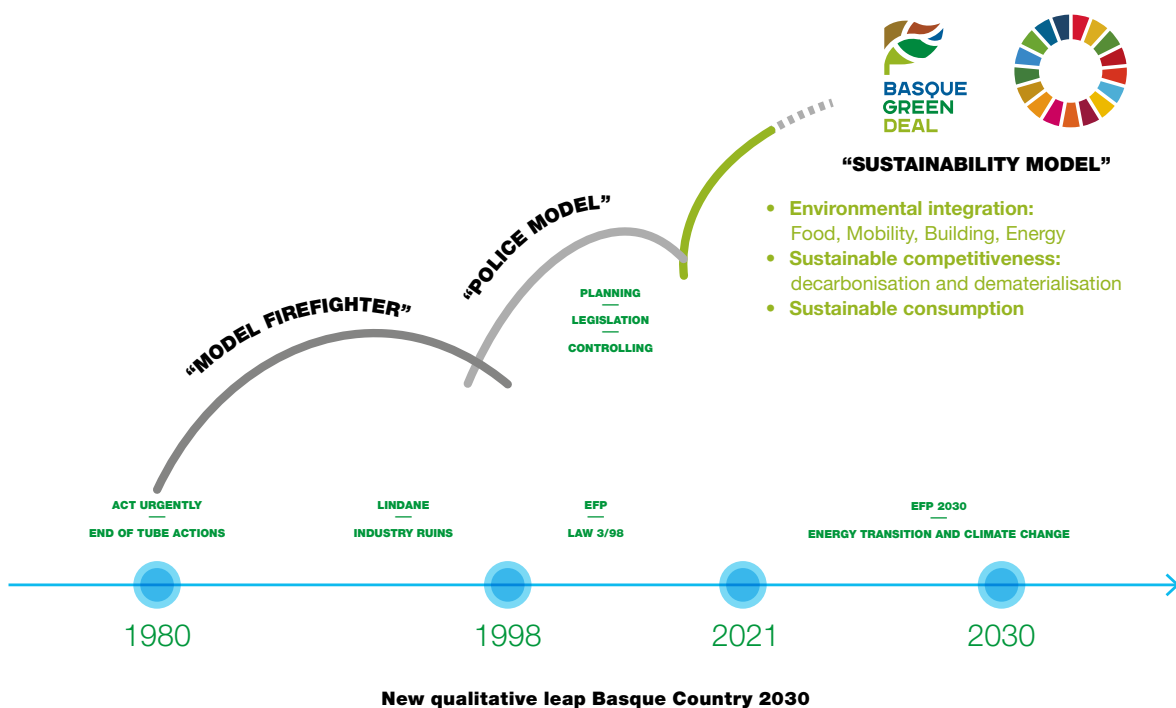
2030 Agenda. It is necessary to deepen quickly into the challenges ahead.

- The complex interrelationship among the different socio-economic areas raises the need to generate new capacities, dynamics and advanced data management allowing to optimize the response to this new reality.

Therefore, we reach the end of the path of the 4th EFP with a photograph that shows a clear and undoubted improvement of the state of the environment in the

Basque Country, where it has been possible to substantially decouple economic growth and the main environmental features, but where there are still clear areas for improvement that need to be faced with greater intensity and new optics, such as the risks of climate change or the state of ecosystems.

In this context, the EFP 2030 is proposed as platform for a new stage with a new ambition leap in which the concept of sustainability must be integrated into all public policies and the strategies and dynamics of companies and of the Basque society.



EUSKO JAURLARITZA



GOBIERNO VASCO