

ENVIRONMENTAL OUTLOOK BASQUE COUNTRY 2024





Ihobe, January 2025

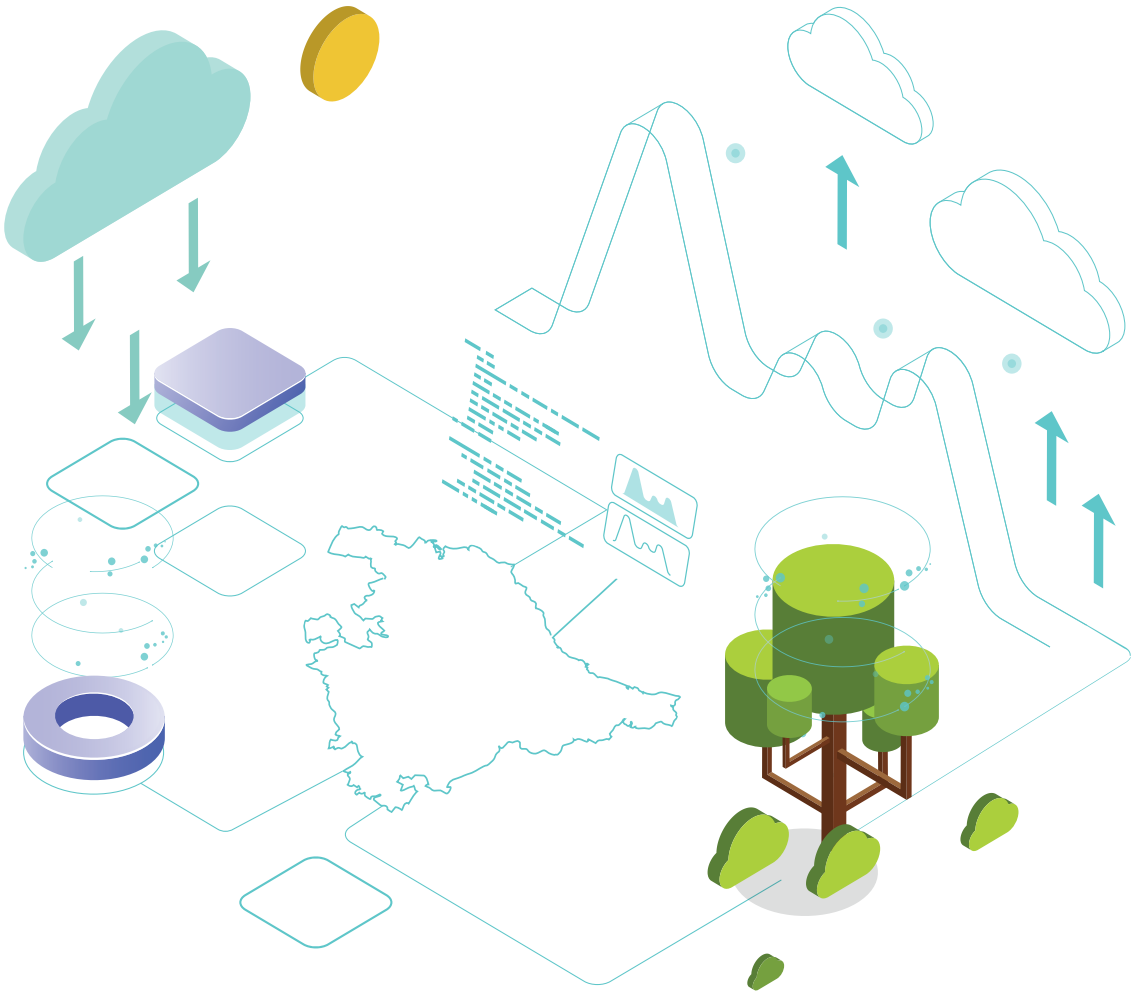
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As set out in Article 13 of the Basque Environmental Administration Act 10/2021, of 9 December, the General Administration of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country is required to prepare and publish an annual outlook report on the state of the environment and a full report every four years. The reports are to include data on the quality of the environment and the pressures on it, including the transformation into artificial land, along with a non-technical summary that can be understood by the public.

Therefore, this report aims to compile and analyse different environmental indicators that help to provide a visual and simplified idea of the quality of the environment in Basque territory.

The analysis is divided into 9 environmental thematic areas, which have been selected based on the environmental vectors defined by the European Environment Agency and adapting them to the socio-economic context of the Basque Country.

The evolution of headline environmental indicators - of the European Environment Agency and of Eurostat (Statistical Office of the European Union) - is studied to assess the progress and advances of each of the thematic areas, and the distance to the targets set for the Basque Country, as applicable, is reflected.

The indicators mainly come from the environmental statistics of the Basque Government (Basque Ministry of Industry, Energy Transition and Sustainability, and Eustat (Basque Statistics Institute)). The latest data published as of the date of this report have been included.

This report is coordinated by Ihobe, the Basque Government's environmental management agency, whose functions include reporting to society in an easy-to-understand way on the progress and most important challenges of the evolution of the environment in the Basque Country.

All the information is available at: <https://www.euskadi.eus/gobierno-vasco/medio-ambiente/>

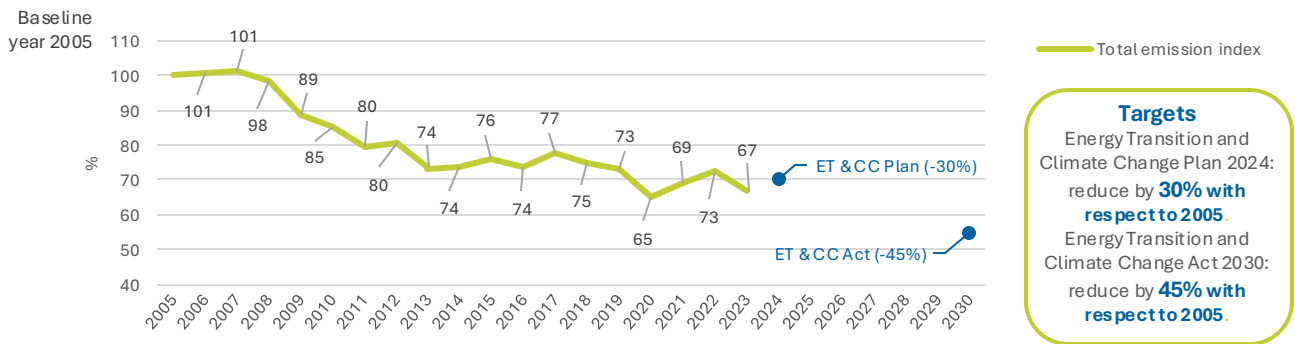
Climate change

Reduction of CO₂ emissions by 33% since 2005

It is here essential to refer to the Basque Energy Transition and Climate Change Act 1/2024, of 8 February, whose goal is to achieve net zero emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050.

In 2023, the Basque Country emitted 17 million tonnes of CO₂, which meant a 33% drop in emissions on the 2005 baseline. Therefore, we are well on track to meet the target set for 2030 in the Basque Energy Transition and Climate Change Act.

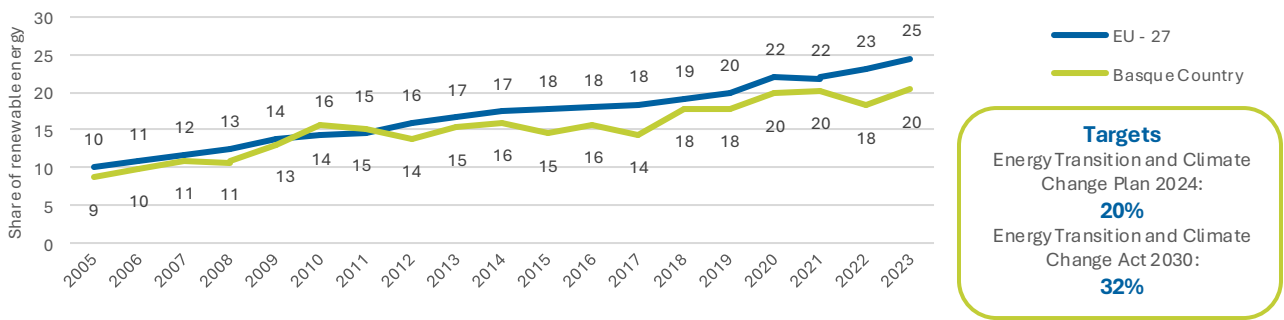
Index of total greenhouse gas emissions 2005-2023



Article 23 of Act 1/2024 envisages that the share of renewable energy in the final energy consumption must be, at least, 32% by 2030; that is a minimum percentage that could be revised upwards in keeping with the targets set by the EU or the Spanish State.

In the last decade, the share of renewable energies out of the total energy consumption rose by 11.7% - standing at 20.4% in 2023 - and returning to an upward trend thanks to the increase in biofuels, photovoltaic solar energy, thermal energy, aérothermal and geothermal energy.

Share of renewable energy in final energy consumption 2005-2023



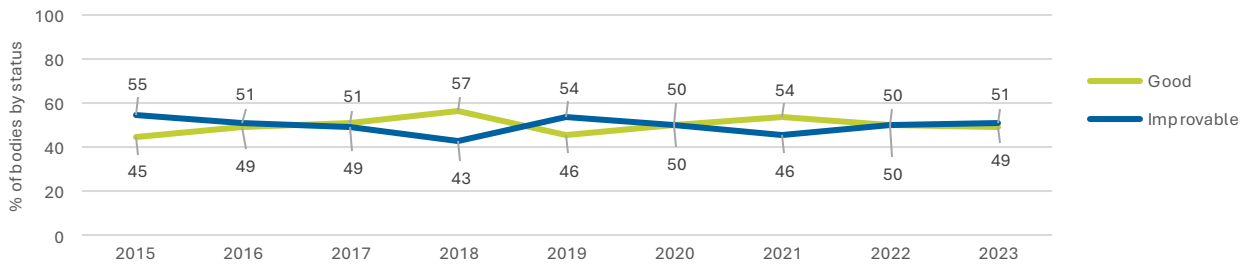
Water body status has remained stable in recent years

Water bodies are the management and assessment units used to establish the environmental goals and to access their compliance. In the Basque Country, 36 underground and 167 surface (including 128 rivers, 21 lakes and reservoirs, 14 estuaries and 4 coastal waters) water bodies have been identified.

Favourable but slow progress is being made towards achieved a good water body status.

At present, the status of 49% of surface water bodies and 89% of underground water bodies is good. Good status is not achieved in the majority of the surface water cases due to lack of compliance of environmental goals related to the environmental status, and to the chemical status in the case of the underground waters.

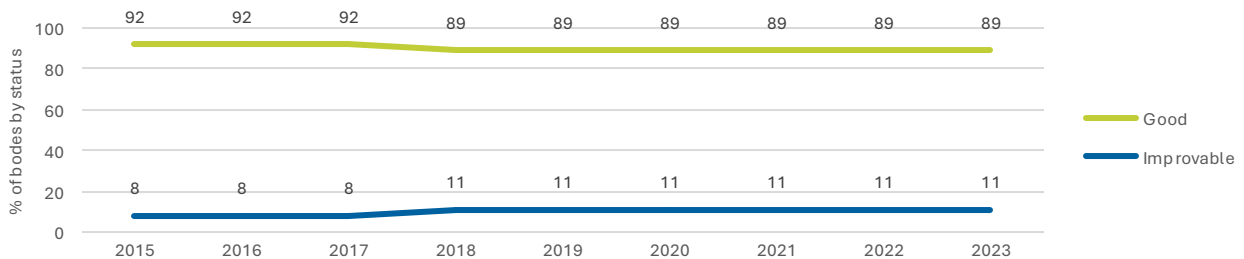
Status of the surface water bodies 2015-2023



The general situation of coastal waters and reservoirs is good within the surface waters. In 2023, the status of 100% and 90% of their water bodies, respectively, was found to be good.

Rivers and estuaries report a less favourable situation, with the status of 49% and 57% of their water bodies, respectively, being good in 2023. In turn, only a third of lakes and wetlands achieved good status in 2023.

Status of underground water bodies 2015-2023

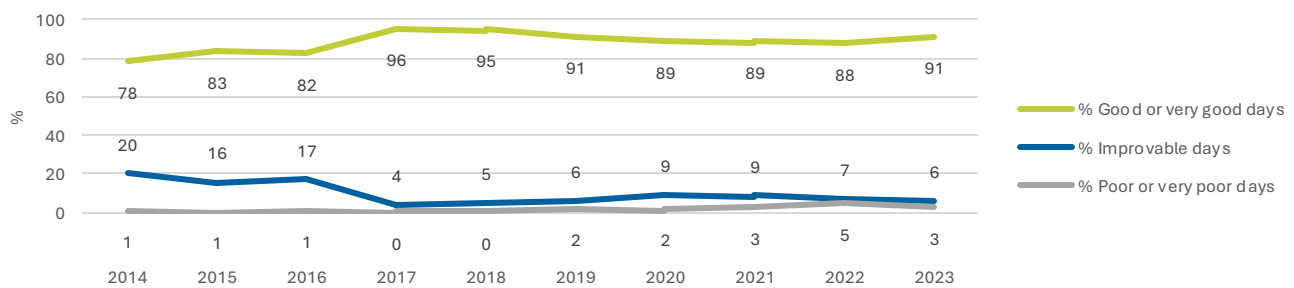


Improvement in the evolution of the air quality

The Basque Country has seen a drop in polluting emissions and better air quality. The latter is taken to be the degree to which the air is free from pollutants.

In 2023, the air quality on 91% of days was 'good' or 'very good', 6% 'improvable', and 3% between 'poor' and 'very poor'.

Air quality index 2014-2023



The index of urban population exposed to air pollution shows the weighted annual average concentration of PM10 fine particulate matter. In other words, the particulates whose diameter is less than 10 micrometres (micras), to which the urban population is potentially exposed.

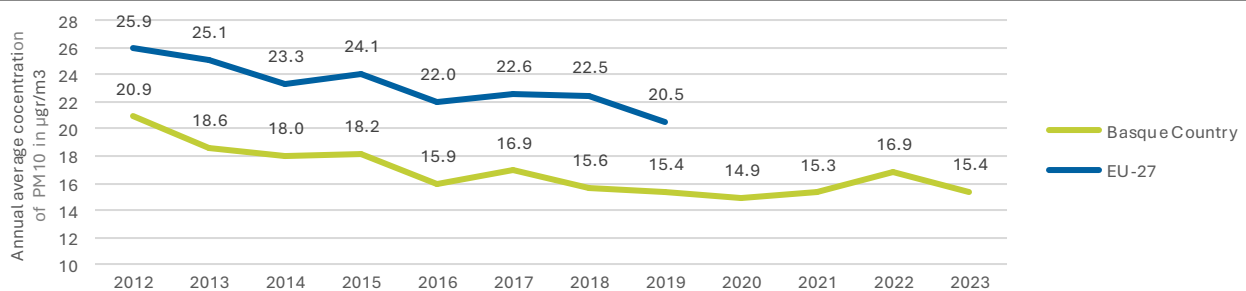
The annual average concentration of particulate matter (PM10) was 15.4 $\mu\text{gr}/\text{m}^3$ in 2023, after showing a

favourable evolution, down 26% since 2012.

This was under the target set by the European Directive regarding air quality (20 $\mu\text{gr}/\text{m}^3$).

In terms of the coming years, the Basque Air Quality Plan 2030 has set the target of an annual average no higher than 20 $\mu\text{gr}/\text{m}^3$ at all measurement points and 15 $\mu\text{gr}/\text{m}^3$ at least in half the points.

Index of urban population exposed to air pollution 2012-2023

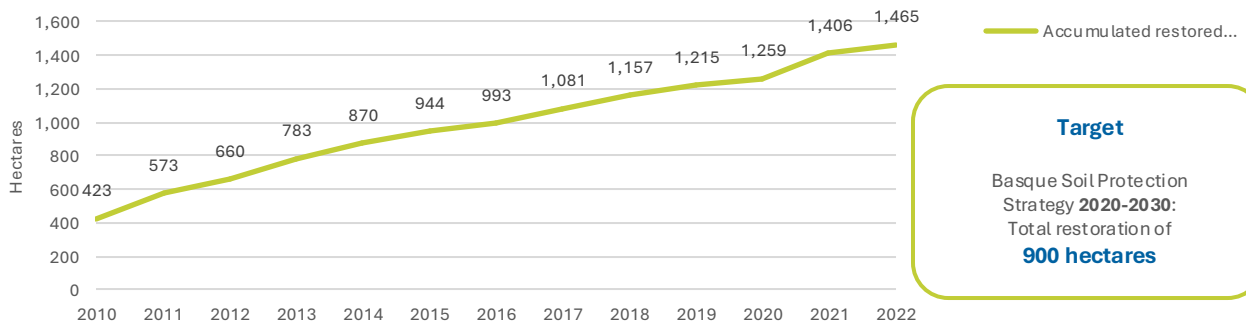


1,406 hectares of contaminated soil restored

The Basque Soil Protection Strategy 2030 has set the target of achieving significant progress in the restoration of contaminated soils; by 2050, it envisages reducing the soil contamination to levels considered not harmful to human health and natural ecosystems.

Since 2000, 16% of the 9,114 hectares of potentially contaminated soil inventoried in the Basque Country, pertaining to 1,584 contaminated sites, have been restored for new uses.

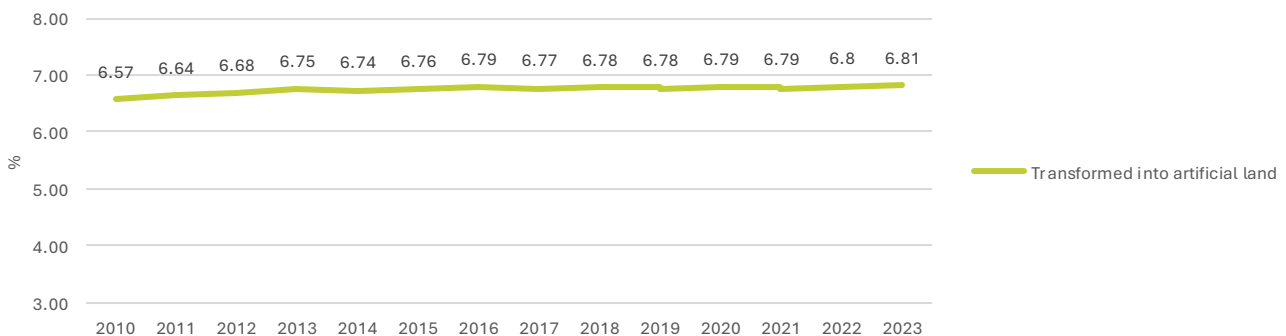
Potentially contaminated soil surface and restored for new uses 2010-2022



The rate of artificial land replacing natural soil increased slightly from 2010 to 2016. However, this percentage remained stable in previous years, at around 6.8%. If this figure is compared with the percentage of sealed soil in the

other European countries, the Basque Country exceeds the European average (1.81%) and its percentages are close to countries such as the Netherlands (7.33%) and Belgium (7.37%), which also have high population densities.

Evolution of the transformation into artificial land 2010-2023

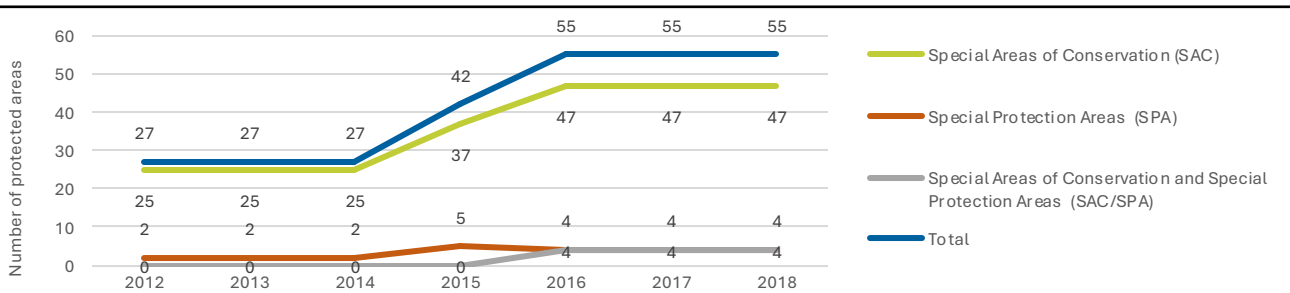


23% of the surface area of the Basque Country is protected by the Natura 2000 Network.

The European Natura 2000 Network is the fundamental mainstay of European biodiversity policy. This network has been completed to a great extent for Europe's river and terrestrial habitats and has a series of associated mandatory regulations and measures.

The Basque Country has 55 areas protected by Natura 2000; their total surface area is 1,659 km², which is equivalent to 23% of the total area (EU 18.6%). Other protection figures also exist in Basque Natural Heritage Act 9/2021.

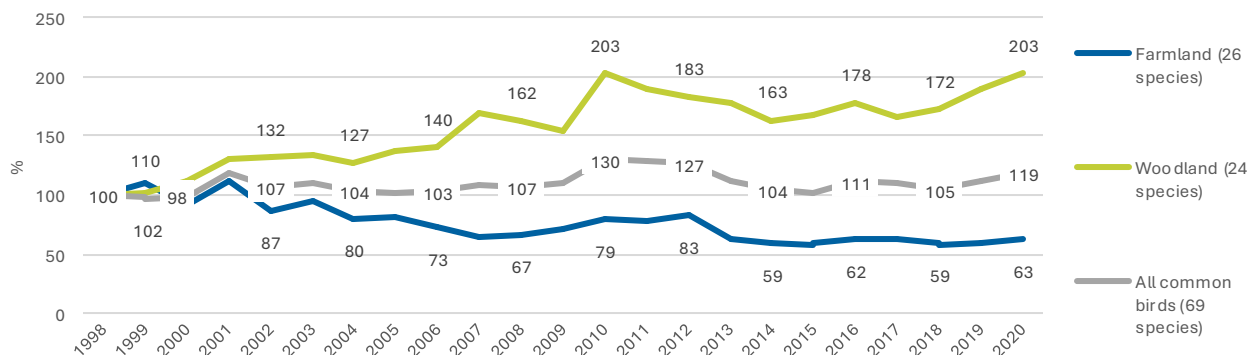
Evolution of the number of protected areas 2012-2018



The Basque Country, through its 2030 Biodiversity Strategy, has deployed measures focused on fostering urban biodiversity through the green infrastructure, where it is addressed from the citizen perspective.

Birds associated with farmland have shown a population decline of 37% with respect to 1998 data. While the birds in woodland and urban areas have increased their populations by 103 % and 19% respectively.

Evolution of the index of common breeding birds 1998-2020





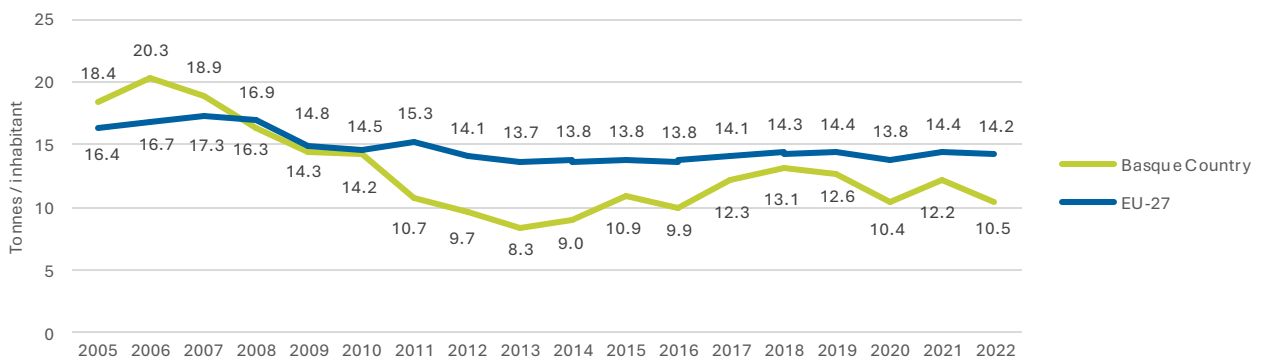
Circular Economy

Drop in material consumption per inhabitant

In October 2021, the Basque Government approved the Basque Circular Economy and Bioeconomy Strategic Plan 2024, whose goals include driving the creation of new more circular business models, reducing consumption of raw materials and waste generation.

Since 2005, a clear drop in Domestic material consumption (DMC) has been seen, down 8 tonnes per inhabitant and remaining under the EU average.

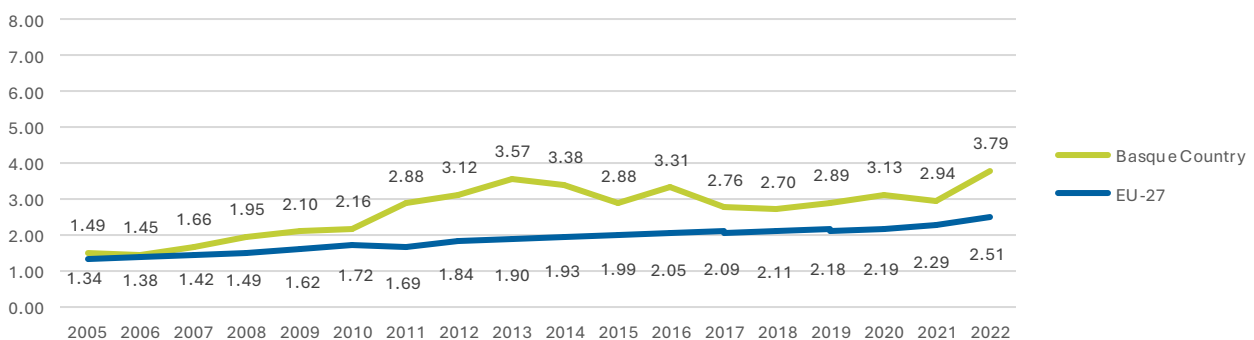
Domestic Material Consumption per inhabitant 2005-2022



The drop in Domestic Material Consumption has occurred despite the Basque economy continuing to grow.

Proof of that is the material productivity index, which measures the relationship between the Gross Domestic Product and the DMC.

Material Productivity Index 2005-2022

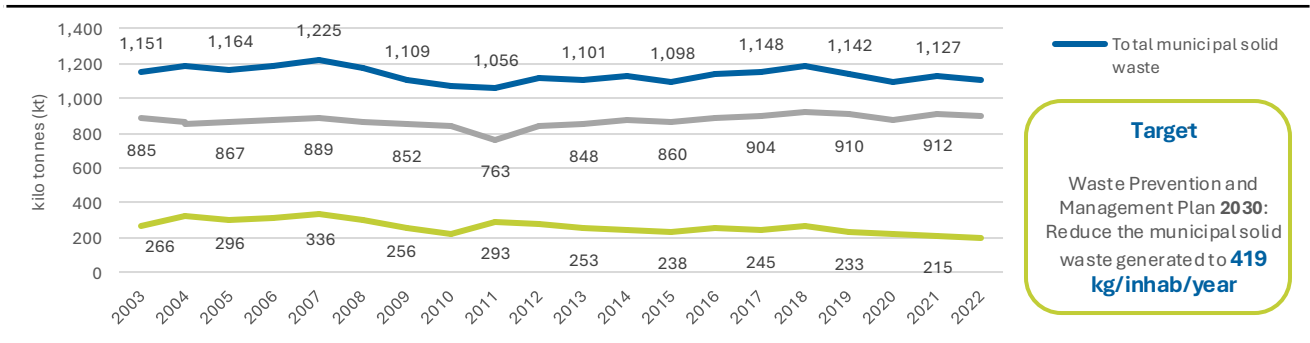


Waste ending up in landfill reduced by 54% since 2018

The municipal solid waste generated in the Basque Country since 2003 has been cut by 4%.

It has been reduced to 1,106,000 tons generated in 2022. 80% were domestic.

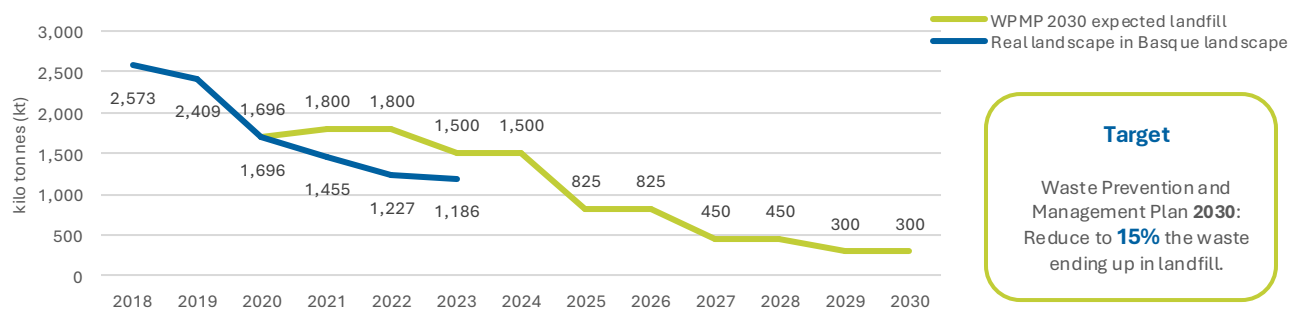
Municipal Solid Waste Generated 2003-2022



In addition, since 2018, the waste that ends up in landfill has been reduced by 54%. We are on track to achieve the objective set by the Basque Country's 2030 Waste Prevention and Management Plan, to reduce the waste that ends up in landfill to less than 15%.

The 31.2 million euros that have been allocated since 2021 have contributed to this reduction, to minimise landfill and to foster the reuse of waste as secondary materials, by supporting circular economy and waste prevention and management projects, in Basque public administrations and companies.

Waste ending up in landfill 2018-2023





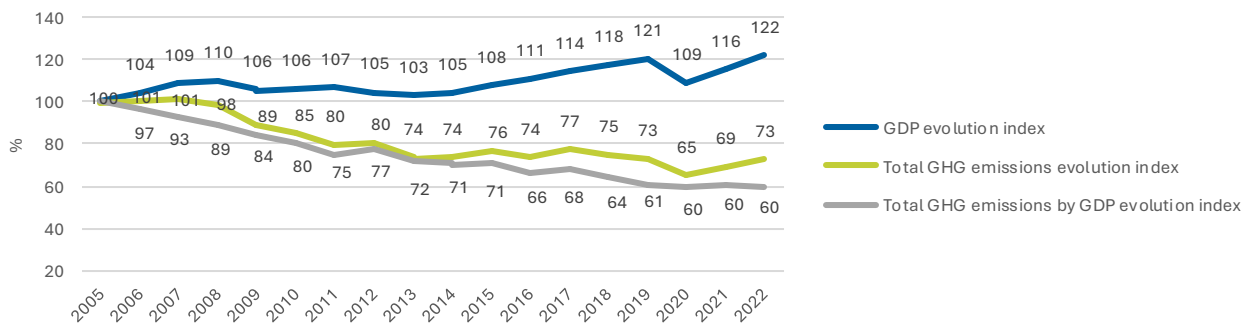
Economy and Environment

Decoupling between the GDP and the main environmental indicators

The relationship between the GDP and greenhouse gas emissions is a key indicator to assess the environmental sustainability of economic growth. This indicator is crucial to formulate policies that foster sustainable economic developing, by minimising the environmental impact and advancing towards a low-carbon economy.

Between 2005 and 2022, the GDP rose 21% and the GHG emissions fell by 27%. The Basque Country shows an absolute decoupling between the GDP and the main environmental indicators; in other words, the economy has grown and there are fewer environmental impacts.

Evolution of the GDP and Greenhouse Gases 2005-2022

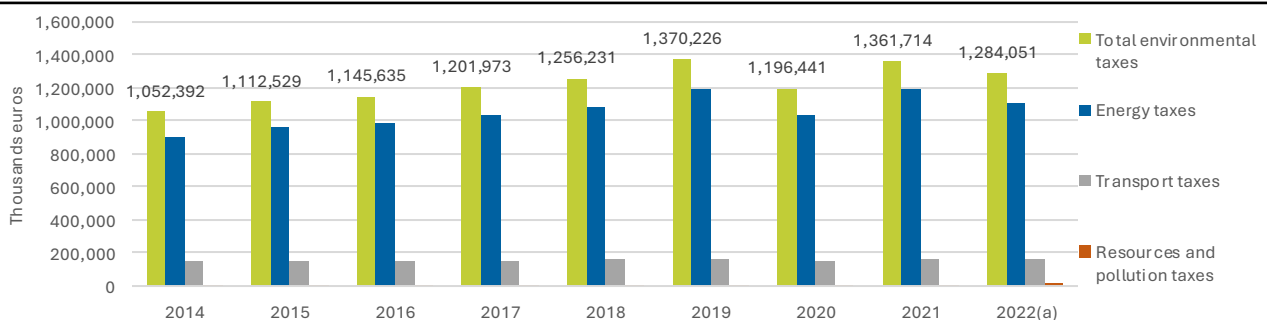


Environmental taxes are grouped into three categories, according to the type of environmental criterion: Energy taxes, Transport taxes, and Taxes on pollution and resources.

In 2022, environmental taxes in the Basque Country stood at €1,284 million, 6.7% of the total taxes.

Green taxation, as a percentage of the environmental taxes to GDP, is 1.5% in the Basque Country, under the EU-27 average of 2%.

Environmental Taxes 2014-2022





Citizens and Environment

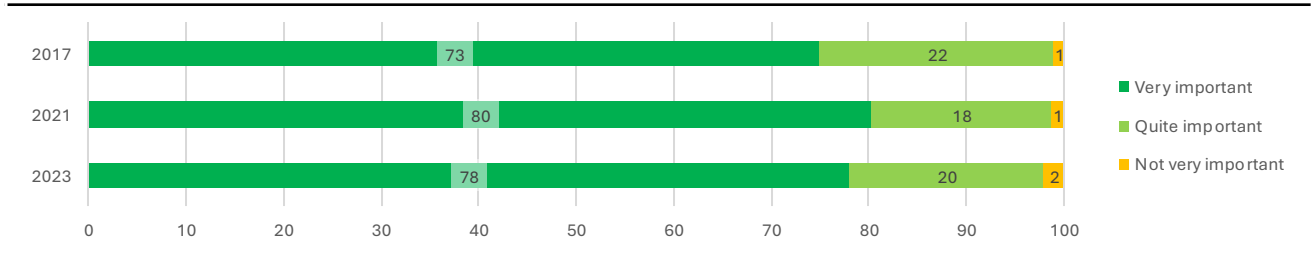
76% of Basque citizens are worried about climate change

The November 2023 by the Sociological Survey Office of the Lehendakaritza (Basque Premier's Office) analysed the degree of concern of Basque society about different aspects related to the environment.

Citizens are shown to highlight the environment as important for quality of life. Furthermore, 9 out of every 10 people believe that their purchasing decisions have make companies manufacture more responsibly.

In this case, practically all Basque

Importance of the environment on the quality of life % of responses of the survey conducted in 2023 on 'How important is the environment to have a good quality of life'



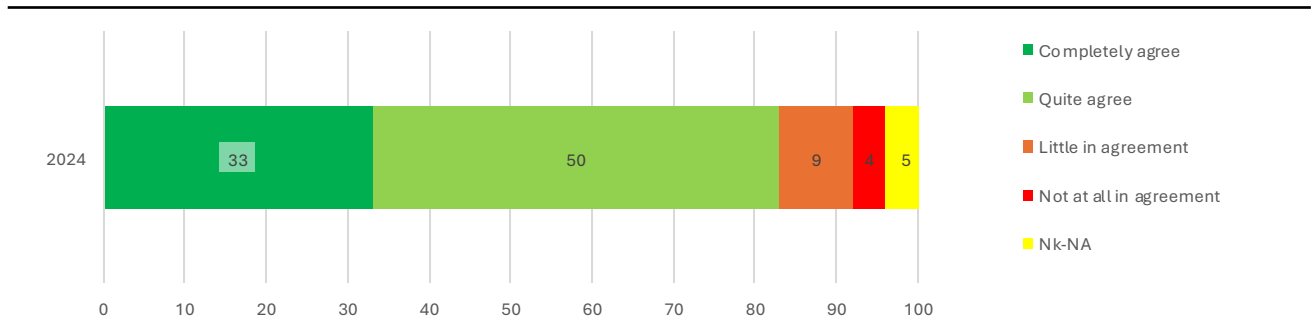
In the study published in October 2024, focused on climate change and the energy transition, citizens were consulted regarding how far in agreement they were with the measures to fight against climate change and if they believed that they can help to

improve our quality of life.

In this case, 83% of the surveyed population were completely or rather in agreement. 13% said that they are little or not at all in agreement.

General attitudes to fighting climate change

% of responses of the survey in 2024 regarding whether 'The measures to fight against climate change can help to improve our quality of life'





Conclusions

CLIMATE CHANGE

In 2023, the Basque Country emitted 17 million tonnes of CO₂, which meant a 33% drop in emissions on the 2005 baseline. If we continue to be on track, we will meet the target set for 2030 in the Basque Energy Transition and Climate Change Act. The share of renewable energy in final energy consumption in 2023 was 20.4%, with the target of 32% set for 2030 in the Basque Energy Transition and Climate Change Act.

WATER

The status of approximately 50% of surface water bodies and 89% of underground water bodies is good. The evolution is favourable but slow, particularly in the case of the rivers and estuaries. Greater effort is needed to roll out measures related to achieving the environmental goals of the water bodies included in the water plan.

AIR

In 2023, the air quality on 91% of days was 'good' or 'very good', 6% 'improvable', and 3% between 'poor' and 'very poor'. The annual average concentration of particulate matter (PM₁₀) has fallen and is under the European average.

SOIL

Since the year 2000, 1,465 hectares of soil have been recovered from 1584 contaminated sites. Transformation into artificial land has been seen to be stabilised.

BIODIVERSITY

The Basque Country has 55 areas protected by Natura 2000; their total surface area is 1,659 km², which is equivalent to 23% of the total area (EU 18.6%). As regards the conservation of common breeding birds, while there has been a decline in population of the birds associated with farmland, the populations of the birds in woodland and urban areas have increased.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY

Since 2005, there has been a clear drop in Domestic material consumption (DMC), in a context of economic growth.

WASTE

Waste ending up in landfill has reduced by 54% since 2018. Meeting the target of reducing that waste by 85% set in the Basque Waste Prevention and Management Plan 2030 requires 1.1 million tonnes to be recovered and reused.

ECONOMY AND THE ENVIRONMENT









The Basque Country shows a notable decoupling between GDP and the main environmental indicators such as GHG emissions. Conversely, green taxation accounts for 1.5% of the GDP in the Basque Country, under the EU average of 2%.

CITIZENS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Practically all Basque citizens are shown to highlight the environment as important for quality of life. Furthermore, citizens are quite in agreement with the measures to fight against climate change.



Indicators summary

Indicator		2015	Last figure
Index of total greenhouse gas emissions (2005 baseline)		76 Total GHG emissions index	67 Total GHG emissions index (2023)
Underground and surface water bodies with good status		53% bodies of water with good status	56% bodies of water with good status (2023)
Air quality index		83% days with good or very good quality	91% days with good or very good quality (20232)
Potentially contaminated soil surface and restored for new uses (since 2010)		944 Ha restored	1,406 Ha restored (2022)
Number of protected areas		42 protected areas	55 protected areas (2018)
Domestic Material Consumption per inhabitant		11 tonnes per inhabitant	10.5 tonnes per inhabitant (2022)
Waste ending up in landfill		2,573 kt of landfill (2018 figure)	1,186 kt of landfill (2023)
Environmental Taxes		1,112,529 thousands of euros	1,284,051 thousands of euros (2022)



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