

BASQUE COUNTRY, SPAIN

The Basque Country is driving climate adaptation through coordinated governance, strategic EU initiatives, and innovative demonstrator projects. By involving diverse stakeholders and leveraging key mechanisms, the region is strengthening its resilience and advancing effective, long-term adaptation planning.

EU MISSION IMPACT

The Basque Country, Mission Charter Signatory, is advancing its climate resilience through strategic planning and targeted actions. With support from MIP4Adapt's technical assistance, the region has leveraged the Regional Adaptation Support Tool (RAST) tool to develop a comprehensive adaptation strategy.

This process has led to the identification and definition of demonstrator projects, ensuring the implementation of innovative and effective adaptation solutions. Progress in the region is evident, with early adaptation steps completed and demonstrators paving the way for further advancements in long-term resilience planning.

The support from MIP4Adapt Technical Assistance has been invaluable and enriching. The collaborative work sessions with our teams have strengthened our strategic approach, helping to shape the definition of demonstrative adaptive actions for our territory. Additionally, their expertise in the adaptation process across other regions of Europe has been instrumental in guiding our next steps.

MARI MAR ALONSO MARTÍN
 Director of the Climate Action
 Department in Ihobe

REGIONAL PROFILE

The Basque Country, located along the southeastern Bay of Biscay and bordering France, is a densely populated region with 2.2 million inhabitants across 7,234 km². It includes major cities such as Bilbao, San Sebastián, and Vitoria-Gasteiz, with a mix of urban and rural settlements near the coast. The region features 252 km of rugged coastline, short northern river basins, and fertile southern plains, with 23% of land protected as natural heritage. Its economy is strong, with a highly industrialised base (24% of GDP), alongside ties to fisheries, livestock, and agriculture. The Basque Country has led a process of industrial reconversion, positioning itself as a pioneer in sustainable development.

CLIMATE CHALLENGES

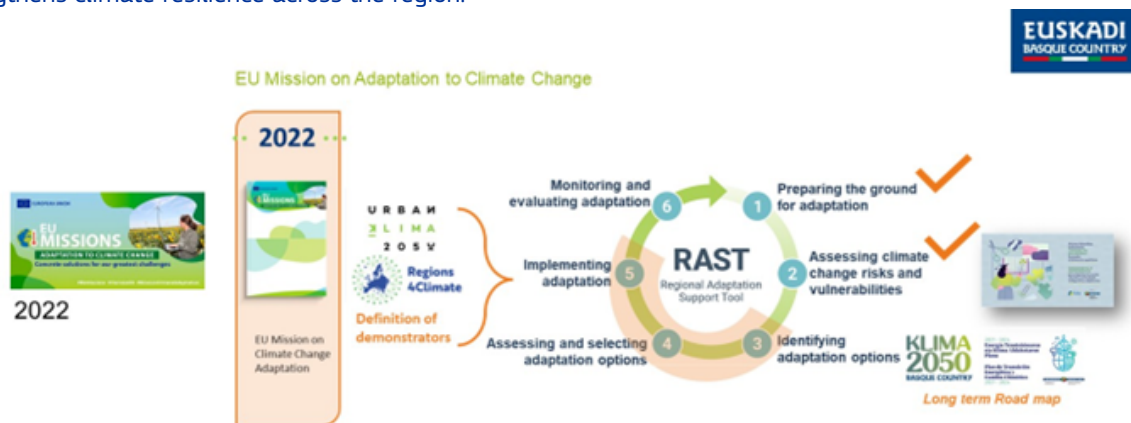
The Basque region, with 75% of the population living close to coastal areas, is highly exposed to several climate hazards. These include sea-level rise, coastal and river flooding, and an increase in heatwaves, all of which threaten ecosystems, infrastructure, and key economic sectors such as fisheries and agriculture.

SOLUTIONS

The Basque Country has built a strong climate adaptation framework through long-term planning and strategic action. A newly approved regional climate change law and the Adaptation Roadmap are key to translating the Basque Climate Change Strategy 2050 into practical resilience measures. Effective coordination among government departments, local authorities, businesses, and key sectors ensures adaptation efforts are localised, scalable, and impactful.

To align funding with adaptation strategies, the region leverages multiple financial mechanisms. The Klimatek programme supports research and innovation projects, including regional climate scenarios, sea level rise assessments, and vulnerability and risk analysis—tools that directly inform regional planning. Additionally, dedicated funding enables local entities to invest in sustainable projects, such as nature-based solutions (NbS).

Collaboration is central to success, with Ihobe, the Basque Government's Environment Agency, working closely with key stakeholders, including URA (the Water Management Agency), planning departments, academia, research institutions, businesses, and municipalities through the Basque Network of Sustainable Municipalities (Udalsarea 2030). This integrated approach strengthens climate resilience across the region.



OUTPUTS

The Basque Country is committed to ambitious climate adaptation and aligns with key EU initiatives, including MIP4Adapt and C4T (Cohesion for Transition). As a frontrunner in the Mission-funded Regions4Climate project, the region is demonstrating coastal resilience solutions with support from Tecnalía, Azti, and Zabala Innovation.

Through projects like LIFE IP Urban Klima 2050 and Regions4Climate, the region collaborates with institutional and technical stakeholders to implement pilot projects addressing sea-level rise, flood management, and urban heat hotspots.

MIP4Adapt Technical Assistance has played a key role in advancing adaptation planning in the region. The RAST tool has helped assess climate risks, structure adaptation pathways, and align demonstrator projects with long-term resilience goals. This support has enabled Ihobe, the Basque Government's Environment Agency, to refine its adaptation roadmap, ensuring that actions are effectively prioritised and resourced.

These initiatives foster governance, policy integration, and community engagement, creating scalable models for adaptation across Europe.

LESSONS LEARNED

A collaborative, multi-level governance approach is key to effective climate adaptation. Aligning regional strategies with EU initiatives ensures coherence between long-term planning and local action. Stakeholder engagement has driven knowledge exchange and innovation, while targeted funding (e.g., Klimatek) has accelerated research and implementation.

Technical assistance has helped identify high-impact demonstrators, ensuring adaptation strategies are evidence-based and action-oriented. The Basque Country's approach highlights the need for scalable, replicable solutions, backed by governance, policy, and investment, to strengthen climate resilience.

