



**ANDRÉS URRUTIA** *Chair of Euskaltzaindia*



**Euskaltzaindiak, euskal hizkuntzaren akademiak, estatutuak aldatzeko erabakia hartu du, urgazle izena hartzen duten euskaltzainak ugaritze aldera. 24 ziren lehen, orain, gehienez, 32 izango dira. Hala, euskal gizarteko sektoreek tokia izango dute, eta 1919. urtean jaio zen erakundeari perspektiba berriak emango dizkiote.**

## *New blood invigorates Euskaltzaindia*

**E***uskaltzaindia*, the Royal Academy of the Basque Language, has decided to amend its by-laws to increase the number of full members from 24 to a maximum of 32, and to make room for different sectors of Basque society to bring fresh ideas and new perspectives to the institution founded in 1919. The new members will be incorporated gradually, explained Andrés Urrutia, Academy Chair since December 2004, while at the same time vacancies due to the death of members will be filled in the same manner as in the past.

The new by-laws will maintain the lifetime appointments for full members but will provide for special emeritus or supernumerary status for members when they reach the age of 75, without limiting their rights and obligations. The only thing they will no longer be able to do is delegate their vote to another member should they be absent from a plenary session.

Changes in the by-laws will enable four new *euskaltzainas* to become full members the first year, and another two the following year, without prejudice



to the two new *euskaltzainas* appointed to fill the seats of recently deceased Academy members Juan Mari Lekuona and Patxi Altuna

### We're not sitting in an ivory tower

Andrés Urrutia, born in Bizkaia, notary public by profession and Academy member since 1997, is presiding over a period of change in the internal structure of the organization, backed by fellow members. In December 2004 he took charge of the Academy with the firm resolution that the changes should come about gradually without tarnishing the institution's scientific and cultural prestige. He also proposed to improve external communications and revamp the public image of the Academy and its members. "People have the idea that all of the members are elderly and sit in an ivory tower without really knowing what they're doing. Fortunately, that's not how it is. At Euskaltzaindia we work on a daily basis in close contact with Basque society –we are not isolated– so that the language can serve as an instrument for communication among all Basques."

When Andrés Urrutia first accepted the position of Chair, he proposed three objectives in the areas of funding, research and internal organization. At the end of his first year, he says his impression is positive and that his expectations have either been met or are well on their way.

"With regard to funding, an agreement has been signed between the Basque Government and the three provincial governments. The arrangement already in place with the Government of Navarra will continue, as will the agreement linking the Academy with agencies in Iparralde. In the area of research, after 20 years of compilation work we have completed the General Basque Dictionary with over 125,000 words and phrases in 16 volumes. We've launched other projects, such as the Dictionary of Standard Basque, and have improved the Linguistic Atlas of Euskara, drawing up linguistic maps based on surveys on words and word morphology. The atlas makes it easy to see the geographical distribution of different variants of the same word or grammatical structure. Euskaltzaindia has also begun working on a corpus of Basque personal and place names, and we are making the most of the Internet and new technologies. As for the third area, internal organization, we are on the verge of reforming our by-laws to increase the number of Academy members from 24 to a maximum of 32."

The work of Euskaltzaindia is not ad-lib. It requires careful thought and continuous dedication in all areas. After all, the Academy's slogan "Ekin eta jarrai" (work and continue) is not there for nothing. Euskaltzaindia's Research Section studies Basque grammar rules and terminology to build a unified literary language. The job of defining regulations is the responsibility of the entire Academy, which meets in monthly sessions. This task is a key element for the standardization of a language. The Watchdog Section is in charge of promoting the use of Euskara and safeguarding the linguistic rights of the speakers of the Basque language. It puts forward publications, exhibitions, conferences, classes, prizes and awards, and organizes research groups and activities, as well as any other initiative aimed at defending and promoting the language.

"The role of Euskaltzaindia today is not so much to teach Basque language and culture, but rather to encourage those who do learn the language to make sure it is not just a symbol, but a means of communication, a part of our identity, and unrelated to any sort of political ideology.



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## ACADEMY MEMBERS

There are three different types of members, all appointed lifetime positions:

**FULL MEMBERS.** All full members have voting and decision-making powers. Under the new by-laws there will be up to 32. Currently there are two women and the rest are men. Among them are representatives of all of the dialects of Euskara. Over half of them hold university positions.

**HONORARY MEMBERS** Prominent researchers and/or persons who have made significant contributions to the Basque language over their lifetimes. Currently there are 19 honorary members.

**CORRESPONDING MEMBERS** Currently there are 131 engaged in the different working commissions: Grammar, Dialectology (linguistic atlas), Onomastics, Literature, Unified Euskara, Lexicography, Phonology, and in the Watchdog Section, Corpus and Promotion. There are also three other so-called structural commissions: Publications, Azkue Library and Economic-Legal commissions. Experts in different areas also sit on these commissions alongside full and corresponding members.