

## More than 20,000 march in Bèsiers for Occitan



Over 20,000 people went to Bèsiers on Saturday to support the Occitan language under the slogan “Anèm ! òc ! per la lengua Occitana !” (Let’s go ! Yes ! for the Occitan language !). People came from all over Occitania to defend their language:

Auvèrnhe, Bearn, Comtat de Niça, Gasconha, Lengadòc, Lemosin, Provença, but also from the Val d’Aran, in Catalunya, where Occitan is an official language, and from the Occitan-speaking valleys in Italy.

Six Occitan associations coordinated the demonstration: the Institut d’Estudis Occitans (Institute of Occitan Studies), Felibrige, (an Occitan language NGO), F.E.L.C.O. (Federation of Occitan culture and language teachers), Calandreta (the Occitan schools association), Òc-Bi (Occitan school parents association), and the Conselh de la Joventut d’Òc (Council of the Occitan Youth).

Others countries were also represented (Catalunya, Basque Country, Brittany, Alsace with children from the Breton Diwan immersion schools and members of the Cultural Council of Brittany. In a speech Diwan’s President, Patrig Herve, spoke about why Bretons support the Occitans in their language struggle and called for support for the Breton language demonstration organised by Diwan on 31st of March in Lorient.

The high turnout of 20, 000 people was twice more than the demonstration in Carcassonne in 2005.

People of all ages were in attendance, babes in arms, children, teenagers, adults, and pensioners acting to show the vitality of the Occitan language and how strongly speakers feel about future language development.

The organisers spoke about developing Occitan in every domain of society: in the media, in education, and in public life. In order to reach these aims, the speakers demanded that the French state must begin by changing Article 2 of its constitution and ratifying the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

During the demonstration, the various opinions of the French presidential candidates were given out to the demonstrators. This is a four page paper published by EBLUL France and by the French association for regional and minority languages and cultures that questioned each candidate on their respective policies on regional languages. The document is available in pdf on the Cultural Council of Brittany’s blog: [www.kuzul.info](http://www.kuzul.info)

*Gwenvael Jequel – 19.03.07 – Eurolang 2007*