

Bilbao City of Values

VALUES THAT GUIDE THE LIFE OF THE CITY

Summary

Over the past 40 years, the city of Bilbao gained worldwide recognition for its process of urban regeneration, recovery and transformation across the threefold environmental, economic and social dimensions. Given this profound metamorphosis, the City Council considered it necessary to carry out an exercise to identify and reflect on the values that should guide the present and future of the city, understanding values as those principles that act as the driving forces behind the people's development and the human development of a city.

In light of this, in the year 2016, the project Bilbao Balioen Hiria (Bilbao, City of Values) was born

as an innovative initiative based on extensive processes of co-creation and citizen participation. The process was carried out in three phases, which include the participatory development of the Values Vademecum, the drafting and approval of the Bilbao Charter of Values, and the approval of the core areas and key actions of the Plan to Develop Values, and its subsequent Roadmap.

The main value of the Charter, around which all the others revolve, is respect for human rights; and linked to this are those of social justice, equality between men and women, and solidarity. Other values that should be highlighted are

diversity/inclusion, environmental sustainability and commitment, as well as participation, trust and creativity. The Charter is completed by the values of coexistence, identity, effort and co-responsibility, honesty, hope and health.

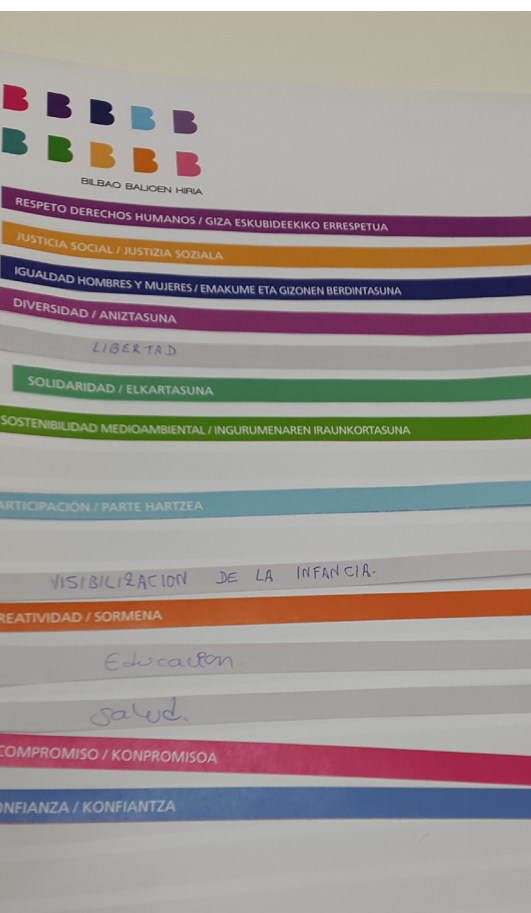
City: Bilbao
Country: Spain
Inhabitants: 350.000

Topics: Citizen participation, Civics & living together, Interdepartmental coordination

Active member since 1990, Bilbao has participated in most of the IAEC International Congresses and coordinated the thematic network "City of Values"

Goals

- ▶ To position values as the driving forces behind human development in the city of Bilbao, identifying those values which, whether individual or collective, should serve as a mark of identity and which need to be maintained, protected and developed.
- ▶ To create a space for analysis, dialogue, reflection and collaborative work among institutions, social organisations, businesses, the media, education centres and citizens in order to foster a local framework of shared values.
- ▶ To encourage coherence between both municipal policies and the actions of the different local social actors with the agreed values.



Context

Bilbao is a service city located in the north of the Iberian Peninsula. It is the economic and social centre of a metropolitan area with a population of over 1,000,000 inhabitants. In recent years, the city has undergone a process of urban and environmental regeneration, which has turned it into an important cultural destination.

Over the past decades, Bilbao has opted for a model of open government through the creation of eight District Councils and other permanent participatory bodies. The City Council has also fostered the city's community life, with more than 1,600 active associations,

which have contributed to generating a vibrant, inclusive and dynamic city.

In recent times, this dense network of associations has provided significant support to address challenges such as the integration of the growing population of migrant origin, as well as specialised attention to traditionally invisible social groups (such as women, senior citizens over 60 years of age, young people, and children). Municipal policies have been responding to the demands of these groups by emphasising the richness of this diversity and by highlighting the shared values.

Methodology

The project was launched in 2016 under the leadership of the Mayor himself, who raised the need to create a space from which to reflect on the values that should guide civic life. Based on this initiative, all the municipal areas participated in the Values Forums, which took place between December 2017 and January 2018. A total of seven forums were organised, with the participation of five hundred people from the institutional, business and civil society spheres, which concluded with the development of a first draft of a decalogue including additional values they considered relevant.

A Vademecum was then drafted, in which each of the values was defined, linking them to the daily behaviour of citizens, social organisations and the City Council. This document, developed in collaboration with the University of Deusto, served as a basis for the development of a citizen survey, designed with the objective of finding out residents' opinions about the values that the city should promote and guarantee. The survey (with a representative

sample of 1,200 telephone interviews) revealed that citizens have an optimistic and positive vision of their city and its future. Bilbao is considered to be an attractive and hospitable city, although more work should be done on gender equality, social justice and social rights.

Between January and June 2017 the Values Vademecum and the results of the survey were disseminated through the project's website. In parallel, information was gathered on the initiatives in course by social organisations in line with these values in order to develop a Map of Good Practices.

In a second phase, working sessions were held with: political parties, the local Civic Council, District Councils, Sectoral Councils (thematic participatory bodies), social organisations not present in these bodies, and other social groups. The aim of these sessions was to analyse, by way of a participatory approach, the state of health of values in the city, to highlight those ongoing initiatives that should be maintained, to reflect on those

that could be improved, and to make new proposals for others that could be developed jointly.

In September 2017, the Charter of Values was drafted on the basis of all the information gathered in the previous working sessions. The resulting Charter gathers 17 values, aligned with the 17 SDGs, which conform the shared values framework, on the basis of which local institutions and citizens commit to constructing the present and future of life in the city.

After being presented to all municipal political groups, it was approved by the City Council in March 2018. It was also presented to the involved groups and organisations and to the general public, inviting all individuals and local entities to adhere to it.

Following its approval, a specific Roadmap was designed to translate the values it encompasses into concrete municipal actions and policies.



★ Evaluation

Overall, the development of the Charter of Values has been characterized by citizen participation, be it at personal level or through the different local associations, social actors and groups involved. Yet, despite the importance of the Charter in itself, the City Council has continued to work to deepen the transformative impact of the process, understanding it as a starting point rather than a destination already reached.

To this end, a Roadmap for the period 2019-2023 was developed in consultation with citizens, different municipal areas and other local social actors, and coordinated by the City Department of Citizenship, Participation and International Affairs. The Roadmap, which was adopted by the City Council, aims to continue the deployment of the Charter, developing the agreed values and articulating them through three lines of action:

1) Actions of recognition (*Sariak*). The purpose of this axis is to recognise and make visible existing initiatives in the city in terms of promoting and developing values. To this end,

since 2019, three awards' calls have been launched to reward ongoing initiatives.

2) Actions undertaken by the municipal areas (*Udala*). This takes the form of the organisation of open days oriented towards learning about the values, as well as to promote and stimulate the incorporation of the spirit of the Charter into municipal action plans. Along these lines, an initiative called "One area, one project" has been launched, so that each municipal area can identify actions that can be clearly linked to the Charter, and commit to carrying them out.

3) Actions of socialisation and diffusion (*Agiria*). This area focuses on raising awareness of the Charter both among the city's residents and on an international level. The Charter currently has more than 2,200 local endorsements and actions are being undertaken to share this initiative with other cities around the world.

The monitoring and evaluation of the Charter and Roadmap is undertaken periodically within the framework of the local Civic

Council, a deliberative and advisory body on local economic development and strategic planning of the city, which is made up of representatives of the main neighbourhood, professional, social and economic organisations.

The complexity of the process has led to difficulties in some respects. For example, in order to involve citizens who are not linked to groups or associations, it was necessary to intensify dissemination actions. Further, in order to represent the heterogeneity of certain social groups (such as young people), coordination among different municipal areas was required to reach out to a range of representative interlocutors. Similarly, it was necessary to adjust some aspects that were initially planned, such as the idea of organizing separate forums for each segment of the population, since it was felt that bringing together a diverse range of people in the same forum would further enrich the participatory processes.

➔ Future proposals

Looking ahead, it is envisaged to continue to strengthen ongoing work by consolidating the Charter of Values as a fundamental axis around which municipal policies should be articulated. It is also foreseen to do an impact assessment and to define the indicators of the evolution of the project.



i Contact

- ▶ **Organisation:** Bilbao City Council
- ▶ **Contact Person:** Ms. Gotzone Zaldunbide Solaun (Director, Department of Citizenship Participation)
- ▶ **E-mail:** participacion@bilbao.eus

View the experience in the Bank

