



*Euskadiko Lehendakaria*

*El Lehendakari de Euskadi*

Vitoria-Gasteiz, December 2021

*Kanpoan bizi zareten euskaldun estimatuak:*

Throughout 2021, like last year, the Covid-19 pandemic has continued to put us to the test. We are managing to hold out and continue to battle the virus with all the strength, dedication and effectiveness we can muster. My first words are in memory of and solidarity with those no longer with us and their families. All of them have the Sempervirens park in Vitoria-Gasteiz as a place to honour their memory.

Our priority remains guaranteeing public health. We have not yet managed to beat the virus, but with each new variant, with each new wave, we are learning to develop new tools to protect people's life and health. After nearly two years of the pandemic, and despite the dark clouds, we have managed to restore contact between people, classroom lessons, most economic activity, the arts, leisure and travel. We are holding out and, in turn, we are preparing for the social and economic relaunch of the Basque Country. This is the fundamental idea we share: we have never given up and we are never going to give up.

We saw a good example of this on 8th September, Diaspora Day, when thousands of Basques around the world threw ourselves into a packed programme of activities, filled with strength and imagination. On that day we were more conscious of the presence and numbers of our people in the world. We have been talking about a Basque Community for 30 years, and today we are talking about various communities that make up a global community. Our big challenge is to help to organise this big global Basque Community and to make it into an opportunity for all of us.

The first step is to get to know each other better. Our intention is to connect with everybody with Basque origins or sympathies through participation on the network, through active, open listening. With this aim we have set up the university postgraduate course in the Basque Diaspora and we have held an international conference on "*Relations between diasporas and their host countries: new migrations, return movements and historical context*", with the participation of representatives of 17 countries.

With the same aim we have launched "*Han Hemen – Basque Global Network*", the new social network platform to share information, ideas, experiences, requests or needs between the whole Basque Community around the world.

In this respect the New Year will be of particular symbolic value for our diaspora. In 1936 Lehendakari Agirre opened the Basque Delegation in Paris, paid for precisely by the Basque Communities of the Americas. In 1979, after 43 years in exile, on the occasion of the return of Lehendakari Leizaola to the Basque Country, it closed. This year the Basque government is to open the new Paris Delegation, joining the network we have in Madrid, Brussels, New York, Mexico City, Santiago de Chile, Bogota and Buenos Aires.

This is a further step in the internationalisation of the Basque Country: "*eman ta zabal zazu*". We share the same roots and the same goal of making the Basque Country grow in the world. At this time of year, and with this hope, I would like to share my best wishes for Christmas and the New Year with the whole of the global Basque Community.

*Bihotz bihotzez, Gabon zoriontsuak igaro ditzazuela eta Urte berri on!*

**Iñigo Urkullu Renteria**