

BUSTURIALDEA REGIONAL PARTICIPATION FORUM

On December 11 and 12, the first sessions of the Regional Participation Forum, part of the Busturialdea-Urdaibai Regional Strategic Plan, were held.

From the **Guggenheim Urdaibai STOP Platform**, we would like to highlight the following:

- The platform was invited to this meeting **exclusively thanks to the express request of one of the municipalities in Busturialdea**, and **not** by the institutions promoting this Forum, namely the **Provincial Council of Bizkaia** and the **Basque Government**, with whom, until now, we have only held meetings at **our own request**.
- Our participation in this Forum has always had a single objective: to once again make our position clear regarding an issue that is central to us and that, one way or another, like it or not, is **directly related not only to the future of this region but also to the Strategic Plan** that may eventually be carried out. We refer to the **Guggenheim Urdaibai project**.
- The level of confusion is at its peak when the consultancy **BMasi**, which is in charge of carrying out the Forum, presents a document titled “**Diagnosis of the Busturialdea-Urdaibai Region**”, in which **there is no mention** of this museum project. We do not understand how it is possible that, despite the institutions behind the Forum having labeled it a “strategic project” not only for the region but for the whole country, there is **no reference to it** in this foundational document.
- By omitting it, we believe the opportunity to discuss part of the Plan (the proposed Guggenheim Museum) **within the framework of the Strategic Plan itself** is being **denied**, which is a **contradiction in terms**; in other words, it is a “strategic project” that is not being debated within a “Strategic Plan”.
- We believe that it is precisely the **widespread public outcry** against this project, and the **undemocratic ways** that various public administrations have used to try to impose it, that **triggered** the need to launch this institutional socioeconomic plan together with the Regional Participation Forum. Many political leaders have announced the imminent creation of forums for **citizen participation and active listening** regarding Guggenheim Urdaibai.

Therefore, the question we must ask is:

👉 **Why does this Strategic Regional Participation Plan not include the necessary debate about Guggenheim Urdaibai?**

Our Platform has **always expressed clear and firm opposition** to this project and insists on the need to **permanently halt it until a few simple but clarifying questions are answered**:

- **Is a Guggenheim Museum in Urdaibai really necessary?**
- **What is it for, and on what arguments is it based?**
(These arguments are more necessary than ever, especially considering the project is not mentioned in the presented diagnosis.)
- **Why must we invest at least 140 million euros of public funds in favor of a foreign franchise?**
(The Basque Lehendakari, Pradales, has recently stated clearly that public resources are limited.)
- **Have its environmental, economic, social, identity, and cultural impacts been evaluated?**
Where are those plans?
- **Why is enormous public funding being used to “clear the way” for a project that is clearly opposed by a significant part of the public?**
- As it currently stands, this Forum is merely a **decorative justification** for something that is already set to happen, controlled by a political elite far removed from any truly participatory, democratic, and citizen-oriented governance.

If this Participation Forum truly aims to be such, it should **decree the reversal, suspension, and/or annulment** of all those numerous and costly “land clearing” initiatives destined to pave the way for the Guggenheim Museum project—putting an end to **fait accompli and irreversible decisions** that make genuine deliberation on equal terms impossible.

- In addition to the **serious democratic deficit** we have already pointed out, we believe that this Forum **blatantly violates the minimum standards of citizen participation** set out in the **Aarhus Convention**, which the Spanish state has signed and is obliged to comply with. The same goes for the **Basque Parliament Law of June 20, 2017**, which called for a **new review of the Master Plan for the Use and Management of the Urdaibai Biosphere Reserve**.
- Our Platform wants to emphasize that it has **always fully supported a genuine Economic, Social, and Cultural Reactivation Plan** for our Region—one that is **not shaped by the whims of disconnected leaders**, but instead genuinely and effectively works to safeguard the **environmental values of the Biosphere Reserve**, which in recent decades have been left unprotected by these very institutions.
- Finally, everything leads us to believe that what is really behind this latest maneuver by the institutions—**excluding the Guggenheim Urdaibai project from the Forum**—is the **lack of consensus** it would face if presented as a flagship project in this Forum.

In fact, the **initially announced cost** of this museum project (**140 million euros**) is

greater than the total amount proposed for all future flagship projects combined (around **100 million euros**), a figure clearly **insufficient** to meet the long-standing needs of Busturialdea.