

Basque Studies Consortium forges its future

Deputy Minister for Linguistic Policy, Patxi Baztarrrika, and Lorea Bilbao, head of the Basque culture and language assistantship program in universities around the world, took part in the International Conference of Basque Studies hosted last April in Boise, Idaho. The conference featured speakers such as Northern Ireland priest, Father Alec Reid, who discussed the Basque peace process, and Ibon Mendibelzua, Basque Government delegate in Brussels.

Patxi Baztarrrika gave a talk on the situation and international presence of Euskera today. He and Lorea Bilbao took part in a meeting between the people behind the future Basque Studies Consortium, a collective whose mission is to promote the creation of Basque Studies programs in North American universities. Present at the first meeting were university representatives, who expressed an interest in including Basque studies in their curricula or putting new life into the programs already offered. Together the participants laid the foundations for the Consortium and shared ideas for the future. Some of the organizations represented at the meeting already offer courses of this type, such as the Center for Basque Studies in Reno, Nevada, as well as Basque centers and institutions attached to universities in the states of Idaho, California and Oregon.

The Basque Parliament gives the green light to the Etxepare Institute

The Basque Parliament has unanimously passed a law authorizing the creation of the Etxepare Institute. The purpose of the Institute is to promote Basque culture abroad, whether in Spanish or Basque, although particular emphasis will be placed on Euskara.

The organization, named after sixteenth-century Basque writer, Bernart Etxepare, will have its headquarters in Donostia-San Sebastian. All of the Basque Government programs relating to Basque culture and language will be brought under one roof. The Institute will also promote programs designed to teach and study Euskara in foreign countries and to strengthen cultural bonds with Basque-speaking communities around the world.

In her speech before the plenary session, Minister for Culture Miren

Azkarate explained the goals of the Institute, saying that it "will put Basque culture and Euskara on the world map," adding that "Euskadi must not be isolated." She insisted that both the Spanish and Basque languages form part of Euskal Herria's heritage, although she pointed out that the two languages do not enjoy the same opportunities to spread and grow.

The Etxepare Basque Institute has the mission of fomenting the Basque language and culture worldwide, based on a motto coined by sixteenth-century writer Bernart Etxepare, for whom the institution was named: "Jalgi hadi mundura!" (Open up to the world!). This new public organization, with its own legal status, will not be starting from scratch. Instead, it will take on different programs already set into motion by the Department of Culture, to which it will be directly answerable.

"Zubigintzan" chosen as motto for 4th World Congress of Basque Communities to be hosted in Bilbao

Under the motto "Zubigintzan" representatives of the Basque diaspora will come together to celebrate the Fourth World Congress of Basque Communities, organized by the Directorate for Relations with Basque Communities. The event, hosted in Bilbao for the first time, will take place this July from the 9th through the 13th.

As laid down in Act 8/1994, every four years a congress is held to promote contact and build alliances between the Basque Clubs and Communities and Basque Government institutions. Three delegates with full voting rights from each of the Basque center federations will attend the Congress, in addition to three delegates from each of the countries without federations. Thirty Gaztemundu program

participants from Argentina, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay and the United States will also be attending the Congress.

The idea behind the motto for the 4th World Congress is to promote new channels of communication between people, associations and governments. "Zubigintzan" captures the spirit of building bridges in different directions to shorten the distance between the Euskal Herria and its diaspora.

The discussions and deliberations during the Congress will be used to draw up a document containing conclusions. The document will then be submitted to the Advisory Council for Relations with Basque Communities to be used in writing up the final 2008-2011 Four Year Institutional Action Plan.

