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The city of Vitoria-Gasteiz

First information

Vitoria-Gasteiz is the capital of the province of Alava and of the autonomous community of the Basque Country, and is ideally located geographically.

Only 65km from Bilbao, this "medium-sized" city with its 254,000 inhabitants is the administrative capital of the region, as it is home to the Basque government and parliament.

This does not mean that its economy is flourishing. Very committed to its environmental development, this sustainable city is very green. In all, it has no less than 613 hectares of greenery around its peri-urban belt, more than 130,000 trees and an emphasis on participatory and sustainable mobility (tramway, bus, cycle lanes, pedestrian zones).

Culturally, this city is also very attractive. With its contemporary art centre Artium, its festivals such as the "Green Nights" or the rioja wine route, there is something for everyone! Its objective remains the protection of its landscape and its heritage.



The circular economy in Spain

Vitoria-Gasteiz's case

The Spanish circular economy strategy reflects the objectives of the EU circular economy package and identifies priority sectors. The national strategy has 12 general strategic objectives and aims to reduce national material consumption in relation to gross domestic product (GDP) by 30% by 2030, using 2015 as the base year. A specific target for increasing material efficiency (e.g. reducing raw materials used during production) has been included in 2019.

Vitoria-Gasteiz (VG) is a sustainable city that has been working for years on a city model that takes into account the environment in which it is located, while at the same time developing it. During the 20th century, the city's population increased fourfold in the

space of a decade. However, the planning ensured that the population remained within the city limits in order to respect the planet's boundaries

According to Juan Carlos Escudero (Head of Information and Innovation for the Urban Sustainability Unit of Vitoria-Gasteiz, Centre for Environmental Studies), VG has a particularity : it's the people who make it up encourage closing loops to Nature. Indeed, citizens support sustainability projects, consider green policies and encourage closeness to nature. The commitment is not only concerning public policies but works because citizens enable a functional system with a coherent and sustainable model between the city and the surrounding nature.



Poster of the Vitoria-Gasteiz Jazz Festival.

The three important actors in this study:

Paul James, 2020



European comission



World Forum on Human Settlements



Erasme - RIVM

Circles of a social life

A circular Economy for living on one planet - James 2020

To explain the circular solutions implemented in the city of Valladolid, Paul James's social life circle seems relevant. This circle of social life as using as a tool and research framework that are un derpinning the city's good environmental and sustainable practices. The challenge is to include cultural strength in the form of benchmarking's progress, taking into account resilience, adaptability and sustainability. The metaphor of 'social capital' approaches cultural themes as if they were based on the accumulation of value, such as the accumulation of money in the economic field. This tool allows us to undersat how the city of Valladolid is part of a circular economy policy.

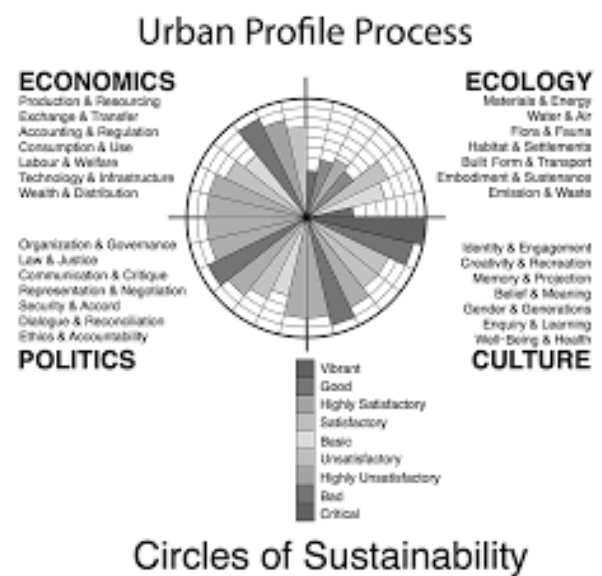
It is a self-assessment tool based on 4 social domains:

Politics : Organisation and governance, law, communication and criticism, negotiation, security and agreements, dialogue and reconciliation, ethics and responsibility.

Economy : Defined as the practices, discourses and all material forms related to the production, use and management of resources.

Ecology : Concerns materials and energy, but with particular emphasis on the importance of human engagement with and with water and air, wildlife, habitat and space, buildings and transport, emissions and waste.

Culture: Illustrates itself through identity and commitments, creativity, beliefs and ideas, plays a role in memory and projection, health and well-being, research and learning.



Global green city Award 2019

POLITICS

Circles of social life

The city of Vitoria Gasteiz has been a leader in sustainable economy for over 25 years. In fact, in 1996, it was selected as an example in Spain for its environmental experience at the Habitat II summit held in Istanbul. The following two years VG won the prize for the cleanest city awarded by the Ministry of Health. From 1998 onwards, national environmental congresses were organised, VG receiving a special mention for its title of sustainable city. In 2004, for the 8th consecutive year, the city received the Green Flag Award for Sustainable City.

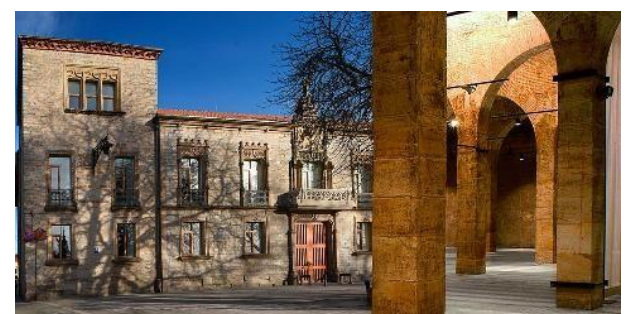
In 2005, the UN invited the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz to participate in the World Environment Day ceremonies celebrated in San Francisco and in the Green Cities Declaration. In 2007, the city received a series of awards, including the "Bioenergy 2007" award from the Nuclear Safety Council for the use of biofuel, and the "Sustainable City" award from the Environmental Forum Foundation in recognition of the city's comprehensive environmental policy. In 2010, Vitoria-Gasteiz received the José Celestino Mutis "Biosphere Consciousness Award" for its Green Ring. In 2012, it became the Green Capital of Europe.

Erasme - RIVM

More recently, in 2019, VG was awarded the Global Green City Award by the World Forum on Human Settlements, supported by the United Nations. The city of VG has been in the process of sustainable transition for almost three decades. Extremely early in this field, both politically and culturally it is a model of sustainability in Europe.

In terms of communication, the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz is multiplying its media. Indeed, the municipal secretariat contributes to the public relations linked to the awarding of the prizes thanks to social networks: facebook, instagram and twitter pages, but also a city website where everything is referenced (brochures, what to do, transport, maps, events not to be missed). There are 2 tabs: the tourist office and the convention office, but also 6 sections (discover, map, nature, gastronomy, sports and guide). No point is missing. A space dedicated to the citizen is even available, it is very interactive.

To conclude this part, the capital of the Basque Country has the advantage of being the seat of various institutional bodies of the autonomous community: the Presidency of the Government in Ajuria Enea, the Basque Government in Lakua and the Basque Parliament in Becerro de Bengoa Street. This set of powers gives it a dynamism from which emerging projects benefit.



City hall of Vitoria-Gasteiz

Erasme – RIVM

ECONOMY

Circle of Social life



Market in the halls of Vitoria-Gasteiz. Products of local agriculture and livestock. Panoramic green terrace.

In terms of economic production, the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz is located in an area of considerable biological and landscape wealth. In the Basque region where VG is located, the quality of life is optimal. In fact, the city has a wide range of residential, commercial, cultural, sporting and rural facilities that enhance the well-being of its citizens. Out of 17 Spanish regions, the Basque Country has the highest human development index, with 0.924, ranking fourth in the world in 2013.

The resources of this region truly give access to the well-being of its citizens. This is reflected in their life expectancy, which remains one of the highest in the European Union.

The urban spaces immersed in a natural environment as well as an undeniable citizen involvement have allowed this city to obtain the European Green Capital award in 2012. On the industrial side, firms are requested to challenge the principles of sustainable and circular economy that the city has decided to adopt. They aim to achieve economic but also environmental excellence. Out of 52 Spanish provinces, Alava's economy is in first place. Its GDP per capita is 35,000 euros, one and a half times that of Spain.

The city's economic activity revolves around industry (25% of its GDP and employment) and the development of advanced technologies. We find the metallurgical industry, the automobile industry (Michelin, Mercedes Benz), the manufacture of railway equipment, mechanical engineering and aeronautics. In the background, the activity is turned towards services linked to the quality of life: retail trade, cultural activities, mobility, education etc. In particular, the Minano technology park.

More generally, the Basque Autonomous Community is one of the 10 most industrialised regions in Europe, generating the most wealth: in 2018, 74 billion euros with an annual growth rate of 3%. That same year, the GDP/inhabitant was 34,079 euros, which is well above the Spanish average: 25,730 euros.

ECOLOGY

Circles of Social life

Regarding the ecological dimension of the city, green design is inside and outside the city. It aims to be as close as possible to its environment, with an efficient ecosystem while maintaining the best possible living conditions for its citizens. Residents are encouraged to participate in community vegetable gardens and organic gardening initiatives (Urarte and Olarizu).

Its main asset is the large number of green spaces throughout the city. The public gardens cover 1100 hectares or 32.7% of the urban area. It is a real source of biodiversity thanks to the 381 species are growing in these gardens. This city is a green lung. The belt created in this way enables it to partition off any urban sprawl. The ultimate goal is to extend this belt to the surrounding mountains and forests.



green belt around vitoria-gasteiz

As the urban area has not grown (surface area), currently 81% of the population lives within 1500m of the city centre. Therefore, most citizens use public transport or walk. Only 28.3% of all trips in the city are made by car. In 2008 a new tram line was opened. According to a mobility survey carried out in 2012, 50% of journeys are made on foot. A quarter of the territory is reserved for pedestrians (33km of pedestrian lanes). A public bicycle network has been developped since 2005, with 350 freely accessible bicycles and 17 stations. In order to make it possible for every citizen to use them, tricycles for people with reduced mobility or tandems for the visually impaired have been proposed.

In an area where car industries are established, the question of electric vehicles is undue; the municipality has been participating in the European project Civitas MODERN since 2008. The aim is to finance sustainable mobility demonstrations. With a budget of 2.3 million euros, VG plans to establish a pilot system of 4 electric vehicles available for hire. Finally, a plan of measures to encourage sustainable mobility has been adopted, such as solutions for improving the transport systems (extension of the tramway line, increased bus frequency), an extension of the "superblock" which is an eco-neighbourhood where the speed limit is 10km/h and an improvement of the transport distribution.

Vitoria-Gasteiz has an energy plan. The use of greener technologies is strongly encouraged: district heating or micro-cogeneration (decentralised energy production system). Solar energy, geothermal systems, wind farms and biogas are included in a 76 million euro budget to promote sustainable development. For example, the congress centre has been renovated with the aim of using energy more efficiently (-60%). This was made possible by a green façade that improves the insulation and waterproofing of the structure and solar control on the glass roofs. These innovations improve the thermal and acoustic insulation and extend the useful life of the building (the level of insulation of the façade has been multiplied by three). In addition, it helps to purify the air quality, reducing air pollution and thus contributing to the reduction of global warming. In conclusion, VG is almost exemplary in its ecological initiatives. Thanks to a conscientious population and good investments.

CULTURE

Circles of Social life

The city of Vitoria-Gasteiz is highly multi-cultural. This region is an incubator for cultural events. Without mentioning the rich heritage of this city : There is the cathedral of Santa Maria, in Gothic style, situated on top of a hill, overlooking the

view, or museums such as the Diocesan Museum of Sacred Arts, the Museum of Fine Arts of Alava, as well as the Museum of Artium, which highlights contemporary art , a strategic place in the heart of VG for its architecture, its space (large volumes) and its light. It is very accessible on sustainable educational contents with awareness campaigns, exhibitions, congresses for its citizens. We can better understand their commitment to the many initiatives taken by the municipality. In fact, since 2005, the city council has proposed a programme of educational activities to raise awareness of development. Accessible to all, it aims to change citizens' behaviors and develop sustainable responsibility.

This programme is not the only initiative, since the end of 1980, the centre for environmental studies was created with the aim of setting up post-graduate training for environmental technicians. More recently, this programme has been enriched with specific courses in the fields of geography, computer systems, environmental services.

This is beneficial for the citizens but also for the companies which adopt environmental standards more easily thanks to already trained staff. The economic circularity is optimal.

The centre has developed close relationships with universities and research organisations. Programmes ranging from primary courses to internships in environmental research centres are available. All companies as well as administrations are likely to benefit from the skills of citizens acquired during these various training courses.

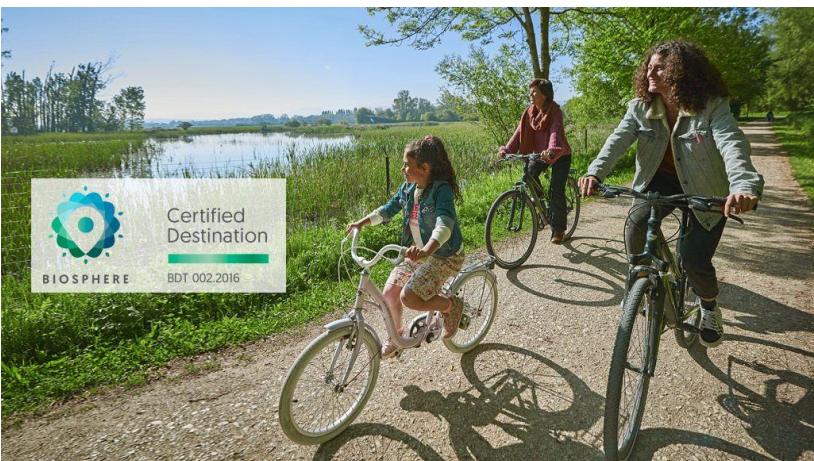
In addition, there is a permanent exhibition at the Europa Congress Palace in Avenida Gasteiz. The aim is to present and promote the different environmental actions carried out by the municipality in recent years. The projects that earned VG the European Green City award in 2012 can be viewed. There is even a space for citizens. Those who wish to invest time and brainstorm new ideas may suggest projects in small groups. This makes the exhibition dynamic and interactive, which allows for greater influence. Once again, citizens are at the heart of the debates.

Another important axis remains that of ecotourism that the city is trying to set up. Action plans are being put in place to make the city attractive to tourists. There is a programme on natural and cultural heritage, making the most of the city's riches. The city is then a truly sustainable cultural site.



Circle of social life - Case of the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz

On this circle a self-evaluation of the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz. Each circle segment corresponds to a sub-area. All sustainability practices are represented. For the city of Vitoria-Gasteiz, no area is neglected. Economically, this city is still of moderate size. It does not have the disadvantages of megacities (traffic jams, pollution, CO2 emissions). As a result, it does not have the external trade connection with the world. Its industrial activity passes through Bilbao. In spite of a strong export of tyres, it remains a "small" city for trade. The other three pillars are highly developed. Special mention to ecology (famous green lungs) and culture.



Green City

- 613 hectares of green belt
- 479 m2 of forest per inhabitant (covering one third of the municipality)
- 210 organic farming plots
- 130,000 trees in the city's streets
- 2 tramway lines and 90 km of bicycle paths
- half of all journeys are made on foot.



1st environmental action plan in 2002

The Michelin site in Vitoria-Gasteiz : A 43-hectare plant located near the centre of the city. It has 3,515 employees who produce 200,000 tonnes of tyres per year for the Iberian market and for export (port of Bilbao). It specialises in the production of giant tyres for civil engineering and public works (huge lorries used in mining operations). It is an important production centre for the Michelin site.

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