

THINK TANK

Process of deliberation on new political culture: Working Document No. 18

INTERNAL TRANSFORMATION PROCESS OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OF GIPUZKOA:
STUDIES DERIVED FROM THE FIRST CYCLE OF REFLECTION/ACTION

(18 February 2022)

Introduction

This deliberation group for elaboration of the new political culture has adopted two projects (3 processes) as a reference for the co-creation of knowledge for 2022. One of the two projects will seek transformation within the Provincial Government of Gipuzkoa (DFG), and the other will target transformation in the province, through a mapping process. The third process will be based on the studies of the two previous ones; the aim is to develop the deliberation group and increase its impact in Gipuzkoa.

The first cycle of reflection-action developed in the first project was presented at the session of the deliberation group held in February 2022. This cycle can be summarised as follows:

- a) In September 2021 the projects and challenges to be addressed were presented to the group; Eider presented the Provincial Government's internal transformation challenges.
- b) In October 2021, Maria José Canel explained some of the internal transformation work that has been carried out so far in the Provincial Government, especially within the framework of the Ekinez Ikasi initiative, and the group proposed priorities and criteria for this work
- c) In November 2021, the group reviewed the experience of La 27e Région and again made contributions, especially on the characteristics that an internal transformation process should have.
- d) Between December 2021 and February 2022, Eider Mendoza, with the collaboration of Nerea Urcola, facilitated a concrete process of action, establishing the space, criteria and procedures for collaboration between two areas of the Provincial Government which had previously had a low level of collaboration.
- e) In February 2022, Eider Mendoza and Nerea Urcola shared the lessons learned from that process, which were addressed as a group to help in the next steps of the Think Tank.

Lessons contributed to the group

More detailed presentations on each of the lessons learned are included in the report dated 18 February 2022. These are listed below:

a) Making courageous decisions

With regard to the experience, at the beginning of the process there was a difficult process of restructuring. The process was hard for everyone, but helped to develop the right conditions subsequently.

b) Consistency

In the process, it was important to show a conviction in the importance of disseminating the same message within the Provincial Government as that which is disseminated to the outside world and of turning that message into action.

c) Having a clear goal

This does not mean that the goal of the process is immovable; Indeed, the proposal made by Eider Mendoza was modified as a result of the reflection. But once a consensus was reached, the goal guided the process.

d) Defining the problem properly

If, despite having a clear goal, the problem is not properly diagnosed, the process may go in the wrong direction.

e) Looking forward without looking back

Too much time is often wasted looking back, dwelling on things that have happened. It is important to work on the ability to look ahead in order to transform.

f) Stop apportioning blame

It is very easy to point the finger at those responsible for the problem and stop the process, but this temptation must be avoided.

g) Persons

The people who assumed responsibilities for transformation in this process, their attitudes and way of working, their disposition and mutual respect have been fundamental in making the transformation possible.

h) Good timing

Previously, other initiatives had been carried out in the Provincial Government that supported this process, among them, the Ekinez Ikasi initiative, which was developed in the Think Tank. But this process has managed to combine the possibilities opened up in other processes and the phases of people's trajectories, and to take a step forward.

i) Analyse the problem on a differentiated basis with each of the parties

First, the problem was studied calmly with each person, before approaching the joint work. This created the right conditions for subsequent dialogue.

j) Commitment and willingness of all parties

The participants have been committed and have done a good job.

k) Trust

The relationship of trust that developed among the participants was of fundamental importance.

l) Help from the rest

On the one hand, the participation of Eider Mendoza was of fundamental importance. On the other, the role of Nerea Urcola was appreciated, demonstrating that people who come to collaborate from outside can also play an important role.

Group reflection

The group was very positive about the overall process; the contributions are grouped below under the X idea.

a) The importance of the process presented and of some of the items that appear in it was highlighted:

- a. The problem raised, silos and lack of interdepartmental collaboration are common in other institutions as well
- b. The role of leadership is very important in this type of transformation process
- c. In order to foster collaboration, it is very important to work on the construction of a common language
- d. Who is in charge in this type of entity, the technical staff? The political appointees? We are not sure, but this is an important question in understanding the transformation

b) Some doubts about the next steps of the process were raised and contributions were made to solve them.

- a. An attempt must be made to bring about a profound transformation in the Provincial Government through projects of this type.
- b. One question has arisen in relation to the project: How can this initiative be continued? We believe that some conflicts may arise that have not appeared so far.
- c. Looking ahead, the following factors should be taken into account: the nature of the people, will, understanding of discretion, management of emotion, power (whether or not the participants would lose power in the proposed process) and situations.
- d. How to extend this experience to the system? Early adopters (those who adopt the changes quickly and enthusiastically) are in the minority; A few others are very opposed to the changes and may block the process. Most of them, even if they are initially not very well-disposed to making changes, will be willing to introduce them. The proposal is not to work only with "early adopters" and to identify as early as possible people who might interfere in the process.

- c) From this process we tried to draw lessons that could be valid for other processes. The doubt is that it is unusual to have the conditions to obtain such good results in such a short period of time and, above all, that it is not always possible to find people with this profile. If at the time of launching a process we do not have people with suitable profiles for this type of work, is it worth going ahead with the process? Wouldn't it be more effective to focus the transformation on other areas?