

Democracy Lab Bilbao

Democratic engagement of youth and children



Arantzazulab
democracy
innovation



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Day 1 – Tuesday, 10 February 2026 <i>La Perrera Espazioa, Konekta room</i> Sabino Arana Etorbidea, 50, Basurtu-Zorrotza, 48012 Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain		
Time	Session	Speakers
12:30-13:45	Registration and welcome lunch	
13:30-13:45	Family photo with the Mayor of Bilbao	
13:45-14:00 PLENARY	Welcome by the Mayor of Bilbao, Juan Mari Aburto Introduction by Eurocities and La Perrera host	Juan Mari Aburto , Mayor of Bilbao
14:00-14:30 PLENARY	Keynote address <i>From Bilbao to Europe: Strengthening Democracy Through Youth Participation</i> The session will explore how local democratic practices can inspire a stronger European culture of participation through the active involvement of young people and children, at a time when democracy itself is increasingly under pressure. It will reflect on how youth participation can move from consultation to real influence in public decision-making, strengthening trust in institutions. Concrete experiences, shared challenges and	Eider Inunciaga Bilbao City Councillor for Basque Language, Public Services, Civic Engagement, Agenda 2030 and Internationalization

	<p>future opportunities will illustrate how cities can act as guardians of democratic values through citizenship engagement. The talk will connect local action with European commitment, highlighting participation as a key driver of democratic resilience. A forward-looking reflection on how the next generation can help safeguard and renew democracy.</p>	
14:30-16:00 PLENARY	<p>City challenges presentations</p> <p>Short presentation of cities that were selected to present their challenges to youth and children engagement, followed by Q&A</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Cascais, PT - Inclusive participation of children and young people 2. Leeuwarden, NL – Making youth participation structural, inclusive and impactful 3. Leipzig, DE - Reimagining youth participation through smart city tools 4. Milan, IT - Designing a Youth Climate Assembly for real impact 5. Valongo, PT – From symbolic to transformative participation for children and young people 6. Göteborg, SE - Strengthening democratic culture with youth in disadvantaged neighbourhoods 	Challenge owners
16:00-16:30	Coffee break	
16:30-18:00 TEAMWORK	<p>Teams formation and problem framing</p> <p>Participants form the challenge teams and start to explore the challenges in groupwork.</p>	Challenge owners and facilitators
18:00-18:30 PLENARY	<p>Mentors check-in</p> <p>Teams have a first check-in with their mentors on the progress so far to get their feedback and tips</p>	n/a



19:00 –21.30	<p>Visit and dinner at the San Mamés Stadium</p> <p>The group will visit the city's football stadium, where they will have the opportunity to meet with those responsible for the ATHLETIC FOUNDATION project. The ATHLETIC FOUNDATION is closely linked to Athletic Club, the historic football team from Bilbao whose unique philosophy makes it a sporting and cultural reference both within and beyond Europe. Since its origins, Athletic Club has maintained a model based on commitment to its territory and the promotion of local talent—an exceptional principle in professional football that strengthens its identity and connection with the community. This uniqueness has made the team a collective symbol that transcends sport and forms an essential part of Bilbao's social imagination.</p> <p>To conclude the visit in a special way, it is proposed to complete the tour with a guided visit to San Mamés Stadium, an emblematic space for the city deeply linked to Bilbao's collective identity and which has also received important architectural recognitions. At the end of the visit, the group will be offered an informal dinner in one of the stadium's own spaces, creating an inspiring and symbolic setting to foster exchange among the participants.</p> <p>Location: Rafael Moreno Pitxitxi s/n, Puerta 20, 48013 Bilbao</p>	



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Day 2 – Wednesday, 11 February 2026

Time	Session
9:00-11:30	<p>Site visits</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">Azkuna Zentroa Discover how Bilbao's flagship cultural and community centre, housed in a former wine warehouse, uses arts, education and social innovation to strengthen social cohesion, accessibility and active citizen participation. Meeting point: Main entrance of the Azkuna Zentroa at 08:50. Address: Arriquirar Plaza, 4, Abando, 48010 Bilbao, Bizkaia, SpainZorrotzaurre Visit one of Europe's most ambitious urban regeneration projects and see how multi-actor governance, innovation ecosystems and community initiatives are shaping an inclusive, sustainable district grounded in youth engagement and social cohesion. Meeting point: La Perrera (main venue) at 08:30. Please arrive 5-10 minutes early, as the bus departs at 08:30 sharp. This visit will last 2 hours.Koop SF34 & DIVERSITOURS Experience how a cooperative trains local residents as intercultural guides in a disadvantaged neighbourhood, using award-winning community-led tours to promote new narratives on migration, inclusion and urban citizenship. Meeting point: La Perrera (main venue) at 08:30. Please arrive 5-10 minutes early, as the bus departs at 08:30 sharp. This visit will last 1,5 hour. <p><i>Transfer to the main venue</i></p>



30'		
La Perrera Espazioa, Konekta room		
Sabino Arana Etorbidea, 50, Basurtu-Zorrotza, 48012 Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain		
Time	Session	Speakers
11:30-12:00	Coffee break	
12:00-13:30 TEAMWORK	Innovation Capsule: creativity and lateral thinking. Tender agora In this session participants will be invited to think collectively through action, using performative strategies and artistic tools. It will be an invitation to think from the body, placing ideas in space, transforming intuitions into images, visualising doubts with the help of other bodies, and also making room for the unexpected. Because when we think together, we see and recognize each other, we go much further than expected.	Matxalen de Pedro – Theatre director and actress
13:30-14:30	Lunch	
14:30-15:45 TEAMWORK	Workshop: ideas selection Teams test ideas against their relevance and feasibility.	Facilitators
15:45-16:15	Coffee break & Mentors check-in	
16:15-16:30 PLENARY	Lightning talk: BEYOND YOUTH COUNCILS Democratic Innovations with Children and Young People More and more local governments are promoting youth councils, children’s councils, youth consultations, and other traditional approaches to participation with children and young people. However, these experiences have often fallen short of policymakers’ expectations, particularly in terms of inclusion, outreach to the wider youth	Andrés Falck – Executive Director, Coglobal



	<p>community, and policy impact. Key challenges frequently identified in conventional youth participation designs include self-selection, lack of inclusion, adultism, tokenism, and the reliance on one-off participatory experiences.</p> <p>In this talk, we will explore how the current wave of democratic innovations is offering new designs and approaches to address these challenges with renewed hope. This will be illustrated through concrete experiences such as school participatory budgeting, citizens' assemblies with children and young people, and classroom-based participation.</p>	
16:15-18:30 TEAMWORK	<p>Workshop: idea conceptualisation and prototyping</p> <p>Teams select concrete ideas for further development and start prototyping action plan for implementation.</p>	Facilitators
18:30-18:40 PLENARY	Day 2 wrap-up	n/a
20:00-22:00	<p>Pintxo-pote dinner</p> <p><i>Pintxo-pote</i> is a popular social tradition in the Basque Country that invites people to enjoy small tapas (pintxos) and drinks while spending time with friends, colleagues, and family. It is a relaxed and lively way to experience local gastronomy and everyday culture, and a perfect opportunity to connect in an informal atmosphere after a day of meetings. The pintxo-pote will take place in DOCK BILBAO, one distinctive venue that embody the themes of civic engagement, participation and collaborative innovation.</p> <p>Location: DOCK Bilbao, Uribitarte Pasealekua, 3, Abando, 48001 Bilbao, Bizkaia</p>	



Day 3 – Thursday, 12 February 2026*La Perrera Espazioa, Konekta room*

Sabino Arana Etorbidea, 50, Basurtu-Zorrotza, 48012 Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain

Time	Session	Speakers
8:30-9:00	Welcome coffee	
9:00-9:30 PLENARY	Lighting talk: The Basque Country: A Living Ecosystem for Democracy Innovation Strengthening democracy and community development through collaborative governance	Asier Aranbarri – President Office in the Basque Government
9:30-10:45 TEAMWORK	Workshop: pitch preparation Teams finalise their prototypes and prepare for public presentation.	Facilitators, challenge owners
10:45-11:15	Coffee break	
11:15-13:00 PLENARY	Final presentations and feedback session Teams present the result of their work and provide feedback to other participants.	Challenge owners, facilitators, mentors
13:00-13:10 PLENARY	Event closing	Eider Inunciaga Bilbao City Councillor for Basque Language, Public Services, Civic Engagement, Agenda 2030 and Internationalization Nets4Dem & Eurocities representatives
13:10	Take-away lunch and departures	

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