

el Periòdic News

INTERVIEW

Luisa Fernanda Garrido

DIRECTOR OF THE INSTITUTO CERVANTES DE TOULOUSE



«The expansion of the Instituto Cervantes in Andorra has as its main function the linguistic certification and promotion of Spanish culture»

IRINA
Rybalchenko



The Spanish Embassy in Andorra inaugurated an exhibition of photographs by Judith Prat entitled *Witches*. The Instituto Cervantes de Toulouse is Co-Organiser of this exhibition, as well as many other cultural events that took place at the embassy. We talked to the director of the Instituto Cervantes de Toulouse, Luisa Fernanda Garrido, about

this exhibition, as well as the significance and international impact of the institution she heads.

—Tell us about the cooperation between the Instituto Cervantes and the Spanish Embassy in Andorra. How many joint cultural events have been organised in 2024? What are your plans for 2025?

—In Andorra, the Instituto Cervantes is represented by the Instituto Cervantes de Toulouse, which organises a series of

cultural events in collaboration with the Spanish Embassy in Andorra, as well as the DELE Spanish certification exams, which are recognised worldwide. The exams are organised in collaboration with the Andorran Ministry of Education—each year, two exams are organised for the many candidates who are nominated.

As for cultural activities, in addition to the events organised by the embassy itself, there are a dozen cultural events aimed at different audiences. Students,

for example, enjoy scientific seminars such as: ‘Microbial perception: history and current state of biotechnology’, or a seminar on maths and magic called *Mathemagic*.

We have hosted literary and scientific evenings with the writer-historian Elvira Navarro, a high school teacher Àgatha Ortega Cera, and a scientist Jaime Lira. We have also held exhibitions, both in Toulouse and Andorra. One of them was entitled: *A New Dialogue, Another Work, Two Artists*. The Andorran artist Javier

Balmaceda and the Spanish artist Eduardo Arranz-Bravo, both from Andorra, were the main contributors. For 2025, we are just recently creating the programme, but we can say in advance that we will have exhibitions, concerts, and, of course, various literary meetings.

—What can you tell us about the current photography exhibition *Witches* and its concept? Judith Prat is a photographer and documentarian with a strong gender focus. What does this have to do with witches?

—Through numerous images, the exhibition *Witches* traces the thread of the history of witch hunting that took place in Europe between the 15th and 18th Centuries, and in particular in the Pyrenees. The photographs recreate a map that visually recalls the events and key locations of the witch hunts with portraits of women currently living in the mountains on both the Spanish and French sides.

Judith Prat. A Personal View: this exhibition identifies symbols, traditions, and stigmas with the aim of breaking down old stereotypes and honouring the memory of them, thus facilitating the encounter between past and present.

—The Andorran witch hunt investigation is the least studied in

Europe. The most serious research was first carried out in 2004 by journalist Robert Pastor. The cataloguing of these studies by the National Archives of Andorra made it possible to bring together the entire corpus of documentary material and to expand on Robert Pastor's work, much of which was transcribed and studied as part of Pau Casteia's doctoral thesis. How has Andorra progressed in its study?

—Andorra has very good specialists: among them is Aurora Baena, who gave a brilliant presentation at the opening of the exhibition in the Principality.

—The Instituto Cervantes was created in Spain in 1991 and is already present in 89 cities in 45 countries on five continents. Tell us about the unit in Toulouse: how many students does it have?

—The Instituto Cervantes disseminates and promotes the linguistic and cultural diversity of Spain and Latin America in collaboration with various regional, national and international organisations. This happens either through courses and activities in the network of centres, or through various projects or resources that the Institute develops on the Internet. The official and popular languages of Spain find an international impetus in the Institute's various actions around

the world. During the 2023-2024 academic year, the Institute registered 132,776 students worldwide—110,702 students enrolled in Spanish language courses and the remainder in teacher training courses.

In the Toulouse unit, we had around 500 students in the 2023-2024 academic year and 783 candidates took the DELE exam, 104 of whom were Andorran.

Our range of courses is diverse: from general Spanish courses to specialised courses such as Spanish for children, Spanish for radio, or DELE preparation courses.

—The Instituto Cervantes in Toulouse offers a cultural programme all year round and also participates in the city's many festivals. Can you tell us about these events?

—The Castilian and the Spanish culture is well represented in Toulouse. Many schools include Spanish in their subjects and organise events with guest writers. Spanish is a very popular language in France, with almost all schools having it as a subject or as a bilingual baccalaureate option. And all universities have Spanish departments.

I would also like to highlight the Spanish departments in the universities, which have outstanding Latin American professors in disciplines ranging

from the humanities to law and science.

The life of the Instituto Cervantes is largely centred on Cervantes-related activities and is in constant connection with the recovery of the historical memory of Cervantes. The holdings of our library, named in honour of Manuel Asagna, are extensive and highly valued (they contain real bibliographical gems).

The people of Toulouse appreciate our efforts and our dedication and consider us an important player in the cultural life of the city and the preservation of the historical heritage.

The Instituto Cervantes collaborates with many of the city's cultural agents and festivals to work with them to promote Spanish musicians, photographers, historians, film directors, writers, as well as actors and authors of shows for children.

As far as Andorra is concerned, some events are organised twice: once for young audiences and school children, and once for adult audiences.

The expansion of the Instituto Cervantes in Andorra has as its main function the linguistic certification and promotion of Spanish culture. The invaluable assistance of the Spanish Embassy, together with the Ministry of Education, is essential for realising this expansion. ●

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