

BIHAR CONGRESS

“LANGUAGES SHAPING THE FUTURE”

DIAGNOSIS | SOCIALIZATION | CONGRESS

After two years of preparatory work, the organizations Garabide, Soziolinguistika Klusterra, Taupa Euskaltzaleen Mugimendua, and Plazara have presented the initiative called “**BIHAR**” at the Borderline factory in Hendaia. It is a project of exceptional scale: by placing the world’s minoritised language communities at the center, it focuses on updating the narratives around language revitalization.

Based on an International diagnosis and strengthened through a socialization process across the whole of the Basque Country, a four-day International Congress has been scheduled from September 23 to 26, 2026, along the Bilbao-Irun-Hendaye axis. It will be both an opportunity to look at the world and to position oneself globally.

This project is supported by the following institutions: the Basque Agency for Cooperation and Solidarity of the Basque Government, Beasain Town Council, Bilbao City Council, Department of Culture and Language Policy of the Basque Government, Euskal Kultur Erakundea, the Government of Navarre, Provincial Council of Bizkaia and Provincial Council of Gipuzkoa.

Why BIHAR?

In recent years, collaboration with minoritised language communities has shown that Basque speakers and minoritised language communities around the world share similar needs and risks. In fact, internationally, the traditional discourses defending language revitalization appear to be weakening. The loss of effectiveness of these narratives raises concern among those working for the Basque language as well as other minoritised languages worldwide.

The BIHAR project emerges from a dual need:

- on the one hand, **To make visible the new discourses emerging from Global South communities**—where language is intertwined with other social struggles (feminism, environmentalism, migration movements)—;

- on the other hand, **to bring these innovative perspectives closer to Basque stakeholders**, fostering a horizontal and enriching exchange between diverse experiences.

Three pillars of the project

1. International Diagnosis (2025)

Across the world, and specifically in the Global South—in minoritised language communities in North and South America, Africa, Asia, Europe, and Oceania—discourses and narratives used in language revitalization processes have been identified, with the aim of deeply analyzing the discursive strategies used to activate communities in favor of their languages. An intersectional perspective has been applied, taking into account gender, ethnicity, age, social class, and type of habitat.

The organizers stated: “The diagnosis is based on deeply personal experiences, and therefore the collected testimonies are diverse and complex. Because of this dynamism, we hope this research will offer inspiring elements for the future, and the congress will be the place to examine them in detail.”

2. Socialization and Reflection (April-June 2026)

The key findings of the diagnosis will be discussed with a wide range of actors across the Basque Country: 20 sessions will be organized in 10 towns, with more than 150 participants. Alongside Basque language activists, representatives of other social movements have also been invited (feminism, environmentalism, migration movements), and importantly, people who do not speak Basque as well—because the language question concerns society as a whole.

The organizers emphasized: “It is essential to understand that language should not only be thought about from within language itself, but also reconsidered through other life challenges.”

At the end of the process, a joint seminar will be held on June 4 with all participants, carrying out a final collective synthesis to build a shared contribution.

3. BIHAR International Congress — September 23-26, 2026

The International Congress, under the slogan *Languages shaping the future*, will combine academic content, social activism, and artistic expression, with participation from actors from the Global South and the Basque movement.

Over four days, there will be lectures, panel discussions, participatory workshops, and cultural spaces, bringing to the center the lessons, discourses, and experiences gathered in the previous two phases (diagnosis and socialization). The congress will conclude with the publication of a participatory declaration and the formation of a new global network.

According to the organizers, the “BIHAR International Congress” aims to be both a turning point and a starting point, strengthening collaboration between communities, analyzing the causes of language decline processes, and promoting shared paths for revitalization”. Those who wish to take part in this congress, which is open to the general public, can register from today via the website.

Summary of the Congress Program

- September 23 — BILBO- EUSKALDUNA JAUREGIA: Opening Ceremony of the Congress.
- September 24-25 — FICOBA (Irun): Core of the congress: talks, pannels, workshop. HENDAYE: artistic and cultural program.
- September 26 — HENDAYE: Presentation of the declaration and closing ceremony.

Press conference participants

- **Gorane Ayesta Maidagan eta Iñaki Martinez de Luna Perez de Arriba** — GARABIDE Elkarte
- **Imanol Larrea Mendizabal** — SOZIOLINGUISTIKA KLUSTERRA
- **Jasone Mendizabal Altuna** — TAUPA Euskaltzaleen Mugimendua
- **Xan Aire** — PLAZARA kolektiboa

Contact:

komunikazioa@bihar.eus · Tel. 688 632 433

<https://bihar.eus/en/>