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The European network on cultural management and policy

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14th ENCATC Academy on Sustainable Cultural Management and Policy

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

#2026EncatcAcademy

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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.

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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:

- **Bizkaia Accelerator Tower** – a leading innovation hub connecting startups, investors, and talent to drive technological development and economic growth
- **Bilborock** – a dynamic cultural venue blending historic architecture with contemporary music and arts, supporting emerging artists and youth creativity
- **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.



PROGRAMME

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.

PROGRAMME

TUESDAY 21 APRIL

La Perrera | Sabino Arana Etorbidea, 50, Basurtu-Zorrotza, 48012 Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain

12:00 - 15:00	Participants' arrival in Bilbao
15:00 - 15:15	Welcome to the 2026 ENCATC Academy Gianna Lia Cogliandro , Secretary General, ENCATC Cristina Ortega Neure , CEO, World Leisure Organisation
15:15 - 16:30	Visit to the space La Perrera
16:30 - 21:00	Free time

WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL

La Perrera | Sabino Arana Etorbidea, 50, Basurtu-Zorrotza, 48012 Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain

09:00 -
09:05

Welcome and introduction to the day

Leticia Labaronne, ENCATC Vice President, Head of Center for Arts Management at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Co- Lead Culture for the Planet Alliance

9:05 - 10:45

Towards the sustainable transformation of cultural organizations: Culture for the Planet Alliance

This session presents insights from the Culture for the Planet Alliance, a strategic spin-off of the Swiss National Science Foundation-funded project Culture Goes Sustainable. The Alliance unites an international coalition of cultural actors committed to advancing the sustainability transition in the arts and cultural sectors.

Based on ongoing research and collaborative development within the Alliance, the session opens with an overview of current academic and professional debates on sustainability. It then highlights preliminary outcomes, including sustainability indicators, transition frameworks, skills requirements, and evolving approaches to labels and standards. The discussion explores how cultural organizations conceptualize, implement, and measure governance practices, social sustainability, and ecological responsibility.

Leticia Labaronne, ENCATC Vice President, Head of Center for Arts Management at the Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Co- Lead Culture for the Planet Alliance

Laura J. Noll, Center for Arts Management, Zurich University of Applied Sciences; Executive Education Lead, Culture for the Planet Alliance

10:45 -
11:45

Coffee Break

WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL

La Perrera | Sabino Arana Etorbidea, 50, Basurtu-Zorrotza, 48012 Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain

11:45 - 13:00	<p>Acting towards the sustainable transformation of cultural organizations.</p> <p>The session will build on the results of the CreaSus project to foster the reflection and discussion about different approaches to integrate sustainability in cultural and creative organizations. CreaSus (Sustainability Business Models for CCSIs) is a project co-funded by the Creative Europe programme, designed to guide and support cultural and creative industries to make sustainability a key part of their operations and a competitive advantage. Its coordinator will present the sustainability framework used to design the different tools of the project, based on the European Sustainability Reporting Standards. He will then propose a shared discussion with the participants around the main results of the project: actions for sustainable transformation, business models and funding toolkit.</p> <p>Roberto Bernad, Head of European Funds, Fondazione Banco Santander</p>
13:00 - 14:00	<p>Lunch Break</p>
14:00 - 17:00	<p>Study visits</p> <p><u>Bizkaia Accelerator Tower</u> Diego Lopez Haroko Kale Nagusia, 1, Abando, 48001 Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain</p> <p><u>BilboRock</u> <i>Mesedeetako Kaia, 1, Ibaiondo, 48003 Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain</i></p>
17:00 - 21:30	<p>Free time</p>

THURSDAY 23 APRIL

La Perrera | Sabino Arana Etorbidea, 50, Basurtu-Zorrotza, 48012 Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain

09:30 - 11:00	<p>From ESACH to Youth.Heritage.Europe: Shaping the Next Generation of Cultural Heritage</p> <p>This session, led by Jasna Popovic, explores the evolution from ESACH to Youth.Heritage.Europe as a youth-driven platform for cultural heritage engagement. It will outline the motivations behind the transition, key milestones, and the vision guiding this new initiative. The presentation will highlight how Youth.Heritage.Europe builds on ESACH's legacy while expanding its scope, network, and impact across Europe. Emphasis will be placed on youth empowerment, interdisciplinary collaboration, and innovative approaches to heritage. The session offers insights into future opportunities, inviting participants to engage with and contribute to shaping a dynamic, inclusive heritage community for the next generation.</p> <p>Jasna Popović, Secretary, Youth.Heritage.Europe</p>
11:00 - 12:00	<p>Coffee Break</p>
12:00 - 13:00	<p>European Networks and their commitment to advance the greening of the cultural sector.</p> <p>The session will present the SHIFT eco-certificate. It will also explore the contribution of European networks to greening the cultural and creative sectors, highlighting ENCATC as a case study. It will present policy, activities, tool kits and tools supporting the greening of operations and activities of ENCATC, followed by discussion on impact, collaboration, and opportunities for sustainable transformation across the sector.</p> <p>Letizia Garbero, ENCATC operations and community engagement officer, member of the ENCATC Green team</p>
13:00 - 14:00	<p>Lunch Break</p>
14:00 - 15:30	<p>Cultural Heritage and Digital for Society</p> <p>Marco Fiore, Policy and Project Manager, Michael Culture Association</p>
15:30 - 18:00	<p>Study Visit</p> <p><u>Guggenheim Museum</u> Abandoibarra Etorb., 2, Abando, 48009 Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain</p>
18:00 - 21:30	<p>Free time</p>

FRIDAY 24 APRIL

Historical Archive | María Díaz de Haro,3, 48013, Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain

09:30 - 09:35	<p>Welcome and introduction to the day GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens, Secretary General, ENCATC Cristina Ortega Neure, CEO, World Leisure organisation</p>
9:35 - 10:45	<p>Embarking on digital transformation</p> <p>What do CHIs need to know to embark on a digital transformation process? How can they assess their digital maturity?</p> <p>Marco Fiore, Policy and Project Manager, Michael Culture Association</p>
10:45 - 11:45	<p>Coffee break</p>
11:45 - 12:30	<p>Guardians of Digital Memory: AI, Cybersecurity, and the Future of Cultural Heritage Considerations on Cultural Heritage and AI</p> <p>Marco Fiore, Policy and Project Manager, Michael Culture Association</p>
12:30 - 14:00	<p>Lunch Break</p>
14:00 - 16:00	<p>Cybersecurity in the cultural sphere and the role of the Cyber Humanist</p> <p>Cyber attacks, such as those against the British Library, the Natural History Museum in Berlin, and the Internet Archive, have highlighted an increased risk to digital cultural heritage. These attacks reveal the cultural world's substantial unpreparedness to address these threats. Cyber Humanities represents an emerging discipline that, through a transdisciplinary approach, can address the issue of protecting cultural heritage, including digital heritage, with theoretical and technological tools.</p> <p>Emanuele Bellini, Associate Professor in Information Processing Systems and Director of the 2nd Level Master in Cyber Humanities for Heritage Security at the Department of Humanities Studies at University of Roma Tre, Italy. Chair of the IEEE SMC TC on Cyber Humanities and co-chair of IEEE SMC TC on Homeland Security.</p>
16:00 - 16:30	<p>Network of European Museum Organisations: NEMO's work on Digital Transformation</p> <p>Mira Höschler, NEMO Community and Project Manager</p>
17:00 - 19:30	<p>Study visits</p> <p><u>Azkuna Zentroa</u> Arriquirar Plaza, 4, Abando, 48010 Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain</p> <p><u>LA PERRERA</u> Sabino Arana Etorbidea, 50, Basurtu-Zorrotza, 48012 Bilbao, Bizkaia, Spain</p>
19:30 - 21:00	<p>Self-organized networking gathering for participants.</p>



GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens

Since 2004, **GiannaLia Cogliandro Beyens** is the Secretary General of the European network on cultural management and policy, ENCATC. She is also the administrator of the Thomassen mobility programme and serves on several boards. GiannaLia is an expert in EU affairs and international relations, with more than 30 years' experience in advocacy, cultural policy, and strategic management, in the context of international cultural NGO. Since 1998, GiannaLia has also successfully designed, drafted, and managed a large number of EU cross-sectorial projects in the field of culture, education, and research.

Former Policy Officer of the Cultural Forum of EURO CITIES, GiannaLia was also Secretary General of the Association of the European Cities of Culture, AECC. Journalist since 1993, she started her career as Press & PR Officer for the N.A.T.O organisation in Rome. For the European Commission, she wrote 10 Reports on social European policy and a major study on the European Cities of Culture of the year 2000. Educated at the University "La Sapienza" in Rome, GiannaLia holds a Degree in Political Sciences - International Relations and two additional masters in European & International Career Studies, and a in European Constitution. Since 1993, GiannaLia is member of the Association of the Former trainees of the European Union.



Emanuele Bellini

Prof. Emanuele Bellini PhD is an Associate Professor in Information Processing Systems at the University of Roma Tre and a Visiting Academic at the University of Cambridge, Department of Computer Science and Technology. His research spans Cyber Resilience, Human-Cyber-Physical Systems, Critical Infrastructure Protection, and Trust Computing. He is also the founder of the emerging field of Cyber Humanities, and his current research investigates the security and protection of Digital Cultural Assets, as well as the counteraction of Cyber Cognitive Operations targeting Cultural Heritage, as part of the broader challenge of safeguarding memory, knowledge and meaning in the digital age.

Prof. Bellini serves as Chair of the IEEE SMC Technical Committee on Cyber Humanities and Vice-Chair of the IEEE SMC Technical Committee on Homeland Security. He is also Founder and Co-Chair of the IEEE International Conference on Cyber Security and Resilience (IEEE-CSR) and the IEEE International Conference on Cyber Humanities (IEEE-CH). His work is based on a transdisciplinary approach fusing technical and humanistic perspectives to address the challenges of resilience, trust and sustainability in complex socio-technical critical ecosystems.

SPEAKERS



Mira Höschler

Mira Höschler has been Community & Project Manager at the Network of European Museum Organisations (NEMO) since 2016. Her main focus lies in organising capacity-building activities for NEMO members. Before joining NEMO, she worked for several years at the German Museums Association. She holds a Bachelor of Arts in Intercultural European Studies and a Master's degree in Cultural Management, and she is passionate about connecting people and fostering networks.

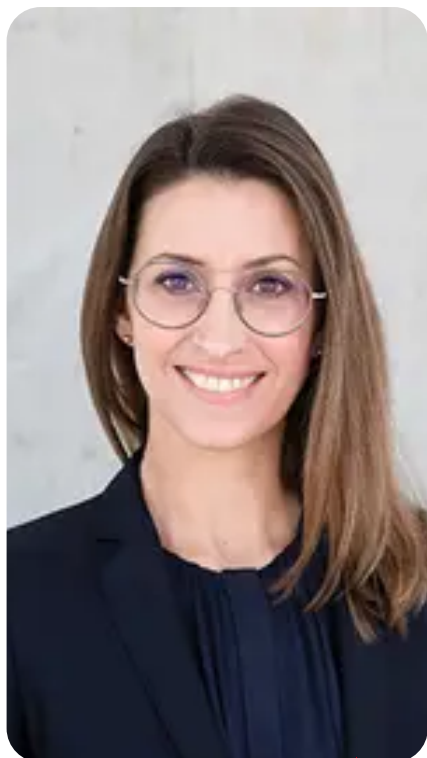


Cristina Ortega Nuere

Cristina Ortega Nuere has been Chief Executive Officer of the World Leisure Organization since 2016 and combines this role with teaching at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya. She holds a PhD in Leisure and Human Development and a Master's degree in Leisure Management. She graduated from the University of Deusto and completed further studies in London at Middlesex and Westminster University.

With over two decades of academic and research experience, she has led more than 50 research projects, published extensively, and served as editor-in-chief of several scientific journals. She was President of ENCATC for four years and chaired its Policy Group Monitors of Culture, involving over 40 cultural observatories worldwide.

A specialist in cultural policy and evaluation, she has been a jury member for the European Capitals of Culture and contributed to cultural governance in the Basque Country. She is also the author of a key reference book on cultural observatories and regularly speaks at international conferences.



Leticia Labaronne

Leticia Labaronne is Professor and Head of the Center for Arts Management at Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW) as well as Director of the executive Master programme in Cultural Management. She has co-created and co-leads the Culture for the Planet project. Leticia worked in the performing arts for over 10 years before joining academia. Originally from Argentina, she holds a BA in International Studies (UK), a MSc in Public and Nonprofit Management (Switzerland) and a PhD on Cultural Management (Germany). Her expertise extends to a wide range of topics related to the management of arts and cultural organizations, including new paths for financing and funding, performance measurement and evaluation. Leticia since 2023 is Vice-President of ENCATC.



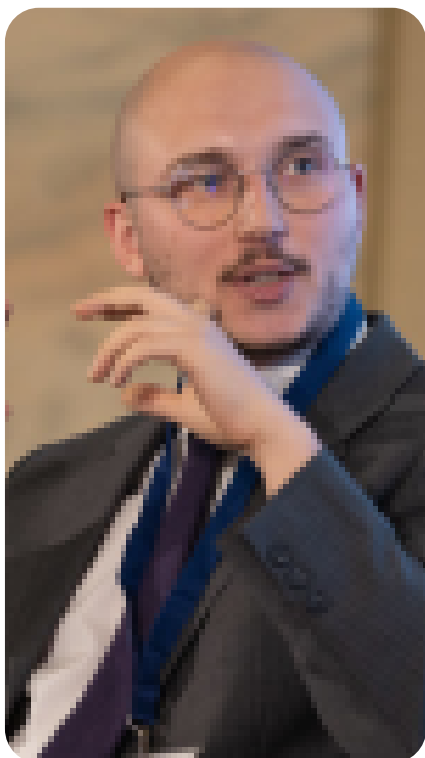
Laura Noll

Laura Noll is the Executive Education Lead in the Culture for the Planet project and Senior Researcher at the Center for Arts Management at ZHAW. Previously, Laura completed a PhD and Postdoc in Management at the University of St.Gallen (HSG). She founded a competence center for art market research at the HSG and initiated and supervised applied research projects with leading art institutions including Art Basel and Christie's. Her main research interests are the value and price of art and the future viability of art institutions. This is why she is committed to creating a pioneering sustainability programme for arts and culture.



Roberto Bernad

Roberto Bernad is Head of European Funds at Fundación Banco Santander, an organization working in culture, social action and education in Spain. He holds a Bachelor in Arts and a MA in International Relations. For several years, he held several management positions in the editorial and design sectors. He moved then into the social sector, where he worked in European funds management linked to social services and EU social policies. He is an expert in homelessness policies, and he has conducted research and coordinated international research projects in the field, and advised several governments in Europe and Latin America. He worked as a consultant in social policies and EU funds for public administrations and NGOs. At Fundación Banco Santander, he is coordinating CreaSus, a Creative Europe project on sustainability of cultural industries, and RELIGHT, an Interreg Sudoe project for culture in rural areas. He makes also part of the Alliance for Socially Engaged Arts and works on relations between culture, territory, sustainability and social justice.



Marco Fiore

Marco Fiore is Policy and Project Manager at Michael Culture Association. He has a MA in European Cultural Policies from SciencesPo Paris and a MA in Ethics of AI. His work focuses on bringing the voice of the cultural sector into European policies, especially in digital contexts where he advocates for digital justice and ethics.



Letizia Garbero

Letizia Garbero is Operations and Community Engagement Officer and Member of the Green Team at ENCATC since 2024. She holds an MSc in Management from Solvay Business School of Brussels and a BSc in Business and Management Administration from the University of Trieste.



Jasna Popović

Jasna Popović graduated from Law in Belgrade and holds two masters - one in International public law and another in Human Rights and now is a Ph.D. candidate at UC3M, Madrid, researching the link between cultural heritage and sustainable tourism. She is a freelance cultural practitioner active in topics of youth involvement, digital transformation in heritage and EU-funded projects. She has volunteered as ESACH Secretary since September 2022, the role she holds in the transformed Youth.Heritage.Europe. association.

PARTICIPANTS



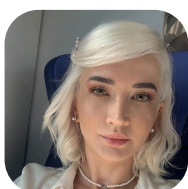
Alessandro Pelligra, International Cooperation Sciences, University of Salento, Italy



Arianna Pedone, Humanities, University of Catania and the Scuola Superiore di Catania, Italy



Bruno D'Arrigo, Literature and Modern Philology, University of Catania and the Scuola Superiore di Catania, Italy



Eda Gjiriti, International Cooperation, University of Salento, Italy



Emma Costa, Management, Control and Finance in Artificial Intelligence, University of Salento, Italy



Federico Bonnano, Classical Philology, University of Catania and the Scuola Superiore di Catania, Italy.

PARTICIPANTS



Federico De Santis, Management, Control, and Finance with AI, University of Salento, Italy



Gabriele Rogoli, International Cooperation, University of Salento, Italy



Giorgia Marti, Business Administration, University of Salento, Italy



Giorgio Pelligra, International Cooperation, University of Salento, Italy



Giulia Maria Meleleo, University of Salento, Italy



Nayab Gull, Management Engineering, University of Salento, Italy



Vittorio Cudillo, Law, Global History and Governance, University of Naples Federico II and Scuola Superiore Meridionale, Italy

STUDY VISITS

BIZKAIA ACCELERATOR TOWER



The Bizkaia Tower, also known as BAT (B Accelerator Tower), is a modern innovation hub located in the heart of Bilbao. Originally built as an office skyscraper, it has been transformed into a space that supports startups, entrepreneurs, and technological development. The tower brings together businesses, investors, and talent to foster collaboration and economic growth. Today, it stands as a symbol of Bilbao's transition into a forward-looking, innovation-driven city.

[Learn more on Bizkaia Accelerator Tower.](#)

BILBOROCK



Bilborock is a unique cultural space in Bilbao, housed inside a former seventeenth century church (the Church of the Merced) that has been transformed into a modern venue for music and arts. It hosts concerts, workshops, and events mainly aimed at young people and emerging artists. Also organizes the Pop-Rock Villa de Bilbao contest, now in its 25th edition. By blending historic architecture with contemporary creativity, Bilborock offers a vibrant space for cultural expression. It plays an important role in supporting the local artistic scene and youth culture.

[Learn more on Bilborock](#)

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.

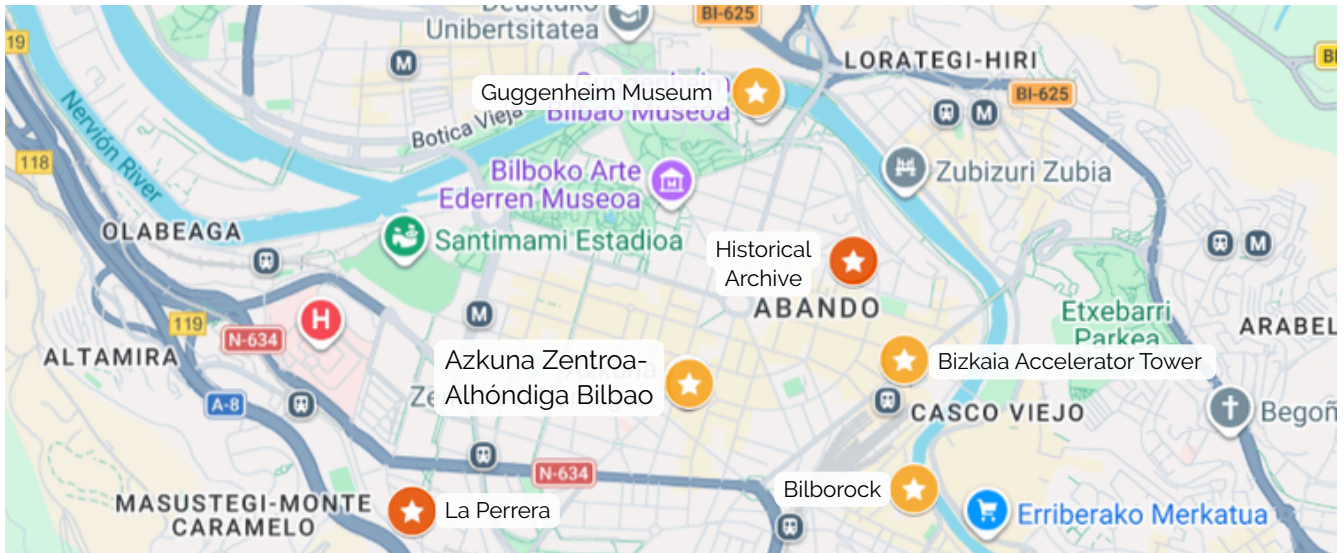
CAR

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.

Locations and Venues



Mobility in Bilbao

WALKING

Recommended for getting around the centre, as most major sights are close together.

METRO

Metro Bilbao is a great option to reach outer neighbourhoods and beaches. Single tickets can be purchased but a Barik card is recommended for multiple rides.

TRAM

Euskotren Tranbia runs along the river connecting the City Centre, San Mamés and the bus terminal

BUS

Bilbobus connects areas not covered by metro or tram. Also available with a Barik card.

PARTNERS

With the support of:



Department of Culture and Language
of the Basque Government



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.

CONTACT

T +32 (0)2 201 29 12

info@encatc.org

www.encatc.org

ADDRESS

Avenue Maurice 1

1050 Brussels,

Belgium



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