

Basque Writing 3

KORRIKA!

Popular race in support of the language



The KORRIKA is a relay race. Over ten days, day and night, Basque citizens organise a relay race through the Basque Country covering nearly 2,000 kilometres. The initiative came about in 1980 and has continued uninterrupted for the last 30 years: every two years thousands and thousands of citizens don their sports clothes and trainers and go out to run. What for? To say that Euskara, the Basque language, is alive and well, and to declare that it does not stand still despite being an old language.

We all have anecdotes to tell about the Korrika. I still remember the astonishment expressed by us Basque teachers in our town when in 1980 we were told that we had to measure the area kilometre by kilometre and that at each boundary stone we had to post at least one person to take the baton. The baton would be passed on to the next person in the following kilometre. Two days before that we had marked out the road using chalk. But the day before it started to rain and we had to chalk over the marks again very quickly.

Hello everyone!

One of the aims of the Basque PEN Centre is to make writers in the Basque language known abroad, the works produced by these writers and subjects to do with Basque literature. We devoted the first *Basque Writing* to Literature for Children and Teenagers, and the second to young writers, because we realised at one point that there were 75 writers under the age of 40 who were having high quality work published.

Through this edition of *Basque Writing* we want to make an interesting subject well known internationally: an initiative developed by the Basque Country to revive its lesser-used language which we feel is an interesting initiative and which could serve as a model for other lesser-used languages.

We never thought that such a madcap idea could be a success. But it seems we were wrong. By the time the Korrika arrived, hundreds of people were waiting in the street ready to run.

Over all these years the Korrika has not only united the cities and towns in the Basque Country. It has made the leap to other countries as well. The Korrika has been organised by Basque speakers in the places where they live, in New York, Montevideo, Mexico, Mar del Plata, Madrid, Barcelona, Beijing, Shanghai and Sydney, and today other languages have also started running to proclaim the survival of their languages, Gaelic, Breton, Catalan and Galician among them. For more details, read the following pages.



Laura Mintegi
President of the Basque PEN Centre

THE HEART THAT PUMPS BASQUE



Lutxo Egia (writer)

The first time I took part in the Korrika I didn't know any Basque. I did not even know what the Korrika was. I remember it very clearly. It was the year 1983. The Korrika set off in Baiona (Bayonne), on the other side of the frontier, on 3 December 1983. I was 14. After covering 1,960 km it ended in Bilbao on 11 December under the slogan Euskaraz eta kitto! (In Basque and that's it!)

All of a sudden we spotted a large group of runners in the "Zazpi Kaleak" (Old Quarter) of Bilbao. Goodness knows what we were up to. Loads of



people shouting and singing were running towards us. It was a very happy atmosphere. As I said, I had no idea what that race was all about, but I realised immediately that the runners were being propelled forwards by their feelings, not by their legs.

"Come on!" someone goaded us on. "This is a race in support of the Basque language. Didn't you know?"

No, we had no idea. We thought starting to run along the streets of Bilbao would be fun thing to do at that moment.

A few years later when I got down to learning Basque, I remembered that third edition. I checked out the newspaper library. At that time the AEK [Adult Basquisition and Basque Literacy Coordinating Body] wanted to pay a tribute to the writer Gabriel Aresti. When I joined in the Korrika, I not only could not speak Basque, I had no idea who Gabriel Aresti was either. A Bilbao-born person like myself, Basquised in adulthood like myself and the main innovator of modern Basque poetry. At school we knew who Cervantes, Shakespeare or Molière were. But we didn't know who Aresti was. Nowadays, fortunately, any student knows who Aresti is.

More than once I have wondered why we Basques run.

Running does have a systolic-diastolic movement. Or the other way round, a diastolic-systolic one. Whenever the baton is passed on, the runners waiting by the roadside are sucked up in the manner of a vacuum cleaner; one by one they are gently left behind. Taken and deposited. The Korrika's centripetal force carries them inside as in a whirlpool; the centrifugal force, by contrast, spews them out.

And this race pumps Basque into all the corners of the Basque Country. Like a heart. Heart when people puff their way up the mountain passes; heart when at night they run across the plains almost alone (but not lonely); heart, when people cross neighbourhoods and towns here and there; and heart, when they arrive late for an exam, because they have been participating.

EDURNE BROUARD

Interview given by the Director of the AEK

*“With the baton carried from hand to hand and everyone participating
we reach the finishing line”*

Urtzi Urrutikoetxea (writer)



The Korrika has come a long way since 1980, thousands of people have participated in it and it has become a huge event. The main idea is that Basque belongs to everyone, that those who can speak it should do so, and that those who can't speak it, should learn it, and the latter option is offered to the migrants who have come to the Basque Country over the last few years by inviting them to come over to Basque, too. Edurne Brouard is the chief coordinator of the AEK, the body that organises the Korrika.

How would you sum up the Korrika?

The Korrika is a huge demonstration in favour of the language, but always in a fun way and it encourages people to participate. I would highlight three aspects: firstly, it covers the whole area of Basque. Secondly, it encourages everyone to participate. This is represented by the baton, which has to reach the finishing line, and to achieve our aim we need everyone to participate, because the baton has to be passed from one hand to the next. And thirdly, the running is not a race but it is symbolic, we cannot move slowly, in other words, the future of our language is at stake right now and we have to move fast.

Hundreds of people take part, what preparations are needed for such an event?

The preparation is massive. As soon as one Korrika is over, we make a start on the next, getting the lines of work ready. One person is there working on it, not on his or her own of course, there are lots of helpers, people who have been involved before, some don't belong to the AEK any more, but they continue to support the Korrika. The most salient feature is the working group, in both directions, top down and bottom up, analysing previous events, trying to correct the mistakes and preparing the lines of work for the coming years. So we ask a question from the very start: What do we want to do with the Korrika? What do we want to highlight about Basque during 2011? What will we be organising the Korrika for? It is discussed during AEK's General Meeting, the local groups are informed and their views are gathered.

**And once the Korrika has got going, what has to be organised?**

That's a difficult question to answer. What is involved in organising it? Being on the local committees? We have 500 towns, there are at least five people in each one, and there are between 3,500 and 4,000 people directly involved. It's a very broad concept; as far as we are concerned, the person who buys the T-shirt and attends the cultural events is a participant, the one who runs as well, of course, but also the elderly people who watch it from their balconies.

How did the Korrika come about?

1980 was a very tricky year. The AEK needed ideas to survive, it needed funds and had to raise them in a short time, the General Basque Council was there, problems were anticipated and the story goes that one night after a dinner the idea of the Korrika came about. However, some work had been done in advance, it wasn't totally unprepared. In the end, it was thought to be the most appropriate idea not only to collect money but also to encourage people to participate directly. There was an idea to sell works of art of artists, as other associations had done; we also toyed with this idea,

but we favoured this extra advantage of the Korrika as it would

encourage participation. And immediately we saw we had got it right, as the Korrika reached the

towns and villages they often rung the church bells, on the coast the boats greeted us by sounding their horns; until that moment we did not know whether selling the kilometres and the idea of people participating would work, but we immediately saw that it would. Urtza Errasti was in charge at first, and the story goes that when he was in the mountains once after a Korrika had begun, there was a terrible snowstorm and then all of a sudden he saw a stone lifter coming up the mountain pass with a round stone and the baton, and at that moment he is reported to have said, "This is for ever."

International contacts are also important, aren't they?

Not from the start but the AEK did have international connections at an early stage. That would have been the 3rd or 5th Korrika, and together with the EKB (Commission for Basque Culture) at that time space was made for the indigenous peoples of America. There were many Aymara in Bilbao running along the main street at that time. It was a strange phenomenon: the Korrika is unknown in Spain, the media have never taken any notice of it, unless it had got mixed up in political conflicts. But in international relations many have taken the idea of the Korrika to their own countries. The Catalans and Galicians do it, not an exact copy, or with the same frequency or covering the whole area, but based on the same idea. Over the last two years the one with the most strength and the most similar to ours is the one in Brittany, this year they have started doing it in Ireland, too, and next year it will be taking place in Wales. That is as far as other countries and languages are concerned, but there are Basque Korrikas all over the world as well, and with the exception of Africa, the Korrika has been organised by the Basque communities in countries in all the continents.

WHAT EXACTLY IS THE KORRIKA?

How did it come about?

The Korrika is a huge race in favour of the Basque language run by the AEK (Adult Basquisition and Basque Literacy Coordinating Body) all over the Basque Country. It aims to raise an awareness in favour of our language and to gather funds to support the day-to-day work at the night schools as well as at the Basque language teaching centres.

The first edition took place in 1980. There have been a total of 16 editions since.

From start to finish in the Korrika a baton is passed from one person to the next from one kilometre to the next among the runners, day and night, without any interruption. As everyone contributes towards getting the baton to the finishing line, the participation of every single person is required; and the baton is passed on from hand to hand, and apart from that, it also suggests transmission. The baton contains a message that will be read out by a well-known Basque speaker when it reaches the finishing line, and until that moment it remains a secret.

More than one person is bound to think that running for ten or eleven days, day and night, in good and bad weather, in the cold and heat is a crazy idea. And maybe they are right. Running to support a language is a crazy idea.

This crazy idea came about in 1980. I think that was a crazy time all over the world and here, too. The time of crazy ideas. Here and there great crazy ideas came about. Creating was an important part in the everyday life of any man or woman. To put it another way, unlike today, few people were afraid of creating. Creating on the basis of a crazy idea. As far as the Korrika is concerned at least, the crazy idea was a success. That often happens with crazy ideas.

The 16 Korrika editions one by one

Korrika 1

29 November to 7 December, 1980. It started at the University of Oñati and after covering 1,820 km (relay) it finished in Bilbao. The final kilometre was done by the National Committee of the AEK, and this has been the case in all the Korrikas since then.

The AEK people decided from the first edition onwards that in each edition a tribute should be paid to someone prominent in the sphere of Basque and teaching; in the first one they chose Xabier Peña Albizu who had been their teacher and teacher trainer.

The baton contained a letter of 17 January, 1966 that the writer and journalist Rikardo Arregi had written to the Euskaltzaindia (Academy of the Basque Language). In it Arregi proposed to the Euskaltzaindia that it should set up a Literacy department, because his main concern was to teach people to read and write in Basque.



Korrika 2

22-30 May, 1982. From Iruñea-Pamplona to Donostia-San Sebastian. It was completed four hours behind schedule because the AEK people made a mistake when measuring the route (1,822 km). The slogan chosen for this second Korrika was: "AEK, euskararen alternatiba herritarra; Korrika, herriaren erantzuna euskararen alde" (AEK, the popular alternative for Basque; Korrika, the people's response in support of Basque). This second Korrika paid tribute to Rikardo Arregi himself.

Korrika 3

From Bayonne to Bilbao, from 3-11 December, 1983, after covering 1,960 km under the slogan, "Euskaraz eta kitto!" (In Basque will do!) . The 3rd edition of the Korrika arrived in Bilbao on time, and paid tribute to the capital's greatest writer: Gabriel Aresti. With good reason: a new Basque speaker (it was not his native language), one of the main innovators of modern Basque poetry, and from Bilbao. He fitted perfectly into the diagnosis of the Basquisition organisation..

Korrika 4

31 May to 9 June 1985, it started in Atharratze and ended in Iruñea-Pamplona after covering 1,927 km. The slogan chosen for the 4th Korrika was "Herri bat, hizkuntza bat" (One country, one language).

The 4th Korrika paid tribute to a writer and great person who had carried the baton in the 3rd edition, and who had died a month before: Piarres Lafitte, the member of the Euskaltzaindia (Royal Academy of the Basque Language) born in Luhuso in Lapurdi (Labourd).

Korrika 5

3-12 April, 1987 from Hendaye to Bilbao, covering 2,085 km. The slogan this time "Euskara, zeurea" (Basque is yours). The 5th Korrika paid tribute to the great "bertsolari" (extempore poet) Balendin Enbeita. This edition also saw the birth of an item that was subsequently to become a must in the Korrika: the number or bib.

Korrika 6

1989. From Iruñea-Pamplona to Donostia-San Sebastian, after running 2,100 km under the slogan "Euskara Korrika eta kitto - Euskal Herriak AEK" (Basque, Korrika and that's it - Basque Country AEK). Tribute was paid to the anthropologist Jose Migel Barandiaran, the runner of a century, the first person to have a tribute paid to them during their lifetime.

Korrika 7

From Gasteiz-Vitoria to Bayonne, 15-24 March, 1991, after completing a route of 2,100 km. It was the first time that the Korrika finished north of the Bidasoa river [in the Northern Basque Country under French administration] and many local associations and political parties publicly expressed their support to it.

The 7th Korrika paid tribute to Remigio Mendiburu, who had made the baton. He had passed away in 1990, bequeathing not only his baton but also his testimony.

On the occasion of this Korrika, 1,200 cultural and sports programmes were organised in the Basque Country's seven provinces, thus sowing the seed of the Cultural Korrika from the 8th edition onwards.

WHAT IS THE KORRIKA?

continuation.

Korrika 8

The race between 26 March and 4 April, 1993, started in Iruñea-Pamplona, covered 2,120 km and finished in Bilbao. The slogan that year was "Denok maite dugu gure herria euskaraz" (We all love our country in Basque).

The 8th Korrika paid tribute to the journalist, historian, writer and cultural player Martin Ugalde and the group that together with him founded *Euskaldunon Egunkaria* (a newspaper exclusively in Basque).

Korrika 9

From 17 to 26 March, 1995 from Donibane Garazi (Saint-Jean-Pied-de-Port) to Gasteiz-Vitoria with a total of 2,150 km. For its slogan the AEK people chose "Jalgi hadi euskaraz" (Go forth in Basque). It paid tribute to the Donostia-born singer Mikel Laboa.

Korrika 10

10 being a significant number, the AEK decided that as a tribute would be paid to the Korrikas run up until that moment, the route should be similar to the first one, and almost the same slogan for the 10th Korrika was chosen. It started in Arantzazu on 14 March 1997 and finished in Bilbao on 23rd of the same month, and "Euskal Herria Korrika!" (Basque Country, running!) was the slogan.

The person to whom tribute was paid was Luis Villasante, who had been the chairman of the Euskaltzaindia (Royal Academy of the Basque Language) for 18 years; he ran the first few metres. The event was packed with emotion because of Villasante's importance in the development of Basque culture, and the significance of the place, Arantzazu.

Korrika 11

19-28 March, 1999, from Iruñea-Pamplona to Donostia-San Sebastian. "1+1=hamaika. Zu eta ni euskaraz" (1+1 = eleven. You and me in Basque) was the slogan adopted by this edition of the Korrika.

And following the general line of the campaign, when choosing the person to receive the tribute, the 11th Korrika paid tribute to eleven (eleven also means "a large number" in Basque).

For the first time in the history of the Korrika, the Basque Government participated in it.

Korrika 12

From 29 March to 8 April, 2001, from Vitoria-Gasteiz to Bayonne, at the start of the globalisation millennium adopting the slogan "Mundu bat euskarara bildu" (Involve a whole world in Basque).

The President of the Basque Government Juan Jose Ibarretxe carried the baton for the second kilometre, thus becoming the first and, so far (2010), the only Basque President to do so.

The AEK decided to pay tribute to the Association of Extempore Verse Enthusiasts of the Basque Country, because according to the organisers, verse making has known better than anyone how to link tradition and modernity.

Korrika 13

4-13 April, 2003, from Maule to Iruñea-Pamplona. The slogan was "AEKrekin Herri bat geroa lantzen" (A country is working on its future together with the AEK).

It was marked totally by the closing down of the newspaper *Euskaldunon Egunkaria* and the arrests and indictments in connection with it. The 13th Korrika paid tribute to the "Ez dok hamahiru" movement and together with them to the whole generation which had been of tremendous importance in the cultural revival that took place alongside it.

When the Korrika had nearly reached Iruñea-Pamplona, the Interior Department of the Government of Navarre prohibited it from entering the city and warned the organisers to end it in the suburbs of the city. After numerous arguments and negotiations the organisers took the matter to court and after getting a resolution in their favour entered the Foru Plaza of Iruñea-Pamplona on 13 April with the baton carried by Martxelo Otamendi (*Euskaldunon Egunkaria's* former chief editor) and surrounded by numerous people. From there he read out the message carried inside the baton, and it was the document he had written when he was released from custody.

Korrika 14

10-20 March, 2005, from Orreaga (Roncesvalles) to Bilbao, with the slogan "Euskal Herria euskalduntzen. Ni ere bai!" (Basquising the Basque Country. Me, too!) and completed a route measuring 2,350 km.

The 14th Korrika paid tribute to the thousands of citizens who had taken the decision to learn Basque, those who had already achieved their goal, and those who were in the process of doing so, and as the reflection and representative of all of them, to the poet Andolin Eguskitza from Santurtzi, who had passed away a few months before the start of the Korrika.

Korrika 15

22 March to 1 April, 2007, starting in Karrantza and finishing in Iruñea-Pamplona after completing 2,360 km. "Heldu!" (Seize!) was the general slogan and sub-slogans based on it were used: "Heldu hitzari!" (Seize the word!); "Heldu lekukoari!" (Seize the baton!); "Heldu elkarlanari!" (Seize co-operation!); "Heldu euskarari!" (Seize Basque); "Heldu Herriari!" (Seize the Country).

The 15th Korrika paid tribute to Basque Women, the women who have safeguarded the Basque language, the women who have facilitated the transmission of Basque, which is vital for its survival. The tribute reflected them throughout the Korrika and was especially highlighted during the course of it because hundreds of women carried the baton.

Korrika 16

26 March to 5 April, 2009, from Tuteria (Tudela) to Vitoria-Gasteiz covering 2,503 km, the longest Korrika ever. The slogan: "Ongi etorri! Euskaraz bizi nahi dugunon Herrira" (Welcome to the Country where we want to live in Basque).

The 16th Korrika paid tribute to all the families that had learnt Basque and had then ensured its transmission, and also to all the families that had facilitated the transmission of Basque after losing it and relearning it.



Summary by Lutxo Egia

IN FAVOR OF THE GAELIC, KORRIKA

In line with the KORRIKA model, people in other countries have also decided that it is a tremendously interesting, crazy idea to run in support of a minority language. In Galicia and in Catalonia they have had their sights on us for a long time, and have organised similar events. However, it is in Brittany and in Ireland where the KORRIKA has left its clearest mark.

This year, the second year of the AR REDADEG was held in Brittany, and the first edition of the RITH took place in Ireland. Seán Ó hAdhmaill, the organiser of the RITH, tells us about their experience.



Seán Ó hAdhmaill

This year you have organised RITH for the first time. Who has organised it and which have been their main targets?

A team of volunteers who want to make a difference and make the Irish language relevant for generations to come! Rith 2010 is supported by Conradh na Gaeilge, Glór na nGael, Comhlúadar, Gael Linn, Seachtain na Gaeilge, and many other organisations that actively support and promote the Irish language.

The organising committee, or lárchoiste, come from all four provinces of Ireland, from Gaeltacht and non-Gaeltacht areas, and from a variety of disciplines such as education, finance, information technology and Irish language support groups. The lárchoiste visited the Basque Country in March 2009 to experience your equivalent cultural festival, the Korrika and we met with the event organisers to get direction on the launch of the Irish festival.

Rith 2010 is a brand new way to celebrate the Irish language and culture in a way that is visual, fun, community based and can be celebrated throughout the island of Ireland. Rith 2010 also aims to raise money to create a new fund for the promotion of the Irish language in the community.

What does RITH mean? Why did you choose that name?

"Rith" means "run" in the Irish language. Because that's what it is, a 1600Km relay-run around Ireland promoting the Irish language.

Have you chosen any special motto for this edition? For example in the last KORRIKA we dedicated the edition to those that coming from outside the Basque Country have learnt to speak the language. What about you?

As well as RITH2010 - Rith ar son na Gaeilge ([a] run for the Irish language). Chomh maith le "Rith ar son na Gaeilge" we had "Ni Neart go gur le chéile" (In Unity, there is strength).

As we do, you have decided to have baton passing on every kilometre. What was inside it?

A special hand-carved baton has been designed that will carry a hidden message throughout Rith 2010. At the end of the run, the message of support for the Irish language, written by Mary McAleese, the President of Ireland, will be read out as part of the St. Patrick's Day parade in Galway. The message is available on our website at this url. <http://www.rith.ie/teachtaireacht>

As a first edition, how do you evaluate it? How was it? Have you fulfilled your expectations? Has it been very difficult to organise a nine-day running relay-race? Organising an event for the first time is always a challenge. We had to start so many things from scratch; build up new relationships, develop a website, raise funding, and of course explain the concept of the Rith to many people for the first time. But we had a great energy on the team, with over a hundred volunteers up and down the country. We learnt many lessons that will contribute to the success of the next Rith in 2012. All in all, we were delighted with our first ever Rith event.



What was the response of the Irish people?

We had a tremendous reception from schools, sports clubs, language organisations and the general public that made up the 20 thousand participants along the route. We have lots of people inviting us back already for the 2012 event and the planning is already underway!

Can you tell me any curious anecdotes during the race?

There was a strange but nice scene of a band playing on the side of the road, a dual-carriage way, but in the middle of nowhere. We weren't expecting it but it was nice that they made the effort to support us. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nTN3rZ0LkBA>



... continuation

This has been the first edition; will there be a second one?

Planning has already begun. It will take place in 2012 and will be even bigger and better than RITH 2010.

In your opinion, what does it have to do the running event and the promotion of a language?

It doesn't in and of itself but it does allow us to connect with people throughout Ireland north, south, east and west, Gaeltacht, Galltacht (english speaking area), rural and urban. It is visual and promotes not only physical wellbeing but also cultural wellbeing. It's also an extremely open way of engaging with communities through Irish, it doesn't matter who much Irish you have (if at all) to run a kilometre as part of the RITH festival. The event also inspired people who wanted to support the revival of the language in their area but didn't know how best to do this.

Just briefly, what is nowadays the situation of Gaelic language? Are there any reasons to feel positive?

Many! We have a huge demand in Irish-medium education from pre-school to third-level. More businesses are starting to see the value of using Irish, including a recent campaign in New York to have an Irish language option on ATMs.

The Irish government are finalising a National Strategy for the Irish-language and they're currently trying to get all-party support for it. There are also many challenges facing the Irish language especially in the Gaeltacht but with the development of Irish language festivals and community events like RITH 2010 we are normalising the use of the language. As we say in Irish Tús maith, leath na hOibre (a good start is half work).

In our case, we have been 30 years running to promote our language. What do you think about our experience?

The Basque community spirit and determination is enviable. We've travelled to the Basque Country and taken part in the Korrika and met with it's organisers. We acknowledge the success you've made of the Korrika over its 30 years of development. We also believe that the Korrika and other language initiatives have made the Basque language revival an important issue that physically ties each village to the next. We have learned from your experience and continue to do so while also making RITH an distinctly Irish festival and passing on our knowledge and expertise on. We look forward to working with our Basque friends to promote and develop the Korrika/RITH concept and hopefully we'll see you all at next year's Korrika!

OTHER KORRIKAS



The Beijing Korrika



The Shanghai Korrika



The Breizh Korrika



The Montevideo Korrika



The New York Korrika

The *Korrika*, the symbol of recovery

Paul Bilbao (General Secretary of Kontseilua-
Association of Social Organisations Supporting Basque)

November 1980: Algorta, the place where I was born. I first took part in the *Korrika* when I was only a child. It was a Saturday morning with dismal weather. My mother, my brother, my cousins, my aunts... we all stood in the entrance to our house waiting for goodness knew what. And at that moment a crowd of people racing and shouting arrived. We too joined in the *Korrika*...

March 2009: The town of Tuteria in the south of Navarre. The town where the authorities attach greater value to English than to Basque, which is the autochthonous language. Waiting to see when the 16th edition of the *Korrika* would begin. Ready to run the first kilometres of the race that would be over 2,500 km long and would be run day and night over a period of nine days.

Twenty-nine years have passed between my two contacts with the *Korrika*. Nevertheless, despite the passing of that period of time, it will be necessary next year once again to run across the country of the Basque language, because we need to speed up the recovery of our language.

Over the 29 years there have been changes in the recovery of our language, but not as many as we would like. Today, in the territory of our language that has a surface area of only 21,000 km² our right to live in Basque is recognised depending on the spot where we live. We still have no rights in the country of the Basque language that is under the administration of the French State.

In the Spanish State our right to live in Basque is recognised depending on which autonomous community (region) we live in. That could be why the *Korrika* has to run in the country of the Basque language because all of us Basque speakers need to be reminded that living in our autochthonous language, Basque, is a basic right.

Over the last 29 years the number of Basque speakers has increased; we can read more and more



literature in Basque, in the original and in translation; there are more and more Basque-language mass media; on the Internet, too, Basque is occupying a reasonable space... Nevertheless, we have to hold *Korrikas* in support of our language; because minority languages like our own are in a hurry.

To learn in Basque throughout the country of the Basque language, to attend university in Basque, to watch films in Basque at the cinema, to have product labels in Basque, to speak to our doctor in Basque... many things are still lacking for us to be able to live in our language normally. To achieve this, we know that we cannot wait on the good will of the authorities. At the end of the day, being able to live in our language needs the commitment of each and every one of us, and the *Korrika* is an effective means for demonstrating that.

Indeed, even though the *Korrika* is an initiative of the AEK, it has become a symbol of the recovery of the Basque language. Through the *Korrika* all the citizens are activated, each one offers the *Korrika* what he or she can, and consequently contributes to the recovery of the Basque language. The *Korrika* shows that what seems impossible can be achieved through effort. The *Korrika* is a show of strength of the country of the Basque language, the *Korrika* overcomes the limits set on the language, the *Korrika* reflects a country that wants to live in Basque.

The next *Korrika* will be in 2011. Once again, hundreds of people will be racing to show they belong to the speech community that wants to live in Basque. Me, too!