



# Basque Writing 16

## PROTOCOL TO ENSURE LINGUISTIC RIGHTS



What was an objective back then, is a strong and hopeful document now. It is a long list of steps that need to be taken to ensure that European small languages and minority languages last, grow and live in a normalised context in spite of how small they

Over the course of this journey that started almost fifteen years ago, we have made dozens of friends from all over the world in PEN meetings and conferences. We have learnt from other centres and shared what we had to offer. Along this path, we have spread our language, culture, literature and initiatives. We may be small but we've got big ideas. For the most part we have conveyed our message in person, or through this magazine (Basque writing), although we have also taken part in other projects every now and then.

Kursaal Palace, Donostia 17th December, 2016

The story in this issue details the setup of a new dimension. Three issues ago, we took advantage of the fact that Donostia was the European Capital of Culture to talk about linguistic diversity, and we mentioned some events about Basque and other language that had been carried out in Donostia. Among all those events, the most significant was the Congress that was organised as part of the closure of the European Capital of Culture programme, where the Protocol would be signed. The main objective was to work all together from the grassroots, following PEN's philosophy of work, in order to energise European civil society and gather the experience that each organisation has acquired in the field of their own language to design a general strategy for the future.

may be. This document is the fruit of the work that has been done over the last two years, as

well as the continuation and the practical realisation of the Universal Declaration of Linguistic rights signed in Barcelona. It is a project that has its origins in the Basque Country and the initiative of Basque people, although, it would not been possible to achieve it on our own. This project has been nourished by hundreds of European organisations that work to support languages and have broad experience in defending language diversity and freedom of speech. And PEN is among them, of course. We believe that we are in a position to be proud of our work. The path has already borne its fruit, but the Protocol is not the end; or maybe it is, but it is also a beginning, as we saw in the Congress: now is the time to spread the Protocol. Let's try and turn the world into a nicer and more balanced place where we are all able to paint with the colour of our language.



**Urtzi Urrutikoetxea**  
*Basque PEN*



# From the DECLARATION to the PROTOCOL

## From BARCELONA to DONOSTIA

In June 1996, twenty years before the Donostia Protocol was signed, 61 NGOs, 41 PEN centres and 40 international experts in the field of linguistic rights approved the **Universal Declaration of linguistic Rights**. Behind this Declaration is the International PEN Club's decision in 1993 to draw up a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights. That bold decision brought successful consequences as the Declaration made a groundbreaking contribution towards coexistence and democracy as well as towards peace. Indeed, this document, which aims to guarantee equality among speech communities, has 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 in 1996, 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 to Ensure Linguistic Rights (PELR)** was 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 has been taken to international fora and institutions to allow entities of all kinds to use it to regulate their commitment to language diversity.

**The Protocol 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.

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**.

A Scientific Committee was also set up to prepare the text of the Protocol. It was a group of seventeen recognised experts, intellectuals and researchers with experience in a variety of disciplines who worked in different fields. One of this commission's main purposes was to make sure that a fair balance of viewpoints was 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 have also played an important role in the preparation of the Protocol. Our aim was 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 has also given us a good opportunity to learn from one another.

### THE PATH TAKEN AND THE OUTCOME

We started a process that was both interesting and exciting in equal measure. We had contacts with over one hundred organisations across Europe to gather their contributions, and hundreds have sent us their proposals: we went 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 also sent us their contributions. We carried out a tremendous collective empowerment of European social organisations. **On the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2017 Donostia-San Sebastian** we presented the Protocol to Ensure Linguistic Rights. You will be able to learn about the path taken since then in the following articles. We haven't taken a considerable 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.



# Carles Torner

## Director Executive of PEN International

**The Donostia Protocol takes its main inspiration from the Declaration of Barcelona, which was signed two decades ago. You were one of the main figures that made it possible. What memories do you have of those days?**

Being in Donostia while the Protocol is being approved is very moving. In 1993 I was a newcomer in my centre of the Catalan PEN, and I was in charge of organising a committee meeting on the island of Majorca. We were experiencing the same difficulties as other communities, for instance Hungarians in Romania, and the Welsh and the Sami, but we realised that each centre was complaining about its own situation, its own literature. We needed something larger in our horizon. In the meeting I mentioned that I had been in Geneva with another NGO, where I met Rigoberta Menchu. We spoke about the initial steps of the project called Universal Declaration of the Rights of the Indigenous peoples. And it was then that we came up with this collective idea, "why don't we try to draft a Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights, so that we won't just be complaining about our situation, but defending a universal human right for all linguistic communities around the world?" It turned out to be a very good idea: the day after our press conference, I received a call from the Unesco Center in Catalonia, and I was wonderfully surprised to see that in less than one month several civil societies had opened their doors to the idea, we had gathered funds and we had started the process to draft this Universal Declarations of Linguistic Rights.

### From Catalonia to the world.

A scientific committee was set up with experts coming from all around the world. Unesco was very interested from the very beginning, so they followed up the work of the scientific committee in detail. The committee worked for two years and created various drafts with contributions from linguistic communities from all continents such as the Aymara, Maya, or the Kadazan-Dusun in Borneo. It also received contributions from the main international organizations like the world council of Indigenous Peoples and the International Organisation of Teachers of Foreign Languages. This incredible network started a process that I'm glad to have seen developing at an international level. In 1996 we had a world congress of linguistic rights in Barcelona, where we proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights.

### And once it was approved...

We sent it to Unesco. It was an extremely interesting document, though very controversial, and it caused turmoil inside Unesco. It is registered in Unesco, but it has been not approved by the member states. It has been well received by them, but it is not an official document, since it has been opposed by countries like Indonesia, Turkey and others. Nevertheless, the text is still there, and it has been used as a framework to draft language related laws in

*The Protocol updates The Universal Declaration to cater for each linguistic community.*

countries such as Paraguay, Colombia, Bolivia etc. It was very soon translated into 70 languages, among them Nahuatl and Zapoteco, two indigenous languages of Mexico, and it went around the Mexican Parliament, giving space to debate.

### And 20 years later, the Declaration becomes a Protocol.

The Declaration had a fantastic projection back then, and now, it has been upgraded into this extremely significant Protocol: not only has it updated its contents from an international point of view, but it has also been updated to cater for each of the linguistic communities where the Protocol and the agenda will be developed. Each linguistic community is given an agenda so that they achieve full linguistic rights. The Declaration established a universal framework for the states to approve universal protection and develop linguistic rights, but it was not enough, it needed to be adapted to each linguistic community. The best aspect of the Protocol is that it gives each linguistic community the tools to create an agenda that will promote linguistic rights in all areas of society. We in PEN defend that each community is a subject of law and has the capacity to develop its language at all levels of society: education, media, judicial sector... But, to achieve that, each community needs to develop a very specific agenda based on the reality of each linguistic community and the laws of the country.

### The Protocol was the final stage of several meetings and an international congress.

The congress in Donostia was fantastic. It was really impressive: the Kursaal was full of people representing 200 organisations of civil society from all around Europe; in fact, some of the people came from places that were not easy to place on the map. This is what I saw: 200 colours of the European rainbow gathered in the Kursaal, united under the same project, requiring support from governments, proclaiming the Protocol of Donostia and showing that it is not just a text, it is a document that is backed by an unbelievable grassroots movement that gathers all the linguistic communities in Europe that need support in matters of linguistic rights.





# Protocol: Chronic

Preceded by two years of hard work, the margin for error was not large, but that did not kill the excitement on that day. The fruit of hard work was right in front of us: The Protocol to Ensure Linguistic Rights, also known as Donostia Protocol, was presented on the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 2016 at a solemn, yet moving ceremony.

It was the first time that such a broad consensus had been reached in the area of linguistic rights. Without precedent, due to its magnitude from the very beginning, the Protocol was nourished by an enormous group of participants: **more than 100 signatory entities formed the first group, which received more 400 contributions.** All those entities gathered together in the Kursaal Congress centre in order to sign the Protocol.

It was one of the last, most famous and most important events of Donostia 2016 (the year when San Sebastian was the European Capital of Culture) and, without a doubt, one of the most significant legacies of that programme. **Supported by Kontseilua** (the Council of social organisations of the Basque language) **and several Basque and international entities**, the road map to ensure the linguistic rights of millions of people was finally launched.

Many people who did not attend the congress expressed their will to sign the Protocol, and the event itself stirred up the interest of many other language activists. However, there were also some absences: the community of minority language Eryza, even though it had taken part in the creation of the text, did not manage to be represented in the event, as the Russian government did not permit their attendance. In any case, these kinds of obstacles, repressions and prohibitions give strength to the document and make it even more necessary.

Until recently, the idea of **taking the step that followed the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights** that was presented in Barcelona two decades ago seemed like a distant dream. That step consisted of creating a document to ensure the Rights that were described in the Declaration. The Donostia Protocol has been created to be a practical tool and to stop everyday injustices: it includes 185 measures that have been specified after two years of work and aims to ensure the linguistic rights of all speakers.

All the aforementioned drew a lovely picture in the Kursaal Congress Centre. A picture that displayed the **empowerment and union between entities that work in favour of minority languages**, which often operate in isolated areas. It is true that most of them were Basque, but there was also a broad representation of European communities, and there was certainly a great mutual understanding between them. All together, they demanded the same rights for all speakers, regardless of their language. To do so, the Protocol states that each linguistic community should write its own tag book. But that would be the next step. For now, we have the picture of that powerful kickoff, the picture of the signing. The fruit of a process that has been full of engagement, mutual understanding and patience.

Paul Bilbao, the secretary of Kontseilua and a member of Basque PEN, underlined that it had been “a day to celebrate”. “If we have been able to respond to the needs of extremely different realities, **we are definitely able to create the appropriate conditions to live our lives in our languages.** We are ready to build a fairer society” says Bilbao. He also claimed that peace and coexistence as two key concepts that need to be fostered in the area of human rights.

Some representatives of Linguapax, PEN International, Ciemen and other international organisations also took the floor. Some of their words can be read in the following pages. Xabier Paya, the artistic director of Donostia 2016, underlined that one of the most important legacies of Donostia 2016 will definitely be the Protocol. Paya also mentioned the last speaker of the North American language called Mandan, Edwin Benson, who died some days before the congress at the age of 85 and took his language with him: “Signing the document is important, but then we have to fulfil it. That is the only way to make sure that we will not be reading news like “Mandan language has died” in the future”.

During the event, several people mentioned **the importance of being oneself in these times of homogenisation.** Days before this event, the European Language Diversity Forum was held in the Kursaal. Experts and activists that work for European languages met their Basque counterparts, as well as hundreds of citizens, politicians, social representatives; the place was completely full. Joan Mari Torrealdai, a highly regarded Basque activist who has done an awful lot of behind the scenes for more than 50 years, focused on the synergies created by the Protocol: “when correctly managed, it is the active linguistic community that accomplishes the greatest achievements”.

## 185 MEASURES, 11 PRINCIPLES, 9 ARTICLES

The Donostia Protocol has identified 11 principles (linguistic rights, language discrimination, language status: official languages, legislation, corrective measures, resources, positive actions, universality principle, mainstream perspective, language heartlands and historical memory) and 9 articles:

**Article 1: SUBJECTS.** Language rights are individual and collective at the same time. A language community is any human society established historically in a particular territorial space which identifies itself as a people and has developed a common language.

**Article 2: OBJECTIVES.** To guarantee language diversity and language development, and to create an effective instrument for language equality and cultivation of languages in unfavourable situations. To ensure that the language communities are the actors of this process.

**Article 3: VALUES.** Peaceful coexistence, diversity, equality and rights.

**Article 4: CIVIL SOCIETY, THE KEY.** 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.

**Article 5: REFERENCES.** The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms drafted by the Council of Europe in 1950, the 1996 Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights of Barcelona and Unesco's “Language Vitality and Endangerment” report.

**Article 6: STRUCTURE.** The Protocol is structured to ensure that linguistic rights will be respected regarding general principles, public administration and official bodies, education, the socioeconomic sphere, proper names, communication, media, new technology and culture. Moreover, the Protocol proposes defined measures for each domain.

**Article 7: GUIDELINES FOR USE OF THE PROTOCOL.** The social entities in language communities will determine the sequence and timing of compliance with the measures in this protocol. The Tag Book will help them monitor the degree of achievement of the indicators in it. The Tag Book may also be used to work with local, district, regional or state institutions.

**Article 8: FOLLOW-UP COMMITTEE.** The initial Follow-up Committee will be composed by members of the Organising Committee. Thereafter, the Follow-up Committee itself will determine who the future members will be. The entities that will compose the Committee are: Ciemen, Ecmi, Linguapax, Elen, Unpo and PEN International.

**Article 9: RECIPIENTS.** The Protocol will be sent to various senior officials of the UN, the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.



# Protocol: Testimonies

**JOAN MARI TORREALDAI (JAKIN):** A

language is a social fact, it is a sign or a tool for a community. Languages need to have a value. The Protocol to ensure language rights formulates this very timely (?) in this preamble: a language cannot be separated from its people. (...) this meeting of us today has a great symbolic value, I hope its real actual value has the same magnitude.



**PAUL BILBAO (KONTSEILUA):** We have

had the capacity and the ability of making a dream come true. We have managed at the end of the day to draft a roadmap that will take us to the future. And I'm saying very honestly, if we've been able to create this Protocol, social agents can create the necessary conditions to live in our language. Congratulations!



**XABIER PAYA (DONOSTIA 2016):** Multi-

lingual co-existence is an oxymoron or an antithesis for many. We want to prove that it is an epithet or a pleonasm, that it can't be coexistence without multilingualism and that multilingualism will not be possible without a peaceful coexistence. If we don't understand each other, we'll not be able to live together.



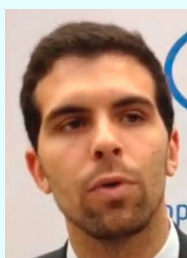
**MARIA DO PILAR GARCIA NEGRO**

**(GALIZIA):** From the stated or formal democracy to executive or real democracy, this has to be so, because otherwise we'll regret we are granted some rights as long as we don't use them.



**TOMMASO NODARI (UNPO):** We de-

clare that guaranteeing to language diversity and ensuring language development are keys to peaceful coexistence. This creates an effective instrument and tool for language equality and the cultivation of languages in unfavourable situations. The Protocol ensures that language communities are agents in this process as subject, and



assert that society's involvement guarantees a fair play.

**MÓNICA PEREÑA (LINGUAPAX):**

There exist powerful forces and inertias favoring cultural uniformity of individuals and societies and this leads (?) to impoverishment, so we think it is important to promote language diversity as a positive value.



**DAVYTH HYCKS (ELEN):** Thank you to

all of the team working on the Protocol. It's an honour to have worked with Paul Bilbao, Haizpea Abrisketa, and all the organisers, it's always an inspiration to be here. I'm very glad today, for (??) my contribution is, in my own dear language Cornish or Kernewek.



**TOVE MALLOY (ECMI):** We believe

that equality is a fundamental value that must be respected in all modern societies. Equality among individuals, between peoples, between cultures, and of course between all languages. We believe that language rights are essentially human rights. We consider languages as an integral part of the individual personal identity that we all carry.



**AURELÍ ARGEMÍ (CIEMEN):** We need to take into

consideration that languages just as people are manifested individually and collectively. For an individual language rights to be respected, it is necessary that collectively the community where each individual is identified is fully respected from the point of view of language rights.



I'm very happy that here today in Donostia there are people ready to carry on and to present this initiative, which is a final achievement of full recognition of language rights and establishes peaceful language coexistence in our world. And for that, congratulations!



# Paul Bilbao

## Secretary General of KONTSEILUA

On the 17th of December, in San Sebastian's Kursaal Congress Centre, we completed the process of creating the Protocol to Ensure Linguistic Rights. Over 120 promoters representing more than 30 languages came from both within the Basque Country and outside to support the Donostia Protocol and its 185 specific measures.

As it was mentioned then, that event was not the end of the journey, but just the beginning: Our aim is for the Donostia Protocol to be a milestone in the field of linguistic rights. The Protocol is now a tool that belongs to all of us and, for that tool to be effective, we need to use it.

That is exactly what we have done this year, we have got down to work and we are certainly capitalising on the project. In this text, we will outline what we have achieved so far:

### 1. More and more organisations announce their support

Several organisations have announced their support since the Protocol was presented:

Among others, Unesco etxea-Unesco Basque Country, Societat catalana de sociolingüística, Enllaçats per la Llengua, Fundació Catalunya, Federació d'Organitzacions de la Llengua Catalana, Asociación Berciana da Lingua Xarmenta, Confederación Intersindical Galega do Ensino, Intersindical Valenciana, Asociación Cultural Faceira, El Teixu and STEI Illes Balears have supported it.

The majority of the Basque trade unions have also joined the Protocol. LAB (Basque nationalist workers' union), ELA (Basque workers union), STEILAS (the Basque union for those who work in the education system), HIRU (the drivers' union), EHNE (the farmers' union) and ESK (a left wing union) have committed to actively work on the implementation of the Protocol. In the near future, we intend to run a campaign to obtain the support of other organisations in the Basque Country and Europe.



### 2. From the Protocol to the Tag Book, accuracy

Before requesting public entities to accept the Protocol, it would be advisable to adapt the document to the reality of each community; that is to say, each linguistic community should set the order of preference of measures, examine the current situation, define the steps to take... For these reasons, the main priority is to fill out the Tag Book, the document that will contain the indicators to evaluate the measures and the timing.

Here in The Basque Country, we have set in motion the process to fill out the Tag Book, and to do so, we have turned to those who signed the Protocol and to those who have joined it recently.

Several organisations and individuals are currently working on that. However, if we have not yet reached you, please contact us. We intend to finish the Tag Book before the end of the year and we would like to include all your contributions.

### 3. Well received by the institutions

Before requesting public entities to accept the Protocol, it would be advisable to adapt the document to the reality of each community; that is to say, each linguistic community should set the order of preference of measures, examine the current situation, define the steps to take... For these reasons, the main priority is to fill out the Tag Book, the document that will contain the indicators to evaluate the measures and the timing.

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### 4. Clearing a path in Europe

We were invited by the European Union's subgroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and languages to present the Protocol in front of several Members of Parliament in Strasbourg.

On top of that, we held meetings with some members of the European Council. Among those meetings, we would like to highlight the one held with the Secretary of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, where we considered different ways to make the Charter and Protocol compatible.

The Protocol has also been presented outside our borders. In places such as Toulouse (Occitania), Santiago de Compostela (Galicia), Barcelona (Catalonia), Valencia (Catalan Countries), Zaragoza (Aragon) local entities have organised events in order to promote it.

In November, thanks to the invitation received from the Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Secretary of the Council of Social Entities of the Basque Language had the opportunity to take part in a meeting about the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, where once again, the main topic was the compatibility of the Protocol with the Charter.

# Simona Škrabec

## Chair of Translations and Linguistic Rights Committee

### **After two years of hard work, the Donostia Protocol is already here. How would you express its importance?**

To be honest, I was not completely aware of the importance of the message, since it has caused a deep change between the situation when we only had the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights and today. We have a new approach now, we need to employ new terminology in this globalised world. I live in Catalonia. In Barcelona, 25% of the people were born abroad, so you need to have a different way of thinking, and we have already set a starting point, we need to define how to create that new terminology, those new principles that will guide us to formulate the strategy of PEN in the future.

### **And what's the road map from now on?**

There is something that is invisible, but it may be the most important thing: coming up with an idea. The world is moved by good original ideas. What we have here is a new way of indicating the path, everything we had until now has been taken one step further. Now we have a new statement of principles, a new tool to explain the reality we live in. That is to say, even if we decided not to do anything, there is a document that could help other people. Now, nothing will change if we don't move, the most important thing at the moment is to build up support in as many places as possible.

Those places include institutions, states, some of them would be friendlier, for example, Slovenia would openly support it if we fully explained the Protocol to them, but some other would never accept it, say Spain. Hard work needs to be done in international organisations such as Unesco and the UN, and it is also necessary to extend the reach: we have started in Europe, but this document is not only useful for Europe, it aims to be a document of reference in all over the world.

### **PEN has done a memorable job in the process of creating the Donostia Protocol, especially those in the Linguistic Rights Committee.**

My main mission in the Protocol has been to believe it was possible. From the beginning of the process I have believed that this was very important for both PEN International and the organisers of the Protocol, and I have tried my best to be as committed as possible and to encourage other members of PEN to participate as well. PEN is a huge organisation, it has centres here, there and everywhere, so, in the last two years, my task has been to monitor what the centres and the managers were doing and give them support.

### **After holding hundreds of meetings, the signing ceremony finally arrived.**

The December congress was both a signing ceremony and a party. When something turns out well, the celebration is well-deserved. It was really touching: even though I had been part of the process, even though I knew you Basque people are great at organising ceremonies, it really touched me to see all those people together, more than 700 people who were firmly convinced — you could see that in their faces — that what until very recently was only a dream had just become true.

### **As you have mentioned before, the document was drafted in Europe, but aims to be international; in fact, you chose to hold the presentation of the Protocol and the last congress of the Committee in India.**

You are right, the Protocol has been presented during the congress of Translation and Linguistic Rights in Bengaluru, India, and we have realised how ignorant of India we are, maybe because it is far away or because we have no common models... The thing is that we realised that it is very similar to Europe. India is not a state, it is a continent, and observing their contradictions might be useful for us to understand why we took certain steps, see what we have achieved and take notice of our obsessions or the situations in which we should try to be more flexible. That flexibility is something that Indians possess and would be very interesting for us: we should learn how to move more nimbly, how to adapt to our environment. India is the ideal place to reflect on what to do with languages.



*The Protocol offers a new way of indicating the path.*



# Euskal PEN and the PROTOCOL

**The** road to making the 2016 Congress and the Protocol that was signed in there possible, was a long one. PEN International had a crucial role: it took part in the Scientific Committee that was created for the Protocol, the same way it had been part of the committee that was created for the Universal Declaration of Linguistic Rights of Barcelona. We in Basque PEN have made our humble contribution to make it possible. Paul Bilbao, a member of Basque PEN's executive board and the secretary of Kontseilua (The Council of Social Organisations of the Basque Language), has been the director of the group that was in charge of completing this mammoth task. Both during the process before the Congress and the dissemination of the Protocol, Basque PEN has taken advantage of PEN International's meetings to inform the rest of the centres on the development of the project.

It was during the 2014 Bishkek Congress that Paul Bilbao told us that, in view of that fact that Donostia would be the European Capital of Culture in 2016, it would be important to create a Protocol with characteristics such as those that now constitute The Donostia Protocol. We drew PEN International to our 2016 project the same year when Simona Skrabec took the chair of the Translation and Linguistic Rights Committee, the London office, from Josep Maria Terricabras. Later on, we organised several meetings in Donostia, and we spread our project in the congresses of Quebec and Ourense, where the topic of languages were absolutely prominent.

The project was created in Europe and for Europe, due to the fact that it was going to be part of the programme "Donostia 2016: European Capital of Culture ". However, we knew that the Protocol needed to be universal, since we were sure that in other continents there were communities facing linguistic challenges that were completely imperceptible in Europe: outside Europe there are more languages that have very limited or no written record at all, languages that are only orally transmitted and, in places like India or Africa, for example, the colonial languages are usually stronger and more important than the local ones. That is why, it has been a pleasure to present our project in the **last meetings held by the Translation and Human Rights committee in Johannesburg and Bengaluru.**

The first of those congresses was held when Donostia was already the European capital of Culture (the Protocol was signed in December). By that time, we had already held hundreds of meetings and we had a rough draft of the project, but contributions were still welcome. It was a true pleasure to get to know that big group of African writers that we would never have been able to meet in other circumstances. From Mali to

Kenya or South Africa, languages and voices from all over Africa got together in Johannesburg. They all expressed similar worries, they talked about the importance of writing literature in one's own language, instead of choosing French, Portuguese or English, and about the difficulties and obstacles that doing so can bring about. In the middle of that intense and interesting debate, we had the honour of explaining our reality and expressing that the Protocol would include specific measures to ensure the linguistic rights of all speakers of all languages and that, therefore, even though the text was made in Europe, it was essential for us to gather contributions from writers and authors of other languages.

A year later, the Protocol was already a reality. Paul Bilbao has travelled to many European places in order to present it to local authorities. Meanwhile, the representatives of Basque PEN have taken part in another congress; we have travelled to another continent, Asia, and have found a reality that is both different and full of similarities: a PEN centre that will gather writers from 6 languages has been founded in Bengaluru and on occasion of the event, several organisations from India and Asia attended the meeting.

Our itinerary took us from Africa to Asia, and we had the opportunity to present the Protocol outside Europe again. And this second time, we explained specific texts and measures in a reality that is so far removed from our own, but at the same time has clear connections with our situation. We learnt that their languages' oral use is alive and well and they are also very often written, but, apart from the colonial language, usually English, there is also a superior state language, Hindi, and the rest of the languages, say the languages of Southern India, come after. The Protocol wants to create a solid base in all these realities, it wants to list the rights of languages and speakers and define the steps that need to be taken to ensure those rights.

The last PEN congress was in Lviv, Ukraine. We are back in Europe, back in the Western world, we are in a place that is very rich linguistically speaking, a place where history has considerable weight, an area that is trying to protect, promote and strengthen its local identity in an attempt to resist the pressure and the strength of big languages that come from both East and West. We have shown the protocol to Ukrainian, Hungarian, Romanian, Slovakian, Polish and Russian speakers, as well as to speakers of other languages. We have travelled from India to Quebec, from South Africa to Wales and Cata-

lonia, and we still have a very long way to go ahead of us.

But we hold the fruit of that mammoth work in our hands, and we are determined to continue spreading it in the future meetings and congresses.

