

ARA HIGH-LEVEL MEETING
2026 BILBAO
26th - 27th May 2026

Bilbao Declaration



#EUSKADIGLOBALA



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'Bilbao Declaration' of the Automotive Regions Alliance

At the high-level conference of the Automotive Regions Alliance (ARA) that took place on 27 May 2026 in Bilbao at the invitation of the Basque Country and the European Committee of the Regions, the participating regions confirmed their commitment to the positions expressed in the founding declaration of the ARA¹, as well as in the previously adopted Declarations² and during the Strasbourg high-level Conference, and engaged to further advocate for the following objectives:

The Automotive Regions Alliance:

Coherence between industrial and regulatory frameworks

1. Supports the objectives of the Industrial Accelerator Act (IAA) as a key instrument to strengthen the industrial dimension of the automotive transition, in particular by reinforcing European and regional value chains, reducing strategic dependencies, and supporting the long-term competitiveness of regional automotive ecosystems across the Union;
2. Stresses that the effectiveness of the IAA depends on coherence and alignment with the broader Automotive Package, the Automotive Action Plan, and the wider regulatory framework, in order to ensure mutually reinforcing measures across the value chain, avoid fragmentation, and support both industrial capacity and regional ecosystems as well as the functioning of the internal market;
3. Stresses the importance of carrying out a comprehensive assessment of the implementation of the Automotive Package and its interaction with the IAA, in order to evaluate its impact on competitiveness, investment, supply chains and regional economies, and to ensure that the framework remains fit for purpose;

Strengthening European value chains and industrial capacity

4. Supports, in essence, the introduction of targeted, proportionate and robust "Made in EU" requirements as a key component of the IAA and acknowledges the benefits of these requirements in certain instances to strengthen European industrial capacity, support regional ecosystems, and contribute to a more resilient and competitive automotive value chain;
5. Emphasises that the implementation of the "Made in EU" approach should be proportionate and carefully calibrated, ensuring legal certainty and avoiding undue burdens and red tape on manufacturers and suppliers, in particular Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) and regional supply chains, while allowing for a predictable and orderly adaptation of existing production systems;
6. Underlines that "Made in EU" requirements should reinforce European industrial sovereignty but remain in compliance with the EU's international commitments especially towards Free Trade Agreements (FTA) partners and avoid international supply and value chains disruptions of the European automotive industry;

¹ Adopted at the 150th plenary session of the CoR on 30 June 2023 <https://core.europa.eu/en/our-work/cooperations-and-networks/automotive-regions-alliance#toc-our-goals>.

² <https://webapi2016.core.europa.eu/v1/documents/cor-2022-05422-00-01-tcd-tra-en.docx/content>.

² https://core.europa.eu/sites/default/files/2024-07/ara_navarra_declaration_en-tl.pdf.

² <https://webapi2016.core.europa.eu/v1/documents/cor-2024-04227-00-01-tcd-tra-en.docx/content>.

7. Highlights the importance of prioritising industrial digitalisation through for instance the development of artificial intelligence in the automotive sector and increasing support for research and development in battery technologies and component manufacturing, including software, semiconductors, autonomous and connected driving as well as steel and low-carbon materials as a key enabler for strengthening European value chains and ensuring the long-term competitiveness of the automotive sector;
8. Underlines the importance of ensuring a level playing field within the Single Market and in global markets, through clear, transparent and enforceable rules, including appropriate safeguards, in order to preserve competitiveness and ensure the credibility of the measures of the IAA;
9. Highlights the strategic importance for the EU automotive industry of materials such as steel and calls for a coherent approach to low-carbon and origin requirements, ensuring that European production based on circular and low-emission processes is effectively supported;
10. Highlights that talent is a strategic vector for the competitiveness of the automotive sector, and therefore recommends reinforced programmes for technical training, reskilling and attracting young talent, while ensuring gender equality in labour criteria and promoting collaboration between regions, vocational centres, universities and businesses as a key component for social and local acceptability and for the techno-industrial transition. Supports, in this context, the objectives of the Quality Jobs Roadmap and the forthcoming Quality Jobs Act aimed at fostering quality employment, fair working conditions, social dialogue and workforce resilience across the automotive value chain;

Regulatory dimension of the automotive transition

11. Recognises that the Automotive Package aims to provide a framework for achieving climate neutrality in the automotive sector while maintaining industrial competitiveness, and underlines the importance of ensuring that regulatory measures remain technologically neutral to support this transition, through zero and low emission solutions, capable of contributing to emissions reductions to be developed in line with market, infrastructure and innovation dynamics;
12. Supports the initiative on small and affordable electric vehicles to facilitate access to zero-emission transport across Europe, while stressing that support for the transition to zero-emission mobility should not be limited to this initiative alone in order to preserve manufacturers' ability to offer a diverse and demand-driven vehicle portfolio, ensuring a broad consumer choice, and avoid unintended market distortions;
13. Notes that the Automotive Package includes flexibility mechanisms such as fuel and low-carbon steel credits; underlines, however, that the current cap on the contribution of sustainable renewable fuels, including biofuels, may not adequately reflect their contribution to decarbonisation efforts. Calls for an assessment, ahead of 2035, of the role and effectiveness of these fuels in reducing emissions and supporting the competitiveness and resilience of European industrial value chains, while ensuring coherence with the principle of technological neutrality and the Union's objective of achieving climate neutrality by 2050;
14. Emphasises that the Automotive Regions Alliance stands ready to support the monitoring and implementation of the IAA and the Automotive Package, contributing regional expertise, industrial capabilities and place-based policy solutions, to ensure effective and balanced outcomes across the European Union;
15. Calls for the co-design and co-implementation of EU industrial and investment instruments with automotive regions, recognising their strategic role, industrial capabilities and proximity to the real economy.



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The logo for #EUSKADIGLOBALA features the text "#EUSKADIGLOBALA" in a bold, blue, sans-serif font. Below the text is a horizontal bar with the colors of the Italian flag: green, white, and red.

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