

ISLAND VOICES – GUTHAN NAN EILEAN

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Island Voices in Europe

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Gordon Wells was delighted to give a short presentation on Island Voices to the Hitzargiak Congress, held in the Basque Country on June 23rd and 24th. There was a very full programme over the two days of the congress, with the first full roundtable discussion focussing on Oral Heritage. Always happy to assert the "Primacy of Speech", Gordon was also pleased to learn of broadly similar projects working in Alsatian, Basque, and Galician.



"Writing is, of course, a very important skill and an intriguing facet of linguistic behaviour", he said, in his opening remarks (simultaneously interpreted in three other languages!). "But it is still, nonetheless, a kind of accoutrement to the essence of language, which is realised in its most elemental form through speech. And in the context of language endangerment, I suggest we must take care to continue supporting ordinary talk, because if we lose recognisable speech we lose the essential medium through which to maintain language."

You can see Gordon's presentation, "Supporting Speech through Language Capture and Curation", here. The Hitzargiak entry on Island Voices, as an example of Best Practice, can be found here.

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