



*Euskadiko Lehendakaria*

*El Lehendakari de Euskadi*

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Vitoria-Gasteiz, December 2020

Kanpoan bizi zareten euskaldun estimatuak,

A difficult year for everybody is coming to an end. 2020, the year in which the COVID-19 pandemic upended our way of life. It has affected the way we relate to one another. It has hit many of our plans, both personal and professional, in both the short and the medium term.

A year in which our trips, journeys and personal contact have been severely restricted. Mobility between the Basque Country and the rest of the world has been considerably reduced, with the repercussions you are all familiar with and we are all experiencing.

In such a difficult context, the Basque Country faces its 12th legislature. With a view to this, an absolute majority of the Parliament has asked me to lead the Basque Government as Lehendakari for the next four years.

I accept the challenge. I do so in the firm commitment and total conviction that with your help, between all of us we can get through this, wherever we are. Every personal contribution, however small it may seem, adds to our common project: the Basque Country!

The organised Basque presence abroad, structured primarily through the Euskal Etxeak, has seen many of the projects planned before the outbreak of the pandemic cut short. All of them planned with the aim of spreading the idea of being and feeling Basque around the world.

People in Basque communities all over the planet were ready to do this through different means: culture, food, the Basque language, sports and so on. A host of activities organised by Basque groups abroad to show the world what the Basque Country really is.

2020 has been a hard year for all of you. But even so, many Basque communities abroad have not given up in the face of adversity, but reacted with enormous doses of solidarity, initiative and imagination.

Solidarity with a view to the Basques who from one day to the next found themselves "stuck" in different countries, far from home. Working with local bodies to help the most disadvantaged people in their respective towns and cities. Helping older and vulnerable people in your communities.

Initiative. Many groups responded with new ways of relating to each other to carry on building a community in the face of the lethal blow of the pandemic.

Imagination, managing to make a virtue of necessity. By adapting and seizing the opportunities offered by new technology to respond ingeniously, quickly and effectively to the need for communication posed by this health crisis.

All your "discoveries" cannot replace human relations and personal, physical, palpable contact. The direct communication with nothing in the way that we Basques are so fond of. But the fact is that, amid so much misfortune, the Basque community abroad has shown itself more dynamic and caring than ever, with incredible drive and a tremendous determination to look to the future with hope.

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2021 will present us with new challenges and opportunities. A chance to work together, "auzolan" in Basque, to build up the network of a global Basque community. A tool to structure the Basque presence abroad that, in circumstances like the present and those that will arise in the future, proves the value of this asset to the Basques in the world of the 21st century.

The Basque government will go on working to structure and expand the Basque network around the world. Through active listening and through fluid relations with each and every one of you.

We want to feel that the Basque government is yours too. That we will do what we can to listen to and support you. That, in the words of Iparragirre, the bard of Urretxu whose 200th birthday we are now commemorating, the well-known "eman ta zabal zazu munduan fruitua" can come true.

My best wishes for the year 2021, to all of you and to your families. Let us hope that we will soon be able to pass from uncertainty to certainty, to carry on along the path to be taken by the Basque Country in the 21st century on the way to peace and prosperity!

Gabon-Eguberri on eta urte zoriontsua zuek guztiarentzat, bihotz bihotzez!

Iñigo Urkullu Renteria