

# BASQUE NEWS

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*The Lehendakari Juan José Ibarretxe delivers the text of the new Statute for the Basque Country to the President of the Basque Parliament, Juan Mari Atutxa.*

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**The text of the proposal is now being considered by the Basque Parliament**

## The Basque Government approves the proposal for the Political Statute of the Community of the Basque Country

Since October 25, the Basque Parliament has been considering the Proposal for the Political Statute of the Community of the Basque Country, presented by the Basque Government, whose aim is to provide the Basque Country with a new framework of relations with the Spanish State.

On the same day which marked the 24th Anniversary of the Statute of Gernika and 164 years after the abolition of Basque Rights, the new Statute was passed at an extraordinary meeting held by the Government at the Palacio de Ajuria Enea (the official residence of the Lehendakari) moments before being deposited in the Basque Parliament for its consideration.

This meeting aroused a great deal of expectation in the mass media as the three parties that form the Basque

Executive (PNV, EA and IU), approved the text which sets out the basic concepts already presented by the Lehendakari Ibarretxe at the debate on General Policy held in September.

After its approval by the Council of the Government, the Lehendakari read an Institutional Declaration in which, once more, he emphasised the conciliatory and non-divisive nature of the proposal and called on other political parties to make their own contributions and to Basque society in general to support this initiative at a referendum.

### **The text was delivered personally by the Lehendakari**

Subsequently, all the members of the Government went to the Basque Parliament where the Lehendakari

delivered the text in person to the President, Juan Mari Atutxa. The latter undertook to instigate a serene and orderly debate on this initiative, which he defined as "of enormous relevance, democratic and totally legitimate".

Once the Political Statute Proposal has been formally delivered and registered, a long process of examination, debate and voting by paramilitary groups will begin, culminating at the earliest in September 2004, according to Government forecasts. Nevertheless, to judge by the declarations of leaders of the Partido Popular and the Partido Socialista de Euskadi, who have manifested their total opposition to the Proposal and their determination "to do everything so that it does not prosper", Ibarretxe's Proposal will have a rough ride through Parliament.

# Ibarretxe: “It is a historic day for our people”

**After the extraordinary meeting held by the Council of the Government at which the Proposal to provide the Basque Country with a new Political Statute was passed, Juan José Ibarretxe read the following Institutional Declaration to the numerous media representatives at the Palacio de Ajuria Enea:**

Today, October 25 2003, at 10.30 AM, in an extraordinary meeting held at the Palacio de Ajuria Enea on the 24th anniversary of the passing of the first Statute of Autonomy, drawn up at the end of the Franco dictatorship, and exactly 164 years since the abolition in 1839 of the special rights of the Basque Country, the Basque Government, elected democratically by Basque society and formed by the Partido Nacionalista Vasco, Eusko Alkartasuna and Ezker Batua-Izquierda Unida, has decided to adopt the Proposal for a new Basque Political Statute of Free Association with the Spanish State.

It is, therefore, a historic day for our people. An undertaking to Basque society to provide solutions. This new Political Statute of the Basque Country represents a response to the undertaking that the Government and the three political parties that make it up have made to Basque society, namely, to provide solutions. It is a commitment based on desire and hope. A commitment to providing a solution, a positive commitment, a commitment to Yes. Yes to human rights and the freedom of all persons. Yes to respecting the democratic rights of Basque society to decide their own future without violence. Yes to the social construction of a Basque Country for all Basque citizens, without exclusion. A new Statute for a new generation.

Based on these three positive commitments, assuming our institutional responsibility and in the exercise of our authority, acknowledged in article 46 of the Gernika Statute of Economy, the Basque Government wishes to initiate a new phase in the development of the Basque Country. We propose a new Statute for a new generation of Basque men and women. We propose a new Statute to provide a better response to Basque society's desire for change and to find solutions to its problems. It is a modern proposal for the Basque Country's relations with the State, with Europe and the world. A proposal for a better life For Basque men and women, self-government is a

synonym of well-being. This is shown in the subjects developed in the Gernika Statute of Autonomy. We are fully convinced that a higher degree of self-government will also bring with it a higher level of well-being for each and every one of us. We need new instruments and new powers. We need more decision-taking powers in order to enable Basque society to face the challenges of the future with greater guarantees. We propose this new Statute for a better life. A pacific and democratic proposal. A proposal for coexistence. The new Statute does not propose a split but a new framework of coexistence with the Spanish State. We wish to coexist in mutual recognition and respect. We wish to initiate an orderly, calm debate. We propose a pacific, normalised dialogue, without insults, without defamatory remarks. We appeal to the democratic spirit of the peoples of Spain so that the majority wish of Basque society, expressed in a pacific and democratic way, may be respected. We ask only for the right to express ourselves. A starting point for dialogue.

The proposal passed today by the Cabinet is a result of the joint effort of the three parties that make it up. Between us all we have established the starting point for dialogue. We are going to submit to the Basque Parliament a set of regulations so that while the parliamentary groups that represent the different political and ideological opinions in Basque society may freely make their contributions modifications. Because, however great our differences may be, we all have a common objective: to achieve a higher level of consensus in order to coexist in peace.

### **An appeal to hope and participation**

I wish to appeal expressly to each and every one of the citizens of the Basque Country. This proposal for coexistence has been drawn up with the aim that each and every one of you will take part in its development

and ratification. The future of all those who live in the Basque Country, will be decided with our vote. It is our right and nothing and no one can take that away from us. I offer you encouragement. Do not lose your enthusiasm and hope. Never allow yourself to succumb to fear or disillusionment. But do not resort to insults or confrontations because these do not lead anywhere. Between us all, we are finally going to carve out a tunnel so that we may see the light of our future, the new dawn. The light of our well-being, the light of coexistence and the light of peace. I invite you therefore to examine this proposal in depth, to participate actively in the debate and to demand from all the political representatives of the Basque Country and of the Spanish State, responsibility, generosity, foresight and especially you must demand that we keep talking.

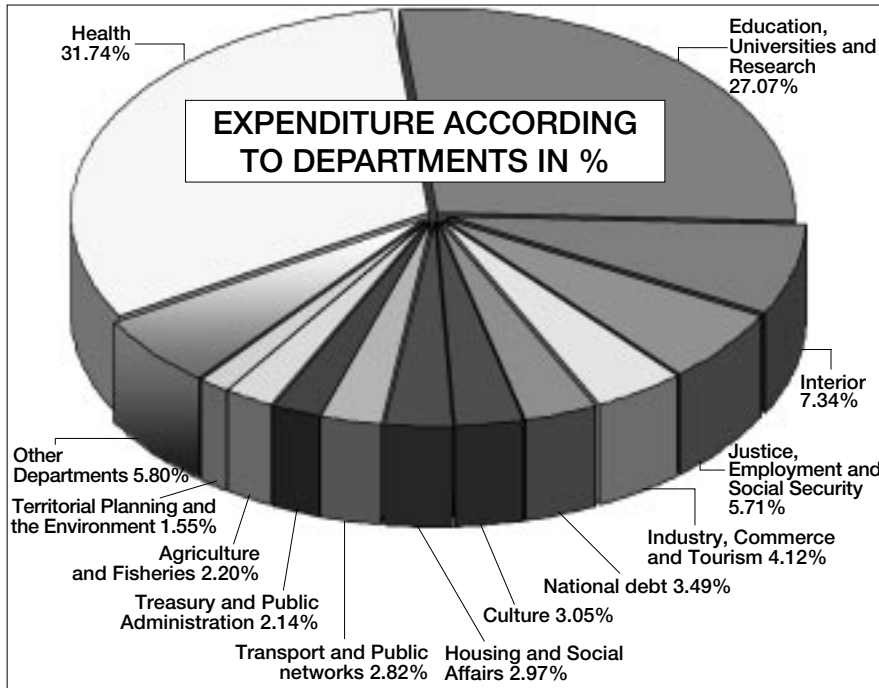
It will be up to Basque society to take the final decision. A process in which everyone can take part is a worthwhile endeavour. In the Basque Country there is a place for everyone. Every opinion and, especially, every person, every citizen, is important, indispensable. Between us all we can construct an alternative future. Between us all we can find the road that will lead us to a solution. Because the more of those who believe that coexistence is possible, the nearer we will be to achieving it. Where there is a will there is a way. In the end, it will be the whole of Basque society and each of the provinces that currently make it up, Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa, who will have the opportunity to ratify the agreements reached in the Basque Parliament, through a referendum under peaceful conditions, without violence and without exclusions.

**Everything relating to the Proposal for a new Statute can be consulted in:**

[www.nuevoestatutodeeuskadi.net](http://www.nuevoestatutodeeuskadi.net)

The Government passes the 2004 Budget amounting to 7135 million euros

## Budgets designed to foster economic growth and social cohesion



The Basque Government recently announced the Budget Bill for next year, which amounts to a total of 6661 million Euros (7135 if we count Public Companies, Entities and Organisations), which represents a 7.7% increase with respect to the 2003 budget. The person responsible for presenting the Budget of the Autonomous Basque Community,

which has been referred to Parliament for approval, was the Deputy Lehendakari Idoia Zenarruzabeitia, who indicated that these proposals have been designed in order to "contribute to the consolidation of the growth and competitiveness of the economy and to the solidarity and cohesion of Basque society".

The guidelines according to which

the budgets of the Basque Country have been designed, aim to maintain budgetary stability and equilibrium, increase public investments, consolidate expenditure in adapting to the Information Society, sustainable development, enhancing social integration, guaranteeing equality of opportunity and, finally, the consolidation of resources aimed to deal with the ageing population of the Basque Country, by maintaining child benefits and reconciling work and family life.

### Growth above the European average

Government forecasts point to moderate but stable growth for the next financial year. According to Idoia Zenarruzabeitia, this will continue to allow the Basque Country to generate employment and, therefore, reduce the unemployment rate which will stand at 7.9% of the active population in 2004. Moreover, the Executive has estimated 2.6% growth in GDP, which places the Basque Country above the European average and, specifically, above the levels recorded by most of the competitive economies in our environment such as Germany, France and Italy.

### 725 out of every 1000 Euros earmarked for social services

Once more, most of the budget passed by the Basque Government has been earmarked for social expenditure, which includes Health, Education and Training, Social Welfare and Insertion (Basic Income, Social Aid), Creation of Employment, Family Support and the Promotion of and Access to Housing. This is illustrated by the fact that out of every 1000 Euros, 725.30 are allocated for these items. In absolute terms, the social expenditure budgeted for the year 2004 amounts to 4832 million Euros, i.e., 72.54% of total expenditure.

With regard to Basic Income, this has increased and stands at 83% of the Minimum Inter-professional Salary. To this we must add the Social Emergency Aid, which stands at 20 million Euros, extendable to 25. Likewise, the Executive will continue to foster the 2003-2007 Employment Plans, aid for families with children, provided with 55.2 million Euros and Vivienda-Etxebide 2202-2005, which includes the construction next year of 5100 new homes, of which 2400 will be undertaken directly by the Basque Government and its public Companies .

### Powers not transferred by Madrid cost 183 million

For the second year running, the 2004 Budget Bill includes a specific appendix in which an economic appraisal is made of the powers that the State refuses to consider to the Basque Country and which are financed by the Basque Government.

In 2004, this expenditure will amount to 183.3 million Euros, 8.84% more than the volume of expenditure earmarked for the same item in the 2003 budget. Nevertheless, Idoia Zenarruzabeitia pointed out that the expenditure generated in dealing with the Prestige crisis must be added to the amount budgeted for this year, which on October 30, amounted to around 55 million Euros.

Their personal and professional careers have made them Universal Basques

## Ainhoa Arteta and Martín Ugalde awarded the Universal Basque Prize

Demands that the truth be told about the closure of the Basque language newspaper Egunkaria dominated the entire Universal Basque Prize 2002 award ceremony, which on this occasion went to Ainhoa Arteta the Tolosa-born soprano and the writer, journalist and one of the founders of the aforementioned newspaper, Martín Ugalde. The ceremony was held on the premises of the Lehendakaritza and coincided with a police operation during which nine people were detained, all of them having associations with Egunkaria, although they were released later.

In his speech, the Lehendakari Ibarretxe demanded that the facts that led to the closure of this newspaper be clarified. "Eight months have gone by," he said, and "still there are no details about why it was closed nor about the serious accusations of torture and ill-treatment that took place at the time. During his speech, the Lehendakari denounced the fact that Basque language and culture are constantly placed under suspicion of having links with violence and terrorism, and pointed out that this "does not lead anywhere, only darkness and obscurity. And our Basque language and culture live in full sunlight".

Ibarretxe highlighted the honesty, sincerity and serenity of Martín Ugalde (who was not able to attend the award



*Ainhoa Arteta and Martín Ugalde's wife, during the award ceremony.*

ceremony due to his delicate state of health), "a lifestyle that Basques have always conveyed to the world" and demanded that Ugalde be allowed to continue enjoying his life with the dignity that singular people deserve.

Ugalde's wife, Ana Mari Martínez, collected the Prize on her husband's behalf and repeated the demands that he be given the respect and dignity he merits. "Being born in this land and feeling Basque is not a crime but a right" she pointed out.

### Dreaming of peace

The other main protagonists at the ceremony was the soprano Ainhoa

Arteta, who is the first woman to have received this prestigious award and is also the youngest.

After expressing her gratitude, Ainhoa Arteta pointed out that "since she was a child, being Basque has been synonymous with honour, compassion, solidarity, and generosity with the needy and a love for freedom". For this reason, she defended the idea of a Basque, citizen of the world, tolerant and compassionate.

Ainhoa Arteta, who has settled in New York, went on to say that she dreams of a wonderful Basque Country, "where are all its inhabitants show consideration for each other, irrespective of social class, religion or political ideals. I dream of a country in everlasting peace and liberty", she concluded.

In addition to the award winners, their families and friends, the Universal Basque ceremony was attended by a large number of representatives of Basque society: Representatives of Basque parties and institutions, from the world of culture and show business, sports men and women, industrialists and businessmen and women, journalists and many others, who filled the atrium of the Lehendakaritza to the brim. Everyone wanted to be present this year in order to show their support for the winners of this award, established by the Basque Government and Caja Laboral in recognition of the personal and professional careers of individuals, associations or entities whose activities have had a bearing on promoting the Basque Country abroad.



### Another Universal Basque on the top the world Juanito Oyarzabal world record holder in 8000 m ascents

The Alava-born mountaineer, Juanito Oyarzabal, another Universal Basque who received this award in the year

2000, became one of the main protagonists of the evening as he had just returned from his latest expedition to the Himalayas, becoming the first person to climb more 8000-m peaks than anyone else in the world. Oyarzabal had already obtained world recognition several years ago when he became one of the few people to have scaled the 14 mountains of more than 8000 m that exist in different parts of the world. Now, this Universal Basque has managed to outdo the master mountaineer, Reinhold Messner on completing his nineteenth ascent of an 8000 m peak. Oyarzabal still has his eyes set firmly on the Himalayas where he is preparing an ascent of the fearsome K2, which he climbed for the first time in 1994.