



Press release

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## Iberdrola's Global Smart Grids Innovation Hub and the Provincial Council of Bizkaia mark five years with over 120 partner organisations

- *The Global Smart Grids Innovation Hub (GSGIH), based in Bilbao, has established itself as a global benchmark for innovation and expertise in smart grids*
- *The fifth anniversary of the Hub—driven by Iberdrola and the Provincial Council of Bizkaia as a technology platform connecting partner organisations—coincides with the 125th anniversary of the company's founding*
- *Investment in innovation by Iberdrola's distribution business, i-DE, has increased by 55%, exceeding €40 million annually*

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The Provincial Council of Bizkaia and Iberdrola today celebrated the fifth anniversary of the [Global Smart Grids Innovation Hub \(GSGIH\)](#) in Bilbao.

The GSGIH is a public–private collaborative ecosystem, launched in 2021 and based in Bilbao, that brings together the company and the Provincial Council of Bizkaia with suppliers, start-ups, technology centres and universities. Its aim is to leverage innovation to drive the electrification of the economy and enhance the quality of service for grid-connected customers, through solutions that strengthen grid robustness, resilience, flexibility and security.

The anniversary event, held at the Berroeta Corporate Centre in Bilbao, was attended by the President of the Provincial Council of Bizkaia, Elixabete Etxanobe; Mario Ruiz-Tagle, CEO of Iberdrola España; Asís Canales, the company's institutional representative; Ainara Basurko and Itxaso Berrojalbiz, Regional Ministers for Economic Development and for Finance and Treasury, respectively; Eva Mancera, CEO of Iberdrola's smart grids division i-DE; Javier Arriola, Northern Region Director at i-DE; and Estibaliz Goñi, Director of Processes and Technology at the Group's distribution business.

Since the Hub's creation five years ago, i-DE's investment in innovation has increased by 55% compared to the previous period, now exceeding €40 million per year. This investment is helping to boost regional competitiveness by strengthening the value chain and reinforcing Iberdrola's position as the world's leading utility in terms of R&D investment. Since its launch, the Hub has welcomed more than 9,000

visitors, offering them the opportunity to gain insight into electricity networks, understand their role in the electrification of the economy and appreciate the positive impact of public–private collaboration. Over this period, the GSGIH has brought together more than 120 partner organisations, including over 10 universities, 10 technology centres, more than 25 start-ups and 45 leading companies in the sector.

For the President of the Provincial Council of Bizkaia, Elixabete Etxanobe, the anniversary represents “five years of progress, but above all five years in which Bizkaia has positioned itself at the forefront of the energy transition. We are celebrating much more than an anniversary, we are celebrating a way of shaping Bizkaia’s future based on ambition, collaboration and the ability to anticipate challenges.” She also stressed that “the war in the Middle East has reminded us that energy is not just a resource, it is a strategic issue. Without smart grids, there can be no energy transition. Without modern networks, there is no energy independence, no competitiveness and no security.”

Asís Canales, Chairman of i-DE, Iberdrola Group’s distribution company, and the company’s institutional delegate in the Basque Country, noted that “in a particularly significant year for Iberdrola, as we celebrate 125 years of history, the fifth anniversary of the Global Smart Grids Innovation Hub confirms that collaboration between companies and institutions is key to building a global benchmark in grid innovation.” He added: “From Bizkaia, this ecosystem is delivering solutions worldwide that enable smarter, more resilient and secure networks—essential for advancing the electrification of the economy.”

During the event, the **Bizkaia Smart Grids Awards** were presented to foster competitiveness among local businesses and entrepreneurs. These awards recognise R&D projects that generate new ideas, identify advanced technologies, improve processes and create knowledge that strengthens business activity. They are supported by a favourable environment in Bizkaia, including advanced tax incentives that enhance resilience, foresight and competitiveness, helping to develop products, processes and services that accelerate the energy transition.

Over the past five years, the Hub has grown significantly, leading to the creation of the ‘GSGIH’ excellence label at the end of 2023. This has enabled the launch of the ‘Product developed at the GSG Innovation Hub’ certification, awarded by AENOR to recognise equipment and data solutions developed within the Hub and successfully deployed in electricity networks. Currently, 13 products from 18 manufacturers carry this certification, and the Hub aims to reach 20 certified products by 2026. The ENLIT trade fair held in Bizkaia last November provided an ideal platform for partners to showcase these developments to the international energy sector.

Iberdrola and the Provincial Council of Bizkaia have recently renewed their collaboration agreement, reinforcing their shared commitment to technology as a driver of electrification, industrial competitiveness and quality job creation. This includes innovation focused on designing equipment, data solutions, systems and telecommunications networks to expand the capacity of distribution grids, integrate renewable energy and build safer, more reliable and resilient networks capable of addressing challenges such as climate change and cybersecurity.

## 125 YEARS COMMITTED TO THE NETWORKS OF THE FUTURE FROM BIZKAIA

The Hub’s fifth anniversary in 2026 coincides with Iberdrola’s 125th anniversary—a milestone reflecting a long track record of adapting to changes in the energy sector while maintaining the highest standards of environmental performance, efficiency and customer service. Today, the development and modernisation of electricity networks are central to the vision of institutions shaping the future of energy.

The decision by Iberdrola and the Provincial Council of Bizkaia to establish this Hub in Bilbao, where the networks of the future are designed through collaborative innovation, demonstrates their ongoing commitment to society and to the next 125 years.

Further information is available on Iberdrola's [125th anniversary website](#), which features the full calendar of events as well as audiovisual content highlighting the people behind the company's history and those shaping its future. Through real-life stories, it showcases Iberdrola's impact on society and its role in advancing a more sustainable, secure, innovative and competitive energy model.

### SMART GRIDS ACADEMY (SGA)

As part of this collaboration, Iberdrola and the Provincial Council of Bizkaia have also launched the Smart Grids Academy (SGA), a pioneering initiative under the "Bizkaia with the Talent" strategy. The programme provides continuous, specialised training for professionals across the energy sector and smart grid supply chain, supporting technological expertise and workforce development.

The Smart Grids Academy reflects a shared commitment to the future of smart grids and lays the foundation for a transformative national project aligned with the Basque Country's Industry Plan 2030.