



Euskadiko Lehendakaria

El Lehendakari de Euskadi

Vitoria-Gasteiz, December 2024

Dear Basques Abroad,

This is my first Christmas and New Year Message as Lehendakari and I am reaching out to send my warmest season's greetings to each and every one of you.

2024 has been an intense year for the Basque Country; a year marked by the elections to the Basque Parliament and the forming of the new Government that I lead. I am committed to my country and it is a real pride to have been elected Lehendakari and to succeed Iñigo Urkullu Renteria, a Lehendakari who left a much better country than the one he found.

On the other hand, Lehendakari José Antonio Ardanza, a person with an impeccable record of public service, left us forever last April. He was devoted to the common good of Basque society, to the present and future of the Basque Country, and to its self-government. That public commitment was embodied in each of his institutional responsibilities and would continue in his private life until the very end. *Agur eta ohore, Euskadiko Lehendakaria!*

I would also like to recall a true Basque: Nestor Basterretxea. The 6th of May 2024 was the centenary of his birth (Bermeo 1924 - Hondarribia 2014). He must go down as one of our most groundbreaking, multifaceted and influential artists. Nestor Basterretxea was closely linked – both in his creative work and as a person – with the Basque exiles in the Americas and the Basque Diaspora in Argentina.

As regards Diaspora celebrations, the Basque National Week was the great annual event of the euskal etxeak of Argentina. It was held from 11 to 17 November in 2024. The Bahía Blanca euskal etxea –the *Unión Vasca* founded over a century ago (125 years of activity) – hosted this event, that is the longest, best attended and most important one of the Basque communities of South America. In 2025, it will be the turn of the *Gure Etxea* in the city of Tandil to organise this gathering that draws huge crowds.

In 2025, we will also celebrate the Jaialdi in Boise (Idaho, USA). This city is a very important enclave of Basque emigration in the United States and hosts one of the largest festivals of Basque culture in the world. At the end of July 2025, the Jaialdi will return to Boise after a 10-year break due to the pandemic, as it is usually held every five years. There is therefore huge expectation about its return and the Basque Government will be there, as well as at the Tandil event in Argentina.

In 2024, the '*Basques in Australia*' exhibition – conceived and promoted by the Basque Government together with '*Euskal Australiar Alkartea*' (the association of Basque emigrants in Australia) and the University of the Basque Country – continued to enjoy great success as it toured the whole of the Basque Country and was taken to the *Eskual Etxea* of Paris; it will be put on at the euskal etxeak of Townsville and Sydney in Australia in 2025.

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And with our sights set on 2025 and the coming years of this parliamentary term, we are going to address, among other actions, the approval of an essential and basic instrument: the future Basque Diaspora Act; we will also step up our work in areas regarding Basque citizens abroad by striving to maintain more useful and streamlined direct communication, improving the channels, making them more accessible and advancing in the HAN-HEMEN dynamics; and will lay the foundations for a Migration Interpretation Centre.

Above all, we want to strengthen, energise and modernise the ties with the Basque Diaspora to drive together Basque interests in Europe and around the world. The Diaspora as a fundamental aspect of Basque diplomacy and its cultural, economic and political External Action, to ensure we are able to be a global influence in our own right.

Our challenge is to carry out all the social transformations that the country needs to leave a better Basque Country for future generations, with stronger social cohesion and a higher level of self-government and wellbeing.

Today, in the 21st century, we need to reach out beyond the home playing field, to cross borders and 'to country brand' abroad. It is none other than taking a further step in the development of an international strategy for the Basque Country. A strategy where the network forged with the Basque Diaspora with your ideas, abilities and enthusiasm is going to be essential to face the great global challenges, where, I must stress, the identity and wellbeing of future generations are at stake.

We must strive together to design, organise and drive the new 'Global Basque Country'.

I know that I can count on each of you, the international Basques, to help to build this new country project. 2025 is the opportunity to be involved in that challenge that is, furthermore, an opportunity that we must seize.

As Lehendakari of the Basque Country, I send you my affectionate regards and warmest wishes for the coming year.

Bihotz bihotzez, Gabon zorientsuak igaro ditzazuela eta Urte berri on!

Imanol Pradales Gil