

Sustainability Report

January 2025 - December 2025



BIOSPHERE



GLOBAL
DESTINATION
SUSTAINABILITY
MOVEMENT

Bilbao Convention Bureau

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This document has been prepared with the collaboration and knowledge of all of the Bilbao Convention Bureau team and the approval and signature of its director.

Kepa Olabarrieta

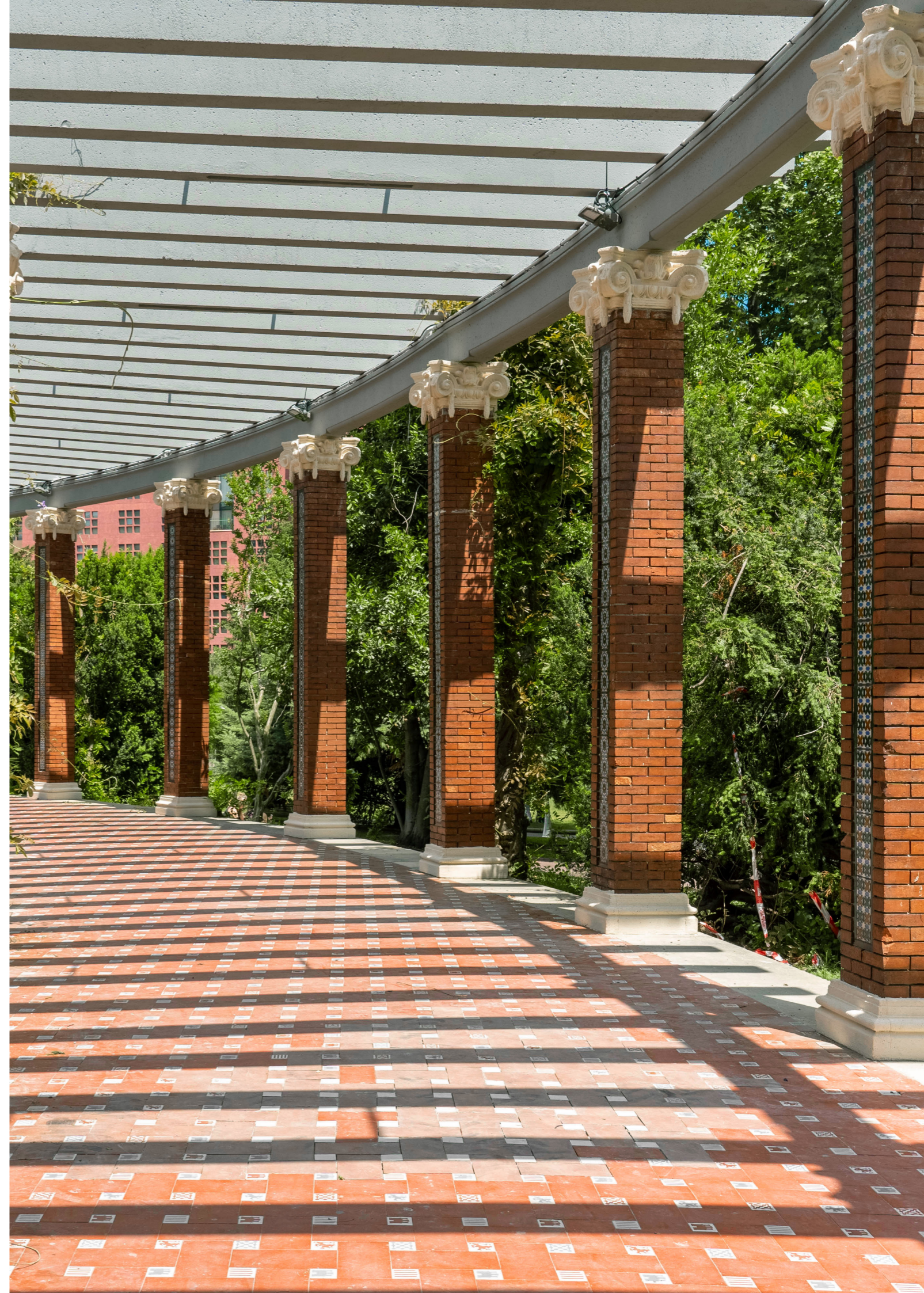


Introduction

This report outlines the progress made by the Bilbao Convention Bureau (BiCB) and its partner organisations in sustainability throughout 2025. It follows the framework outlined in BiCB's Sustainability Strategy 2021-2027 and its accompanying Action Plan.

In 2025, the MICE sector began to stabilise following the upheaval of the pandemic. This has enabled the development of new initiatives and projects, particularly in the field of sustainability.

In 2025, the Bureau's focus has extended beyond environmental sustainability to social sustainability, with particular emphasis on the positive impact and lasting legacy of meetings and congresses held in Bilbao.



Partner participation

Our permanent working group, #BilbaoArimaBerdea, brings together BiCB partner companies and key local stakeholders to collaborate and share experiences, challenges, and best practices in sustainability. Activities include regular meetings, training sessions, and engagement through our LinkedIn group #ArimaBerdea.

This group is formed by hotels, venues and agencies as well as local associations, universities and members of the City Council.

Together, they form a well-rounded ecosystem that enriches and strengthens BiCB's path towards sustainability.



GDS - Index

At the same time, for the third year running, **Bilbao's participation in the GDS-Index** has been managed. This international ranking measures the sustainability of cities as a MICE destination based on different environmental, social and economic indicators.

Bilbao achieved an excellent score, reaching 14th place and securing a spot in the TOP 20 of the ranking, with a two-point improvement on the previous year's score.

14th in the GDS-Index

For the third consecutive year, Bilbao has improved its position in the Global Destination Sustainability Index (GDS-Index), solidifying its position among the top 20 leading destinations globally. The collaboration of local stakeholders has been instrumental in achieving this milestone.

24th in the GDS-Index

For the second year in a row, we have improved our position in the ranking by nine places – a result of the collective efforts of all the stakeholders involved.

33rd in the GDS-Index

Thanks to combined efforts and a commitment to continuous improvement, Bilbao rose by 9 places in its second year.

42nd in the GDS-Index

In its first year, Bilbao ranked 42nd in the GDS-Index, receiving one of the most positive receptions among new entrants.

21st in the GDS Index

Minimal difference in score, with a drop of 7 positions.

2021

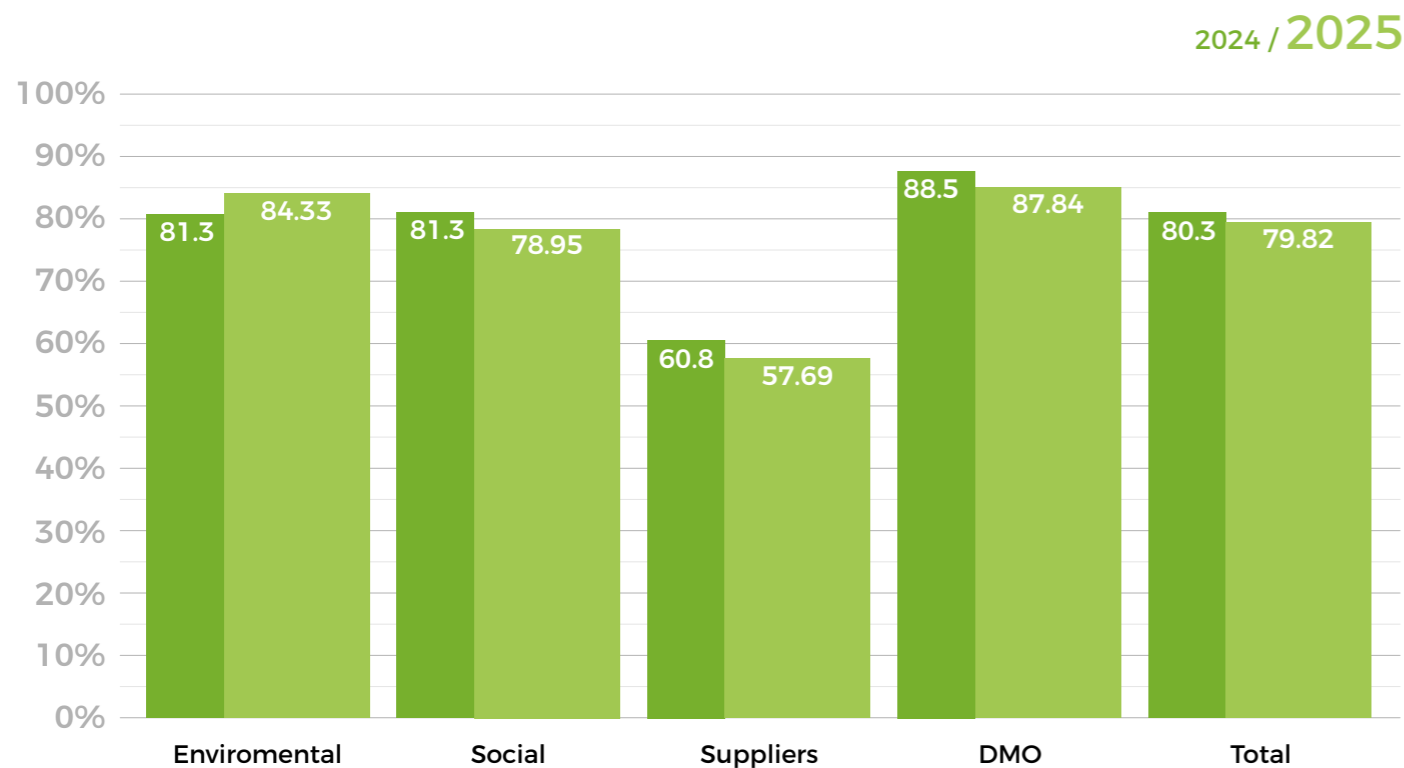
2022

2023

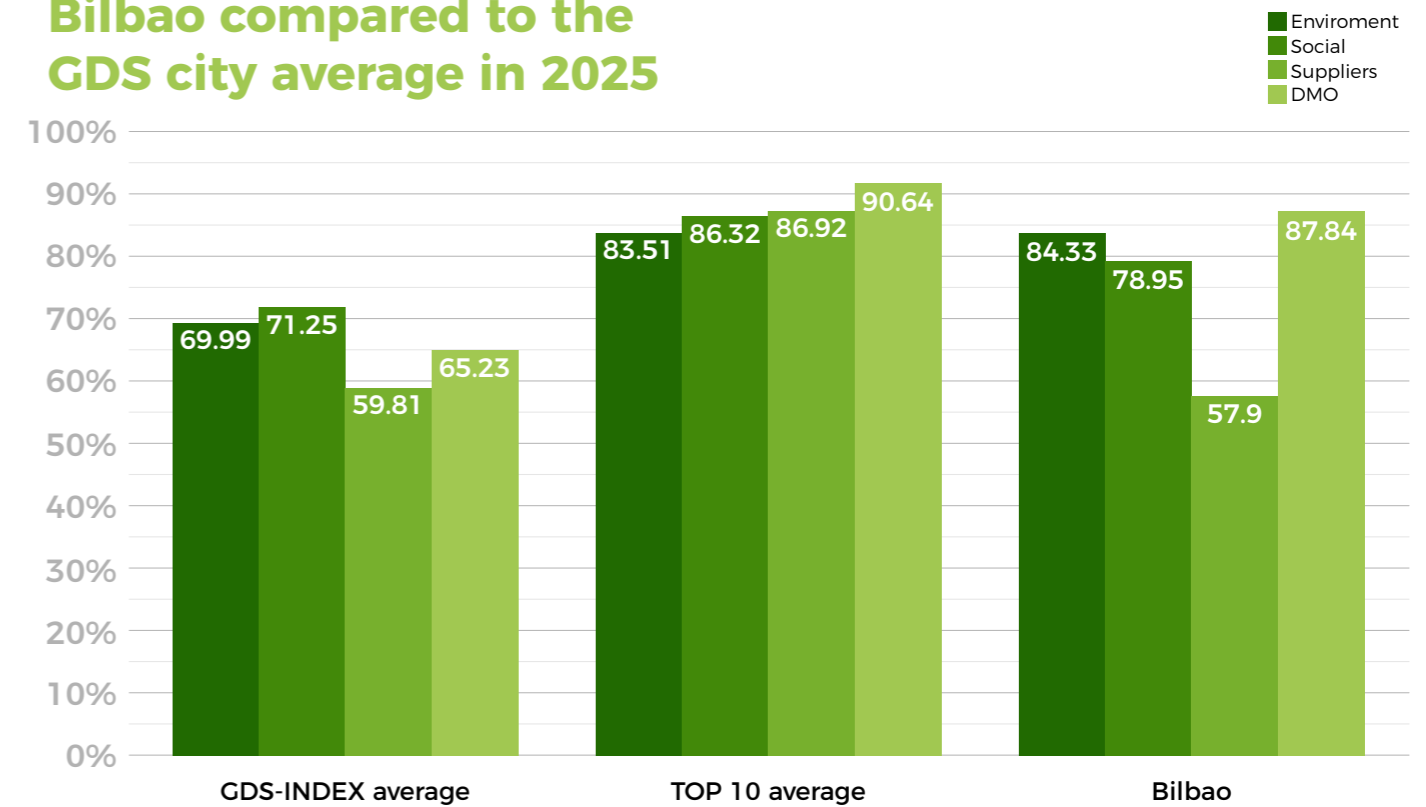
2024

2025

GDS-INDEX Results



Bilbao compared to the GDS city average in 2025



Actions taken

Bilbao Convention Bureau has successfully driven several initiatives that provide partner companies and the destination with more tools and resources to become a more sustainable MICE destination.

- **Calculation of the carbon footprint** *(Action 9.4A)*

With the ambitious goal of measuring the carbon footprint of MICE events, we have collected transport-related emissions data via delegate surveys. Additionally, we calculated the carbon footprint of the BiCB office using the IPCC methodology to assess its CO₂ emissions.

In addition, the carbon footprint of the BiCB office was measured based on the [Ihobe methodology and the impact of its activity](#) on CO₂ emissions.

Efforts continue to align with our KPI “CO₂ emissions avoided” and the City of Bilbao’s goal of achieving climate neutrality. Steps are being taken to reduce and offset emissions associated with office operations. **(Action Plan for climate)**

- **Process of continuous improvement and digitalisation** *(Action 8.1)*

The improvement process of the Bilbao Convention Bureau continues, ensuring the ongoing update of its website with the latest developments in sustainable resources and best practices. In addition, there is regular posting in the #arimaBerdea LinkedIn group, with the aim of sharing best practices and amplifying their impact.

At the same time, new initiatives and companies are being added to the portfolio of sustainable tools, expanding the options available to event organizers. **(Action Plan for climate)**

- **Certifications** *(Action 3.2)*

From the Bilbao Convention Bureau, the grant program continues to support member hotels, venues, and agencies—together with BiCB itself—in obtaining the BIOSPHERE certification.

This certification focuses on the 17 Sustainable Development Goals and is specifically designed for organizations in the tourism sector. In addition to BiCB itself, there are already 3 certified members and 9 currently in the process, with a further 9 companies expected to begin their certification journey by 2026.

(Action Plan for climate)

- **Positive impact and legacy** *(Action 8.1)*

Work has taken place to create a portfolio of sustainable tools to enable event organisers to have a vision of the key associations in the city and to develop measures with the aim of creating a positive impact on the city and a legacy for residents.

In addition, Bilbao Convention Bureau has joined a Learning Community on Impact measurement, organised by [ESADE and BBK-Kuna](#), to train the organisation in monitoring and measuring the impact of actions carried out or promoted by the Bureau. Training sessions for the Kuna learning community were also conducted in 2025.

(Action Plan for climate)

- **Food waste reduction** (Action 6.1 and 6.2)

The first steps of the 'Elikagaiak Orekan' initiative are being taken in collaboration with Oreka Circular Economy. This initiative is based on the implementation of pilot programs in Bilbao's main venues to combat food waste.

It represents an opportunity to improve the socio-environmental responsibility of venues, catering services, and events through the prior management and subsequent donation of surplus food to social dining centers and care homes.

(Action Plan for climate)

- **“For a Social Contract Agenda 2030” Declaration**(Action 8.1B)

In 2021, the Agenda 2030 Euskadi Forum was established as a multi-agent and interinstitutional governance platform. In September 2022, the United Nations decided that the global headquarters of the Local 2030 Coalition Secretariat would be in Euskadi, specifically in Bilbao.

In 2025, the Agenda 2030 Euskadi Forum continued to make progress by forming the Basque Alliance for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), through the declaration “For a Social Contract Agenda 2030 Euskadi,” which includes a series of commitments and responsibilities related to the 2030 Agenda. Bilbao Convention Bureau has joined this initiative, along with 50 other Basque associations, to continue advancing its commitment to the 2030 Agenda.

(Action Plan for climate)

- **Training** (Action 1.4)

It is worth highlighting that BiCB offers continuous training internally for its staff, while also providing open training sessions for partner companies through various online platforms, such as Anfritrones, as well as in-person training in Bilbao on environmental and social sustainability.



Alignment with the SDGs

Any decisions taken aimed to be in line with the SDGs defined in the Sustainability Strategy at all times.

In addition, Bilbao Convention Bureau has signed up to the Glasgow Declaration and to the Basque Alliance for the SDGs.

- Carbon footprint calculation



- Selective collection on request of non-domestic waste



- Various training sessions



(Sustainability Policy for agencies, sustainable food, reuse of materials and circular economy)

- Donations of food and materials



- Various measures with positive impact and legacy



- Update of the Web page





Measurement of KPIs

Environmental KPIs

• Carbon footprint (Action 9.4A) (I.A.1.1)

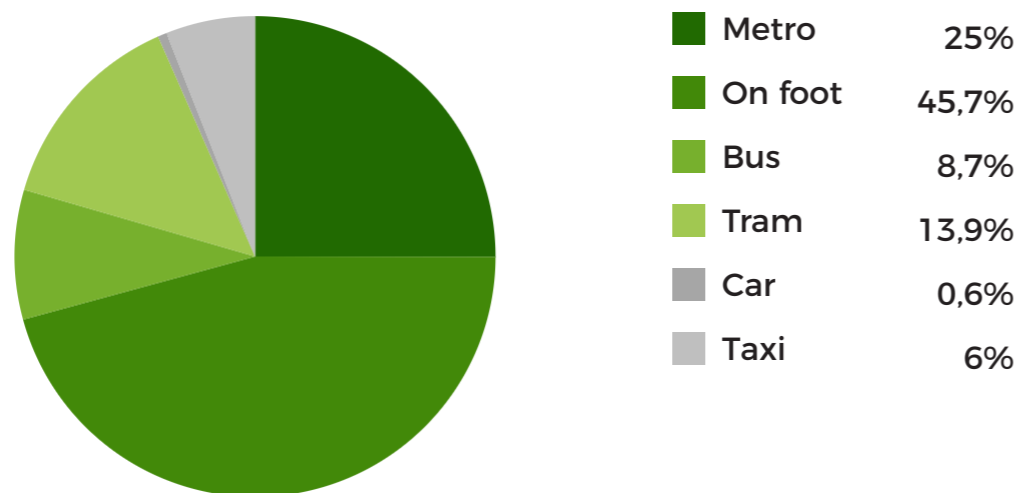
In line with the City Council of Bilbao's commitment to reach carbon neutrality, at BiCB we continue to move forward in the measurement and offsetting of the carbon footprint in the following segments of our activity:

- BiCB Office Carbon Footprint in 2025 8,43 t_{eq} CO₂
This was calculated based on areas 1, 2 and 3
- Carbon Footprint in Famtrips - t_{eq} CO₂
Emissions from transport and accommodation were considered

(Action Plan for climate)

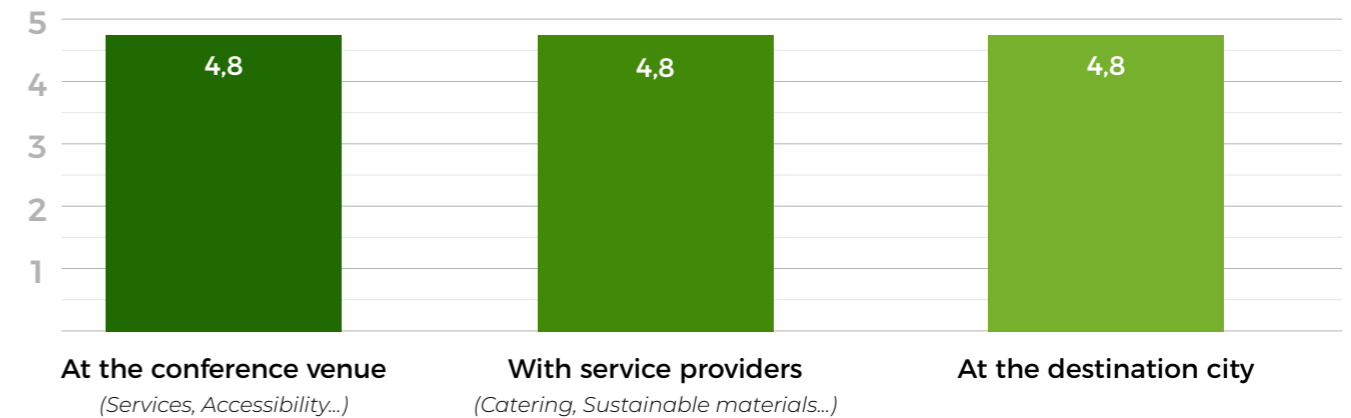
• Mobility of conference participants

93,3% of conference attendees used public transportation or walked to the venue. (Action Plan for climate) (Acción 1.5) (I.A.5)



• Environmental sustainability by conference organisers

A survey was conducted with event organisers regarding their commitment to sustainability in the MICE segment in Bilbao:



(Action Plan for climate) (Acción 1.3 a) (I.A.6)

A survey was conducted with event organisers regarding the importance of sustainability certifications and policies when choosing a destination or selecting suppliers:



(Action 2) (I.A.7)

Social KPIs

- Training

In 2025, the BiCB trained a total of 41 individuals through various sessions organized for BiCB staff, partner companies, and the MICE ecosystem of Bilbao. **(I.S.1.1) (Action 8.1) (DEI)**

- Accessibility

Delegates gave an average rating of 4.6 out of 5 for perceived accessibility in Bilbao. **(I.S.3) (Action 8.1h) (DEI)**

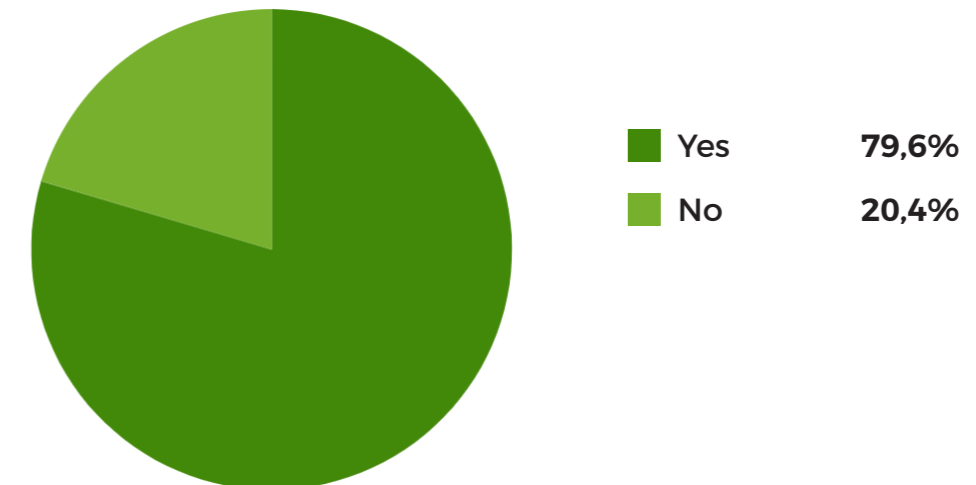
- Equality and Inclusion

Regarding equality and inclusion in recruitment, event organisers gave low scores for efforts to promote the hiring of individuals with disabilities or those at risk of social exclusion. **(I.S.4) (Action 8.1g) (DEI)**

In response to this feedback, steps are being taken to encourage organisations to adopt inclusive employment policies, supported by a dedicated portfolio of sustainable tools developed specifically for event organisers. **(I.S.3) (Action 8.1h) (DEI)**

- Positive impact measures

Most event organizers proposed positive-impact actions in the event design, increasing by approximately 70 percentage points compared to the previous period. **(I.S5) (Action 8.1g) (DEI)**



Economic KPIs

The direct expenditure generated by delegates and accompanying persons at congresses held in Bilbao in 2025 exceeded €248 million.

The average daily spend per delegate was €443,52.



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