



ENCATC

The European network on cultural management and policy

BROCHURE

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YOUTH

14th ENCATC Academy on Sustainable Cultural Management and Policy

**21-24 April 2026
Bilbao, Spain**

#2026EncatcAcademy

An initiative by:



With the support of:



KULTURA ETA HEZKUNTZA
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DEPARTAMENTO DE CULTURA
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CONTENTS

ABOUT ENCATC ACADEMY	3
2026 ACADEMY AT A GLANCE	4
PROGRAMME	7
REGISTRATION	8
DRAFT STUDY VISITS	9
DISCOVER BILBAO	10
PRACTICAL INFO	12
PARTNERS	13

ABOUT ENCATC ACADEMY

EDUCATING, COLLABORATING, EMPOWERING

Sustainability is central to cultural management and policy today and lies at the core of ENCATC's work. Since 2011, ENCATC has implemented a Green Policy that prioritises sustainable practices and collaboration with key initiatives such as the Climate Heritage Network.

The ENCATC Academy brings together the cultural management and policy community to explore practical approaches to sustainability. Created to help academics and cultural professionals integrate sustainability into their work, the Academy has become a leading annual meeting point for educators, researchers, managers, and practitioners working to build more sustainable cultural systems.

The Academy focuses on three key pillars:

- **Enhancing** knowledge and skills in sustainable cultural management and policy
- **Sharing** practices and experiences among educators and practitioners
- **Strengthening** the cultural community's role in advancing sustainable futures



For more than a decade, ENCATC has organised the Academy in collaboration with Goldsmiths, University of London, and local partners. The programme brings together academics, cultural operators, and policymakers to address shared challenges and develop practical solutions for sustainability in the cultural sector.

Through peer learning, exchange of practices, and professional dialogue, the Academy creates opportunities for collaboration that extend beyond the event itself. Participants leave with new knowledge, stronger networks, and practical ideas to apply in their organisations and projects.

2026 ACADEMY AT A GLANCE



The **14th ENCATC Academy on Sustainable Cultural Management and Policy** will take place **from 21 to 24 April 2026 in Bilbao, Spain.**

Over the past three decades, Bilbao has evolved from an industrial centre into an international example of culture-driven regeneration. Through strategic cultural investment, strong governance, and sustainable urban policies, the city demonstrates how culture can contribute to economic, social, and environmental development.

Bilbao is also strongly aligned with global sustainability agendas. As host city of the **Local 2030 Coalition**, it promotes the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), integrating culture, social inclusion, and environmental responsibility into its public policies.

Participants will explore Bilbao's cultural ecosystem through study visits to key institutions, including:

- **Arriaga Theatre** – integrating sustainability into cultural management
- **Harrobia** – a performing arts centre supporting experimentation and ecological awareness
- **Guggenheim Museum Bilbao** – a global symbol of cultural regeneration and sustainable museum practice
- **Azkuna Zentroa** – a multifunctional cultural centre promoting participation and innovation
- **La Perrera** – a creative hub supporting local talent and socially engaged cultural projects

These visits, combined with contributions from local experts and practitioners, will provide participants with concrete insights into sustainable cultural development in the Basque Country.

By hosting the Academy in Bilbao, ENCATC offers participants both a professional learning experience and direct exposure to one of Europe's most influential examples of culture-led transformation.

2026 ACADEMY AT A GLANCE



Scope and Objectives

Developing Skills for Sustainable Cultural Practice

The Academy encourages participants to turn ideas into action. Through practical sessions and real-life case studies, students and young professionals explore how sustainability can be applied in cultural projects, institutions, and creative initiatives.

Building Knowledge for Future Challenges

Participants gain the knowledge, tools, and confidence needed to understand the green transition in the cultural sector. The programme helps emerging professionals develop the skills required to address environmental and social challenges in their future careers.

Learning from Peers and Expanding Your Network

The Academy creates a space for exchange between students, young professionals, researchers, and experienced practitioners. Participants share ideas, learn from different perspectives, and build connections that can support their future professional development.

Access to Practical Resources and Expert Insights

Through lectures, workshops, and discussions with leading experts, participants are introduced to key publications, tools, and initiatives related to sustainable cultural management and policy. These resources provide valuable guidance for academic research and early career projects.

Becoming Part of the Next Generation of Cultural Leaders

By engaging in lectures, study visits, and collaborative activities, participants gain insight into how culture can contribute to sustainability and social change. The Academy empowers the next generation of cultural professionals to play an active role in shaping a more sustainable cultural sector.

2026 ACADEMY AT A GLANCE

WHO THE ACADEMY IS FOR

The ENCATC Academy brings together cultural managers, policymakers, researchers, educators, and emerging professionals from across Europe and beyond. Alongside the core Academy programme for cultural managers, policymakers, researchers, and educators, ENCATC is hosting a dedicated programme for the next generation of professionals — students and young cultural entrepreneurs.

This initiative builds on ENCATC's long-standing commitment to empowering young changemakers in sustainable cultural management and policy. In recent years, this has included developing new learning tools and opportunities such as:

- Educational video resources based on Academy speakers' insights
- Online training webinars for members of the Climate Heritage Network Youth Forum

Until now, most of these activities have taken place online. In 2026, ENCATC takes the next step by creating a dedicated space within the Academy in Bilbao where young participants can meet in person, exchange ideas, and collaborate directly with senior professionals, experts, and policymakers.

This new format is designed to spark intergenerational dialogue, mentorship, and meaningful networking.

By bringing experienced leaders and emerging voices together, the Academy creates a space for shared learning, fresh perspectives, and collective action to advance sustainability across the cultural and creative sectors.



A 4-Day Learning Experience Journey

Across four days, the Academy offers an intensive and interactive programme combining high-level lectures, applied workshops, peer exchange, study visits, and networking moments. Each full working day runs approximately from 09:30 to 18:00, with selected evening activities dedicated to networking and community-building.

The programme explores four key themes:

1. Sustainable Cultural Management & Organisational Change

How can cultural organisations become more sustainable in practice?

Participants explore strategies for integrating sustainability into leadership, governance, and long-term organisational development.

2. Policy Development, SDGs & Cultural Impact

Learn how cultural organisations and policymakers connect local initiatives with European and global sustainability agendas. Topics include sustainability reporting, ESG frameworks, SDG localisation, and impact measurement.

3. Digital Transformation & Cultural Sustainability

How is technology reshaping culture?

This strand explores digital maturity in cultural institutions, AI and cultural heritage, cybersecurity challenges, and the ethical questions surrounding digital transformation.

4. Learning from Bilbao: Culture, Regeneration & Practice

Bilbao is one of Europe's most inspiring examples of culture-driven urban transformation.

Participants will visit key cultural institutions and creative hubs to explore how culture contributes to sustainable city development.

How You Will Learn Methodology

The Academy combines:

- Expert lectures and policy dialogues
- Hands-on workshops and group exercises
- Case-study discussions
- Study visits and field-based learning
- Structured networking moments
- A dedicated youth networking and exchange space

This blended methodology ensures participants gain both conceptual insight and practical tools, while fostering intergenerational collaboration and long-term professional connections.

REGISTRATION

Participation fee



Youth Programme

PLEASE NOTE:

- Accommodation, coffee breaks, lunches, dinners, and transport costs are at the participant's expense.
- Tickets are non-refundable.

[Click here to register](#)

DRAFT STUDY VISITS



TEATRO ARRIAGA ANTZOKIA



Teatro Arriaga Antzokia, a historic public theatre located in the heart of Bilbao, stands today as a leading example of sustainability in the cultural sector. As the first theatre in Spain to receive the ETC Theatre Green Book European sustainability certification, it has integrated environmental responsibility into its productions, operations, and building management. Rooted in Bilbao's broader urban transformation towards ecological and cultural innovation, the Arriaga has implemented a comprehensive strategy involving energy efficiency, waste reduction, circular material use, and audience engagement. Its commitment demonstrates how cultural institutions can become catalysts for climate action, aligning artistic excellence with the goals of the European Green Deal and the UN Sustainable Development Agenda.

[Learn more on Teatro Arriaga Antzokia.](#)

HARROBIA – HUNTZA HIEDRA



Harrobia – Huntza Hiedra is a pioneering Cultural Innovation Centre based in Bilbao that is redefining how cultural infrastructures engage with the ecological transition. Through its comprehensive Huntza-Hiedra plan, Harrobia integrates technological innovation, artistic creation, and environmental responsibility to address the climate emergency. Its strategy—structured in three phases—includes actions such as energy efficiency upgrades, intelligent building management systems, renewable energy generation, and participatory waste and emission co-management. Inspired by biomimicry and systemic thinking, the project promotes a holistic model where culture, sustainability, and digital transformation converge. Harrobia thus emerges as a benchmark for regenerative cultural practice, aligning local action with the broader goals of ecological resilience and sustainable cultural governance.

[Learn more on Harrobia - Huntza Hiedra.](#)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM BILBAO



Guggenheim Museum Bilbao is a global benchmark for integrating sustainability into cultural management. Beyond its pioneering environmental measures—such as its certified carbon footprint, installation of solar panels, and energy efficiency initiatives—the Museum promotes economic sustainability through stable local partnerships and the generation of long-term cultural tourism that supports Bilbao's creative economy. Equally, it fosters sociocultural sustainability by engaging diverse audiences, supporting local artists, and advancing accessibility and education programs that strengthen community participation. The Guggenheim thus exemplifies a holistic model where culture, economy, and ecology converge to drive sustainable urban and cultural transformation.

[Learn more on Guggenheim Museum Bilbao.](#)

AZKUNA ZENTROA



Azkuna Zentroa is a landmark cultural centre that illustrates Bilbao's vision of culture as a driver for innovation, participation, and sustainability. Housed in a former wine warehouse redesigned by Philippe Starck, the venue brings together contemporary art, community engagement, and responsible resource management in an inclusive civic space. Through a diverse programme of exhibitions, performances, and learning activities, Azkuna Zentroa promotes cultural participation while integrating sustainability into its operations, from energy efficiency and accessibility to collaborative partnerships with local actors. Its model demonstrates how multifunctional cultural infrastructures can foster creativity, social cohesion, and environmental awareness at the heart of the city.

[Learn more on Azkuna Zentroa](#)

LA PERRERA



La Perrera is a dynamic cultural and creative hub that embodies Bilbao's commitment to socially engaged and sustainable cultural practice. Located in a regenerated industrial space, it hosts artists, cultural organisations, and community initiatives that explore new forms of creation, participation, and civic innovation. La Perrera fosters sustainable development by providing accessible spaces for experimentation, supporting emerging creators, and promoting projects rooted in social inclusion, local identity, and environmental awareness. Its collaborative model encourages interdisciplinary work and community interaction, positioning the hub as an essential catalyst for cultural democratisation and grassroots sustainability. As a living example of how cultural infrastructures can nurture resilience and social cohesion, La Perrera reinforces Bilbao's role as a leader in sustainable cultural transformation.

[Learn more on La Perrera](#)

DISCOVER BILBAO: A LEADING CITY IN SUSTAINABILITY AND CULTURE

Bilbao is the largest city in the province of Biscay and the main urban center of Spain's Basque Country. Historically shaped by shipbuilding, steel production, and maritime trade, Bilbao grew around its port and river, becoming one of northern Spain's most important industrial cities during the 19th and 20th centuries. While this industrial past brought prosperity, it also led to environmental challenges and urban decline toward the late 20th century.

Beginning in the 1990s, Bilbao launched an ambitious program of urban regeneration that fundamentally reshaped the city. This transformation emphasized modern architecture, improved infrastructure, cultural investment, and environmental recovery. The result is often referred to as the "Bilbao effect," a term used internationally to describe how strategic cultural projects can drive economic and social revitalization.

At the heart of this renewal is the Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, designed by Frank Gehry. Opened in 1997, the museum's sculptural titanium exterior and bold, experimental design quickly became an international icon. Beyond its architecture, the museum hosts major exhibitions of modern and contemporary art, attracting millions of visitors and placing Bilbao firmly on the global cultural map.



The city is built along the Nervión River, which flows through its center toward the Bay of Biscay. Once heavily polluted by industry, the river has been cleaned and integrated into the city's public life. Revitalized promenades, bridges, and public spaces along the waterfront now serve as focal points for leisure, events, and everyday urban life.

Bilbao's cultural identity is deeply connected to Basque traditions, language (Euskara), and cuisine. The city is renowned for its food scene, particularly pintxos, often elaborate snacks displayed on bar counters and enjoyed socially. Traditional Basque dishes emphasize fresh seafood, local produce, and simple but refined flavors. The historic district, Casco Viejo, is especially famous for its bars, markets, and lively atmosphere, as well as landmarks such as Santiago Cathedral and Plaza Nueva.

DISCOVER BILBAO: A LEADING CITY IN SUSTAINABILITY AND CULTURE

Reminders of Bilbao's industrial heritage remain visible in former docklands and factory zones, including Zorrozaurre, a once-industrial peninsula now undergoing large-scale redevelopment. This area represents the city's future-focused approach, combining housing, creative spaces, technology hubs, and sustainable urban design.

Bilbao also places strong emphasis on quality of life. The city offers numerous parks, green hills, and viewpoints, such as Mount Artxanda, which overlooks the urban landscape. Its public transportation system, featuring a modern metro, trams, buses, and walkable neighborhoods, makes the city accessible and easy to navigate.



Overall, Bilbao is a city defined by transformation and balance. It successfully blends a proud industrial legacy with cutting-edge architecture, strong cultural institutions, a distinctive culinary tradition, and a commitment to sustainability. This combination makes Bilbao not only an attractive destination for visitors but also a dynamic, forward-looking city for those who live there.

[DISCOVER MORE](#)

Accommodations in Bilbao

Following our environmental commitment, ENCATC has curated a list of hotels in Bilbao following a Green Policy:

[Catalonia Gran Vía Bilbao](#)

[Hotel Barceló Bilbao Nervión](#)

[Hotel Abando](#)

[Hotel Carlton](#)

[Hotel Illunion San Mamés](#)

[Hotel Vincci Consulado de Bilbao](#)

Getting to Bilbao

AIR TRAVEL

Bilbao is served by Bilbao Airport (BIO), located about 12 km north of the city center. The airport offers frequent domestic flights to major Spanish cities such as Madrid and Barcelona, as well as international connections to many European destinations. Regular bus services link the airport directly to central Bilbao, making transfers quick and convenient.

TRAIN

Bilbao is well connected by rail to other parts of Spain. Long-distance and regional services are operated mainly by Renfe, providing routes to cities such as Madrid, Zaragoza, and San Sebastián. In addition, Euskotren operates regional and commuter trains that connect Bilbao with towns across the Basque Country. The city has several train stations, with Abando being the main hub.

BUS

Long-distance buses are an affordable and popular way to reach Bilbao. The main bus terminal, Bilbao Intermodal, is centrally located near the San Mamés area. Companies such as ALSA operate frequent services from cities across Spain and neighboring countries. Buses also provide excellent regional connections throughout the Basque Country.

CAR

Reaching Bilbao by car is straightforward thanks to its well-developed road network. The city lies along the A-8 (Autovía del Cantábrico), which runs along Spain's northern coast and connects Bilbao with cities like Santander and San Sebastián. Driving allows flexibility to explore the surrounding coastline, mountains, and nearby towns, though parking in the city center can be limited.

Language

All activities and materials will be delivered in English.

PARTNERS

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POLITIKA
DEPARTAMENTO DE CULTURA
Y POLITICA LINGÜISTICA

Department of Culture and Language
of the Basque Government



Bilbao

Department of Culture
of the Town Hall of Bilbao

Partners:



ENCATC is the leading European network dedicated to advancing cultural management and policy. Established in 1992, this membership-based NGO gathers over 100 higher education institutions and cultural organisations in 38 countries.

As a dynamic platform for collaboration, ENCATC fosters the exchange of knowledge, methodologies, comparative research, and innovative practices. It also conducts regular assessments to address the evolving training needs of the cultural management sector from a distinctly European perspective.

ENCATC is an NGO with a consultative status at the United Nations, it has an official partnership with UNESCO, is an observer to the Steering Committee for Culture of the Council of Europe, and is co-funded by the Creative Europe programme of the European Union.

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