



PRESS RELEASE: 2025.03.19

Etxepare Basque Institute sets its sights on the French-speaking world to promote Basque culture abroad

-The Institute unveiled a four-year initiative designed to connect contemporary Basque creation with a community of 321 million French speakers, to be carried out through a collaboration between institutional bodies, cultural organisations, and professional associations

-A gathering of professionals in Getaria, attended by numerous representatives from the cultural sector and featuring the Basque Government's (Euskadi) Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Culture and Language Policy, marked the beginning of the project

-The project advocates the globalisation of diversity by promoting Basque language and culture in dialogue with the rich array of languages and identities that make up the French-speaking world

'Ça colle au basque' (literally, Basque 'sticks to me', a popular expression in French to describe something you can't get out of your head) is the initiative that the Etxepare Basque Institute has launched for the next four years to promote the visibility of Basque culture in the French-speaking world (Francophonie) – a mosaic of languages, cultures, and identities, 321 million strong, whose common language is French.

The project was presented this morning at Zarautz Palace in Getaria in a working session with more than fifty representatives from the cultural sector and institutional bodies. In attendance were Ibone Bengoetxea, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Culture and Language Policy of the Basque Government (Euskadi); Maël Solen Picard,



Director of the Québec Office in Barcelona; Yves Kordian, Deputy Director of Malandain Ballet Biarritz; and Irene Larraza, Director of the Etxepare Basque Institute.

“Euskadi wants to set its sights on the international arena and seeks to have its voice heard in the places where decisions are shaped,” said Bengoetxea. She also expressed her wish for the Etxepare Basque Institute to be “the driving force behind the Basque language and culture in the Euskadi Global strategy, the piece that marks who we are in the world”, and called for “collaboration at different levels and between different agents to promote this long-term project aimed at fostering cross-border cooperation, strengthening networks and disseminating our identity in the French-speaking world.”

Larraza explained that over the next four years “the Institute wants to make a meaningful impact on the diverse and expansive cultural space of the Francophonie,” adding that “the goal is to increase awareness of our culture and identity while also fostering new collaborations”. Larraza went on to explain the Institute’s desire to “reflect together on the place and importance of minority creations and languages in the maps drawn by hegemony throughout history”.

‘Ça colle au basque’ aims to promote Basque culture and elevate the Basque language by increasing its visibility and understanding in the French-speaking world through strategic partnerships and inter-institutional collaboration. It advocates for achieving this through dialogue with the languages, cultures, and identities that make up this community, staying true to its commitment to fostering a world where diversity is seen as a unifying force.

To this end, the Etxepare Basque Institute focuses on building, developing, and strengthening connections with organisations across various French-speaking regions, leveraging the international reach of this community.

The initiative is also dedicated to raising awareness and enhancing the prestige of the Basque language by promoting its presence in academic circles, fostering new



synergies between creators and universities, and highlighting the reality of Basque in the context of diglossia and its relationship with dominant languages.

Destination Francophonie

The French-speaking world is a vast and diverse mosaic of languages, cultures, and identities – a global community of 321 million people across all continents, whose common language is French, the fifth most widely spoken language in the world. From 2025 onwards, the Etxepare Basque Institute intends to explore this reality to raise awareness of the Basque language and culture while fostering new opportunities for collaboration among the cultural stakeholders in our region.

Since 2018, the Institute has been developing the Kultur Konexioak (Cultural Connections), a series of long-term initiatives aimed at promoting activities that strengthen ties, enhance cooperation between creators and cultural agents, encourage cultural and academic exchange, elevate the profile of the Basque Country, and establish a strong position for the cultural and creative sector in regions and countries prioritised in its external strategy.

Unlike the bilateral projects developed within the framework of Kultur Konexioak, 'Ça colle au basque' is an initiative that goes beyond a specific territory, expanding its focus to a global scale within Francophonie. It aims to create multi-level alliances and multilateral projects across all continents.

Four lines of work

The 'Ça colle au basque' initiative will be developed around four pillars. Firstly, the Basque language and creative talent will be consolidated in the dynamics and projects that the Etxepare Basque Institute already promotes in the French-speaking world, including three festivals: Québec en toutes lettres (Quebec, Canada), Fest'Arts (Libourne, France) and Foire du Livre de Bruxelles (Brussels, Belgium), among others.

Secondly, new funding opportunities will be introduced to support the participation of Basque creators and professionals in key fairs, festivals, and cultural and artistic



events in French-speaking regions, as well as to enhance their presence in the publishing sector. The main initiatives include a line of funding for Basque literature publishing projects in Francophonie, as well as specific aid for participation in performing arts fairs such as Cinars Biennale (Montreal, Canada) and Rideau: L'Association professionnelle des diffuseurs de spectacle (Quebec, Canada). A new edition of the 'Itzultzaile Berriak - Nouveaux Traducteurs' is also slated for 2026. The project is aimed at creating a network of translators of Basque literature abroad. In this edition, the focus will be on translation into French.

Thirdly, cooperation will be strengthened with cultural and institutional stakeholders in Iparralde (Northern Basque Country), which serves as a natural bridge between Basque and French-speaking cultures. Given their shared linguistic reality and institutional framework, these connections have great potential to serve as a gateway to the broader French-speaking world. A notable project here is the collaboration between the Etxepare Basque Institute and Malandain Ballet Biarritz, developed within the framework of the Maitaldia festival. This initiative aims to showcase the most outstanding Basque stage productions to cultural programmers from across the French-speaking world.

Lastly, 'Ça colle au basque' will reinforce the academic field in which the Etxepare Basque Institute is already working, creating new opportunities to promote the Basque language and Basque studies at partner universities. The Institute is currently collaborating with the Sorbonne and Sorbonne Nouvelle universities on a conference about translation in diglossic sociolinguistic contexts within the French-speaking world. The event is scheduled to take place in November in Paris.

Broad representation of the cultural sector

'Ça colle au basque' kicked off with a gathering of professionals at Zarautz Palace in Getaria. A large representation of the cultural sector and institutional bodies already involved in this initiative attended. It is an open initiative that has taken its first step and will continue to build networks in the coming months.



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At the event were professionals from the cultural and creative fabric from the Basque-speaking regions on both sides of the Franco-Spanish border: Iparralde (Northern Basque Country) and Hegoalde (Southern Basque Country), as well as institutional representatives from the Basque Government's Office of External Affairs, the Basque Country delegations in Paris and Brussels, the Basque Agglomeration Community, the New Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarre Euroregion, Université Sorbonne, Université Bordeaux Montaigne, and EuroBasque.

In addition, several entities already involved in the project (Malandain Ballet Biarritz, Scène Nationale-Sud Aquitaine, Euskal Kultur Elkargoa) also took part in the first working session, and new partners will join in the coming months.

Etxepare Basque Institute

The Etxepare Basque Institute is a public agency dedicated to promoting Basque language, culture, and creative talent internationally, as well as building lasting relationships with other countries and cultures. To this end, the Institute fosters quality artistic activities and supports the mobility of artists and cultural industry professionals, in addition to teaching Basque language and culture. The agency also encourages collaboration with international stakeholders in the pursuit of cultural and academic endeavours.

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