

# **GUIDELINES FOR THE LINGUISTIC POLICY OF THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

**Basque, a versatile, living, everyday language for the twenty-first century**

## **PRINCIPAL PAPER**

---

29 April 2008



**KULTURA SAILA**  
Hizkuntza Politikarako Saiburuordetza  
**DEPARTAMENTO DE CULTURA**  
Viceconsejería de Política Lingüística

***EUSKARAREN AHOLKU BATZORDEA***  
***BASQUE ADVISORY COUNCIL***



# AURKIBIDEA

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PROLOGUE.....	10
I. INTRODUCTION.....	14
2. PARADOXES OF THE LINGUISTIC POLICY TO REVITALISE BASQUE – MAIN FEATURES OF THE PRESENT SITUATION.....	18
2.1. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF BASQUE.....	18
2.2 LEGAL STARTING POINT.....	20
2.3. THE OTHER SIDE OF BASQUE’S ADVANCE.....	23
3. LINGUISTIC POLICY FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: PRINCIPLES AND CHALLENGES.....	33



## **MEMBERS OF THE BASQUE LANGUAGE ADVISORY BOARD**

1. President: Juan Jose Ibarretxe Markuartu jauna, president of the Basque government.
2. Vice-president: Miren Azkarate Villar, culture minister of the Basque government.
3. Patxi Baztarrrika Galparsoro, Basque government deputy minister for linguistic policy
4. Joseba Erkizia Itoitz, director general of HABE
5. Julian Beloki Gerra, director-coordinator of Eusko Irratia S.A., designated by the director general of Euskal Irrati Telebista.
6. Joseba Alkalde Amutxategi, secretary general of vicepresidency, designated by the minister of finance and public administration
7. Pedro Otxoa Bernales, deputy education minister, designated by the minister of education, universities, and research
8. Jon Urrutia Mingo, director general of IVAP
9. Lorena López de la Calle, regional deputy for Basque language, culture, and sports, appointed at the proposal of the Álava regional council
10. Miren Dobarán Urrutia, director general of Basque language promotion, appointed at the proposal of the Biscay regional council
11. Estibaliz Alkorta Barragan, Basque language director general, named at the proposal of the Gipuzkoa regional council
12. Jokin Bildarratz Sorron, president of EUDEL, representing the Association of Basque Municipalities
13. Andrés Urrutia Badiola, president of Euskaltzaindia, representing Euskaltzaindia

Board members appointed on the grounds of their distinction in different fields related to the process of giving the language official status pursuant to this body's Order of 24 October 2007:

14. Dorleta Alberdi Aretxederreta
15. Sagrario Aleman Astiz
16. Kike Amonarriz Gorria
17. Aurelia Arkotxa
18. Inazio Arregi Gordoia
19. Joseba Arruti Lafuente
20. Nerea Azurmendi Zabaleta
21. Koldo Biguri Otxoa de Eribe
22. Garbiñe Biurrun Mancisidor
23. Allande Boutin
24. Ana de Castro Rubalkaba
25. Gotzon Egia Goienetxea
26. Ana Eizagirre Garate
27. Aingeru Epaltza Ruiz de Alda
28. Lore Erriondo Korostola
29. Malores Etxeberria Arrese
30. J. Iñaki Etxezarreta Alberdi
31. Estitxu Fernandez Maritxalar
32. Iñaki Goirizelaia Ordorika
33. Jokin Gorozika Bidaurreazaga
34. Fernando Iraeta Kintela
35. Jean Claud Iriart
36. Odile Kruzeta Olañeta
37. Miguel Lazpiur Lamariano
38. Miren Elixabete Larrinaga Artetxe
39. Anjel Lertxundi Esnal
40. Koldo Martinez Urionabarrenetxea
41. Ludger Mees jauna
42. Mertxe Mugika Balanzategi andrea
43. Imanol Murua Uria
44. Eneko Oregi Goñi
45. Rosa Miren Pagola Petrirena
46. Carlos Ruiz Gonzalez
47. Pello Salaburu Etxeberria
48. Miriam Urkia Gonzalez
49. Ana Urkiza Ibaibarriaga
50. Jesus Uzkudun Illarramendi

Board members proposed by the Basque Parliament

51. Iciar Lamarain Cenitagoya
52. Alberto Lopez Basaguren
53. Garbiñe Mendizabal Mendizabal
54. Txomin Peillen Karrikaburu

55. Tomas Uribe-Etxebarria Maiztegi

Secretary of the Basque Language Advisory Board, appointed by the deputy minister for linguistic policy:

56. Erramun Osa Ibarloza, director of coordination, Culture Department

**“GUIDELINES FOR THE LINGUISTIC POLICY OF THE BEGINNING OF  
THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY” – SPECIAL COMMITTEE**

Patxi Baztarrika Galparsoro, committee chairman  
Erramun Osa Ibarloza jauna, secretary  
Kike Amonarriz Gorria  
Aurelia Arkotxa  
Joseba Arregi Aranburu  
Mikel Basabe Kortabarria  
Koldo Biguri Otxoa de Eribe  
Garbiñe Biurrun Mancisidor  
Ana de Castro Rubalkaba  
Ana Eizagirre Garate  
Lore Erriondo Korostola  
Miren Dobaran Urrutia  
Gotzon Egia Goienetxea  
Malores Etxeberria Arrese  
Ramon Etxezarreta Aizpuru  
J. Iñaki Etxezarreta Alberdi  
Itziar Idiazabal Gorrotxategi  
Iciar Lamarain Cenitagoya  
Gorka Landaburu Illaramendi  
Miguel Lazpiur Lamariano  
Anjel Lertxundi Esnal  
Jose Luis Lizundia Askondo  
Alberto Lopez Basaguren  
Lucía Martínez Odriozola  
Koldo Martínez Urionabarrenetxea  
Jasone Mendizabal Altuna  
Garbiñe Mendizabal Mendizabal

Xabier Mendiguren Bereziartu  
Ludger Mees  
Mertxe Mugika Balanzategi  
Pedro Otxoa Bernales  
Eneko Oregi Goñi  
Carlos Ruiz Gonzalez  
Pello Salaburu Etxeberria  
Tomás Uribe-Etxeberria Maiztegi  
Ana Urkiza Ibaibarriaga  
Andres Urrutia Badiola  
Jesus Uzkudun Ilarramendi  
Mikel Zalbide Elustondo

**PERMANENT PRINCIPAL PAPER  
DRAFTING COMMITTEE**

Aurelia Arkotxa  
Lore Erriondo Korostola  
Alberto Lopez Basaguren  
Eneko Oregi Goñi  
Pello Salaburu Etxeberria  
Erramun Osa Ibarloza, secretary  
Patxi Baztarrika Galparsoro, chairman

## PROLOGUE

---

*Patxi Baztarrika*

*Basque government deputy minister for linguistic policy*

The thirteenth of the plans of action set out in *Future of the linguistic policy* (the document that contains the Linguistic Policy Secretariat's programme for 2005–9) stated as follows:

Taking as the subject of study the road travelled in linguistic policy and the steps to be taken in future years, to encourage discussion and debate, redefining when necessary the strategies, lines of action, and priorities. Given that the General Plan for Promotion of the Use of the Basque Language (EBPN) has been in existence for six years, this is a good time for a debate of this nature. Our discussion of the themes to be studied should be as broad as possible with participants drawn from as wide a range as possible. There should be room in this initiative for the world of Spanish as well as for the world of *Euskera*. Public institutions, education, culture, the media, business, political parties, trade unions, social and economic associations, sectors connected with *Euskera* ... There must be room for all spheres of activity in this debate. The main purpose of that open debate would be to hold a calm and free discussion about the past and to set the lines of action and priorities for the future.

The discussion would be facilitated through conferences, workshops, seminars, articles, and papers. The purpose of the debate will be to regain the excitement of continuing to progress with winning official status for the Basque language.

From that point, the work of the Basque Language Advisory Board was given fresh impetus when the rules related to the monitoring and other specific committees were updated in accordance with Decree 176/2007. The Board was also given additional responsibilities, one of which was the duty to “study and propose new strategies for introducing the Basque language in different social spheres”. As a result of the above, on 24 October 2007, the culture minister, Miren Azkarate Villar, issued an order appointing the members of the Basque Language Advisory Board.

On 25 October 2007, the Basque Language Advisory Board unanimously resolved to act on the culture minister's suggestion and set up a special committee to lay down the “guidelines for the linguistic policy of the beginning of the twenty-first century”. In accordance with that resolution, I appointed the members of the special committee on 14 January 2008.

From then onwards, in order to enrich and promote the work of the special committee and to encourage debate within society, the special committee's permanent committee has been drafting the paper that you are reading now. The members of the special committee have been asked to think about this theme so that they can contribute their opinions and points of view to the discussion process that is open to society as a whole. In effect, the leading figures in the revitalisation of the Basque language are the members of the general public, because the language's present and future and the key to its progress reside to a large extent in their hearts and souls – and above all in their mouths.

This document is the product of many hours work, long debates, and

agreements reached between people with different opinions. Nevertheless, this is in no way a final document. This is not the purpose at this time. This document refers to the criteria that should govern linguistic policy at the beginning of the twenty-first century more than to the known lines of action. Nor does it pretend to be a comprehensive description of all that the team members can contribute in the field of linguistic policy. That is not its purpose either. The team members themselves could make an infinite number of clarifications to this document, and they still have a lot to say. The text is intended simply to start the debate. It is a wide-ranging discussion of the bright and dark spots of the linguistic policy, a discussion written without prejudices that questions possible limitations. It also includes lines of action for the future. It is all of that – no more and no less.

As the social debate continues – and it will go on until at least the end of the year – we shall make a further effort to summarise the situation in another document. Let's hope that we can manage it and bring our own ideas and those of others closer together because the Basque language and its revitalisation need all of us. Because, if the Basque language is to have a future, it must be clearly understood that it belongs to all of us and that it is for everybody.

In closing, I wish to express my most sincere gratitude to those who have worked on the paper: Aurelia Arkotxa, Lore Erriondo, Alberto Lopez Basaguren, Eneko Oregi, Pello Salaburu, and Erramun Osa, who has done the editing.

**GUIDELINES FOR THE LINGUISTIC POLICY OF THE  
BEGINNING OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

**Basque, a versatile, living, everyday language for the twenty-first century**

**PRINCIPAL PAPER**

---

29 April 2008

Translated from the Spanish translation of the original Basque



## I. INTRODUCTION

THE THOUGHTS COLLECTED in this paper have been written with hope and excitement but also with responsibility. In fact, when we think about the Basque language and the success of the Basque community over the last 25 years, there are many reasons to look towards the future with hope and excitement. All the same, we would be wrong and blind if we did not recognise the mistakes we have made and the deficiencies that have existed over these productive 25 years and if we weren't capable of pinpointing the challenges and dangers that lie before us. Fortunately, there is no cause to sound the death knell or to be pessimistic about the future. On the other hand, not everything is as rosy as we might wish, so we shouldn't resign ourselves to settling into a comfortable state of inertia and waiting to see what happens.

One of the features of any advanced democratic society is that all its public policies can be debated. There is debate in our society, too, but among all the issues to be addressed, there is one that demands an important place on the public stage and which deserves much more space than that which it is at present given. This is the Basque language question. In other words, the ongoing debate on a linguistic policy aimed at strengthening the language at the heart of our society. If the Basque language belongs to everybody, we should all say something about it, and we should all have the opportunity to shout our opinion from the rooftops and to compare it to other people's opinions. This is so for several reasons, but especially because if we are to build, reinforce, and expand the social and political consensus that the Basque language needs more than anything else, it is essential to debate the different points of view calmly and freely

A lot of things are said about Basque – many of them nonsense and biased towards one side or the other. All the same, we believe that the field for

One of the features of advanced democratic societies is that everything in public policy can be questioned.

Basque language criticism should be broadened. If we are to progress successfully with the language, as well as shoring up our successes and recognising the effort made by society, there is an essential role for criticism. Criticism that allows us to reject or amend what hasn't been

done well, criticism that is calm and made without fear of being thought an enemy of the language for expressing doubt when faced with situations that may seem to favour it. Also criticism made without fear that a passionate defence of Basque may be placed in a particular ideological pigeonhole. And all of that is the aim of the ideas set down here.

This paper is a response to a proposal that the Linguistic Policy Secretariat set as one of its goals for 2005–9. Let's look first at the proposal, and then readers can judge the response for themselves. The paper is meant to guide and assist everybody who wants to take part in the open and enriching debate proposed by the secretariat. The proposal is the following:

We must not fear debate. Nor should we be afraid to discuss what we are doing and the route we are taking ... and we should always remember – although it may be only as a hypothesis – that maybe not everything we are doing is right or the best or most prudent option. Likewise, we should always remember that we may not be doing everything that should be done. In the present situation, it is essential that we practise self criticism – not to rub salt in the wound, throw suspicion on everything we do, or fuel disheartening doubts. In any case, we are convinced that it is necessary to hold a calm dialogue, both inside and outside the group connected with Basque, about what we have done so far and about the future. ... The idea is to combine criticism and self-criticism without giving in to the temptation to systematically blame others for all the deficiencies and mistakes.

... We do not think that it is ...a question of searching for new formulas in the hope that they will perform near miracles.

... As is normal, we have to do what we are doing better, make better use of the money we are investing, re-analyse and redefine priorities, although the general guidelines and principles remain unchangeable, re-orient the lines of action, and – in short – give a fresh boost to the linguistic policy, while at the same time encouraging interinstitutional cooperation and collaboration between the different agents.”

Not everything done in the name of the Basque language is right or appropriate. Nor is it necessarily wrong or unacceptable to criticise particular actions in the field of Basque.

Over these years, great efforts have been made on behalf of Basque. Working together with, and under the guidance of, public bodies, and with the encouragement of a great number of social agents, Basque society has made an unprecedented effort to revive the language. The Basque people – some actively, others passively but all with a positive attitude – have made it possible to develop the numerous structures, fund provisions, promotional plans and initiatives to guarantee the future of the language, most notably in education. While recognising the merit of this effort, we should, nevertheless, ask ourselves several questions, among them whether it has produced the results that might have been expected and whether they have all been appropriate. Those who think that everything is perfect don't need to ask questions, but, for those of us who believe that all social processes have their ups and downs and that there are no benefits without costs and that therefore both benefits and costs

Social processes do not produce benefits without cost. The progress of the Basque language also has its social costs.

The rights of all citizens must be respected without forgetting, however, that it is the Basque speaker who has to surmount the obstacles.

should be calculated, it is essential to ask ourselves about the road already travelled and the road still to be travelled, because that is the only way in which we shall be able to find effective solutions and answers.

The discussion on linguistic policy should take into account two points of view at the same time: on the one hand, there is the need to take specific measures to support Basque and bring it into the mainstream of public life; and on the other, there is the suitability of those measures. We talk of suitability a) because in questions of linguistic policy “want” and “can” don’t always go hand in hand; b) because not all the measures that seem favourable to Basque turn out to be suitable for encouraging its use; because the social reality of the language and the measures for developing it have limits that we must take into account; c) because, in a democratic society, abuse and risk of break-up must be avoided; but at the same time, d) because most citizens have to be willing to accept the discomfort and to make and tolerate efforts to secure true social linguistic equality, since they must respect the rights of all citizens, whether bilingual or non-Basque speaking. We know – and we must not forget – that in our society it is Basque speakers who still face obstacles to express themselves in their chosen language, and our goal is to eliminate these obstacles through a suitable and balanced linguistic policy that encourages the use of Basque and promotes coexistence. In other words, effective measures are necessary to promote the Basque language, but not everything is acceptable or advisable, even when it is allegedly done or proposed in its favour.

We can see both bright and dark spots in the situation of Basque, but, over the last 25 years, the bright spots have predominated.

If we look at the situation of Basque, we can see both bright and dark spots in our society. In any case, the light has predominated, and the situation of Basque today is completely different from what it was 25 years ago. All the same, shadows still exist and we have to speak about them. Our intention is not to criticise anybody or anything, but rather to channel the debate. We champion the Basque language and our goal is to ensure that it is used in the future. Our hope is that in 25 years there will be more Basque speakers, that Basque will be more widely used than it is today,

Agreement is the lifeblood of any linguistic policy.

that it will be the language of habitual use in the family circle, that it will be used more between friends and in the community, and that there will be more people reading books written in Basque. These are the only concerns occupying our minds and heart when it comes to raising questions and expressing our thoughts. From that point of view, this paper will have been worthwhile if it helps us to shore up the successes that have put the language on the path of its considerable progress, if it helps us to identify the problems and dangers lying in wait for us along the way, and if it helps us to reach broad agreement on all these questions.

We have used the word ‘agreement’ because agreement is the lifeblood of any linguistic policy with claims to be democratic and effective at the same time. The agreement needed to encourage the use of Basque must come about, not just in the political environment but also in the political-social environment and throughout the whole of society. The Basque language problem is, in fact, the problem of coexistence between our society’s languages, and, precisely because of that, it is

The problem of Basque is the problem of coexistence between the languages of our society.

obvious that making Basque an official language is one of the core issues of our coexistence. There is no doubt that the guarantee of a secure present and future for the language would benefit coexistence within Basque society. Democratic coexistence must be based, above all, on “agreement between those who are coexisting”.

Because of that, and also because individual support and the determination and protection of society as a whole constitute the main positive factor in encouraging and increasing the use of the Basque language, it is essential to build and reinforce the broadest possible political and social agreement. The greater the political and social agreement the better will be the health of Basque and coexistence between languages.

## 2. PARADOXES OF THE LINGUISTIC POLICY TO REVITALISE BASQUE – MAIN FEATURES OF THE PRESENT SITUATION

### 2.1. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF BASQUE

According to a widely recognised sociolinguistic principle, three factors must be present before any language can be successfully revived: a legal framework that will facilitate making the language official within its region; an effective linguistic policy and the resources to implement it; and the people's support for and commitment to the language. Although there are different, and at times conflicting, points of view, when we study and evaluate each of these three factors, we are bound to accept that they are already present in one of the Basque territories – the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country. The situation is very different in Navarre and Iparralde.

We realise that the process of gaining official status for a language is long and complicated because, among other things, it is intertwined with the political, economic, and cultural values acquired by societies over many years, and it depends on the individual's wishes, freedom, ability, and habits. Precisely because of this, it is essential to study the process of reviving Basque with the benefit of hindsight.

#### Requirements to ensure the future of Basque:

- A suitable legal framework.
- An effective linguistic policy and resources to implement it.
- The people's support.

#### Advantages of combining and adding these factors:

- The desire of most parents for their children to study in Basque.
- Thousands of new Basque speakers in the last 25 years.
- Most young people are capable of expressing themselves in Basque.
- Basque can express ideas as well as any other language: Basque is present in areas where it was never found before.

If we look back over 25 or 30 years, it is clear that Basque has progressed notably. In spite of the bright and dark spots, Basque is in a much better position than it was 25 years ago. We have Basque language newspapers, magazines, television, and radio. Most parents want their children to take their mandatory classes in Basque and they are willing and able to bring it about. At university, many subjects, and even entire courses, can be studied in Basque, and thousands of students are doing this. Basque is also present in government. There is also a highly professional public and private learning network with 139 centres (*euskaltegis*) where adults can study Basque.

Basque has added thousands of new speakers over the last 25 years. Most Basque speakers 25 years ago were older people. Those who

spoke it least were young adults and children. Today things are the other way round: most Basque speakers are young people.

The versatile Basque language praised by poets has been revitalised during these years and its multi-faceted nature has been highlighted. Basque literature, for example, has reached new heights. The Basque literature now being created is comparable to other modern literature. The same thing applies to translation and cultural output in general. Basque is present as never before in books, CD-ROMs, DVDs, and films. One would have to be blind to reality to deny that Basque is present in spheres of activity and places where it has never before been found, in other words that it is a language which is increasingly spoken in an ever wider range of activities.

All this had to be said when it came to debating the outline of the linguistic policy. It had to be said, but not out of self-satisfaction or vanity that would only cloud our view of the future. As we shall demonstrate later, there is another side to the growth of Basque – a side that demands deep thought.

The development that we are talking about results from combining and adding the three factors mentioned earlier. If it weren't for public support, if the majority of the public, regardless of their politics, had not accepted Basque, our language would not have advanced as much as it has. When we talk about "the majority of the public", the stress should be on the word 'majority': a majority made up of people of different political stripes, of people who speak Basque and of others who don't – they all form this majority, and clear proof of this is that if non-Basque speaking parents had been against it, education in Basque would not be so widespread. This does not mean that all citizens support Basque in the same way and to the same extent. And this will have to be taken into account when the linguistic policy is instituted. There are different levels of commitment, but the support for Basque does exist.

Such progress would not have been possible without the leadership and commitment of public institutions. The support and encouragement given to Basque by public institutions over these years is unparalleled. Likewise, unprecedented resources – financial, human, and material – have been made available to promote the language.

This progress has also been possible thanks to the splendid effort made by the social organisations and businesses which promote Basque and, of course, thanks to the continuing valuable work of so many people who appreciate the language.

Finally, this progress would not have been possible without a suitable legal framework – one which acknowledges linguistic rights and prepares the way for the active linguistic policy being developed by the public bodies. The legal framework of the Basque Country's linguistic policy has its starting point in the Spanish

Some of the things we have learnt from experience:

- The processes involved in making a local language official are long and complex.
- No two situations are alike and they should be treated differently.

Constitution and its foundations in the Devolution Statute. Its backbone is the Basque Language Law and its ample collection of detailed sectorial laws, decrees, and orders. The corpus of the Basque Language Law is based on a broad political consensus. The Devolution Statute, the Basque Language Act, the later Basque State

**The legal framework of the Basque Country linguistic policy:**

- The Constitution
- Based on the Devolution Statute.
- Its backbone is the Basque Language Law.
- Supported by a broad consensus achieved when the law was drafted.

School Act, the Basque Public Administration Act, the 1997 decree making Basque an official language in government offices, and the Consumer Protection Act (which includes a section on linguistic rights) – none of them were passed unanimously by Parliament, but they did achieve a broad consensus in both nationalist and non-nationalist circles. Some matters, especially those related to education, have been taken up by the socialists at decisive moments. We have mentioned all this because we want to show that the suitability and effectiveness of the legal framework do not lie only in its cold rules but

also in the political agreement from which it is inseparable – this is certainly not its least virtue.

## 2.2 LEGAL STARTING POINT

Every linguistic policy has two aspects – institutional and social. In our case, however, when we speak of linguistic policy we are normally thinking about the institutional aspect – as if the pace and soundness of the linguistic policy depended only on laws and the performance of government. This will become clearer if we ask ourselves whether there is any step that the majority of Basque citizens would like to take on behalf of the Basque language which they are prevented from taking by the Basque Language Law or other laws.

**To respect and enforce rights is one of the challenges yet to be met.**

It is true that it is difficult to enforce the law and the rights granted by the law in their entirety and that in some cases these rights are scarcely respected. The justice system is, without doubt, one of the worst offenders. It is also true that the options for improving the present laws have not yet been exhausted, and much can still be done. The real issue, though, is a different one.

The issue is that if the Basque language is not stronger, if the actions to make it official have not made more progress, then it is because society in general sets limits. The truth is that society sets limits on the speed and development of linguistic policy. And it is in our own interest to bear this reality in mind if we want to secure a successful and robust linguistic policy that really does encourage and increase the use of the Basque language.

The basic principles of the legal framework of the Autonomous Community of the

The legal framework is based on three principles:

- Acknowledgement of the citizens' linguistic rights.
- Its gradual nature: not everything can be done in one day. The Basque Country lacks a homogeneous sociolinguistic reality
- Non-neutrality: its purpose is to make Basque an official language.

Basque Country are the following. First, citizens' rights are acknowledged and obligations are placed on the government to ensure that the rights are in fact respected and exercised in daily life. Second, the process is gradual – it is understood that not everything can be done in one day, especially in view of the Basque Country's lack of a homogeneous sociolinguistic reality. Third, the language law is not neutral – it pays no lip service to laissez-faire principles – because in the end its purpose is to make Basque an official language and to bring about a bilingual society.

Let us now take a more detailed look at the main features of our legal framework.

### **Basque is the Basque Country's own language**

This statement appeared for the first time in Article 6 of the Devolution Statute.

What then is meant by “own language”? Obviously it does not mean that it is the *only* language in the Basque Country, or even the main one. In some parts of the Basque Country, Spanish is, or has been, the local language more than Basque. Consequently, we can say that Basque is not the Basque Country's only language or the only language spoken there. But it is a language that is only spoken in the Basque Country. Basque is our own language not because it is our only language, but because it belongs to us, to us alone and to nobody else.

The Basque language is also the foundation and main feature of Basque society's cultural heritage. From that, we conclude that Basque does not belong just to its speakers and even less to Basque professionals. The Basque language is the common heritage of all Basque citizens.

### **Like Spanish, Basque is an official language of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country (CAV)**

Basque's official status is fully accepted in our society. It has its starting point in the Spanish constitution and its limits are defined by the Basque Country Devolution Statute.

The Constitutional Court has ruled that Basque has full official status. This status does not just apply to government offices. It is official throughout the entire

Autonomous Community and on a par with Spanish.

Its official status means that government offices recognise the validity of any document drafted in Basque. In other words, they fully endorse citizens' use of the language. The use of the language remains in the citizens' hands. The main principle is linguistic freedom.

**All citizens are entitled to learn and use Basque and Spanish. Public bodies are obliged to guarantee this right.**

As we have already mentioned, linguistic policy as a whole in our community is based on citizens' rights, not on language rights or territorial rights. Citizens – all citizens – have the same linguistic rights.

In this regard, our laws are founded on the will and support of the people, and it is the authorities' duty to ensure that they are “effective and real” at all times. The

**Features of the legal framework:**

- Basque is the Basque Country's own language, not because it is our only language but because it is ours alone.
- Basque is an official language in the CAV, and linguistic freedom is the main principle.
- All citizens have the right to learn and use Basque and Spanish. The public bodies are responsible for guaranteeing that right.
- The purpose of the law is to give official status to Basque and to achieve bilingualism.
- The main features of the law are sociolinguistic diversity and its gradual nature.

authorities are obliged to take suitable measures to guarantee that Basque can be learnt and used. The citizens have linguistic rights. The authorities are responsible for protecting those rights and for taking suitable steps to enable the citizen to exercise them. Although these steps in many cases may cause unavoidable discomfort, the authorities must at all times ensure that they are fair, suitable, proportional, and effective.

**The purpose of the law (and of the linguistic policy) is to give official status to Basque and to achieve bilingualism**

When we say that Basque will be given official status we mean that it will be possible to speak it normally at any social event. In other words the Law is meant to give official status to Basque.

If this is to be achieved, the authorities and society in general must develop an attitude that favours the weakest. As democratic

societies strive for greater equality, they tend to help the underdog (in this case the Basque language and its speakers).

The purpose of the law (and of the linguistic policy) is to achieve bilingualism. It is not its purpose to oppose Spanish and still less to harm those citizens who speak only Spanish and who wish to lead their lives in Spanish. The law is meant to secure a place for Basque that will be large enough to ensure its continued existence in a

bilingual context, because, in the words of Mitxelena, “Spanish too is from here”.

### **The main features of the law are sociolinguistic diversity and gradualness**

It would be impossible to enforce all the linguistic rights recognised by the law in one day. Similarly, when we consider Basque’s weak starting point, it would be impossible for it to be used everywhere from one year to the next, or even in a generation. It is not feasible to ignore the different sociolinguistic circumstances of the different Basque territories and impose the same measures and the same rate of progress everywhere. The sociolinguistic situation in the CAV is not homogeneous, and both the Devolution Statute and the Basque Language Law specify that sociolinguistic diversity is to be taken into account when adopting measures intended to guarantee that Basque is learnt and used.

The Law makes it clear that linguistic rights should come into effect gradually. Gradually, though, does not mean “put off indefinitely”. It is obvious that those who want to conduct their lives in Basque still face obstacles in many places. How we guarantee this right while reconciling it with the rights of Spanish-speaking citizens and how we introduce changes gradually are questions that must be decided democratically.

## **2.3. THE OTHER SIDE OF BASQUE’S ADVANCE**

We have already mentioned the progress made by the Basque language over the last 25 years in Section 2.1 of this paper, so there is no point in repeating it here. In this section we shall consider the other side of the coin. We want to identify the hazards that we shall have to face if we are to successfully meet the challenge set by the future of Basque. We also want to detect the lines of action that need to be redrawn so as to make improvements and corrections where necessary.

Although Basque has – and indeed needs – more legal protection and promotion than ever before, it is not enough to fully guarantee its future because the law by itself cannot ensure that the language is used. More resources and more money than ever before have been placed at Basque’s disposal. This is necessary, but not enough to guarantee its future completely, because money by itself does not make Basque a language for all purposes. What then is the key?

**The building of a balanced, diverse, and robust co-existence is one of the major goals of any advanced democratic society.**

The key is use, and we, the citizens, hold that key. The building of a balanced, diverse, and robust co-existence is one of the major goals of any advanced democratic society. Basque is a necessary part of that co-existence and the key figures are those who are able to promote its use – namely, the citizens. This means

that any study of advance of Basque should also take into account both the citizens' desires, abilities, and opportunities and the many facets of use of Basque itself – not just now but in the future. Once that has been done, we may be at a point where we can identify at least some of the hazards, because we shall realise that over the last 25 years we have not advanced at the same rate in every area (in fact, in some areas we may even have lost ground) and that perhaps we should have done some things differently.

Basque is obviously not just a language, not just a *neutral* instrument of communication. Other languages too are also more than that. We know that the Basque language is a symbol, the main feature of the plural nature of our society, a cultural heritage that must be kept alive. We know that not only does Basque by itself not constitute a right but that – because citizens have the right to live in Basque – it is inextricably linked to the universe of rights.

Whatever else it may be, Basque is above all a language. As Koldo Mitxelena, with his customary lucidity, said:

A language, whether our own or another, is no more, and no less, than society's vehicle of communication and expression. It is good, therefore, because since it is useful for communicating with one another and for expressing our thoughts, it serves to communicate and to express. For the same reason a sharp axe made for chopping is good and a blunt one is not. We may also say that languages are not in themselves blunt; if they display a defect of that nature, the fault lies solely with those who did not sharpen it as much as they could have done, as Axular said long ago.

We also know that the real measure of the value of a language is its use. In other words “the sharp axe” insofar as it allows us to express ourselves correctly. A language functions as a vehicle of communication and expression to the extent that it is used. Furthermore, the “axe” can only be sharpened through use, and if it is blunt, then those who use it are to blame (“the Basques themselves are to blame,” said Axular). We intend to promote and encourage the use of Basque and, as we understand it, that is the reason for the discussion in which we are engaged now.

**Points to be remembered if the future of Basque is to be guaranteed:**

- The key to Basque's future is in its use, but it has to be guaranteed by citizens, not the law.
- Basque is a symbol, but above all it is a language.
- A policy for prioritisation is needed.

- There are two basic premises that must be taken into account when we discuss the linguistic policy. First, promoting Basque as a vehicle of communication and supporting and encouraging its use. Second, respecting linguistic rights and ensuring that they are respected. In fact, we believe that we must start the discussion on the present and future of the Basque language from two standpoints. Not only should we discuss linguistic rights, but we should also explain what measures we ought to take, which measures we are keen to avoid, which we should prioritise, and which we should lay to one side (although perhaps only temporarily) as we advance towards our goal of promoting and supporting the use of the language with the sole purpose of acting in the best interests of Basque itself. Doing this would control the lines of action and the pace of the linguistic policy.
- In fact, although Basque is spoken far more than in the past and we have added thousands of new speakers, we need to ask ourselves whether they really speak Basque between themselves more than before.
- Some questions about what has been done so far:
- Has Basque increased its presence at school, in the government, in the media, on the Internet? Has the same thing happened between friends and in the family circle, on the street, or at work?
  - Is the consumption of products in Basque increasing?
  - Is the Basque of current speakers more expressive?
  - Is the social status or recognition of Basque improving?

We know that there has been a striking increase in the presence of Basque in schools, government offices, the media, the Internet, etc, but what about elsewhere? Is Basque really spoken much more than before between friends, in the family, in casual surroundings, in everyday social life or in the workplace?

Is the number of readers and spectators for Basque-language products increasing, and if so, by how much?

Do today's Basque speakers express ourselves in Basque better or worse than before?

Those thought to oppose Basque are in a minority. Indeed, it is obvious that the enormous effort made on behalf of Basque would have been totally impossible if the majority of society had not been in favour. But, what social status or recognition does the Basque language have today?

**The revival of Basque is impossible without the support of schools, but schools alone cannot guarantee success.**

Our experience during these years has shown that the revival of Basque cannot be left entirely to the schools, because the revitalisation of its use in social life is only a school matter up to a certain point. The prevailing belief in the 1980s was that "by making schools Basque-speaking and to a lesser extent through public Basque radio and television, the coming generations will save Basque once and for all". Since then, this belief has been the basis on which the agreement needed to advance

the linguistic policy has been built. But believing is not the same as knowing. The truth is that, although it is impossible to advance towards a Basque-speaking community without the schools, the schools by themselves are not enough to bring this about. The old belief leads us to forget that the salvation of the Basque language lies in speakers, not saviours – in other words, the key lies in the natural use of spoken and written Basque. The schools should, of course, be asked to do their job. We fear though that, while in some cases they may be able to give more, in many others they have been asked for more than what they are capable of giving. The students' level of proficiency in Basque does not depend solely on the teachers' language training or on the linguistic model. There are many factors outside school that have a bearing on the students' education in Basque. These include the language spoken by their parents and in the family circle, the sociolinguistic situation of the place of residence, the languages spoken in students' network of informal relationships, and the language of leisure activities and of the wide range of pursuits open to students. The results produced by the same linguistic model will be different in places with a majority of Basque speakers from those in places with a majority of

Many students of Basque forget about it as soon as they leave the classroom.

Spanish speakers, and more examples of the sort could be mentioned. In any case, the question is whether what the school can do in the Basque revival process should be linked to what can realistically be done in other areas of society. In other words, since goals and results are necessarily

determined by reality, whether it should depend on a diagnosis made on the basis of an analysis of the true situation, with specific goals that are tightly linked to the different factors mentioned above. We should accept, therefore, that the minimum general linguistic goals set for everybody must be attainable and that the linguistic results of each teaching centre, though above the general minimum, may differ according to their location. A failure to do this could result in harm to both the language and education.

It may be stating the obvious, but before a language can be used it has to be learnt, and school is a reliable way of teaching it. The contribution made by the schools to Basque's progress has been enormous. Schools are also able to undertake the important task of teaching students Basque in formal and academic registers. But a language will not be used unless at least two more requirements, in addition to knowledge, are met – the wish to use it and the opportunity to use it. These two requirements go beyond the four walls of the classroom.

It is also true, and worrying, that there is a significant lack of language education at levels above mandatory secondary school. This applies to upper secondary schools and especially to professional training centres. In fact, over these years one of the problems that have been seen is that the efforts to teach Basque during mandatory schooling are not properly continued at the other educational levels, in society, on the street, in leisure activities, at work, in the media, and in social relationships. But

Basque speakers must be willing to use it and have opportunities to do so.

it is in upper secondary school and in professional training where the chain of continuity begins to break. In some cases, students who have become Basque speakers during their mandatory schooling start to lose the habit in upper secondary school or in professional training.

There are several possible explanations for the difference between the growth in knowledge of the language and the growth in its use. At present, unlike at other times, there is a growing number of young bilingual people whose first language is not Basque. In other words, there is a growing number of young bilingual people whose maternal language is Spanish. Furthermore, unlike at other times, two thirds of bilingual people live in cities, in places with the greatest number of Spanish speakers. This, of course, means that they have fewer opportunities to use Basque naturally in everyday activities. Two fundamental determinants of language use are often cited: the demo-linguistic density in the speaker's vicinity and the speaker's relative ability to communicate in the language.

When we remember that the speakers in question are not monolingual and that furthermore we want them to use their second language, we soon realise that the influence of those factors is indeed determinant.

That is our reality or, more accurately, that is also our reality. If we bear in mind that 25 years ago the language which we hope will be learnt and used by a growing number of people was a minority tongue – and indeed it still is today – it is normal that problems of this sort arise. In our case, it is impossible for social development to take place without such problems. In view of this, we should not become over-dramatic and fall into pessimism because it is inseparable from a

**The use of Basque should be extended as naturally as possible.** growth crisis. We also think, though, that 1) this reality cannot be changed by decree and 2) since this reality also exists, the Basque development policy must continue. We are aware that it is a task that will take many years, that its pace will be subject to adjustment, and that networks of Basque speakers outside of school will need to be encouraged so that Basque can grow as naturally as possible.

To put it another way, not every measure that may appear to promote Basque is necessarily helpful to the language. There are some which over the long term may unexpectedly turn out to be harmful to its development. To use the expression

**The Basque language issue does not concern only Basque speakers or the followers of a particular ideology.** “whatever is done is too little; Basque needs everything” as a basis for taking action to promote Basque is not a good philosophy. Above all, Basque needs a continuous increase in the number of new speakers and support of different degrees and sorts.

Those measures which turn out not to be useful for achieving this or practices that turn some citizens away from Basque are not helpful to the language, even though they may have been promoted with the best of motives.

The linguistic policy must be above all pragmatic, i.e. it must promote measures that really do encourage and increase the use of Basque.

Basque's future is most likely to be assured if it is allowed to develop in the most natural possible way. At the end of the day, most of us use the language that we find most natural, the one in which we can best express our emotions and feelings. In these circumstances, the way to internalise and fortify the language is to use it both formally and informally. Because use gives rise to expressiveness, the capacity to transmit feelings, emotions, and one's true nature – at least from a psycho- or neurolinguistic point of view – in the parts of the brain used for thought and language. Use is what makes language natural, not love or good intentions, nor an appeal to the genuine or the language of origin.

This is not apparent from some of the phenomena that we see around us. For example, many students who take their classes in Basque switch totally or partly into Spanish when they go from the classroom to play in the schoolyard. Twenty-five years ago, things were the other way round: very few students took their classes in Basque, but many Basque speakers who studied in Spanish switched to Basque when they went to play in the schoolyard. The current situation at university seems to be somewhat similar: in summer 2007, 52% of students took their entrance exams in Basque and for the first time 45% of the students admitted asked to take their courses in Basque. For many of them, however, the language that they use outside the classroom is Spanish.

**The government has to guarantee linguistic rights and encourage the use of the Basque language.**

Before continuing, it is worth repeating that what Basque needs are speakers and opportunities for it to be used. Those citizens who are still far removed from Basque should also realise that the matter is not just an issue for Basque speakers. They should realise that the future of this common heritage can only be assured by an ever greater effort from all of us. They should realise that in this society, which has two official languages, the more equal the situation of both languages the better will the languages coexist and, as a consequence the better will the citizens coexist.

Before ending this section, we should turn our attention towards the government, another area where Basque has clearly made progress. Today, in spite of problems, Basque is used in government to an extent never before seen. There is, though, another side to this.

The government, believing that it was protecting the rights of Basque speakers, has introduced linguistic profiling for certain civil service posts, which means that candidates will have to meet minimum language requirements. This policy has sparked dissent in some cases, mainly when linguistic rights clash head

**In this society, which has two official languages, the more equal the situation of both languages the better will the languages coexist and, as a consequence the better will the citizens coexist.**

**Basque has become a language of government but there is still a long way to go: existing problems must be detected and solved.**

on with a person's existing rights as an employee. In practice, though, there are many exceptions to the policy, depending on age, nature of the job, etc. It is also true that, although people do not seem to realise it, nobody has lost their job on language grounds. Another thing that has been noted on several occasions is that people who have demonstrated their proficiency in Basque are at an advantage when it comes to winning a job. But to mix things together and put them all in the same bag is not really appropriate. It is more important to pinpoint the problems.

Both the 1982 Basque Language Law and the Constitutional Court's ruling on it in 1986, as well as subsequent legal developments, clearly grant full legal protection to the right to work in Basque in the civil service. The ruling and the Law also state that, as a result of the rights related to Basque's official status, proficiency in Basque will be a requirement for some positions in the civil service and regarded as an advantage for others. The sociolinguistic reality of each place should, of course, be taken into account, and principles of proportionality should be applied. This has opened the way to many advances although it has certainly been a winding road.

In any case, in spite of the advances, there are still today many government offices that either find it difficult to use Basque in a natural way without making citizens feel uncomfortable or indeed find it impossible to do so. Also, there are still many government offices that have not taken any measures or done any planning that would gradually make Basque one of their working languages alongside Spanish. Much remains to be done, therefore, to gain official status for Basque and

Although young children are taught Basque at home and at school, the language habitually used by many parents is Spanish. No matter how much children are taught Basque in school, it will be difficult to keep the language alive and increase its natural use unless it is used at home.

increase its use in government offices. It also has to be said that the requirement for proficiency in Basque and its standing as an advantage in the civil service should be closely linked – although too often they are not – to the guarantee of linguistic rights and to the encouragement of the use of Basque. The fact is that unless accompanied by use, proficiency in Basque leads to malfunctions. The ratio between people with a qualification in Basque and those who really use the language is unsatisfactory. Too much emphasis has been placed on having the Basque proficiency certificate or the right linguistic profile and not enough on using the language at work. It is obvious that if we act solely or essentially in this way, Basque will gain few supporters among civil servants, and, on the contrary there is a

Unless accompanied by use, proficiency in Basque leads to malfunctions. The ratio between people with a qualification in Basque and those who really use the language is unsatisfactory. Too much emphasis has been placed on having the Basque proficiency certificate or the right linguistic profile and not enough on using the language at work.

Mention must also be made of the indolence of the state's decentralised services, especially the justice system, in complying with the Basque Language Law.

clear danger of frightening them away from the language.

Therefore, the request for proficiency in Basque (and especially when it is a requirement) should be associated with its use in the job. Consequently, the Basque proficiency requirement ought to depend on whether it may be used or has to be used in the job at present or in the near future.

In any case, the discussion on the government cannot be closed without mentioning the indolence shown by the state's decentralised services, although they are just as subject as local government to the Basque Language Law. Among the different services, special mention must be made of the justice system, and more specifically of the judges and prosecutors, who have failed to accept Basque as an official language. In this area, everything remains to be done.

We have left until last an extraordinarily important question: the transmission of Basque in the family. The place of honour for the most solid and significant advance in the Basque development process in the CAV in these years must surely belong to transmission in the family. We have gone for years without ensuring that Basque is passed from generation to generation in the family, and have seen loss after loss. In Navarre, there is still no assurance that Basque will be transmitted, and in Iparralde the language is in continuous decline. In the CAV, the break-up process that was undermining the transmission of Basque from generation to generation has now been interrupted. Among other things, this signals that Basque is held in high esteem in our society, because, as human beings, we generally let go of what we do not need or appreciate and try to conserve the things we value. It is, therefore, the responsibility of Basque-speaking parents to transmit the language to their children. But there is also another side to it. Although young children are taught Basque at home and at school, the language habitually used by many parents is Spanish. No matter how much children are taught Basque in school, it will be difficult to keep the language alive and increase its natural use unless it is used at home.

#### Limits we found:

- The reality of Basque itself
- The influence of Basque in society
- Society's desire and ability.

That then is the last of our main causes for concern. Nevertheless, they should not lead us to be pessimistic about the future. In fact, the last 25 years have shown us that Basque society is capable of developing the language, of adding more

#### Three essential requirements for the future:

- Ability to use Basque
- Opportunities to use it
- Willingness to use it

Basque speakers and more spheres where it is used in social life. Accordingly, the past and present give us reason to look forward with optimism. The fact is that whether we win or lose the future depends on what we do from now on, so it is important to correctly identify the dangers and to get it right when we define the challenges and priorities.

The constraints placed on us for that task are those imposed by the reality of Basque, Basque's importance in society, and the desires and ability of society itself. It is, therefore, especially important not to be over-optimistic when we design the

linguistic policy of the future. Militancy is necessary, but linguistic policy cannot be based on optimism untempered by reality, because it is an area where we cannot do everything that we – or some of us – would like. We have not always been completely free of unrealistic optimism, but there is no place for it in future because it ignores the limits imposed by reality and its unwritten social rules.

If we had to sum up this entire chapter in a single paragraph, we would reaffirm the importance of linguistic rights and the need to adopt the measures required to make them respected in everyday life and in every sphere. But this does not mean that every measure adopted in the name of linguistic rights is inherently acceptable; rather that they are acceptable inasmuch as they are useful in making Basque more widely used. The linguistic policy must be based on constantly encouraging and increasing the use of Basque with the support and agreement of the majority of citizens. This means that the citizens must know how to use Basque and have the opportunity and desire to do so. In other words, the citizens must increasingly use Basque voluntarily.

**The linguistic policy must be based on constantly encouraging and increasing the use of Basque with the support and agreement of the majority of citizens.**



### 3. LINGUISTIC POLICY FOR THE BEGINNING OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: PRINCIPLES AND CHALLENGES

LAWS, DECREES, ASSISTANCE, recognition, and the like all contribute to the revival of a language. But what is really decisive is that the citizens demonstrate that they really want to achieve the goal and give their support, because without them everything else is useless. In effect, although there might be some ephemeral improvement, the decline would only become more noticeable when it came. In these circumstances, as the linguistic policy is developed it must be adapted to the will and wishes of the majority of citizens. Therefore, as well as being aware of the attitudes of the citizens, it is also essential to be continually updating and renewing the political and social agreement on language.

Basque society has repeatedly expressed its commitment to supporting Basque and, in our opinion, a linguistic policy that is in accord with that commitment should be put into practice. In any case, we must not forget that linguistic policy, whether here or elsewhere, has a primary basic goal: institutions must perforce adapt their decisions related to linguistic policy to linguistic reality. Furthermore, the linguistic policy can – and, we believe, must – assume the goal of supporting the language. The measures to be taken with this goal are, however, located on another plane. In any case, a policy of this sort needs a solid and unquestionable qualitative agreement that correctly defines objectives and limits, given that the measures required by the policy may impact on citizens' rights.

*As well as being aware of the attitudes of the citizens, it is also essential to be continually updating and renewing the political and social agreement on language.*

From this starting point, a linguistic policy, which in a modern society strives to support a language, may have many ramifications, and those general principles may not necessarily give rise to a single sort of linguistic policy. Agreement on principles does not necessarily mean that they result in a single linguistic policy, because whoever has political responsibility will have more than one choice when precise policies are to be established.

The linguistic policy designed in our community is in accordance with the

specific guidelines and principles provided in Law 10/1982 of 24 November and for the last 25 years has taken into account the objectives and limits set forth in that Law.

Considering that social conditions are changing, the linguistic policy of the future should perhaps meet other requirements. However, before embarking on that route, we believe that it would be a good idea to think about and discuss the guidelines laid down by the Basque Language Law and clear up certain misunderstandings. At the same a dialogue will be required to determine which criteria, guidelines, and principles might be worthwhile for a present and future agreement.

As has been mentioned previously, no particular linguistic policy will be found in the following paragraphs. This paper does not include a linguistic plan with specific actions sector by sector and for a determined period of time, because the responsibility for defining, designing, and developing initiatives of that sort always lies with public institutions.

What we propose below are the guidelines for a linguistic policy, guidelines that are beneficial and useful for the Basque language and valuable as a way of encouraging coexistence between Basque citizens.

### **The use of a language as a symptom of its state of health**

The fundamental objective is for Basque to be a versatile, living language of great expressiveness, that will be used naturally and fluently by a growing number of people in both formal and informal activities. We do not, of course, want to see it turned into a museum piece or to be confined within the four walls of a classroom. If Basque is to be kept alive, it must undoubtedly be used in the street and in public services, but we especially want to see its use encouraged between friends, in the family circle, on the Internet, at work, in leisure activities, and in the media. This should be a gradual but unceasing process.

**Basque draws its strength from social life. The key to the future is in its use.**

The goal, therefore, is to increase its use, given that use is key to its future. If that is to be achieved, there is a greater need for people who actually speak Basque than for those who simply know it. Potential speakers must also be made into real speakers. It is absolutely necessary for Basque to be seen as an attractive, agreeable, and natural language by a growing number of people and not as a source of problems. Nobody can be forced into being loyal to Basque or sympathetic towards it, but we must be fully aware that loyalty and support are essential if we expect it to be living, thriving language – and that awareness must be communicated to both Basque-speaking and non-Basque-speaking citizens.

**Objectives: to even out social differences, strengthen social cohesion, and move more swiftly towards better coexistence**

It would be difficult for Basque society to find a better objective for itself than that of becoming a society with fewer differences and a more balanced and robust

The Basque language issue is really a problem of coexistence between our languages.

coexistence, since this is the way to become gradually freer. We have also placed the Basque language issue among our objectives. In our opinion, this issue is really a problem of coexistence between our languages. It is not, therefore, a matter

which concerns just those of us who are worried about Basque and feel an attachment to it. In fact, it is really an issue that concerns all citizens, regardless of political hue and which affects the co-existence of all of us, whether we are bascophiles or not.

We should all set ourselves the goals of gradually getting rid of the social differences between languages; advancing towards equal opportunities in the use of languages; and achieving true linguistic freedom. Whatever the future linguistic policy may be, it should rest on at least the following two principles: first, the

To level out society's linguistic differences by leaving monolingualism behind and encouraging plurilingualism.

utmost respect for individual linguistic choice; and second, the right to be able to freely exercise that choice, no matter what the language. In accordance with the latter principle, we must clearly understand that if

we are to encourage the use of Basque – the weaker language, at a disadvantage, and with fewer opportunities for its use – we must reinforce our present opportunities to use it and create new opportunities.

The less the social difference between languages and the greater the equality, the greater the equality of opportunity to use both languages that we achieve, the less likely it is that any of us will have to sacrifice their linguistic rights. In our society today, the bilingual often end up having to abandon the exercise of their linguistic rights. It is well known that here and now, in several fields, those who wish to express themselves in Basque come up against difficulties. This is partly because Basque is still a minority language in Basque society and because Spanish has for centuries been the language of public affairs and of cultured usage, and to change a reality like this is not just a question of willpower. In such circumstances, our objective must be to make languages more equal so that citizens can gradually exercise their recognised linguistic rights without problems or special difficulties. The fact is that a real increase in opportunities to exercise linguistic choices would lead to more linguistic freedom, which would encourage coexistence, thus benefiting everybody.

A real increase in opportunities to exercise linguistic choices would lead to more linguistic freedom, which would encourage coexistence, thus benefiting everybody.

Stronger social cohesion to build a truly plurilingual Basque society.

### Starting point: leaving monolingualism behind and encouraging plurilingualism

We live in a world of globalisation, which gives the impression that the dominant trend will always prevail in the name of modernity and efficiency. It is the same in the field of language. We are different. Language also makes us different, and we believe in the richness of diversity. Consequently, we think that multilingualism is a prized and enriching value, which should be encouraged and promoted in this globalised world. It is not our intention to make those who are different conform; we are trying to promote equal opportunities. That leads us to support Basque because it has fewer opportunities to be used; but not at the expense of Spanish, which is also from here and which enriches us. Our plan is to bring about an increasing number of equal opportunities for both languages.

A monolingual Basque society is not possible. Furthermore Basque society does not want it. Monolingualism would bring us little wealth and much poverty.

It is clear that plurilingualism in our society mainly refers to bilingualism. Both Basque and Spanish are our languages, and in line with what has been said, the linguistic policy should be aimed at obtaining a truly bilingual Basque society. There are those who maintain that there is no truly bilingual society in the world. They argue that symmetrical

bilingualism does not occur anywhere and that it is not possible here either. In short,

there are two types of message which clearly say “no” or “yes, but ...” to bilingualism: some propose a Basque Country with Basque as the only language for social relations; others a Basque Country where Basque will always be weaker and on a lower level than the dominant Spanish.

A monolingual Basque society is not possible. Furthermore Basque society does not want it. Monolingualism would bring us little wealth and much poverty. Obviously, that is not to our liking.

As to symmetrical bilingualism, we do not know whether we will be able to establish it or whether the generations now living will ever see that sort of bilingualism in Basque society. However, if we set about working unceasingly for linguistic freedom and equal linguistic opportunities for Basque and Spanish in a proactive, sensible, and flexible way, we must act as though balanced bilingualism based on equality of opportunities were really possible and accordingly implement a flexible and realistic linguistic policy which pursues that goal. If we failed to do that, we would hold back a process that needs all the help it can get.

Once the goals have been identified, we can talk about the way in which we can achieve them. When we begin, we must accept certain points of departure and basic principles.

### **We must remember reality and guard against being unrealistically optimistic**

Society wants to have Basque within its reach – a desire that is also shared by non-Basque speakers – and schools are the main expression of that desire. Although the desire to add more Basque speakers may be beneficial for the strengthening of the language, we should never forget that it is impossible to meet all the demands of the Basque-speaking community. Going more deeply into this aspect, if we want to help the Basque-speaking community, we cannot give unlimited support to the wish to add more speakers because, for one thing, a quantitative policy of that sort would increase their qualitative weaknesses in terms of register, correctness, and quality and would put Basque more at risk in the future. In those circumstances, we must carefully consider the policy for adding new Basque speakers if we do not wish to weaken the Basque-speaking community itself.

**Linguistic policy is based not on unrealistic optimism but on the will of the citizens. So we must remember our true status.**

When it comes to reviving a language, the principle of “way there’s a will there’s a way” is not useful, and laws and regulations – while necessary and helpful – are not enough. Many years have passed since Koldo Mitxelena wrote the following:

As I see it, there is some danger in our deep-seated inclination towards unrealistic optimism, in our belief that everything is

Basque belongs to and is for everybody regardless of political hue. Basque's future too is of all and for all.

possible provided that we want it. I cannot be unaware of the miraculous effects of utopia because some of them are in front of my eyes. I would, however, prefer, just in case, that the excitement and enthusiasm, without which nothing practical has ever been done, were accompanied, or even preceded, by the most exact calculation possible of what we want to achieve, the phases in which we expect to achieve it, and the resources that we can count on now and in the future.

We cannot rely – as some people do, more for convenience than for anything else – on the miraculous effects of the decree or on declarations that the language has official, or equal official, status. Just as our people need to find a place among the peoples, our language has to find a place among the languages: a place that will guarantee its continuity and development without extremist adventures. We must not fall into the hell of the ghetto by fleeing from the purgatory of diglossia. Integration is as necessary for us in the linguistic area as in any other.

Therefore, no linguistic policy should be based on unrealistic optimism. Basque would not gain anything by doing that. Also, with regard to revitalising Basque, we should counter over-optimism by remaining aware of the measure of what we are. In effect, there are different factors that oblige us to strengthen the practice of Basque by its speakers. Here are some of them. Basque speakers are still a minority and furthermore they are not monolingual, but bilingual at least; there are significant linguistic differences between the generations; for many years Basque has not been found in public and cultured use; the citizens put other values at an equal or higher level. Because we also want citizens who feel far removed from Basque to gradually come closer to the reality of our language, Basque must be presented as an agreeable, enriching, and attractive window that is open to new opportunities.

Basque is still too weak to compete with Spanish on an equal footing. Therefore, if its future is to be successful, it behoves us to act with the utmost prudence. We must acknowledge without fear that our

society will not be bilingual 25 years from now, but, in spite of that, in a few years we must reach a stage where bilingual people are no longer a minority. We must acknowledge without fear that it is not in the best interests of Basque for the linguistic policy discourse to be centred solely around rights and for us to insist that everything written in Spanish be written in Basque “just because it is our right”. So, we should acknowledge without fear that in tomorrow's society it will be normal for each language to have its spheres of use, without sometimes one and sometimes the other being the main one, and that circumstances may differ from

Because we want citizens who feel far removed from Basque to gradually come closer to the reality of our language, Basque must be presented as an agreeable, enriching, and attractive window that is open to new opportunities.

one region to another, etc. In an unrestricted and complex situation like this one, it is preferable to encourage strategies that tend to strengthen Basque rather than wear ourselves out in an unrealistic attempt to make it equal. If we look more closely at this point and consider the linguistic communities, it is particularly important to design and develop specific ways of treating them, e.g. strengthening, densifying, prioritising specifically the use and knowledge of Basque in the spheres where it is predominant.

To escape from unrealistic optimism we must take into account the entire sphere of action of the linguistic policy, and to do that it is essential to support the treatment across the board. It is impossible to encourage everything at once. Priorities have to be set, which means that the situations of every time and every place must be studied. The steps to be taken have to be identified and planned, and at the same time support from the citizens has to be cultivated. Furthermore, if we are to eschew unalloyed optimism, it is essential, among other things, to continuously evaluate the linguistic policy that is being made so as to reinforce and expand those things that have been done well, to correct those that have been done badly, and to detect and attempt to respond to speakers' new needs – and definitely, to move away from quick fixes. All the above is necessary because without evaluation there can be no improvement; nor will it be possible to adapt to the old and new needs of the speakers and of the community that they form.

### **Basque – of all and for all**

Basque should not be with aligned with any particular political line or ideology. The Basque language is not well-served by those nationalists who claim Basque exclusively for their own side or who attempt to reduce its sphere to that of nationalism, and even less by those who try to link it with violence. On this question, all sides must practise self-criticism, because the fact that there are people in the nationalist world who have, at times, tried to make Basque their exclusive property does not justify the attitude of those who have left it in nationalist hands and turned their back on it.

The future of Basque is not solely a matter for its champions, the *euskaltzales* – much less for nationalists. Given that it belongs to all Basques, all of us, including those who do not consider themselves *euskaltzales*, should take it up on ourselves to encourage Basque in the heart of society and in the individual sphere, by using it more and going beyond monolingualism, because, no matter how social bilingualism is measured, there is no bilingual society without bilingual citizens, although they may be bilingual to different extents.

### **Our own language should be recognised as such**

This does not mean that we intend to protest on behalf of a single language, but that the right conditions must be created so that the weakened language can survive and grow fully alongside the others.

This must not lead us into insisting on monolingualism. That would be a serious mistake, precisely because it would mean accepting that languages are opposed to each other. In our opinion, languages are a sign of wealth, and we have always, to some extent, had two languages.

From now on though, we shall have more. Immigrants, the media, emerging communication needs, etc bring new differences, and our society must also adapt to them linguistically. So then, it is society's task to try to build as peaceful a society as possible. The promotion of this rich diversity means, among other things, that the right conditions must be created for Basque too to develop on an equal footing with Spanish, if possible, and for it to enjoy, like Spanish, real opportunities of use. According to what we have said, we need a linguistic policy that fosters, protects, and creates chances for the language to be used and which enables means of developing it.

#### A democratic linguistic policy:

- must protect the weakest language
- must ensure that those who do not know the language can learn it
- must make languages an instrument of cohesion.

### Linguistic policy must be based on democratic principles

To overcome situations of conflict or marginalisation, to improve the climate of coexistence between different sectors, and to make societies more egalitarian, one of the signs of a democratic society is that it helps those who are in the most difficult situation (whether people or languages).

Linguistic policy must be based on democratic values, not on force or coercion.

Although 'democracy' has more than one meaning, here we are referring only to democratic systems. In other words, to what is understood by democracy in countries with democratic systems: the division of powers and the democracy that comes from the authority of parliament. At the end of the day, democracy is based on the decisions taken by the representatives of the majority of citizens.

A linguistic policy that is designed to be effective at getting rid of ingrained habits is unavoidably going to be uncomfortable, otherwise there would be no need for it. It is like that in every sphere of life, not just language. Any decision taken by politicians will always be better received by some people than by others, and when rights are recognised, the measures needed to guarantee them will inevitably not be to everyone's liking. In recent years we have had the opportunity to see examples of this close up, with the measures taken to guarantee women's rights, gay rights, etc.

Nevertheless, even admitting that this is so, it would be totally unacceptable, in our opinion, to use force where language is concerned, since speakers' rights can only be guaranteed with the agreement of those who speak the language – Basque in our case – and of those who live their lives apart from it. A correctly implemented

linguistic policy can promote social cohesion; but if badly implemented, it can even cause cracks in social cohesion.

A linguistic policy would not, however, be democratic if it failed to offer non-speakers the opportunity to get to know the language, so it would be necessary to promote greater knowledge of the language. Furthermore, to remedy the unequal situation of the languages, the linguistic policy must also be exact and capable of influencing linguistic reality. In short, linguistic policy must be free of excess and must create social cohesion, but it could never be free of discomfort.

Looking towards the future, although the risks of fragmentation in present-day Basque society have decreased, the intent to integrate needs new goals:

#### Goals of integration:

- Basque speakers must not be treated as a linguistic minority in the Basque Country.
- The fact that the non-Basque-speaking world lives with its back turned towards the Basque-speaking world is an obstacle to coexistence.
- Both worlds should be encouraged to get to know each other.
- Immigrants should be integrated rather than assimilated.

- a. Basque speakers cannot be treated as a linguistic minority in the Basque Country – as this concept is understood in comparative law – but nor can they enjoy fewer rights than members of a linguistic minority
- b. The fact that the non-Basque-speaking world lives with its back turned towards the Basque-speaking community – its ignorance of the worlds of the Basque language – means that it is scorning and wasting the riches that we as a society possess. That is also one of the phenomena that most harm coexistence.
- c. By increasing (at least passive) bilingualism through the media and through extension work, we should make Spanish-speaking Basques participants in the world of *euskera*, just as we Basque-speakers are participants in the Basque Country's Spanish-speaking world. We must build bridges in this area too. All of us must contribute to mutual knowledge and understanding but nobody should be offended if we say that those who live with their backs turned to Basque and the Basque-speaking community are the ones who should make an extra effort, since the decision to come closer to Basque is theirs to take.
- d. In recent times, there has been an increase in the number of arrivals from other countries, which should lead us to step up our efforts in favour of social cohesion, equal opportunities, integration (not assimilation), etc. Among other things, it is a matter of ensuring that bilingual education can be accessed and that it has an effective methodology and of carrying out

systematic planning, developing reception projects and making them more widespread.

### **Linguistic policy must be based on the wishes of the individual**

Any linguistic policy, whatever its type, is doomed to failure unless it takes into account that the use of Basque depends on the wishes of the speaker, wishes that nobody is entitled to thwart – those who wish to express themselves in Basque should be supported (indeed to a great extent at times), but the wishes of Basque speakers who choose to use another language must be respected.

Free will sits uncomfortably with imposition. Something is wrong if a given policy is forcing somebody to study a language. It is, of course, essential to promote Basque by enabling its speakers to use it, and the influence of Spanish in daily life must somehow be counteracted by other means. This applies both to the work of government and of private enterprise, which should also have a duty to support the policy.

#### **Linguistic policy guidelines:**

- It must be based on the wishes of the individual.
- It must be progressive, flexible, and weighted.
- It must be integrationist.
- It must be ambitious in considering possible tasks.
- It must watch over quality.
- It must take the linguistic characteristics of each place into account.

### **Linguistic policy must be progressive, flexible, and weighted**

The linguistic policy must be based on flexibility and progressiveness. It must be flexible and weighted to ensure that it is not perceived as aggressive and always integrationist. It is true that language belongs to individuals but its usage is shaped between speakers in society, which, whether we like it or not, has an influence on the linguistic behaviour of other people. All of this sets limits on freedom because different speakers demand the right to use the language that they prefer. In this regard, however, the only people who enjoy true freedom are the bilingual citizens. The majority are only able to use the only language that they speak.

Be that as it may, the choices of bilingual people may sometimes affect people who are not bilingual, especially when the policy implemented to allow them to exercise freedom of use clashes with non-linguistic rights. We should all bear in mind and accept that rights (except for a few, like the right to live) are not absolute, and that the exercise of one right may sometimes hinder the exercise of another. In any case, linguistic policy should limit citizens' freedom as little as possible. The opposite would happen if, instead of being based on the citizens' wishes, the linguistic policy were based on force or coercion.

On this point, however, there are conflicting opinions. In fact, some people believe that linguistic policy should be based on freedom, but with a bias in favour

of the language with less freedom of choice. When there are different languages and the predominant and the less-used language are in contact, then the use of the predominant language would not be a free act but an imposition against the less-used one.

**Linguistic policy must move between what can and cannot be done, while conserving quality as much as possible.**

The qualitative point of view must be taken into account: the linguistic policy does not have the same effect on the needs of students from Laguardia, Hondarribia, or Getxo; a business in Goierri and a shop in Bilbao cannot be dealt with in the same way unless the idea is to attract private organisations to this common task; there is a huge difference between a worker who is stacking parcels on the seventh floor of a government building and one who answers the telephone every day. There are various degrees and aspects of reality, all of them different, and inasmuch as they are different, they are usually – and quite rightly – treated differently.

It is also the duty of us all to encourage an expressive use of Basque and to conserve its quality, but, probably as a result of the increase in speakers and the spread of the language to new generations, Basque will have to pay a price. In spite of everything, as it becomes more spoken and used in additional spheres, the quality of the language will hopefully improve, and the best models of language and expression will surface.

**A linguistic policy that encourages citizens to be bilingual.  
The importance of teaching in achieving this goal**

The greatest achievement of the linguistic policy in the last 25 years in the field of Basque and in our community has undoubtedly been bilingual teaching.

In the debate on the 1982 Basque Language Law, there was full agreement on the value of teaching in extending personal bilingualism and on the need to achieve true bilingualism through teaching. The pact, if we may call it that, was centred on setting up ways of achieving bilingualism in the next generation. The principles laid down in the Law with regard to teaching are well-known:

- a. The individual's right to be taught in Basque or in Spanish.
- b. The duty to study the other official language.
- c. As a goal, upon completing mandatory education, all students have to achieve fluency in the two official languages.

To achieve its goals, the 1982 Basque Language Law empowered the Basque government to determine the linguistic models and in general the measures to make

bilingualism progressively more widespread in the CAV teaching system. The increase in the number of Basque speakers in recent decades is to a large extent due to that decision.

The situation is gradually improving: those who have learnt Basque as a second language are strengthening the trend to transmit it to their children; the spheres of use are expanding; teaching methods used in schools are improving; teachers' linguistic proficiency is improving.

Parents have taken action so that their children can learn the language which, for different reasons, they themselves did not have the chance to learn, and that has been one of the mainstays of the growth reported in recent years. This process has shown the effectiveness of combining three factors: parents' right to choose the language in

which their children are educated; the linguistic goals included in the education programmes of each school community; and the minimum level of communicative proficiency that must be reached in the two official languages upon completion of mandatory education. All this while guaranteeing equality of opportunity for the students at all times and improving coexistence and social cohesion.

When considering the communicative skills of young people now living in cities or in areas where Basque has lost ground, we should bear in mind that – given that Basque is scarcely present within the family, in the spheres of use in the immediate surroundings, in their network of relationships, etc. – these young people have preferred to communicate in another language, and this has had as great an impact on their support for the linguistic goals as on their powers of expression.

The situation is gradually getting better because those who have learnt Basque as a second language are strengthening the trend to transmit it to their children; its spheres of use are getting larger; teaching methods in schools have improved; teachers are linguistically more proficient, etc. All of which has a beneficial effect on the communicative skills of the new generations, and especially on their powers of expression.

In this respect, the fact that the linguistic register taught in school has prevailed for all purposes has also had an impact on the communication skills of new speakers. Furthermore, correct grammar has been given priority over expressiveness and suitability of the language, and this too has limited the success of the speaker's communicative acts. The slavish obsession with grammatical correctness – a phenomenon that has spread among Basque speakers – has restricted the opportunities to use the language. Fear of not using the language correctly is widespread among its speakers. This fear leads to doubt, and doubt leads to paralysis. To break out of this vicious circle, allowance must be made for mistakes;

speakers must be able to speak calmly without feeling that the language authorities are breathing down their necks.

Furthermore, to meet the needs of teaching in Basque, it has been necessary to train a large number of teachers in the language in very little time. Consequently, and taking into account the effort made by these people, it is essential to continue with the task of strengthening their linguistic proficiency.

The progress made has also had other consequences. Indeed, no specific or priority attention has been given to the Basque-speaking areas and, consequently, not only have the local linguistic registers got worse but their transmission between the generations has been interrupted, which has affected linguistic development and weakened the local linguistic communities. Attention has been given to adding new speakers of Basque, but its consolidation has been neglected in the places where it has survived for generations.

In any case, given the successful progress made so far, steps are now being taken to change previous decisions on the linguistic models. Bearing in mind the global prevailing principle of plurilingualism, it is, in our opinion, highly important to remember that changes in education should be gradual, that ideas should be tested

**In the process of fostering bilingualism, in addition to regulated mandatory education, it will be important to teach Basque to adults. This activity should be adapted to the citizens' changing needs and should respond with quality and flexibility to their detailed requirements. Together with all that, any linguistic policy should aim at encouraging the use of Basque in the workplace, in information and communication technologies, and in the media.**

and evaluated before they are applied more extensively, that resources should be applied as they are allocated, and that the desires of the educational community and society should be reconciled as they work towards cohesion. This does not mean that the linguistic models designed at a given moment ought to remain unaltered but that any changes should be made in accordance with prior development. Failure to do this could cause a breakdown and the damage would fall most heavily, perhaps irreversibly, on the weaker party.

In the process of fostering bilingualism, in addition to regulated mandatory education, it will be important to teach Basque to adults. This activity should be adapted to the citizens' changing needs and should respond with quality and flexibility to their detailed requirements. Together with all that, any linguistic policy should aim at encouraging the use of Basque in the workplace, in information and communication technologies, and in the media.

### **A linguistic policy that balances the power of the citizens with the leadership of the public institutions.**

Not everything can be left to the will of the citizens. Leadership from government is also necessary to iron out inequality, strengthen, occupy, and expand Basque's spheres of use without marginalising anyone, and give the weaker party – in this case, Basque – a real chance of revival. We cannot, therefore, just sit back and wait for what fate holds in store for us. Indeed, if we are to achieve our goals, the wishes of the citizens and of the government should go hand in hand in linguistic questions.

The citizens have the right to be dealt with in the official languages – as much in one as in the other – and the government is obliged to respond efficiently to their demand. Nevertheless, government has to do more than just respond to the public's requests. Like the citizens and other bodies, government must be both subjects and promoters of reconciliation on the path to obtaining official status for Basque. Among other things, this calls for the implementation of linguistic criteria in the different services offered by the government offices. Of course, all unrealistic optimism should be laid aside and the Basque language profile required of the civil servants must be linked to the use of Basque.

For years, a certain level of Basque has been a requirement for working in some government departments or plans have been introduced that offer many civil servants the chance to learn Basque. For years now, to a large degree because of necessity, the translation of texts from Spanish into Basque has become extraordinarily important in government offices. However, something which at the beginning was indispensable has become routine, and this has had the effect of holding back the development of Basque, because it has made it into a language that depends on the translations of texts that were originally written in Spanish, while creation of original Basque texts in this field has been reduced to almost nothing. Given this setting, it is now time to shake off old habits. Government should be capable of performing its different activities – both internal and external – freely in either language and making Basque into a working language like Spanish. This would mean that mean Basque could be used not only for simple tasks but for the most advanced procedures. What is the point of the plans to make government offices Basque speaking if Basque is not used freely in everyday activities in both simple and complex procedures? How is the government helping to make Basque an official language if it uses translation departments instead of writing original texts in Basque?

There is no doubt that all this calls for a change of paradigm. The truth is that if use is the sign of Basque's state of health, then it must also be used in government offices, taking into account the tasks performed by Basque-speaking employees and

identifying the spheres of activity connected with the language; giving priority to linguistic empowerment so that employees are able to use Basque in their areas of activity; suggesting that no matter how little is done, it can mean a lot for Basque; gathering and strengthening the support of the employees and the politicians in charge; enabling resources, etc.

### **The core of linguistic policy must be reciprocal action between public and private bodies**

Everybody – not just public bodies – has a duty to act on behalf of Basque. It is a duty that is also incumbent on private organisations. In any case, so that everybody knows what their duty is, it should be clearly stated that, in a democratic society, it is up to public bodies, leaders and representatives of the public to define and give effect to the linguistic policy.

If citizens' support for the language is to be strengthened, it follows that it is crucial to supplement the linguistic policy designed by the government by stepping up private activities and social initiatives and making their contributions viable.

**Citizens and public institutions are the key figures in linguistic policy.**

While recognising that each type of body has its own duties and responsibilities, if these activities are to be performed properly, the different organisations and associations must be encouraged to work together to implement the linguistic policy.

### **SUMMARY**

In this democratic and increasingly plural society, the underlying criteria and principles of the Basque Language Law – support for Basque, own language, official status, citizens' rights, and the plan/dream for a bilingual (plurilingual) society – can still be used to shape a linguistic policy whose goal is to strengthen and revitalise Basque and project it into the future.

Although these principles define the scope of the linguistic policy they do not determine a specific type of linguistic policy. Different linguistic policies may be made within that scope and different measures may be taken within each policy but without losing sight of, relegating, or forgetting the principles.