The new Minister of Health and Consumer Affairs of the Basque Country was born in Caracas 57 years ago. He is also the son of a doctor, Jose Maria Bengoa, who was member of the historic first Basque Government presided over by Jose Antonio Aguirre. Rafael Bengoa graduated in medicine from the University of the Basque Country and later specialized in Health Management in England. In 1990, he was co-author of the well-known "Abril Report", coordinated by the former vice president of the central government, Fernando Abril Martorell. The report established the bases for remodeling the Spanish health system. Later, between 1991 and 1995, he was director of Planning of the Health Department of the Basque Government with the Minister, Iñaki Azkuna, currently the mayor of Bilbao. During that time, he drew up the "Osasuna Zainduz" report on remodeling the Basque health system.

He has worked for the World Health Organization on two occasions and for a total of 15 years. The last of these was between 1998 and 2006, when he was director of Health Systems. At that time, the care of chronically ill patients had become the main focus of his attention. After leaving the WHO, Bengoa directed the Kroniker Observatory, an independent organization engaged in the analysis of trends in world health with the aim of improving health systems.

Independent of any political group, Bengoa has proposed a change in the healthcare policies of the Basque Country. Five fundamental ideas guide his strategy. The head of Health and Consumer affairs has begun to design a care model based on the care of chronically ill patients, improvements in patient safety and the continuity of care. The project he is leading also gives a greater role both to health professionals and the public, who will take an active part in the fight against disease. "We are faced by a genuine epidemic of chronic illnesses. Rather than merely attending to cases of myocardium infarction", he declares graphically, "We must think about a kind of care that avoids cardiovascular pathology and treat those who suffer from this illness throughout their life".