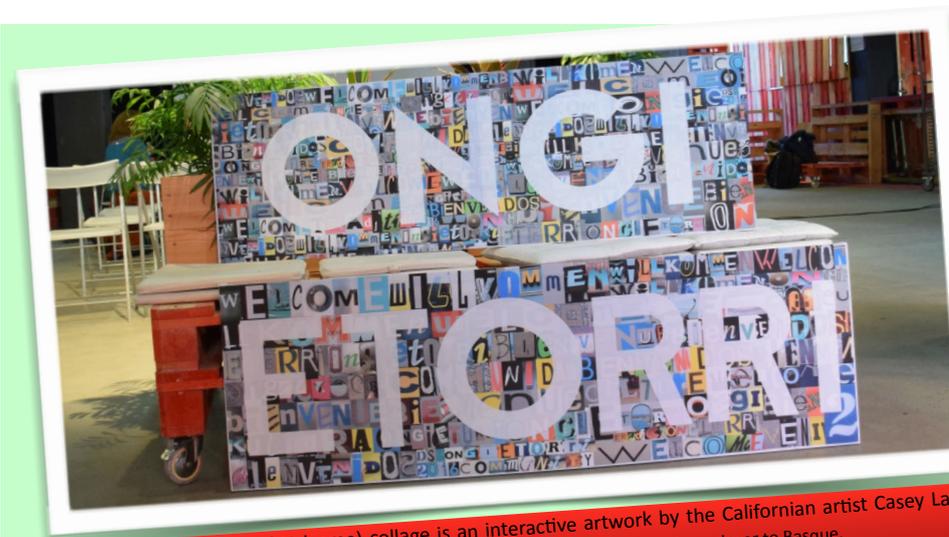




Basque Writing 13

Language Diversity



The "Ongi Etorri" (Welcome) collage is an interactive artwork by the Californian artist Casey Larae Shea to welcome the language diversity brought by migrants and to bring them closer to Basque.

who have come to us have to offer. We expressed solidarity towards our Amazigh and Kurdish friends, who had brought their contribution from both sides of the Mediterranean to this corner of the Bay of Biscay and, above all, we organised a celebration in support of coexistence and respect.

We have not simply stayed put in Europe. We participated in the Linguistic Rights Commission held in South Africa, and it was tremendously gratifying to see so many of our African friends participating in the meeting. We went to Kurdistan to express solidarity towards our friends who are going through a most difficult time, and we shared experiences with each other. We also welcomed our Sami friends who had come to us from the northernmost tip of the continent. And by the end of the year we want to establish an important milestone in the area of linguistic rights with the congress set to take place in December and the Protocol that we hope will be the outcome of it. To achieve this, many organisations working to protect linguistic rights have joined forces in the work driven forward by civil society, and the PEN centre has played a leading role in it.

If a small group can constantly take small steps, it can cover a lot of ground. That is what we have done in our modest way and that is what we will continue to do throughout this special year 2016. And without realising it we are going far.



Urtzi Urrutikoetxea
President of the Basque PEN

This year marks the twelfth anniversary of the setting up of the Basque PEN for the third time. We were born a modest group and that is what we are, with members trickling in from one year to the next. In our smallness, too, we work modestly but tirelessly to spread our culture across the world, to win friends from all over the world, to bring together all cultures and to defend freedom of expression and to defend freedom of expression that is indispensable for literature by reporting on the infringements of freedom of expression and by working in support of those who are suffering from such infringements.

We embarked on the year 2016 with more or less the same aims but we were aware that it is a special year. Donostia-San Sebastian is the European Capital of Culture, and the Basque PEN and the work done over the years, the projects and ideas defended have special prominence. When speaking about us Basques, it is often said that we have Europe's oldest language, and even though that

may be true, we Basques know that ours is also Europe's newest language. This is because our language has largely within the space of our lifetime followed the path taken by other languages 500, 300 or 150 years ago; it has become modernised, has adapted to the 21st century, and has made the path between the traditional world and the social networks shorter.

Indeed, languages have special prominence in the Donostia-San Sebastian 2016 project. Beyond the divisions of large/small, little-used or normalised languages, Donostia-San Sebastian is this year the centre where we, the speakers of the language, can defend our right to live in our language, boost European diversity, make it global from our home ground and develop similar ideas.

On Mother Language Day we made a call in favour of that diversity, we called on the continent locked in selfishness to open its doors and make people welcome, we celebrated the diversity of what we have on our home ground and we celebrated in Basque everything that those



DSS2016 LANGUAGE events

Projects working around Basque language, local and European linguistic diversity

Languages are living entities that need favourable environments to develop and last through time. They are an essential element for communication and identification, key for coexistence. **Europe is home to more than 284 languages** and its current challenge consists of creating the ideal conditions for this richness to develop, seeking the sustainability of its linguistic diversity. In a region characterised by its efforts to **revitalise the Basque language**, Donostia / San Sebastián 2016 European Capital of Culture works on some projects in collaboration with the Council of Social Organizations of the Basque Language, Kontseilua, seeking to highlight the value of diversity and to promote networks of agents who work with minority languages.

• EUSKARRIAK www.euskarriak.eus (with Bagera)

Through media, reflections and messages that the public will find unexpectedly around the city, the aim is to raise awareness about the richness linguistic diversity represents and promoting the use of the Basque language. It is based on a participative process carried out with citizens, artists and experts.

• IN VARIETATE CONCORDIA www.invarietateconcordia.eu

Marga Berra Zubieta invited eleven people from San Sebastian to take part in several workshops and to play with words. Their first language was Basque, Spanish, English, Catalan, Polish, Albanian, Czech, Finnish, Wolof and Arabic in each case. The project builds phonetic bridges between this languages and create a book (Katu katu & co), a street exhibition and a website as results.

• HITZARGIAK www.hitzargiak.eu (with Soziolinguistika Klusterra)

In Hitzargiak we work for identifying and reporting on the good practices that are being developed in the process to revitalise Europe's minority languages and to put the active players in contact with each other. The main results are a web-database with all the "best practices" and an international meeting to encourage the direct contact between the players. This meeting offered a space for those who are driving forward European languages to collaborate and set up new relations and shared projects for the future.

• BESTE HITZAK/ OTHER WORDS www.otherwordsliterature.eu (with Donostia Kultura)

Other Words aims to establish a network of creative placements for writers in small and minority languages. The participating language communities are Basque, Frisian, Irish Gaelic, Macedonian and Slovenian. Every year, each participating region will send two writers to complete an 8-week placement in two partner regions, and will host two writers from partner regions in return. During the placements, writers will maintain times contact with the host community and shed light on the creative process through a series of public events. All the texts created during the placements will be translated into the languages of the partners, and into English.

TOSTA www.tosta2016.eu (with Euskaltzaleen Topagunea)

Associations from Ireland, Cornwall, Wales, Scotland, Friesland, Galiza and the Basque Country are working together in this project. Each of those partners have organised a 6 week artist residency for a creator from other territory, to create a work of art with minority languages and cultures as their focus. From April to September, a festival village created with shipping containers will host a 3 day festival in each of those communities. The artworks created by the artists, music, workshops etc. will be part of the festivals focused in the minority languages and celebrating the European diversity.

• EUROPEAN LANGUAGE DIVERSITY FORUM (with Unesco Etxea)

This event will bring together stake holders from European civil society, along with experts with the aim of reflecting on the different factors affecting the development of minority languages in Europe. It is thus hoped to create large-scale opportunity to establish agreements on concrete strategies to revitalise and normalise the use of vulnerable languages and to encourage collaboration. The Forum will address the following issues: language rights, language policy for the EU, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, linguistic diversity as a factor for development, multilingual education...

• PROTOCOL TO ENSURE LANGUAGE RIGHTS www.protokoloa.eus (with Kontseilua)

There are hundreds of community-based organisations acting in different fields with the goal of supporting minority languages. The present project proposes a tool for civil society in Europe to take charge of the process of nurturing linguistic equality. The Protocol to Ensure Language Rights (PELB) will be the fruit of a series of discussions over preceding years by numerous work groups; an instrument bringing together scientific perspectives, academic opinions and social viewpoints and it will be presented in an international meeting (the European Language Diversity Forum) Therefore the Protocol will be taken to international fora and institutions to allow entities of all kinds to use it to regulate their commitment to language diversity.

Asier Basurto Arruti

International MOTHER LANGUAGE Day

This year we celebrated International Mother Language Day, on 21 February, in a special way as part of the events being run by Donostia-San Sebastian as European Capital of Culture 2016. As in most Western European countries, people from all over the world have settled in the Basque Country in recent years. It is gratifying that these new Basque citizens from all the continents of the world and who between them speak more than 120 languages are bringing their valuable heritage to our country. At the same time, we highlighted, just as we did last year, the importance of the Basque language in acting as a bridge between all of us.



Kaissa Ould Braham

Moreover, over the last few months another type of phenomenon is taking place, which is the tragedy of thousands of people at the gates of Europe fleeing from war, and the shameful attitude we have too often witnessed when facing this situation. That is why we wanted to hold an **Ongi Etorri** (Welcome) celebration on 21

February this year. We

Basques have not forgotten, either, that we, too, have had to go into exile, we know very well what exile is, and of course, we proclaim the value and universal need to give protection to those escaping from disaster.

We had the Kabyle-Amazigh **Kaissa Ould Braham** and the Kurd **Rhodi Melle**, who had come from the south and east of the Mediterranean to Catalonia and Belgium, respectively; they participated in a roundtable chaired by the journalist and PEN member Karlos Zurutuza to report on the situation in their countries. People in Algeria, and the Kabyles in particular, know all about the struggle in favour of their language and freedom and the fight against fanaticism, and the Kurds have given the world a lesson in democracy in Rojava (Western Kurdistan) in Syria. The journalist **Ainara Gorostitzu** and **Itziar Idiazabal**, who heads the UNESCO Chair, reflected on how the mother language should be understood nowadays when so many languages coexist in the Basque Country. After that, the documentary *Beltzean mintzo* was presented

by **Txema Abarrategi** of the Garabide association, which has succeeded in incorporating the importance of language into the sphere of international co-operation. And to round off the day, the Ladin singer **Martina Iori** came from the SUNS festival of little-used languages and gave a performance together with **Zuriñe and Fran** of the Hesian group of the Basque Country; she took the opportunity to report on the language and culture of the Dolomites.



Rhodi Mellek

On International Mother Language Day, 21 February, the Basque poets **Itxaro Borda** and **Lutxo Egia** and the Kabyle Kaissa Ould Braham gave a poetry recital accompanied by **Asier Serrano** on the guitar. With the help of a sunny February day and to bring the events to a close, we got to know the experiences of people who had come to the Basque Country from all over the world. Accompanied by words and music, they

set up the **Banaiga Band – The Rolling Immigrants**. Through songs in Basque and from all over the world we made space for sharing, and each person, through an object, text or anecdote from his/her own country, explained the unique features of his/her country, what had brought them to the Basque Country, and what they had found here.



Basque PEN activities

The initiatives undertaken by the Basque PEN have not been lacking in this special year devoted to language, linguistic rights, and little-used languages and to the culture produced in them. Despite being a small group, enthusiasm for work has not been found wanting when undertaking bridge-building work at home and abroad, reporting on our literature and our work, spreading solidarity and getting involved in many other initiatives.



In January we supported the initiative across the world to oppose the death penalty imposed by Saudi Arabia on the Palestinian poet **Ashraf Fayadh**, and we translated his poems. We held a

modest but moving event in Donostia-San Sebastian in which we read his poems and did our little bit in support of the international campaign.

A few weeks later we organised events to mark **International Mother Language Day** within the programme of events to mark Donostia-San Sebastian European Capital of Culture 2016. The previous page shows in greater detail what was organised throughout the long, productive weekend.

Then the first initiative abroad was to attend the meeting of the **Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee**. It is a well-known fact that a small change can spark a whole revolution, and taking the committee to **Johannesburg** this year has had something of that. It was held in South Africa and all of a sudden the continent's writers and many PEN centres congregated. And thanks to that, the subjects that are not usually discussed in Europe emerged there, mainly from an African perspective: relations



among writers, difficulties and obstacles in getting work published, the issue between colonial and African languages to produce literature. **Laura Mintegi** and **Urtzi Urrutikoetxea** participated in the meeting and apart from making contacts with and furthering relations with African writers, they stressed the importance of 2016 and reported on the initiatives being organised in Donostia-San Sebastian, because the city is a European Capital of Culture, and obviously linguistic rights are universal.

In June we received a special visit in the Basque Country. Or, to be more precise, we received a visit for a second time. In 2013 thirty writers of the **Non-Fiction Sami Writers Association** came to our country for the first time,



mainly to Bilbao at that time (despite visiting many spots in the Basque Country), and this year, coinciding with the 2016 events, they came to Donostia-San Sebastian to hold their yearly meeting. So we had an interesting meeting in collaboration with the Basque PEN, together with the Donostia-San Sebastian 2016 initiatives and our friends at the Etxepare Institute, which is responsible for spreading Basque literature abroad.

They made contacts with many associations including the Bertsozale Elkarte (Association of Extempore Basque Verse-making), the NGO **Garabide**, which is also involved in Language Revival, and **Bagera**, which brings together the Basque language loyalists of Donostia-San Sebastian.

Urtzi Urrutikoetxea was in Kurdistan over the summer visiting

friends at the **Kurdish PEN** and extending soli-



arity because in the military operations last winter their headquarters had been destroyed. His visit also provided an opportunity to get to know *in situ* the interesting collaboration that has been set up between the Basque language movement and the initiatives in support of the Kurdish language. Among other things, he visited the promoters of Kurdish-medium schools and representatives of the **Azadiya Welat** newspaper, and got to know the firm steps being taken through an initiative by the Diyarbakir municipal council to revive the language, some of which are the result of the



relations formed with the Basque Country. Among other things, he saw that the slogan **Euskaraz Bizi Nahi Dut** (I want to live in Basque) also exists in Kurdish in a lovely initiative taken from the corner of the Bay of Biscay all the way to Mesopotamia.

While we were preparing the congress we had the chance to hold the final meeting together, during which we re-

ceived one of the best pieces of news in recent times: **Jila Hassanpour**, a sister of the Kurdish journalist **Adnan Hassanpour**, visited us in Bilbao and at that very moment she received the news that her brother was about to be released from prison. In 2008 the Basque PEN made Adnan Hassanpour an Honorary Member as part of the international campaign started up after he was sentenced to death by the Iranian regime. We travelled to Kurdistan, and



his sister **Leyla Hassanpour** came to the Parliaments in Vitoria-Gasteiz and Iruñea-Pamplona to report on the situation of Adnan Hassanpour. She received the solidarity of both parliaments; the international campaign bore fruit, the journalist had his death sentence lifted, but he had to serve a ten-year prison sentence. We received the wonderful news on 10 September that **Adnan Hassanpour had finally been released** after the unjust time in prison had come to an end.

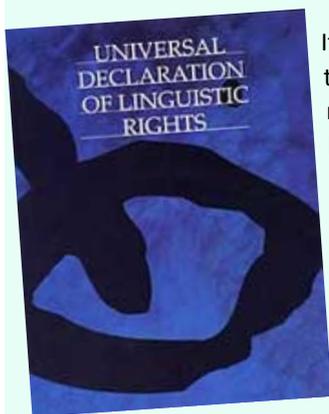
One of the most important initiatives will be taking place in the autumn of this year 2016: the congress of little-used languages and the protocol on linguistic rights that we hope will be the result of that cooperation. That is covered in more detail on the following pages.



From the DECLARATION to the PROTOCOL: Civil society the cornerstone

In an extraordinary general meeting in December 1993, the Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee of the International PEN Club made the decision to draw up a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights. There is no doubt that the PEN Club had taken a new, provocative step.

That bold decision had consequences that could not have been more successful. So in June 1996, 61 NGOs, 41 PEN centres and 40 international experts in the field of linguistic rights approved the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights.



It goes without saying that this Declaration made a ground-breaking contribution towards coexistence and democracy as well as towards peace. Indeed, this document, which aims to guarantee equality among speech communities, had taken significant

steps towards a new, fairer world.

In view of this, and bearing in mind that Donostia-San Sebastian was set to be one of the European Capitals of Culture 2016, KONTSEILUA, the Association of Social Organisations in favour of the Basque Language which brings together 40 organisations working to revive Basque, saw a chance to take a new step forward. A proposal was made to the Donostia-San Sebastian 2016 Foundation to begin a process that would revive the Declaration agreed upon by the social organisations 20 years ago, and to embark on a process that would lead to the specifying of the next steps; work was started in that direction in 2015.

Language rights must certainly be included among these basic human rights. Languages are for communication, but the situation of languages cannot be limited to the communicative dimension alone, since

languages cannot be separated from cultures. When the connection between languages and cultures is denied, the dignity of speakers and citizens is being left out of consideration. Thus, supporting linguistic diversity forms a part of defending the rights of everyone.

This will also open up a channel which can contribute to social well-being and peaceful coexistence, because working towards the democratic treatment of language communities is one way of ensuring that all human rights are respected.

Throughout Europe, language communities have taken steps to enable people to live their lives in their own languages. There are hundreds of community-based organisations acting in different fields with the goal of supporting minority languages. The present project proposes to create a meeting place where civil society in Europe can take charge of the process of nurturing our linguistic diversity.

This project has been the start of a process undertaken by social entities, organisations and specialists to establish a protocol to ensure linguistic equality and present the conclusions to an international summit meeting.





The protocol will be the fruit of a series of discussions over preceding years by numerous work groups; an instrument bringing together scientific perspectives, academic opinions and social viewpoints; and a novel foundation for building a new Europe based on equality between language communities.

Therefore the Protocol to Ensure Language Rights which emerges from the Project will be taken to international fora and institutions to allow entities of all kinds to use it to regulate their commitment to language diversity.

The project has three main objectives:

1. To declare that guaranteeing language diversity and ensuring language development are **keys to peaceful coexistence**.
2. To create an effective instrument for **language equality** and the cultivation of languages in unfavourable situations
3. To ensure that the **language community** is the actor in this process and assert that society's involvement guarantees fair play.

TRAVELLING COMPANIONS

The promoters of the project are Kontseilua and the DSS2016 foundation, by whose initiative it was created, and these bodies take responsibility for its proper development.

Kontseilua and DSS2016EU gave overall responsibility for the process to an Organising committee comprising six recognised and experienced international organisations, each of which was able to contribute its particular perspective. International networks of social organisations and NGOs working in support of human rights, language rights, language diversity and minority languages, which will be directly in charge of the project. These are the organisations member of that Committee: **PEN INTERNATIONAL**, **ELEN** (European Language Equality Network), **LINGUAPAX**, **UNPO** (Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organisation); **ECMI** (European Centre for Minority Issues) eta **CIEMEN**.

It has also been set up a Scientific

Committee which to prepare the text of the Protocol. It is a group of seventeen recognised experts, intellectuals and researchers with experience in a variety of disciplines who work in different fields. One of this commission's main purposes will be to make sure that a fair balance of viewpoints is represented in the Protocol

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the important role played by organised civil society in the area of language communities in Europe. The desire to work towards a more democratic society has driven grassroots organisations to express demands and aspirations which have led to greater public awareness of the issues. Grassroots entities will also play an important role in the preparation of the Protocol. We aim to produce an instrument that has been agreed upon by organisations and actors who speak for millions of European citizens. Though our situations differ in many cases, all entities that work for language normalization share a common goal. This process will also give us a good opportunity to learn from one another.

THE PATH TAKEN AND THE OUTCOME

We have started a process that is both interesting and exciting in equal measure. So far, we have had contacts with over one hundred organisations across Europe to gather their contributions, and hundreds have sent us their proposals: we have been to **Ireland, Friesland, Wales, Oslo, Asturias, Catalonia, Galicia, Denmark** and many other places to present the project. Organisations working in favour of the development of **Friulian, Sardinian, Tatar, Corsican, Breton, Occitan** and many other languages have also sent us their contributions. We have carried out a tremendous collective empowerment of European social organisations. Right now, we are putting all the proposals together and **in Donostia-San Sebastian on December 17** we will be presenting the Protocol to Guarantee Linguistic Rights. That way we will be taking a leap forwards to add a qualitative contribution to that decision taken back in 1993 by the PEN CLUB to create a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights.



Paul Bilbao Sarria

TRANSITS

A performance on lesser-used languages

The question could be this: Is it possible to live in a lesser-used language? Is it possible to live in Basque in Bilbao? Is it possible to live in Welsh in Caerdydd? (Cardiff). Or is it possible to live in Corsican in Ajaccio (Ajaccio)? But perhaps the question that should be asked beforehand is this: What does it mean to live in Basque? What does it mean to live in Welsh? What does it mean to live in Corsican? What does it mean, in the end, to live in a lesser-used language?

Would there not have to be a chance of living in these languages for 24 hours? As a Spanish speaker; as an English speaker; as a French speaker. Even if they are monolingual speakers, they will have no problem whatsoever living in their own languages for 24 hours.

I myself live in Bilbao (Basque Country). The city has a population of about 400,000 people. They all speak Spanish. By contrast, only 80,000 are Basque speakers, and they are mostly children and youngsters. Knowledge of Basque has increased considerably over the last few years. But not so the use of the language. I am happy to speak and read in Spanish, but I want to organise my life mostly in Basque: buy bread, have a beer with my friends in a bar, complete formalities with the city administration, go to the doctor, etc. It is not always possible to do everything in Basque. In view of the level of knowledge of Basque, it could be said to be impossible.

Last June I made the decision to live in Basque for a month (exclusively in Basque). On June 11 I went out and I did not use Spanish until July 10. To put it another way, I was going to stop being bilingual and become monolingual, a *monolingual Basque speaker* in a sea of Spanish speakers. In addition, in a performative initiative, language had to be a tool to examine various issues: spaces, choices, attitudes, behaviours, identities, visibilities, etc.

Before getting the initiative going, I did not tell many people about it. But this is what they all said to me: "Are you nuts?" That, of course, gave me some cause for concern. Something was happening to the 'Basque-speaking' individual, I was aware of something in advance, but this was the first time I was experiencing it. Living in Basque in Bilbao was not precariousness, but "madness". On a par with circus acrobatics.

At that moment when I found myself 24 hours away from becoming a speaker like a non-Basque speaker, I was regarded as a tightrope walker, a Basque-speaking tightrope walker. Immediately questions occurred to me: If a non-Basque speaker is by definition an all-

day one, does a Basque-speaker in a similar situation also need to hang on to a language typology? If a non-Basque speaker is just that for the whole day, what is a Basque speaker? If by definition a Basque speaker also has to be that for the whole day, what have I been until now? And the most important question of all: If I have not been a Basque speaker until now, what are Basque speakers like? What is the everyday life of a Basque speaker like? How does he/she live? In a happy, timid or proud way? How are these speakers regarded by the inhabitants of Bilbao? Is the life of a Basque speaker difficult or pretty easy?

The month-long experience resolved all the questions. All kinds of things happened to me: when people could not understand me in Basque, they thought I was a foreign tourist on four occasions, and in my own city of all places! But those are nothing more than eloquent anecdotes. The only ones that were significant and which really mattered were the unusual situations and answers emerging in everyday relationships: I had problems when renewing my driving licence, speaking in a language not understood by shop assistants I know in the local shops, having difficulty communicating with non-Basque-speaking friends and relatives, etc. I had to put up with many problems and rude responses (numerous social punishments). But, on the other hand, the good experiences and responses were no fewer: the breakdown in the normal means of communication or, at least, the destabilising of it; the discovery that some of the people I had regarded as non-Basque speaking turned out to be Basque speakers; and, above all, the arguments that erupted among thousands of people. Indeed, the performance received tremendous coverage across the social media and local media. It was useful in encouraging many people to reflect on the situation of our language.

And what about the consequences? There were provocations rather than consequences. And the main one in all of them was this: there is no such thing as a Basque-speaking individual. There are non-Basque-speaking ones (Spanish speakers and French speakers in the Basque Country) because they have the chance to use their languages 24 hours a day. Yet a Basque speaker does not have that opportunity. In the case of Bilbao, he or she is forced to constantly transit from one language to another. And, what is more, in many cases he or she will have to speak in Spanish. I have called that individual a trans-Basque speaker.

On the other hand, becoming immersed has shown me that it is possible to use a little-used language in more situations than one expects. The non-Basque speaker must listen to our language. We cannot refuse them that. What is more, in many cases they appreciate it. It is the only way.

