

PRESS RELEASE



WE WILL ASK THE BASQUE PARLIAMENT TO REMOVE THE URDAIBAI LAW FROM THE OMNIBUS BILL ON 7 SEPTEMBER

Today, 7 September, we will be at the Basque Parliament to present our concerns about the bill introduced by the PNV and the PSE. **We will bring the voice of civil society to Parliament, and our main request will be clear: remove the amendment to Urdaibai Law 5/1989 from this bill and open a separate debate and a process of its own on the issue.**

We are not questioning whether the Urdaibai Law needs to be updated. More than 35 years have passed since it was approved, and Urdaibai needs updated regulations that respond to new challenges. **But the protection regulations for such a unique territory cannot be amended as part of a bill intended to streamline public administration and accelerate economic activity.** Even less so without opening a specific debate on Urdaibai and a process of dialogue with the territory. In 1989, the law was approved with the support of the entire Parliament, and that is what we must achieve now as well: an agreement.

A law affecting such a unique territory deserves the broadest possible political, institutional and social consensus that we can build.

Furthermore, **we are extremely concerned about the amendments that the bill itself proposes to the regulations protecting Urdaibai.**

Legalising new uses cannot mean simplifying protection

The bill opens the door to providing legal cover for uses that are currently unregulated or restricted, and **creates a new P1.2 category**, allowing facilities intended for nautical and recreational uses.

However, **not all the sites proposed as P1.2 areas are the same.** Portuondo and Arketa have long been spaces associated with nautical use, and the existing activities there can be regulated under the current legislation. The PRUG itself provides for the preparation of a Special Plan for this purpose, defining the area and establishing the maximum number of vessels according to the environment's carrying capacity.

There is therefore no need to create new P1.2 areas. And certainly not in ecologically sensitive places such as Ozollo and Teileria. Both are unartificialised areas of high ecological value and form part of the natural environment of the Urdaibai estuary. They contain marshes and intertidal habitats that are essential for biodiversity and for the estuary's natural dynamics.

Furthermore, **according to experts, increasing boat access to the inner areas of the estuary would place greater pressure on bird feeding and resting areas.** Therefore, the logic of protection should be the opposite: reduce access to the most sensitive areas, rather than promoting new uses.

“Controlled dredging”: where is the control?

Another of our main concerns is **the continuation of “controlled dredging”**, without the bill establishing the minimum conditions for such control.

What does “controlled” mean? **It does not specify how much material may be removed, how often, in which areas, under what conditions, for what purpose, or what level of impact is considered acceptable.**

And this is not a minor issue. Moving sediments in an estuary can increase water turbidity and sediment resuspension, mobilise contaminants, alter riverbed habitats, and affect areas used by wildlife and birds.

For this reason, **the protection of Urdaibai cannot be hidden behind the word “controlled”**. The current PRUG establishes that, as a general rule, dredging will not be carried out and limits exceptions to specific, duly justified needs.

URDAIBAI DESERVES A DEBATE OF ITS OWN

In recent years, the people and communities of Urdaibai have demonstrated that they have knowledge, opinions and a willingness to participate. For this reason, **we do not want to block the updating of the Law; on the contrary, we consider it necessary. But we want it to be done properly.**

We call for the Urdaibai Law to be removed from this bill, **and for a debate process to be initiated** with the territory's institutions, the Board of Trustees, the scientific community, economic and social sectors, and civil society, and for a decision to then be made about what needs to be amended.

Urdaibai is not an administrative formality. It is a Biosphere Reserve. Decisions about its future cannot be made as part of an expedited legislative procedure. **We are asking for the debate and consensus that Urdaibai deserves.**

In Busturialdea, 7 September 2026