

el Periòdic News

INTERVIEW

Eneko Goia THE MAYOR OF THE CITY

«San Sebastian is the Basque city with the lowest unemployment rate and boasts the highest per capita income for any Spanish city»

IRINA
Rybalchenko



San Sebastian (or Donostia in Basque) is a Spanish royal resort, the capital of the Gipuzkoa province. It is located in the Basque Autonomous Community, in northern Spain. The city is located on the southern coast of the Bay of Biscay, 20 km from France.

The main sectors of its economy are commerce and tourism; it is one of the cities with the most Michelin-starred restaurants.

We talk to Eneko Goia Laso, the mayor of San Sebastian, who has been re-elected for the third time, about the city's attractions and its development plans.

—Please tell us about the etymological history: why the official name Donostia-Saint Sebastian? What does the word Donostia mean?

—Donostia is a word from Euskera, a Basque language. According to the most common etymological studies, it is derived from the Latin name Sant Sebastia, dedicated to the saint. In Basque, it sounds like



AJUNTAMENT DE SANT SEBASTIA

Don Bastia.

—The main economic sectors of the city are commerce and tourism. What are the main economic indicators of the city?

—San Sebastian is the capital of the Gipuzkoa province, where industry has a significant weight. At the same time, the city is oriented towards services, knowledge, and recreation. San Sebastian is the Basque Country city with the lowest unemployment rate (around 6%) and boasts the highest per capita income for any Spanish

city. Tourism is very important to us. It is a sector that generates 15% of GDP.

San Sebastian features Spain's highest investment in research, development, and innovation. The Research and Development sector is a fundamental pillar of our economy, with around 6,000 people working in cutting-edge industries. We have four university campuses in the city, which gives us the status of a knowledge and software centre. In this way, we can claim that our city has very high economic and

social cohesion.

—San Sebastian is the most visited part of the Atlantic resorts of Spain on the Costa Vasca. How many tourists does the city welcome annually?

—In 2023, San Sebastian had almost one million visitors. Of these, 60% are foreigners. In total, including hotels, tourist apartments and campsites, we have around 18,000 beds. In addition, we are also a destination for day visitors who come to Donostia to spend the day—mainly from the surrounding areas—including the south of France.

—What do you advise tourists to visit first?

—Our three beaches (la Concha, Ondarreta and Zurriola) and the old town district with its traditional flavour, bars, and restaurants are the most classic places to visit and most appreciated by our tourists. Among our attractions is also Mount Urgull, offering tranquillity and a breath of fresh air. There is the vibrant and young Gros neighbourhood, the Tabakalera international cultural centre, as well as the parks of Cristina, Enea o Aiete and 'Peine del Viento,' a masterpiece by our sculptor Eduardo Chillida. There are also hidden gems, such

as the island of Santa Clara, whose lighthouse holds a secret to be discovered.

—San Sebastian is a famous gastronomic capital, isn't it?

—San Sebastian is one of the cities with the most Michelin-starred restaurants. There are several restaurants here with three, two and one star. But I think the real gastronomic wealth of our city is in the many restaurants that are not on this list, but where you can enjoy local gastronomy of high quality. Of course there are tapas (los pintxos), miniature snacks. But I think it is the general level of the city that has made us a reference point for so many tourists.

—Given that San Sebastián is 20 kilometres from France, are there any joint international projects in culture, education and sport?

—The reality is that there is an axis between San Sebastian and the Bayonne-Biarritz agglomeration where there is a significant flow of people and activity is very high on both sides of the border separating the Basque Country. It is a veritable Euroregion. The fact is that there is a certain consistency in this flow, especially in terms of holidays and tourism, and perhaps we need to make closer links from an economic point of view. There is a project to create a railway corridor between



Bayonne and San Sebastian, which I believe will help to strengthen and structure this axis.

In addition, we organise international events such as the International Film Festival—the jewel of our city—for a week, San Sebastian turns into the world capital of cinema. We also have a jazz festival in the summer, as well as music fortnights. We host sporting events such as the Sant Sebastià Cycling Classic, the UCI Pro Tour competitions or the popular Behobia-San Sebastià race, which attracts 30,000 runners.

—What are the main investment projects in the city?

—Miramon Technology Park is one of our poles of economic attraction. It is almost 100% full, so we are working on its expansion. In the near future, we

plan to create an electric mobility pole in the city, which will bring together public and private companies and strengthen this sector.

We are also constructing a building that will house a quantum supercomputer, the third in Europe and the sixth in the world.

—Are there any projects of interest to foreign investors?

—The company Bayer has a consolidated project for the production of gene vectors (an agent that transfers genetic information from one organism to another). This project is attracting attention to our city and I believe that soon we will be able to announce new investments.

The artificial meat production plant of BioTech Foods, recently acquired by a Brazilian multinational corporation with the intention of selling its products worldwide, will soon be opened in the Escusaiteseta area. In the artificial intelligence sector, we have a company like Multiverse, which is a leader in quantum computing. And it is in this neighbourhood of San Sebastian that the aforementioned sixth quantum computer, which IBM owns, will be headquartered. All of these will significantly strengthen our position in various strategic and

advanced sectors.

Ultimately, San Sebastian is a hub of economic attractiveness and talent.

—You have been re-elected mayor for the third time. How has the city changed during your reign?

The year 2025 will mark ten years since my first day at San Sebastian City Hall. This is a good timeframe to look back and see the evolution of the city. We came after several years of institutional paralysis of the city. During my first year in charge, San Sebastian was transformed into a capital of European culture, with the opening of the International Centre for Contemporary Culture in Tabakalera.

Important projects were launched, such as the renovation of the Anoeta stadium and the extension of the branch of the commuter train to the centre. We are in the process of building a new high-speed train station. The city continues to expand along the Urumea River, and we anticipate the sale of the Loiola military barracks.

Here are a few examples of how the city has transformed in a positive way during this decade. ●

Your leading real estate agency in Andorra.

Our experience guarantees results, realtors since 1988.



(+376) 353 424 / (+376) 379 769

(+376) 747 747

laportella@andorra.ad

Casa Nova Olivet 10 · Ordino

www.laportella.ad



Government closes the stumbling Grifols with the dissolution of the company

Marsol confirms that the process has been notarized and that AR+I has already recovered the 20% investment.

LAURA GÓMEZ RODRÍGUEZ
ANDORRA LA VELLA

Last Friday, the Minister of Health, Helena Mas, and the Minister of the Presidency, Economy, Work and Housing, Conxita Marsol, appeared to report on the current situation of the Grifols project. Both ministers announced the return of the purchase and sale of AR+I (Andorra Research and Innovation) shares with the multinational, as well as the recovery of the transfer of the use of the land. In the signed agreement, the biopharmaceutical company has acquired 20% of the AR+I share and has transferred 200,000 euros to the research entity, thus completing the return on the investment made by the company. At the same time, the dissolution of the joint company was confirmed.

Even so, Mas emphasized that the collaboration with Grifols represented «a commitment to scientific research and the economic diversification of the country». The project, which focused on research in immunology, according to the Executive, sought to «provide answers to diseases such as cancer, neurodegenerative and chronic diseases». For her part, the holder of the Health portfolio stated that the laboratory also intended to «retain scientific talent», as in the case of Dr. Marquet, and attract other institutions such as the Josep Carreras Foundation.

Regarding the Social Democra-



The Minister of Health, Helena Mas, and the Minister of the Presidency, Economy, Work and Housing, Conxita Marsol, this Friday.

HELENA MAS
MINISTER OF HEALTH

«The Grifols project sought to provide answers to diseases such as cancer, neurodegenerative and chronic diseases»

CONXITA MARSOL
ECONOMY MINISTER

«Running an international competition for the development of a project within the sector is a complex option»

tic parliamentary group's proposal to hold an international competition for the development of a project within the sector, Marsol considered that «it is a complex option», since many countries compete to develop initiatives of this scope «It won't be easy», she warned, while insisting that the Government maintains its commitment to Grifols. During the appearance, Mas also clarified that, despite the relevance of the research project, «the objectives of the laboratory cannot be mixed with the creation of a medicine agency». ●

Marsol admits an excess of «prudence» in the management of the project

The head of Economics acknowledges that the Government has wanted to keep the negotiations discreet

L.G.R.
ANDORRA LA VELLA

Minister Marsol acknowledged that the negotiations with the multinational were carried out with «excessive prudence», emphasizing that the Government trusted the project and insisted on its continuity, but in the end the company decided not to continue. According to Marsol, Grifols presented the project in August 2022, later than the agreed deadline, which caused the company's discomfort.

«Grifols expressed her dismay at the delay in management and the appearance of the situation in the media», said the minister. Marsol acknowledged that perhaps the Government «was too cautious with everything that was happening» and added that large companies «do not usually accept media exposure well». However, she denied that the Government had «begged» Grifols to stay, it was believed in the project because of its great opportunity for the country. ●

SFGA



Marsol recognizes that the Government has acted prudently during the negotiations with Grifols.

The Prat de la Farga land, a possible destination for new flats

Marsol assures that the decision is «on the table» and will be evaluated by the Executive.

L.G.R.
ANDORRA LA VELLA

The use of the Prat de la Farga land, where the Grifols P3 laboratory was to be built, for the construction of affordable housing. This was the proposal suggested by the General Counselor of Andorra Endavant Carine Montaner during the appearance session of the Minister of the Presidency, Conxita Marsol, and the Minister of Health, Helena Mas, on the future of the land.

Montaner questioned the viability of the project from its inception, emphasizing the conditions of the partners' pact, which, she said, included confidential clauses contrary to Andorran law. In addition, she criticized the transfer of the land for 25 years in exchange for 200,000 euros per year, calling it «bad business for Andorra». Montaner urged the Government to find other uses for the land, and suggested that it could be used to solve the housing crisis in the country. «There are many things that can be done with this space», she said.

In response, Minister

Marsol acknowledged that the Government is considering different options for the use of the land. «We have in mind the possibility of allocating it to housing, it is an option that is on the table», she declared, although she added that no final decision has yet been made. As for other possible scientific or innovative projects, the holder of the Economy and Housing portfolio advanced that «the Government is working in some areas», but that at this moment no further details can be given. For her part, Minister Mas emphasized that they are looking for «other synergies and companies interested in coming to Andorra». ●

SFGA



The president of AE, Carine Montaner.