

## ARANESE, THE LANGUAGE OF THE ARAN VALLEY

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### The Aran Valley and Catalonia

Aranese is a variant of Occitan spoken in the Aran Valley since the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This territory, comprising 620 Km<sup>2</sup>, joined Catalonia in 1175 through the Treaty of l'Emparança. It was to change hands several times during the 12<sup>th</sup> century until 1313, when the Aranese decided by popular vote to stay within the Catalan-Aragonese crown, and Jaume II bestowed a set of privileges known as *Era Querimònia* on the valley; a true Magna Carta for Aran. In 1411, the valley was integrated by agreement into Catalonia.

### Aranese, the official language and mother tongue of the Aran Valley

The 1978 Statute of Catalonia states that, "*The Aranese language will be taught and protected*". Law 16/1990, of 13<sup>th</sup> July on the special status of the Aran Valley, confers administrative autonomy on the territory, and recognises Aranese as a variant of Occitan and establishes that "*Aranese, a form of Occitan and spoken in Aran, is an official language in the Aran Valley. Catalan and Spanish are also official languages in accordance with article 3 of the Statute of autonomy*".

The same Law states that, "*the Generalitat (Catalan government) and the Aranese institutions must adopt the necessary measures in order to guarantee the knowledge and normal use of Aranese*" and gives full powers to the Aranese General Council in everything referring to the promotion and teaching of Aranese.

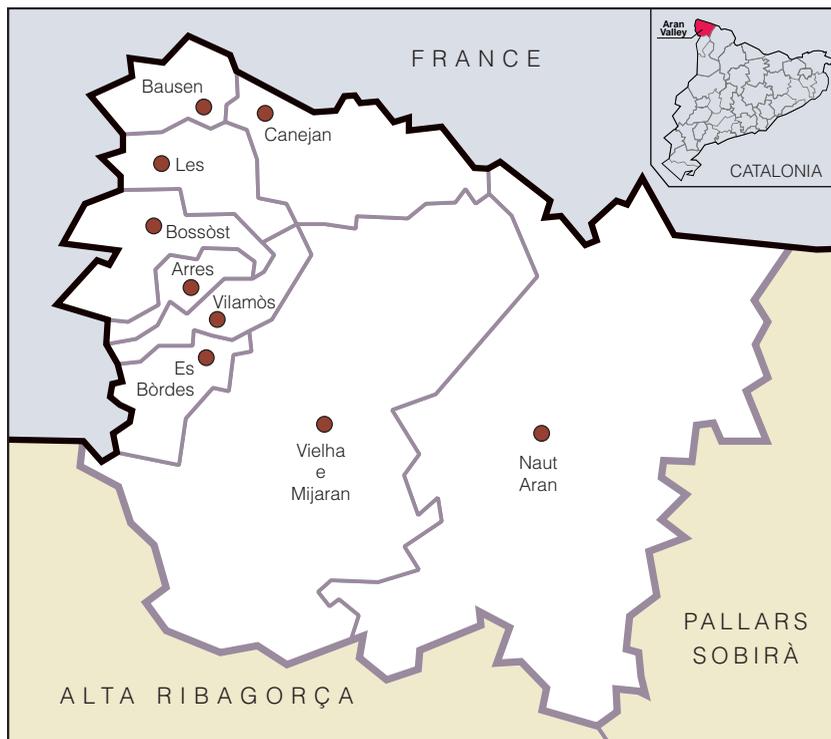
In accordance with these laws, Aranese is taught at all levels of mandatory education and is also used as a teaching language and as subject. In addition, the General Council and the town councils normally use Aranese for internal documents and to inform Aranese citizens. The Generalitat and the Council make efforts to teach Aranese to all public employees assigned to work in the Aran Valley.

### The Aran Valley, the only area of Occitan where the language itself is recognised and has official status

The Aran Valley is the only territory where Occitan is spoken where it has official status and institutional protection. As a result, it is also the Occitan-speaking territory where the language is most alive and known among the population. While in French Occitania as a whole the percentage of the population who can speak Occitan is 16%, in Aran it is above 60%.

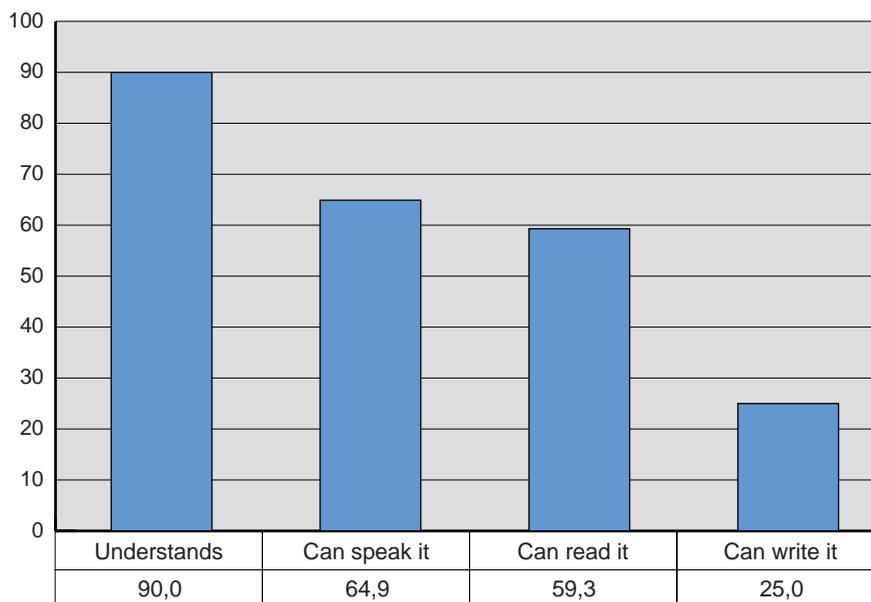
In 1996, 7,130 people lived in the Aran Valley, 90% of whom could understand Aranese and 65% could speak it, although knowledge of Aranese was not distributed uniformly throughout the area: levels of understanding and ability to speak are highest in Canejan, Bausen,

*Administrative map of the Aran Valley*



Les, Bossòst and Naut Aran, while writing competence is relatively higher in the Mijaran Area. Age, place of birth and level of education are factors to be taken into account when understanding this distribution.

*Knowledge of Aranese among the Aran Valley population aged two or over in 1996*



SOURCE: Own research from Idescat data.