

**Bolstering electricity supply and boosting renewable energies in the Basque Country**

## **The Network Development Plan with a 2026 horizon has been approved to drive a greener future for Spain**

- The Network Development Plan 2021-2026 is a key instrument for developing the electricity infrastructure needed to continue guaranteeing the security of supply in addition to promoting the energy transition process nationwide to ensure that renewable energy will account for 67% of the national electricity generation mix by 2026.
- The drafting of the Plan has followed a rigorous Strategic Environmental Assessment procedure to ensure it is sustainable and environmentally friendly.
- The projects included in the Plan will contribute to achieving significant efficiencies and savings for the system as a whole, more than 1.6 billion euros per year. In addition, the investments will help boost Spain's recovery from the crisis.
- The main milestones of the Plan for the Basque Country include a new 400 kV northern axis, the interconnection with France across the Bay of Biscay and structural developments to support the electricity distribution network in Vitoria and to power the 'Basque Y' high-speed rail network. This Plan will enable the integration of renewables and will promote the economic and social progress of the region.

Vitoria-Gasteiz, 22 March 2022

The Network Development Plan 2021-2026, which is binding for Red Eléctrica, has been given the green light after having been approved today by the Spanish Government following its presentation in the Spanish Congress of Deputies. With an investment of 6,964 million euros, this new Plan is a strategic instrument through which the necessary infrastructure will be developed so that Spain may continue to enjoy an electricity supply with high levels of quality and will allow further progress to be made in the decarbonisation of its energy model and in its fight against climate change.

In this regard, the actions included within the Plan will size and prepare the transmission grid in the coming years to be able to connect and integrate a higher share of renewable energy generation in line with the pace set by Spain's National Energy and Climate Plan (NECP) and make it available to consumers. Thanks to the development of this infrastructure, it is estimated that in 2026 renewable energy will reach a share of 67% in the national electricity generation mix and will enable CO<sub>2</sub> eq emissions to be reduced by 66% compared to those recorded in 2019 (the year before the pandemic), provided that the NECP forecasts and the full implementation of this Plan are met. Similarly, the projects included in the Plan, will contribute to achieving significant efficiencies and savings for the system as a whole, more than 1.6 billion euros per year. In addition, the investments will help boost Spain's recovery from the COVID-19 crisis.

The planning process followed a rigorous Strategic Environmental Assessment procedure to ensure it is sustainable and environmentally friendly. It should be noted that the Plan took into account the environmental and territorial conditioning factors and has prioritised these aspects in the final design. Furthermore, the Network Development Plan 2021-2026 includes making greater use of the existing transmission grid, thus avoiding those areas that are most environmentally sensitive and reducing those actions that may have an impact on the territory.



In fact, only 13% of all renewable generation expected to be connected by 2026 will require new transmission substations.

The Network Development Plan 2021-2026 for the Basque Country will enable the construction of the 400 kV northern axis between the region and Navarra to be completed, thus providing the necessary backbone transmission infrastructure to connect the whole of the north of the country and linking it to the Levante area. This will lead to an improvement in supply and a greater capacity to integrate renewable energy.

On the other hand, the actions contemplated in the Plan will facilitate the flow of renewable generation to France through the new link that will connect Gatika (Spain) and Cubnezais (France) across the Bay of Biscay. In addition, the Planning also includes developments for the electricity supply for the 'Basque Y' high-speed rail network.

#### **Milestones of the Planning for the Basque Country: a new electricity axis and the new cross-border connection with France**

Among the noteworthy projects, the Plan for the region foresees the construction of the new axis that will link the Basque Country and Navarra. This corridor includes the connection of the existing Itsaso substation (Gipuzkoa) with the existing line in Navarra between Castejón and Muruarte via a new double-circuit 400 kilovolt line. This project also encompasses the dismantling of two existing lines totalling 120 km between Itsaso and Orkoien.

This new axis will facilitate the integration of renewables in the region and strengthen the connection of the northern axis with the Mediterranean axis. In fact, it will allow an additional integration of green generation of up to 663 GWh each year after its commissioning. On the other hand, the axis will play a crucial role in bolstering the future interconnection with France across the Bay of Biscay.

It is precisely the cross-border connection between the Basque Country and France that is considered one of the milestones of the region's new development Plan. The interconnection, which is currently in the consultation phase, will be the second direct-current link with France and the sixth with this neighbouring country. The link, which will be a double-circuit link with a length of almost 400 km, of which almost 300 km will be underwater, will connect the Gatika substation (near Bilbao) with the Cubnezais substation (in Bordeaux). Additionally, a converter station will be built at each end of the link to transform direct current into alternating current.

This link across the Bay of Biscay is a strategic project because it will increase the exchange capacity with France by 80% - from 2,800 to 5,000 MW. In this way, it will bolster the security, stability and quality of the electricity supply, allow greater use to be made of renewable generation and generate significant efficiencies for the electricity system as a whole. By 2030, an additional volume of green energy of between 6,900 and 8,200 GWh per year will be integrated. This figure represents up to 39% of the entire solar photovoltaic production recorded on the Spanish mainland in 2021. This will prevent the emission of between 1,142 and 1,272 kilotonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>eq. per year. In addition, it will generate an annual saving for the system of between 216 and 227 million euros.

For all these reasons, this project has been classified as a Project of Common Interest (PCI2.7) by the European Commission and is one of the key major transmission projects for helping meet the European energy policy targets.

The interconnection with France will be completed with a series of reinforcements to the high-voltage grid in the Basque Country to increase the transmission capacity of the lines and thus facilitate better use of the cross-border connection. Specifically, this involves increasing the transmission capacity of several lines (the Gatika-Amorebieta-Itxaso line, the 400kV Gatika -Azpeitia line and the 400kV Gatika -Güeñes line) and the updating of the section between Hernani and the French border for the 400kV Hernani-Argia line. In addition, following the public consultation period, the project includes the dismantling of the two existing 400 kV lines between Lemoiz and Gatika.

#### **Bolstering of the electricity supply and powering the 'Basque Y' high-speed rail network**



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On the other hand, this new development Plan also foresees the enlargement of the existing 200 kV La Jara, Ali and Jundiz substations and the 400 kV Abanto substation, through the incorporation of new substation bays. This will increase transformer capacity between the transmission grid and electricity distribution network in order to improve the supply in the event of future growth in demand in Vitoria.

Finally, the planning also includes the construction of the 220 kV Luminabaso substation (Amorebieta, Bizkaia), which represents the last of the 3 projects required to supply electricity for the 'Basque Y' high-speed rail network. Once the lines in Hernani (Gipuzkoa) and Vitoria (Alava) are commissioned, this new substation will enable the high-speed train to be powered in its route through the Basque Country. The works are already underway, and the commissioning of the new substation is scheduled for 2024, thus meeting the goals established for conducting the tests and the subsequent commissioning of said railway line.

#### **A Plan conceived by all for society as a whole**

This Network Development Plan is the result of the responsible and collective efforts of all stakeholders. The public administrations and the different agents of civil society have participated in its preparation, working together with a common goal: to build, together, a useful and valuable transmission grid for everyone. For the first time, the consultation process has been open to all citizens, companies and public administrations, whose high level of participation has demonstrated the enormous interest of society as a whole in the energy transition process.

- **More information at** <https://www.planificacionelectrica.es/>