



Diego Orellana, born and raised in Buenos Aires, joined the Centro Laurak Bat in 2017 alongside his husband, Sebastián Amaya, a Basque language teacher in several Euskal Etxeak. Since then, his connection to the community has continued to grow through active participation in cultural activities, his involvement in Buenos.Aires. Celebra.al.País.Vasco, and the promotion of Basque mythology through both in-person and online talks.

He joined the board of directors as deputy secretary in 2021 and has served as secretary of Laurak Bat since 2023.

1. Since when has the Euskal Etxea had women in positions of responsibility such as the presidency or vice-presidency? How has this influenced the role women have played and continue to play within the institution, especially in decision-making and management?

The Laurak Bat Centre has a long history of women's participation, even during the years when the formal leadership of the institution was traditionally in male hands. Since the late 19th century, women have played important roles in the social and cultural life of the Euskal Etxea, even if they did not yet hold leadership positions.

This leadership became especially visible during the Spanish Civil War, when Basque women organised under the Emakume.Abertzale.Batza carried out autonomous, effective and highly respected work in supporting exiles, fundraising and cultural activities. Their contribution came to be symbolically compared to that of the male-led Basque nationalist structures.

In more recent times, women's presence in positions of responsibility was strengthened under the presidency of María Aranzazu Anitua (2011–2021) and, since 2023, with the current president, María Aranzazu Goicoa, who has been connected to the institution since 1978. As of 2025, the Board of Directors reflects this progress: it is composed of eight women and four men. This evolution has enabled women to hold a genuine space of influence in the management and decision-making of the centre.

2. Since having women in positions of responsibility, has your Euskal Etxea developed any programs, work plans, or specific actions incorporating gender equality? How do these contribute to the promotion of equality today?

Despite the progress made in terms of institutional representation, the Laurak Bat Centre does not yet have a specific programme or plan aimed at gender equality. An attempt was made to create a gender commission in 2022, but the lack of agreement prevented the initiative from moving forward.

Although the issue is present in the public debate and has gained relevance in recent years — especially considering internal community situations that highlighted the need to address it — there is still no stable structure in place to develop sustained actions.

Today, the challenge lies in turning this growing awareness into clear institutional policies, something that those working within the organisation recognise as an outstanding task.

3. What challenges does the Euskal Etxea face in terms of equality? How do you plan to address these challenges and future opportunities?

One of the main obstacles is the widespread perception that ‘there are no inequality issues’, which turns the subject into a sensitive — and even taboo — matter. This belief makes it difficult to create spaces for reflection and limits participation, especially among men.

Another significant challenge is raising awareness of the everyday impact of sexist attitudes or remarks and encouraging more balanced participation across all areas of institutional life. There is also a clear need for men to see themselves as active participants — rather than outsiders — in gender-related issues.

To move forward, it has been proposed to create dynamics and activities that help rethink masculinities, question traditional roles and open up spaces where the community can reflect on behaviours, ways of communicating and the distribution of tasks. The key, according to the interviewee, is to work ‘from within’, engaging in collective processes of self-criticism and learning.

4. What message would you like to share with other women who, like you, help build community in the Euskal Etxeak?

“The message is clear: break the silence, question things, and become visible allies. It is not enough to simply avoid reproducing inequalities; action is needed to transform them. This means calling out sexist attitudes even in informal settings, sharing responsibility for tasks that have traditionally fallen to women, promoting balanced participation in governing bodies, and engaging in training on new masculinities.

He also recommends taking advantage of initiatives such as Gizonduz or the School for Equality and critically reflecting on what it means to ‘be a man’ today. For him, incorporating a gender perspective into all the centre’s activities is a collective and urgent task.

His final invitation is to talk about these issues, create spaces for dialogue, and drive a change that involves the entire Basque community in the diaspora.