

cahier 1  
**passa porta**

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# the european constitution in verse

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# Introduction

If the present European institutions cannot manage to inspire, charm, stir or touch the people, or if necessary anger them, then we shall have to do it. Europe is currently stumbling from one crisis to another, is floating somewhere high above the heads of its citizens, and at certain times suffers from arrogance and hypocrisy, at others from confusion and anxiety.

In this situation, we would like to reflect on who and what Europe *might* be. We wonder which past we should recall and of what future we can still dream. How proud we are, and how sorrowful we can still be.

‘We’ means more than fifty poets. A random group of men and women with something to say about this continent, this history and the destiny that keeps us together. And who say it in many languages. Poets who were born here and others who fled here. Poets with citizenship and without. Poets with literary prizes and poets with traumas.

The poetic constitution is not an assignment from the European Commission nor from any other institution. It is not a gratuitous remake of any political fiasco, nor an attempt to achieve the ultimate compromise. It is political in another sense: it makes Europe the subject of a conversation, a long and agreeable conversation between committed inhabitants. We shall not be avoiding contradictions. We are cheerful, we are singing, but we are hurting too.

Sometimes it’s difficult to have a long and agreeable conversation and to sing about pain. Sometimes it comes naturally. The Brussels Poetry Collective wrote the first version, a piece with lots of empty spaces and unfinished articles. We sent this rough text to other people around Europe. We asked whether they would write a few verses, or wanted to react to some part of it, consider an amendment, or think up a new article. And they did. The result became clearer and

clearer in front of our very eyes: a collection of contemporary European poetry that is more than just a collection. It is more than fifty individual voices from every corner of Europe. And at the same time it is a single poem.

We were only able to achieve this dialogue because the poets taking part gave us plenty of editorial freedom. Each of them told us how much we could tamper with their verses. Many allowed us anything. So we were able to cut, paste and move around to our heart's delight. We could make silent poems talk to each other and loud ones be lyrically lonely. This trust was exceptional. So, to all the poets, we cannot thank you enough.

Many thanks to all the translators too. The initial version of this Constitution contains more than thirty languages. Several of them are world languages, but a much larger number are smaller-scale national or minority languages. Frisian, Galician and Romany can be heard in this text too. Since the whole text had to be translated into French, Dutch and English, we used the services of around seventy literary translators.

In addition you hear Persian, Berber, Arabic and Turkish too. Several of the poets who take part in this Constitution had to leave their native countries because of their opinions or dreams. They now live and work in Europe. Their voice counts too. This was also the conviction held by Shahrazad, the European cultural programme that wants stories from outside to be heard in Europe, and thus to question Fortress Europe from within. This programme's financial support helped make this Constitution possible.

Of inestimable value was also the contribution made by the Passa Porta international literature centre. Not only did this always inspiring workplace in the heart of Brussels provide the Brussels Poetry Collective with a roof over its

head, but many of its staff have done an heroic amount of work for the Constitution. Very special thanks to Paul Buekenhout, Nathalie Goethals, Anne Janssen and Gunther De Wit.

In Greek mythology, Europa was the daughter of a Phoenician monarch who was abducted by Zeus, the supreme god, and carried off to Crete. So even then it all started outside Europe: Phoenicia was where the present countries of Syria and Lebanon are now. The Belgian sculptor Koenraad Tinel made a monumental sculpture of the abduction of Europa in sheet steel. It is eight metres high and almost nine metres long. It is proud and enthralling. We could not imagine a better emblem for this Constitution.

**PETER VERMEERSCH**

**DAVID VAN REYBROUCK**

Artistic coordinators





# table of contents

11	<b>Preamble</b>
19	<b>The Constitution</b>
23	<b>Part I – Principles</b>
35	<b>Part II – Fundamental Rights</b>
55	<b>Part III – Declarations</b>
67	<b>Part IV – Policies and Action</b>
89	<b>Part V – European Hymn</b>
93	<b>Part VI – Final Provision</b>
96	<b>Index of Titles</b>
101	<b>Authors</b>



# PREAMBLE



[Nothing]

don't say Europe they say say Death

Amid a charred wasteland I sit and gaze  
At a pink-fringed cloud that's billowing higher  
(The remnants of a long extinguished blaze)  
And ancient embers from an ancient fire,

don't say Europe they say say Death

Europe that flickers and stifles and bleeds,  
Horsewhips and burning, gas chambers, gallows,  
Europe, history, turbid filtration,  
Battlefields, poppies, gravestones, hatred.

don't say Europe they say say Death

I see bloody wool, deadly grease in the food, black sores, and under motionless  
branches numerous infections.  
Bones burn, I hear the dew fermenting: tortured trees weep.  
In the light I see unclean wounds, the tremor of expiring water.

don't say Europe they say say Death

[Beginning]

trumpet in tunnel  
sound, not light  
magnified brutally  
like when man first created music  
out of raw sounds  
hewn out the innards of the earth  
spewing forth broken chords  
choking hacking  
rasping its throat

We, it moans, we.  
It listens.  
The mouth is not yet dry.  
Again it stutters.  
An answer comes.

We know nothing about ourselves  
at this moment amid history's wind and dust  
We know nothing about ourselves

We who come here from every country, church and slum, nooks and crannies,  
We in Europe, we leave the mountains, visit the valleys, approach the villages,  
Get lost in cities. We, yes, all of us, we entreat the citizens, listen, please, listen,  
Now hear the worries, the fires, the snows of our stories.

At this moment amid history's wind and dust,  
We know nothing about ourselves

---

[We]

All of us together, people of Europe, Europe the old  
Of warriors and bulls, Europe the new, slumber and peace,  
We, people of Europe, so different, so much alike,  
Of all professions, trades and crafts, humble and proud,  
Costly and beggarly, labour and learning, sad and glad:

Ole, the wind engineer, from Roskilde,  
Ines and her fish from Figueira da Foz,  
Dimitriu, who sells horses in Suceava,  
Benazir, at the till at the drugs store in Slough,  
Armand, the pyrotechnician, from Famenne,  
Caitlin from Sligo, the webmistress,  
Paavo, the raftsman, from Lappeenranta,  
Maja with her roses, from the Stara Planina,  
France, the stationmaster at Trbovlje,  
Elena of the cargo ships, from Limassol,  
Juan, plasticulturist from Fuentevaqueros,  
Marija from Klaipeda, junior consultant,  
Heinz, communist and unemployed in Schwedt,  
Claude, the fireman, Esch-sur-Alzette,  
Linda from Ystad, policewoman,  
Jaan from Viljandi, singing postman,  
Madlo, receptionist in Brno,  
Rudolfs, Daugavpils, park-keeper, grandpa,  
Ute, ski instructor, from Geschurn,  
Domíníc, mechanic, La Valetta,  
Ceija, who disinfects floors in Safankovo,  
Joop in welfare work, Purmerend,  
Battista, doctor, in Portomaggiore,  
Erzsébet preaches Calvinism in Tokaj,

The European Constitution in Verse

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Henryk from Bydgoszcz, just a priest,  
Thérèse, farmer's wife, from Blond, Limousin,  
And of course Melissa; who doesn't know Melissa at the Ifigénia Bar in Thessaloniki,

We, the sovereign people of Europe.

[Mornings]

We want no hymns or fanfares  
We need no concerted chants  
Dirges and salsa from brass instruments  
With fairground percussion and cornets  
While leaders mouth empty slogans  
Of difference, fear and exclusive rights

We want all the music, all the instruments  
All the sounds open to dialogue  
Concerts of syncopated melodies

Awake. Awake.  
Open windows to the rhythm that washes over streets  
To sounds and voices, the beginnings of music.

May it be morning in the land  
Feel the others' rhythm  
Get these crinoids and few nettle  
Comb the Aegean's hair with your melodies  
Caress the North Sea's salty skin

May it be morning in the land



[Voices]

We, Europe,

Let us not dip our brushes in an inkwell of indecencies  
So let us use black ink as if it were gold  
So let us use the gentle verb as balm,

Black as the soul of old, old Europe,  
As fragrant as verses and bread from Europe.  
They know the roots and the crowns of words,  
The flowers and the dregs, the dung and the milk.

Now, wrap yourself in robes pale and worn,  
Journey to the shanties, journey to the deserts,  
Journey to the whips, journey to hunger,  
Now sing the sonorous prayers for peace

That the ruin, the rift, the absence may be revealed.  
That the strife, the fall, the work may be appraised.



# THE CONSTITUTION



**ARTICLE 1**

Since the beginning everything has sweated with chaos.

**ARTICLE 2**

Let it move, let it shout, let it dance, let it sing, let it strive  
Let it dispute, let it live, let it rule, let it breed, let it shine  
In sleepless nights when nothing is lost and everything is gained  
Dense desires stand out in sharp relief

**ARTICLE 3**

Order emerges again and again from the magma of chaos.

**ARTICLE 4**

No borders, no plans, no pretended bias,  
No cries, no scorn, and no town hall,  
No brass, no job, no hunting,  
Neither the bleating flock nor the wild pack  
Neither the flagellants nor the horde  
Neither the grovellers nor the crippling blow  
It is not the gates,  
the city gates,  
It is not the tramps and vagabonds,  
their seductive stories  
The aviators, the generals,  
it is not they, it is not they  
No customs officers in green uniforms! No Father Ubu

Here or there, not in Poland or anywhere. Anything but that!  
Do not step, comrades, with a left! Right! Left!

**ARTICLE 5**

No chaos, no evolution.

**ARTICLE 6**

We painted the fence on the seventh day,  
and whistled to ourselves on the sixth.  
On the fifth day, the Lord our Master broke down.  
We fed all we had into him, everything,  
blind with hunger on the fourth day.  
On the third, we sat up in the horse driver's seat.  
On the second day, the axe sang,  
the houses and the graveyards grew,  
we drew figures in the virgin snow.  
We began from the beginning on the first day.

# **PART I: PRINCIPLES**





**ARTICLE 7: EUROPE**

It came with the quiet steps of a child  
and stayed with the calmness of a grown-up.

**ARTICLE 8: HISTORY**

Well now here you are in Europe  
you are looking at the people of the great north  
the people of the great south  
of the great east and the great west

the people who our great great  
great great grandfathers  
killed to sow better

you kneel before them  
you invent new ways  
of sharing the earth

and the stories and the ways  
that is  
forgiveness

**ARTICLE 8bis**

Yet I defend my honour  
by constantly questioning it.  
I assert myself through an in-quest  
that many times leads to my disgrace.  
My story is nothing but the chronicle of this in-quest.

My kingdom is built on my ruins.

**ARTICLE 8ter**

No one builds on the ruins of past wars  
No one keeps up with the insults imposed with scorn  
No one derives satisfaction from the return of thefts  
From the dark labyrinths of the collective memory

The future: where we all start to dream  
What does it matter that we once burnt our ships  
What does it matter that the black death decimated our people  
What importance do rape and hunger have  
The aleatory marshland of the borders  
Tears that lick the sacrificial stone

The future: where we all begin to dream  
Those who now arrive in canoes and sweat hope out of their pores  
Those who cross half the world, fleeing from terror and misery  
All those with fins on their arms and gills that open up in their throat

**ARTICLE 9: THE UNION**

An eye in the center of the labyrinth reveals  
doors closed since the last war,  
windows full of incrustated lichen  
and the primordial march of the snails,  
sliding over discoloured leaves,  
dispiriting the simple spirits.

Too old to be reborn,  
the brand remains that in itself advertises  
the various mixed cultures.

There's not a point even in the extreme  
that all around doesn't have a circle of ashes.

How odd to live in the murky heart of the labyrinth without exit  
in the expanding radiance of the multitudes.

**ARTICLE 10: TRUTH**

When truth is mentioned everyone suddenly looks up.  
After all, it's the kind of thing one can't ignore.  
Or, as a matter of fact, one can ignore it, and  
when it comes up, everyone starts spectacularly yawning.  
Maybe it's because of Master Mo-ci's words,  
who in his time warned against grandiloquence.  
*If we talk ceaselessly about something unrealizable,*  
it's mere rattle, Mo-ci said. Then again, it's the kind  
of thing one might want to possess all the same,  
and would readily proclaim: My truths, our truths!  
Well then, that's a basis one can build on. Although  
it's not for certain, although we must build all the same.

The European Constitution in Verse

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**ARTICLE 10bis**

a truth that will be  
    implausible  
        improbable  
            impossible

thereby making error (pathos)  
    the thread of our life.

**ARTICLE 11: FREEDOM**

it is known:  
in vain you search  
for something to hold on to

for numbers in the wreckage  
structure in the confetti

you may also swim deeper in the blackness

you are free  
this is no beach  
this is not the end of the sea  
this is a horizon with gulls, this is night and emptiness  
the lightness is a hesitation

you may also swim deeper in the blackness

don't put me down now  
I won't put you down

**ARTICLE 11bis: SOLITUDE**

Perhaps you are the red lighthouse light  
that doesn't let ships and planes collide  
without knowing it

Perhaps it's you who guard the shores

Perhaps it's at the foot of your slopes  
that a crayfish egg is buried in sand  
laid for an intimate dinner

Possibly it's in your grass  
on the dunes – in the only place in the world  
that flocks of rare birds nest

Make a step back  
your solitude at the end of the South pier  
may have a deeper meaning  
than bare loneliness.

**ARTICLE 12: CONSTANT INCOMPLETENESS**

to start from zero  
from a point on the map of europe  
let's say it is a small town  
a settlement of the village type  
or simply a batch of woods  
to add the shortest distance to home  
to multiply the sum by the number of years lived  
to divide into winter and spring  
to find a common denominator for day and night  
to deduct memory  
we'll then arrive at what we wanted to demonstrate

**ARTICLE 12bis**

We will know that only finished things may attain  
perhaps, perhaps, some degree of perfection  
and that as much time as we have  
time to live, time to share,  
we will live in uncertainty and imperfection.

Thus, our steps will be light.  
Thus, our words will be discreet.

**ARTICLE 13: THE RULE OF LAW**

The world is conceived in laws  
Which rule the lawful and the wrong-doer.  
Europe is world, right is to defend it  
Without mistaking its meaning, nor expounding absolute truths  
Europe is my house, your house, a right, your right.  
The world is conceived in laws  
And falls asleep under the roofs.

**ARTICLE 13bis**

Laws that are light-years from reality.  
Oceans of doubt.  
Tension on the surface.  
Soap-bubbles in a melancholy lake.

Laws that drag thoughts and needs along with them,  
habits and customs, boundless love  
or capital, which always has a dislike of borders.  
Reaction and obstacles until the flame –

**ARTICLE 14: THE MEMBERS**

The power of discourse still cannot stop the empire of blending  
of the doves that announce the sunset and the nightingales that sing at dawn.  
So many tones, so many hidden stones and waters and pastures,  
so many pulsing voices, so many myths past and future  
My Cid dead and on horseback, Siegfried defending the Ring of the Nibelung,  
Beowulf against all the powers, and Roland sounding the hunting horn.

But also those things that memory guards in the sacred box of treasures:  
From Abaris the arrow that circled the world and from Jason boldness in  
adventure,  
from Hector bravery in battle and from Patroclus the difficulty of renunciation,  
from Ulysses the passion to return to the calm ripeness of Ithaca and Penelope,  
from Icarus the dream of flying that carries one to the burning of wings...  
The sea announces new myths, and the force of the wind stops in the empire of  
blending to wait for Godot.

**ARTICLE 15: THE GOVERNMENT**

Government  
must  
be like  
the heavy laden plum-tree.

The gardener shakes  
and shakes,  
it rains lush fruit  
Children whoop, swoop, juicy mouthed,  
the fruits have to come down, they must,  
without delay,  
but not on naked ground,  
never onto stones.

Tender grass must break their fall,  
on dew.  
A stone,  
you spit that out.

Or like

the cook who fries small fish.  
So said  
the ancient Chinese.  
He wrote it down,  
mounted his ox and rode into the hills.  
The cook who fries small fish  
does not shake them,  
for they would split, crumble.

**ARTICLE 16: POWER**

If Auden sang of limestone  
because it can be shaped and dissolves in water,  
slowly fills with caves and conduits,  
falls drop by drop, disintegrated,  
and becomes stalactites and stalagmites,  
brittle subterranean forests,  
and because thyme or maybe a contorted, scrawny pine  
grows in its nearly soilless fissures,  
I now want to sing of some harder stones.  
Granite, for example, a difficult stone,  
with its seams of quartz, sparks of mica, grey  
or pink in colour. I like granite because it forms  
cliffs by the sea, storm waves beating  
against it, because only centuries  
can crush it into beaches of grainy sand,



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because high in the mountains, granite is split by snow,  
broken into pieces, transformed into scree,  
but never lets water or snow excavate  
caverns or hidden gullies. No, granite  
only breaks, jagged, and ends up as sand,  
or before that, dragged by a rush of whitewater,  
pieces crash into each other, clatter and become round  
and turn into gravel and pebbles and eventually,  
even smaller, a carpet of rocky jawbreakers.  
I sing, too, of basalt, squeezed by the shuddering earth,  
hard and black, forming columns in escarpments  
and bluffs, in lands where eons and eons ago  
volcanoes spat out lava and burning missiles.  
Also slate, black and bituminous,  
with glints of lead and rust stains,  
that can be sliced, becoming flagstones or roof tiles,  
so water may run off  
and snow rest on it in great mounds.  
Slate that sea and rivers and wind  
might turn into round rocks,  
and thus do the black beaches kiss the blue sea.

**ARTICLE 17: THE STATUS OF VIOLENCE**

We've lost our claws, the fang's edge,  
instead of roaring we say good morning and please.  
Yet the wild beast with us and within us  
waits in ambush, patiently, for its hour.

It's necessary to look into its eyes, never  
denying its existence or fury,  
to show it the knife but not blood,  
to know that it also has its reasons.

Blessed are those who distrust meekness,  
holy are those who in their own guts  
listen to the raging protests.

Neither law nor force will be enough:  
if we kill it, we will fall dead,  
if we feed it, it will devour our hands.

**ARTICLE 18: RESPECT FOR MINORITIES**

Geniuses are also a minority!

**PART II:  
FUNDAMENTAL  
RIGHTS**



**ARTICLE 19: ON THE NATURE OF RIGHTS**

We are born with our rights inherent  
Inscribed under our skin as capillary traces,  
As blood-vessel lace – they adorn us!  
And inspire us for life – irrational and rational!  
When we die – the right to be silent and misunderstood remains  
To grieve in the pond of existence  
Like the shadows of water lilies.

**ARTICLE 20: THE RIGHT TO BE IN-BETWEEN**

This article enshrines inalienably the right to alienation  
for those who want it: Republicans of the in-between,  
celebrants of the glorious prefix *trans* and all its panoply  
of cognates: cousins, second cousins, siblings, half-siblings,  
in-laws and out, the *neither/nor*, the *both/and*, the *none*  
*of the above*, the signatories of the dotted sideline,  
citizens of the hard-shoulder, the *terrain vague*,  
the inside-out and outside-in, the bi-, the semi-, the demi-,  
the ambi-, the half-blood, the half-cast, the rainbow-shades  
of grey, the *entre-deux-guerres* and the *entre-deux-mers*,  
the slipstream and the tributary, the river that changes its name,  
the visa that's all in the vista and the port that's all in the passing.

**ARTICLE 21: THE RIGHT TO CITIZENSHIP**

I am citizen, not consumer, name not number  
I have the right to remember my grandmother's

father's mother, the shape her name makes  
in my breath; I have the right to help her cheat her death.

My people sailed from Miletus, Phoenician pilots  
helmed them; they came from Galicia, La Coruna,  
La Rochelle, from fjords of the north, from the Steppes  
out of India, from the neighbouring island...

I am Celt and Jew and Arab, I am of Sarawak, chance sailor,  
I am the dream time, the bone of slave, the sweat  
of soldiers. My voice is rooted here, and fed by streams  
from all parts of the blue, turning globe.

I accept all my histories, I extend my heart in all directions:  
I remember all, I sing for all; there will be no forgetting.

**ARTICLE 22: THE RIGHT TO REMEMBER**

The long nights in the shelters, the bombs,  
the song of the sirens, it all comes back  
to the sweet bourgeois dusk. Don't you remember?  
How distant the shadows, the captive balloons,  
the long nights in the shelters, the bombs.  
Those teenagers were dying by the thousands  
and rotted under so many of Europe's fields  
and are the seeds of coal and beet factories,  
small crimes of passion, bicycles,  
concrete and horizons, roads and agriculture.  
The barges go slowly down the canal.  
Tulips and butter cradle blonde hair,  
tall bodies gain weight, conceived  
in miserable twilights, the bombs,  
long nights in the shelters, it all comes back,

the song of the sirens, the world wars.

Now, Herr Hitler, you can turn around.  
How many lumps of sugar do you want in my smile?  
– All the girls of Europe are forgetting me,  
sweet small heart of plush, tucked into bed with whispers.

**ARTICLE 23: THE RIGHT TO WORK**

you gave life to hammer and axe too, you bent your back for an anvil  
you kneaded the mud for a bread, jug with the water, shelf full of gods.  
you breathed direction to the flags, discovered warm water.  
from time immemorial this land was furrowed by ploughs, sickles and hammers.  
whole regiments  
golden ages of the iron age. maps on the carpet. eyes full of sands.  
work sets free. work is a class act. a fact bare fact  
cruel goddess to whom you upraise your hands

**ARTICLE 24: THE RIGHT TO LAZINESS**

The good gardener prizes the shadow of the apple tree.

**ARTICLE 24bis: THE RIGHT TO APPLE TREES**

Here, everyone has the right to apple trees,  
On mighty trunks from long forgotten dreams.  
Bramley and knotty russet, golden noble,  
Tart flesh from now on shall the palate please.

**ARTICLE 25: THE RIGHT TO HOUSING**

Here, everyone has the right to dry hair,  
To a roof, no more than that, to keep  
What makes us people, a fireplace, a chair,  
Sheltered from hailstorms and barbaric scare

**ARTICLE 25bis**

Mr Nicos told me  
that when fifty years or so ago  
electricity came to Fyti  
the animals cried all night  
and the birds flew anxiously about  
not knowing what was happening.

**ARTICLE 25ter**

In the spaces that I call home  
weretigers roam the hill-heart  
and deep, deep in those woods  
lives the son of the man  
who became a bear.

In the skies that cover  
the spaces that I call home  
sky-husbands appear in the night-skies  
looking, looking for earth-wives.

**ARTICLE 25quater**

Sometimes my hand is like a roof over your head.

I lay that piece of arm,  
that lower piece of arm on your head  
and it's like rubberizing your cranium.  
My eyes are plastic white  
like my toothbrush and other items.

Puf! Puf! Puf!



This is the sound of my microwave.

This is the sound.

The sound that gets warmer when it vibrates, when it waves  
not like corrugated iron, not like that at all.

But sometimes your hands are like a roof over my head,  
and the sound of the two of us eating popcorn is a mess.

**ARTICLE 26: THE RIGHT TO USE ABANDONED PLACES**

I took the husband you didn't need

I scraped from the ground chewing gum that someone had spat out

I stepped in footprints that someone had left in the street all alone

I took your house where the darkness was nesting, took you with me  
you had no more use for yourself.

I took the language that nobody wanted  
the flame that stood there abandoned and shivering

I collected what was left over, what wasn't desired.

And I scattered myself over the landscape like crumbs of bread

how the skinny birds gobbled them up

how cheerful was their chirping

of the shadows of words, the deeds.

**ARTICLE 27: THE RIGHT TO WALK**

With your feet you can link

each town with another

each village with another

new signs for planetary pedestrians

go on, walk

'every real man breathes through his heels'

said Chuang Tzu

**ARTICLE 27bis: THE RIGHT TO RUN**

The treadmill plays faster, faster, *faster!*  
Who will first get to sweat drowning in dimples?  
The footsteps cannot keep up.

Next time you open your mouth,  
can I hide myself under your tongue  
just a couple of words more?

**ARTICLE 27ter: HYMN TO THE CHURCH PATH**

The true path is never the straight path.  
Beneath the stars you walk without erring,  
No torch, no compass,  
Seven stars, satellites, Orion.

Path, footprint, traders' route,  
for centuries haven  
for scrawny cattle stock,  
comfort of dandelion and nettle,  
for mowers from abroad,  
threshers, plungers  
who dragged wilting bones to  
gin, sweat and copper coins.  
You travel to the lechery  
of stable-maid and rider,  
cornflowers, blue with shame,  
scarlet poppy.

**ARTICLE 28: THE RIGHT OF THE SOIL TO WEAR DOWN**

The tractor tire that ploughed the kolkhoz,  
Its sister on the wheelchair that ploughed the cemetery,  
The soles of tennis shoes on the playground,  
And the leather heels of pumps on the dance floor,  
The bicycle wheels of the farmwomen who each morning,  
Each foggy morning, ride through the farm jug by jug,  
Morning after morning,  
And the racing bike of the nun,  
As if all of these incursions  
Cart tracks, ring roads, parking lots,  
All these illegal refuse dumps, backyards, cellars,  
All these gardens, gravel drives, forests,  
All these streets, all the ones with thorns growing over pathless places  
The movement of old taste buds,  
Big, twisted tongue,  
That swallows its everyday everything,  
Everything it touches,  
Everything, that's the inalienable right  
Of the soil,  
That's what dead soldiers know,  
The damp tongue laid on their cheeks,  
The mourners, after a little taste,  
Throw a clod of soil into the open mouths,  
The little children who, from this insatiable,  
This inexhaustible tongue  
Build a fortress in the sand,  
Give it a name out of words that like worms  
Squirm inside it.  
Bring down the fortress,  
Erased by a click of the tongue,  
That named it.

**ARTICLE 29: THE RIGHT TO SLOWNESS**

Slowness to feel, that grows like ivy  
Up legs and knees  
Winds itself round waist and groin, on every side  
And encircles bosom, throat and cheek  
Slow ripening of blood and fluids

**ARTICLE 29bis: HYMN TO THE SNOWFLAKE**

You amble out of the clouds.

On our ranting you lay laws  
of silence. Noise  
falls forward, full-length in the snow,  
without a sound.

Intolerable, surely, that you,  
impose slowness upon us, snow,  
bring us to a halt, snow.  
Your thick habit,  
too heavy,  
too heavy,  
that featherlight damage.

**ARTICLE 29ter:**

At the boundary between  
Tartu province and Viljandi  
a stand of pines offers  
from marsh-edge to highway  
ten extended arms:

*People, why do you not  
wait for us –  
people?*

**ARTICLE 30: THE RIGHT TO SILENCE**

[...]

**ARTICLE 31: THE RIGHT TO LANGUAGE**

Do you hear the ripple of the brook,  
Do you hear the neigh of the horse, the barking of the dog,  
Do you hear the steps on the road,  
The speech of people and the children's laughter?  
Do you hear it? Do you feel it?

I took the language that nobody wanted

Taste every language on your tongue,  
Hiccapped, coughed, cursed, sung,  
Show your vocabularies with pride,  
Do not yield a single word, be it grey as dust,  
Yellow as yolks, red as lovers, not one word

I took the language that nobody wanted

Small and large languages do not exist, nor do small and large literatures.  
All that exists is magnificent poetic wreckages on the shoals of eternity,  
and decaying words that disappear into the darkness without a trace.

I took the language that nobody wanted

we poets always prefer the crystal-clear wagon-man,  
elephant Esperanto and outhouse Creole

I took the language that nobody wanted

The right to build castles in the air in every  
Language known to us: to build luftschlössen or  
Luchtkastelen or even to construct castillos in the air,  
In aria! En l'air! In der Luft! Everywhere castles in the air!

**ARTICLE 32: THE RIGHT TO TRANSLATION**

Oh poems, my friends they keep translating you  
from one tongue to another you form a hundred rivers  
across Europe which is becoming a desert,  
when will you swim against the translated current  
returning to the source and far beyond:  
again becoming rain, clouds, the sky  
that witnessed your birth? When will you return,  
retracing your path to the peak of the mountains,  
flowing like borders, without any battle cries  
or bursts of blood, just the irrigation  
of life and joy? Tell me, dear friends,  
when will you turn back, washing away  
the sins of so many untimely readings,  
toward the great land of more than a hundred tongues,  
toward paradise?

**ARTICLE 33: THE RIGHT TO EXILE IN ART**

Anyone can exile himself into art. The exile of the self into art must not be subject to any form of persecution, violence, or chicanery. The exile of the self into art is irreversible and final. The poem truly begins its existence only with its own abolition; the poem exists because its author has abandoned it.

**ARTICLE 34: THE RIGHT TO ECCENTRIC BEHAVIOUR AND IDEAS**

And the constitution should be in good condition. And guarantee man, garniture on the salad as in the living room, so that anywhere one can do a headstand on top of raw eggs, the childlike in humans must be constitutionally

secured, the right to throw away food, to talk nonsense, and with the kidneys to collect stones, everyone is there for all and everyone has the right to incessantly make oneself out to be something, to jump the borders and to live. Like a king – without subjects, with or without superstructure. Each human is a monarch with an empire of this world. He should be guaranteed nose-picking, sneezing, masturbation, so that freedom shall be enthroned in us.

**ARTICLE 34bis**

On all fours you can stare  
somehow more honestly.  
As if, standing up,  
our two hands make us feel uneasy.  
And the knowledge that the earth is round.  
And things like that.

**ARTICLE 35: THE RIGHT TO STUPIDITY**

a secessionist climate in my head  
the most faithful of thoughts will leave me  
will spirit away even those thoughts I didn't love  
did not consider mine  
I will stay with the creeping ones  
constantly twisting on the tip of the tongue  
all those slovenly ones  
the obscene  
and those which put on an act before manuscripts  
as if in front of a mirror

**ARTICLE 36: THE RIGHT TO INSCRUTABILITY**

The poem, composed by order of the sovereign,  
concerned a tract of land guarded by woods,  
with trees that were so thick about the edge  
it was impossible to find an entrance;

and clay whose surface had turned into brick  
along which pulsing shadows moved and slid;  
as well as the first spruces and larches,  
their lower branches woven with the grass  
and with the monstrous tentacles of briars  
whose furthest parts were growing back again  
between the reddened patches of the ground,  
and the ramparts of oaks delicate, weak  
embraced to choking by a nameless bush,  
and crooked birches, bristling from a heap  
of rocks that had been churned up by the land,  
of burdock leaves whose ends had been scorched off,  
of the lupins and the mulleins, burned away,  
and the store of air above the topmost branches  
in which weeds shiver and hazard, weeds  
of brightness and of distant waves of thunder.

**ARTICLE 36bis**

sage genre of anxious text. you gradually  
grow into. my definition of a killer axe – style:  
'blow by blow'. crack cleaves open. be bold. grow old in  
peace. you too may crack. in fact, doesn't sound half bad.

but you (twin) feel out of place in the role  
the movement intends for you. rebellion is probable.  
intellectual detours too, alas. a trace of sugar snaps  
blows through th' house. post brest-litovsk. how many lines do I have

left?



**ARTICLE 37: THE RIGHT TO COMPLEXITY AND TO SLOW AND DEEP UNDERSTANDING**

Who desires to pull out the heart of the future?

Who the extinction of experience?

**ARTICLE 38: THE RIGHT TO FAIRYTALES**

We all can claim the right to a new fairy tale  
sprouting from lips  
exploding in the crooked cracks  
of rubbled walls.

You too, dear Saleh, have the right  
to gnaw at your own fairy tale  
sprinkled with the crunching dust  
of stones from every border.

**ARTICLE 39: THE RIGHT TO RAGE**

Give the pleasantries a rest and call for the rebellions,  
Join the ranks of the resistance denouncing the power of muddled nations.  
But what education? What rights? What constitution?  
What changes toward what evolution?  
Clearly, there's a lot of 'what's' going unanswered. What deception!  
And the masses are daydreaming, of that there's no question!  
Pay attention to the culmination, people make the revolution,  
I hear a voice:  
Are you fed up with being taken for a fool? Then take action  
With Guerilla instincts in the name of future generations!  
Come on now, rewrite the rules, drive these notorious tyrants back  
To the scenes of their crimes, and don't give a shit 'what the neighbours think'!  
Christ, every day God makes our screens pop with death,  
And still there's nothing but bullshit giving birth to bloodbaths of judgment,  
And from now on even the devil will deny them.  
No more pity, no more virtue. That stuff's all over, finished, complete.

The fight's not in the ballot box anymore, it's out in the street!  
We've searched for it bitterly, hungrily, and too often we've dreamed  
That our revolution would spread to the four corners of this... lost world  
Gone are the days of obedient sheep and indelible tears  
Nothing can erase the families fallen under the arsenals of failing power!  
The objective is clear, the people will advance on the sons of Hell  
Across enemy territory and maybe our graves as well  
Commotion is on the menu, gotta get fired-up and rockin'!  
And if need be, the people will let their arms do the talkin'!  
Restore some dignity to our wives and kids  
Recover the memories locked in our heads  
And above all, use our rights to fight the wicked  
This revolution's for everyone, so I'm spreading the word!

**ARTICLE 40: THE RIGHT TO DISCONNECT**

it takes centuries  
till two waves in the ocean meet  
it takes a moment  
for them to disconnect

**ARTICLE 41: THE RIGHT TO WELL-BEING**

There is a cube in the forest, inside the cube there is silence  
a house floats into the cube  
inside the house a successful life is lived  
rising with certainty to heaven.

It is quiet, very quiet, its belly pleasantly full  
that life at the foot of forest hills  
no problems here, all wrapped in silence, everything is for laughs.

Those were the days, they reminisce there  
blood flowing calmly, so calmly in the veins  
and calmly, so calmly the doe walk in the wood  
as always black and white.

The mouse that mad with hunger at night  
chews off the fingertips to feed on blood  
luckily comes just from time to time.

**ARTICLE 42: THE RIGHT TO FOOD**

Your bread is my bread but mine isn't yours.  
When someone bites off a piece of the dark and cold  
it fattens the skin of everybody  
and is hollow inside

bread of angels, served to humans  
how little of it is given, to some not a single crust  
bread so hard that the heart breaks on its surface.

**ARTICLE 43: THE RIGHT TO ONE'S APPETITE, TO OBESITY**

You say, 'Excuse me? Hello?' And the answer comes: 'A table!'  
There's nothing anyone can do to curb your appetite.  
You're always the first to sit down and the last to leave.  
So be gluttonous! You can mooch without reservation,

Any time, any place, without fuss or flattery.  
Drive-thru, greasy spoon, junk food, it's all a feast if it looks good to you!  
Who cares if you're a lumpy, sumo-looking, weeble-like blob  
If anyone points a finger at you, just tell them, 'Fat

is where it's at!' Become a jowly, fat-assed beyond reason, bra-buster,  
greedier than greedy. Insist on seconds with every meal!  
Fry everything in goose fat! Reward yourself with three chins!

Be a size 'voluptueuse,' as our friends in Quebec would say  
Take up two seats on the plane! Terrify people  
In elevators! Taste the delight of your rotundity and corpulence!

**ARTICLE 43bis: THE FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS OF THE POTATO**

Treaty ... tractor ... taxes for agriculture are buried in black soil ...  
potatoes are taxed and are furthermore a vegetable with a different  
ethnic origin ... one of the types that has understood how to integrate  
yet still lies at the bottom of the food pyramid ...

**ARTICLE 44: THE RIGHT TO MARRIAGES OF CONVENIENCE**

Since Shakespeare can afford  
to blow his nose in Desdemona's handkerchief,  
why can't I play toreador with the bull that abducted Europa?  
I'd like to slay it with my invisible-ink pen thrust right between its horns,  
so I can contract with the damsel a marriage of convenience  
and get without a hitch a French, a Belgian or a German passport,  
like the tramp I once met, twenty years ago,  
on the train to Novosibirsk,  
who cherished the dream of taking a leap from the Wild East to Israel  
by marrying an old Jewish woman.  
Rather than luxury, a woman was to him a means of transportation,  
devoid of Christian complexes,  
considering the fact that, after all,  
Jesus Himself is the result of a ménage à trois.

**ARTICLE 45: THE RIGHTS OF VERY WICKED CHILDREN**

May they always be loved  
For their own pure eyes  
Whether skin is tanned or not  
In a life long and wise

May they always have a house  
In which they study deep  
All the world's tongues espouse  
All its origins to keep

May it be morning in the land  
Thanks to them evermore  
May the ring-a-rosy say

Europe's people are all colors  
Take them tight by the hand  
There is no other way

**ARTICLE 46: THE RIGHT OF VERY OLD LADIES**

Well now here you are in Europe  
all the very old ladies  
live in their houses  
and sit on their doorsteps

in sun and rain they sit  
all day to watch  
the people passing by  
and exchange gossip

**ARTICLE 47: THE RIGHT TO EPHEMERALNESS**

A worm eats the earth over which we walk  
This earth which is our past, our present, our future  
When I go to Malta, I will kiss the earth  
When I return to Latvia – its earth too I will kiss.  
The present this moment is minus memory  
The future knew itself long ago  
The worm feels it within her gut  
Chews and sings – for the worm too knows it!  
Quietly she sings, this small, purple worm,  
Her voice inaudible, yet heard everywhere  
We leave our footprints wherever we walk  
Quietly, together with those yet to be born  
Together with those of us who have died.

**ARTICLE 48: THE RIGHT TO DREAM**

There are gunshots deep in the night.  
There is blood on the streets still  
and in our hearts a dull deadness  
words fail to define despair  
silences have usurped speech  
we are waiting for silence to scream

they have killed our dreams  
but our dreams stubbornly refuse to die.

# **PART III: DECLARATIONS**





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# Declarations concerning museums

## **ARTICLE 49: DON'T SAY EUROPE**

don't say Europe they say say Death  
films have stopped libraries are burning  
no crickets but time bombs concerting in the grass  
their clocks murmur in the arteries of the streets

she doesn't say a thing her mouth is full of water  
clenched onto the body of Russia she seeks salvation  
she mourns over the fate of her sister Atlantis  
she muses over the spectrum of Jan Palach's flames  
student of philosophy follower of Empedocles

when she opens her mouth she speaks in numbers  
words have no meaning  
her tongue is wagging fruitlessly

during white sleepless nights she mumbles old formulas  
she repeats definitions and paradoxes  
she smiles to herself doesn't understand anything  
she doesn't feel her own body  
she freezes freezes

there's no hope they say no redemption  
Venice is sinking the Notre Dame crumbles  
Konstantínos Kaváfis died a long time ago

strangers arrive they speak with a peculiar accent  
they sing their songs full of longing

and nothing happens we learn to cope  
we hear what they say we don't understand a word  
it's not important we say it has no meaning  
we're scratching in the ashes of old books

**ARTICLE 50: THE DAMNED AND THE PILGRIM FATHERS**

At the prow they passed the eve of the first sighting  
and lit on the land they'd dreamed of nights in the swell  
of gangways pregnant with prophecy driving them on  
among the moving stars and terrors of the sea.

On land they laid foundations for the first house,  
Erecting sheds and churches, windows open  
to the ocean. The first night they slept under the sky  
(doling out victuals, praying for the dead  
thrown onto the beach, mutely discoursing with the Lord).

When morning came, they climbed the wall of mountains  
Giving the names of saints and well-known things  
To all in sight, from there to the horizon.  
For lunch they ate raw fish on leaves of maize.  
And fluttering at the top they left a flag.

Skilled in the art of moving rivers and mountains  
they multiplied the forms of clothing and coiffures,  
the artefacts of death and trappings of desire.

**ARTICLE 50bis: GASTARBEITERS**

Allow for the fact that we were in this town for the first time  
and that no one here takes us for locals and even  
automatic doors (which register light particles) do not always open at  
our approach.

Remember how, not very long ago, dressed as sailor-boys,  
crumpled, like the pages of damned-because-left-behind notebooks,  
we stepped onto the readied aircraft steps, so we could  
without looking at our fellow passengers' (their sighs of relief) sideways  
glances, leave the plane for the first time, and then for ages couldn't find  
the addresses we needed...

Remember that nobody met us, and even the dispatcher,  
(or whoever it is, talking away to the whole airport), announced our  
flight, barely  
restraining her laughter, as if she was being tickled by a team of window  
cleaners...

**ARTICLE 51: THE SORROW OF EUROPE**

I imagine that Europe's gone to pot  
(Barbarism, cyclones, fire, weariness)  
And then, across the ocean the whole lot,  
Through some melancholy magnate's largesse,

Is rebuilt: Venice and Paris, with towers,  
Berlin, Milan, all monuments and steel,  
But also alpine meadows full of flowers,  
Hovels and quicksands, the condemned man's meal.

Exact in scale, say, and totally real.  
The world's best theme park is the name for it.  
Day-tripping tourists form an eager throng:

Just look, it's Europe, and still going strong.  
La Scala's a draw and the Louvre's a hit.  
Compared with them the boardrooms lack appeal.

**ARTICLE 52: THE CONSOLATION OF EUROPE**

Amid a charred wasteland I sit and gaze  
At a pink-fringed cloud that's billowing higher  
(The remnants of a long extinguished blaze)  
And ancient embers from an ancient fire,

Ringed round by ashes, chant a song to me:  
'From Lofoten to where Bosphorus flows  
Dream-killers once criss-crossed our land and sea:  
Upon our cinder cheeks their kiss still glows.'

Then the kisses fade and the story's done.  
But across the ocean, in a themed park –  
There curious people can have a ball.

The great abundance of dreams in the Ark  
Will quickly Europeanise them all,  
And the song once again will have begun.

**ARTICLE 53: PAINTING**

Every song is sung for you  
every lyric  
every dance performed on stage is for you  
sorrow is everybody's lot  
and dreams are there to hide you in their folds  
the sea is yours  
as is the gaze of the sailors sizing up the contours of a girl's body  
this ship will berth near Paris

so Parisian writers can usher a doleful girl into the folds of their tales  
this ship will berth near Paris  
somewhere in the right-hand corner of a painting at the Louvre  
people's sorrow hides itself in the folds of a painting  
next to the shades of blue

**ARTICLE 54: CV**

I was born in Russia.  
I went to school in Poland.  
I worked as an apprentice in Romania.  
I married in Serbia.  
I got my job in Bosnia.

The first child I got in Croatia.  
The second child in France, the third in Spain, the fourth in Germany,  
The fifth in Belgium.

I returned to Serbia.  
I got the sixth child in Serbia.  
I had to escape to Italy, after the birth of my seventh child.  
I got twins.

I endured the biggest tragedy: My child was found dead and they said he  
drowned in  
the sea. They drove me away, they burned my roof, and they liked to take my  
fingerprints. And from my children too.  
I am scared. They did it once with the fingerprints not so long time ago. I am  
scared.

I escaped to Holland.  
I got the tenth child.

I got the eleventh child in Sweden.

I am fourty.

I speak Romani (my mother tongue), Russian, Slovakian, Romanian, Serbian, Bosnian, Croatian, Italian, French, Spanish, German, Dutch and a little bit English.

What my family needs and longs for is literacy.

I am getting old.

**ARTICLE 55: TIME OF TRANSITION**

We live in a time of transition, which our grandchildren  
May designate an epoch. We know nothing about ourselves but they  
Will classify us as butterflies in History's specimen cases.  
We will be gazing through the glass with our lifeless  
Eyes, and our children's children, the conquerors  
Of stars, will be thumbing through family albums. This  
Old fashioned elderly gentleman is me, the photograph  
Already faded. I'm standing motionless, eyes fixed  
On the setting sun. In the top left corner  
You can see a shining dot. And that's precisely why  
This old photograph has such significance. That was  
The first sign. Then came the others.

# Declarations concerning landscapes

## **ARTICLE 56**

When I was fourteen, my hours of work were long and hard.

I loved the sun and the earth, and the cries of my friends in the woods,  
and everything giving health and friendship.

At five in the morning, in winter,  
my mother came to my bedside  
and stroked my face until I woke.

It still wasn't dawn, but I had to go to work.

This isn't fair, but it was beautiful in the streets and wonderful to hear my footsteps  
and to feel the night with everyone still sleeping and to apprehend them as one single being,  
as if they were resting from the same life in the same dream.

I no longer can hear the song of the boys over the meadows,  
yet in me something grander and more real than I am  
fills my thoughts.

## **ARTICLE 57: UNDER HARRIER HAWKS**

No one will hear it.

Ochre, tall and ripe, the grain stands in a snug  
Circle around a flattened mound of fecund love.

A warm patch of soil promising fleecy white  
Bliss silently paints a summer in the swirl of  
A cool-blue palette, the upturned thumb a blank.  
Will the closemouthed farmhands or the glib teenagers  
Or the cocked ears of the unmoving owl hear  
The fawn-colored hearts as they leap lithely away  
From the sharp-eyed hunt of the harrier hawk?  
But the soil smells the wet white snout of grain-girded  
Clemency, screws its eyes shut and sighs, louder  
Than the silver seagull spying on the dreams of  
The albatross, high above the blue waves, which  
Wink seductively at the dripping polar cap.

No one will hear it,

Or will the more than two hundred fiery-red  
Stallions, cast in iron and in darkness, waiting  
To sink their twenty-four silver plowshares into  
The naked grain (never before had he delved so  
Deeply into her acres), come after all?  
Creamy black waves curl up along converging lines,  
Canting toward the deadly side of the silence,  
Toward the whispering wind of a serrated sea.  
Shells formed inky-black eons ago gawk at  
The absurdly smitten daylight (such a biting  
Of lips in expectation of what's to come),  
And at the seagulls, pecking like a scraggly throng  
Of followers of a throbbing tin prophet  
At the deep-red cloud of smoke spewing from the plow.



No one will hear it:

The glass-immured music mops the moaning floor  
With kneeling kitchen maids, grabs the glossy gearshift,  
The power steering, the high suspension seat  
And wide view (while the tachometer goes berserk)  
Until after just three and a half minutes  
Of comfort and support the angelic voices  
Plow another neat row and fall furrow-deep.  
The driver drives and, alternating between joy  
And wild despair, longs for the dark-blue attics  
Of the murderous moon, but the day consists of  
A morning, and love can last an afternoon.  
The grain and the soil know that all too well, yet they  
Bear the shrill shrieks of woe and bury the dead,  
The silent temple of this vast blue nothingness.

No one will hear it,

Since the southern sun watches on in breezy  
Silence; besides, the smaller the harrier gets,  
The greater the desire concealed in the crushed  
Grain: eyes search each other, looking for a way out  
Among the cursing seagulls and black stallions,  
Panting toward the white stable of the clouds, where love  
Comes soaring. The slow, syrupy afternoon  
Shakes its sleek tresses before the eyes of the clay,  
Creeps back toward the river, already shrouded  
In mist from the swampy delta, sends a slew of  
Knife-colored salmon upstream to sparkle in  
The sun, and then begins to rant and rave, outside  
Of time, outside of this smug, swaggering space,  
Outside of the realm of words, kicking up a fuss.

No one will see it...

Will see how the fullness and the emptiness  
Step smoothly hand in hand out of the stubbly field,  
While hundreds of black stallions in metallic  
Red smell the salty blue fillies of the sea and  
Pound the earth, prodded by creation as they  
Toil beneath an understanding sun, which bows toward  
The west and the end of this lusty labor.  
Bathed in a blue northern light so dry it shimmers,  
Observed by eyes brimming with moisture and love,  
One of the hundreds of shrieking seagulls is washed  
Ashore by one of the silver plowshares and  
Buried alive beneath a gray worm-studded wave,  
While the harrier hovers high in the air  
And the crows quibble among the abandoned grain.

**ARTICLE 58:**

Without human footsteps what would this harshness be that makes the light crackle.  
What would the yellow crust of the desert be without wounded hands,  
deprived of hope, to crack it open  
in the winter's arc. Shadows, nettles,  
rocky ground, waste and sadness. Thus would be  
the barren land in front of the mountains' steel wall.

Riverbed of solitude. Perhaps, up above,  
the cactus and the rye burn under the birds. Then, they descend  
to the vast red plain like the face  
of the farmer who's always passing  
with his tools and his old horse,  
with his weariness and his poverty, always,  
all his life while the day lasts.

**PART IV:  
POLICIES AND  
ACTION**



**ARTICLE 59: DEMOCRACY**

Let us take a tangent that is unafraid of silence  
or a tango masquerading as concern  
with its accordion stretched longer than a century

Let us take the crown of an almond tree and rest there  
on the crown of an olive tree

Let us take the South and place it in the government's  
Northern hemisphere where no one ever cries  
because the handkerchiefs are folded into quarters

Let us take our principles and fold them into quarters  
and fold the government into quarters, too

Let's all go to the market and sell the government  
and sell our principles, too

Then give us a labyrinth that's not too large  
and a brass band playing economic tunes

And we'll keep the labyrinth and the band  
And we'll fold the economic tunes to quarters

Let us sell the economic tunes at the market

Let us take a flag which is a scrap of cloth  
or some peeled skin or a gale-force wind

Fold the cloth into quarters  
and save the skin for ourselves

Let us not sell the cloth  
until we have secured the skin

Let us take a costume and not have anyone wear it

Let us take a day that is taking too long to rise  
and the sun will say to the day: you there, get up and walk  
and the day will not comply

**ARTICLE 60: REPRESENTATION**

‘If a person, if only for an hour at a time, could borrow the bodies of others,  
I would borrow yours, my brother, so that you could walk beside a river somewhere.’

**ARTICLE 60bis**

I’m unable to find anybody to show me what to do, and I’m here in the  
middle of the rain, trembling. *Igitur non est in extremo punctus quin extremis  
sit circumferentia.*

**ARTICLE 61: DECISION-MAKING SONNET**

A qualified majority  
shall be defined as:  
at least 55% of the other members  
of the Council, representing Member States

comprising at least 65% of the population  
of the participating Member States.

A blocking minority must include at least  
the minimum number of these other Council members

representing more than 35% of the population  
of the participating Member States,  
plus one member,

failing which the qualified majority  
shall be deemed attained.

Or one shall hesitate.

**ARTICLE 62: THE FREE MARKET**

a little square in the south of France  
peeling onions  
the wicker basket  
of a toothless farmer's wife  
humming  
thinking of the hinny  
due for worming  
thinking  
of the vet  
the bill  
the breast of duck  
lying to thaw  
or the hitchhiker  
two kilometres up the road  
who bought onions and  
is now on the lookout for an  
internet connection  
thinking about  
the fridge at home  
in Copenhagen

that has to be repaired  
by a man  
with a lorry  
from Warsaw  
who eats cheese from Italy  
whose grandfather  
trekked deep into Russia  
and now  
in the light of the television  
toothless  
talks no more  
of his hinny  
and on a small  
Sunday morning square  
seeks onions

**ARTICLE 62bis**

the night to doubt  
these markets,  
to doubt the colours of our misty rainbow,  
the night to smile  
at my own doubts,  
the night to cross  
the borders  
that kill the butterfly of my doubt.

let my words  
cross your border,  
to create this new rainbow of doubt  
whose colour i still have to dream,  
colours of my own choice.



**ARTICLE 63: CURRENCY**

O henny penny! O horsed half-crown!  
O florin salmon! O farthing wren!  
O hare! O hound! O snipe! O bull!  
O mint of field and flood, farewell!  
Be Ireland's lost ark, gone to ground,  
And where the rainbow ends, be found.

**ARTICLE 63bis**

Long gone, the seasons of raw blood,  
gone, gone, gold dubloon and ducat,  
past too the frank, guilder and mark.  
We glide now each in like rigged bark  
across this tideless sea of unity,  
Mare Nostrum of the Merchant Navy.

**ARTICLE 63ter**

Have you noticed on your Euro notes  
how the arches of bridges span a bankruptcy of water?  
Each one a narcissus admiring its reflection  
cemented in place with symmetrical bricks.  
Nothing runs, nothing flows, no liquidity  
beneath the engraver's point that etched the watermark.  
The rivers that made Europe – Seine, Tagus, Rhone, or Scheldt,  
Meuse, Po, Rhine, Douro, or Main – these are not reflected here.  
Their waters slip beneath the digits of electronic steams  
provided they quench the capital cities.  
Danubian tears are veined with frozen blood  
and those of the Serbs are adorned with paper cravats.  
Oh, what error, Europe, what thick bewilderment  
made you think to hide your wealth beneath your bed

like a sludge that accumulates to stem the flow  
when what we need is a torrent of credit?!

**ARTICLE 64: FREE MOVEMENT OF IDEAS**

Ideas circulate between people  
They change in rhythm and register  
Mirrors that reflect lagoon beds  
differently in foamy cakes of mud

**ARTICLE 65: FREE MOVEMENT OF PERSONS**

Thanks for the money, the box, your ever good ideas.  
But come now! Visit us. Life's wonderful here  
unlike where you are. What's stopping you? Avoid the fastest  
roads, they look as if they run straight on but they take  
strange turns. Find your way to us under your own steam. We  
will wait for you. While you scramble across poles and wire, walk through  
forests and the outskirts of cities, march and salute the legions of  
corncocks, grasses, grains that stand nodding along the old  
Roman road. Know this: we're expecting you, we're ready,  
seated behind the wide-open arms of our kitchen window.

**ARTICLE 66: TRANSPORT**

*Henriëta folds paper boats:*

'A bicycle is a fish. A car a slide. A city remains a train that stands still for  
a long time.'

**ARTICLE 66bis**

I write that here and here  
I ride on more than one bus, for they always scrawl to the back of  
beyond, like the place, Amager, where I took my driving test. I passed  
the theory exam first time, but didn't always understand the parking  
regulations. The driving lessons also consisted of driving out and

rescuing the driving instructor's driving-instructor son because he'd run out of petrol. A thump on the tailboard and one on the back. That's also a way of learning how to tank.

It's illegal to drive into other cars, the driving instructor said.

Just as it ought to be forbidden to have a crash:

Bror von Blixen-Finecke did it... Albert Camus did it... Hank Williams did it... Jackson Pollock did it... Théo Sarapo did it... Jean Robic did it... Alexander Dubcek did it... Michael Ventris did it... Princess Diana did it... Lisa 'Left Eye' Lopes did it... Natasja did it... Jörg Haider did it...

**ARTICLE 67: AGRICULTURE AND FISHING**

Written in the wind are  
memories of the harvests of other days,  
the unctuous aroma of the oil mills  
the slow fermenting in the ovens  
of wheat that grinds the magic  
of water and stone in harmony.  
How long the sadness of the abandoned fields, of the soil flooded by waste, of  
the chopped-up olive trees, of the mountains of rotting apples and the vines  
ripped up by the roots?

Engraved in the waves ride  
memories of venturous fishing  
of catches of swordfish and sardines  
of octopuses and eels put out to dry  
in stockades oriented to the west.  
How long the tragedy of the sterile seas,  
without fish that rise with the bait?

**ARTICLE 68: ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

Upon the dried seeds parched flowers fall in the shadow of my thought.  
I see bloody wool, deadly grease in the food, black sores, and under motionless  
branches numerous infections.

Bones burn, I hear the dew fermenting: tortured trees weep.  
In the light I see unclean wounds, the tremor of expiring water  
and the thickness of industrial oil under poppy petals.

Is this the earth? Once it was clean beneath the stars.

Do something. Don't let it die. Hurry.

The spring solstice is going to rot. Ignite purity. Right now:  
already yellow insects swarm toward my heart.

**ARTICLE 69: URBAN PLANNING**

call her a calamity  
a maze of rails and narrow streets  
a shadow you take for a swarm

she remains

she continues stubbornly to make our winters  
with shop signs, agencies and opera  
with graffiti and skaters and wallpaper  
with polaroids and dawn light and marzipan and pain

she smiles at your frozen white strain

save crusts for her wild ducks  
throw the evening at her feet  
what if we turn to crumbs  
in her metros and in her Thursdays

she holds everything fast  
she preserves us in her concrete hands  
she treasures us, she squats

**ARTICLE 69bis**

The city's breathing slows.  
At first there were mittens,  
cheeks, roofs decked in snow.  
Now only mist and sheets of rain.

The city swallows in her streets.  
She gasps, coughs and unravels.  
She is reflected in a thousand puddles,  
In a thousand dark windows.

The cold has deserted us.  
No white, no air, no blue  
but drab and merciless  
the city mocks my impermeability.

Wordlessly we once more  
wring out our own skin.  
We last at most a day or two,  
bit by bit the city exhales us.

**ARTICLE 70: ENLARGEMENT**

Light blossoms on the shore  
we walk under star-sails  
a rain of roses, the surge of the sea in a glass  
an ornament curls out from the wall and comes alive,  
a golden egg splits into four birds  
and you cradle in your hand a spa, its blue, iridescent flames.

Yes, and those parties we weren't invited to. Those who weren't invited.  
You say: the wise man always lays an extra place at the table.

**ARTICLE 70bis: GEOSTRATEGIC HYMN TO EUROPE**

You're still selling the story of the Turks  
Before the gates of Vienna taking down their tents as a ruse.  
That they're now dressed up as kebob vendors,  
Waiting for the right moment,  
To leap from their kiosks and cut your senile throats.

Although your tribes are lost forever,  
In the swamps of your barbaric plans,  
And you can't even tell the skull of a Goth  
From the skull of a Slav from the skull of an Angle from the skull of  
a Frank,  
You still believe that only the death of your sons will rejuvenate you.

You still think that you'll fool us all.  
When I close my tired eyes, you appear  
In the form of a fat hairy woman who gives birth snoring,  
And of the man who in the darkness next to her secretly masturbates,  
Thinking of America.

**ARTICLE 70ter: STREET MAP**

Looking at the street map  
of Nicosia and its suburbs  
Fuat Pasa Street ends on Dionos and Issiou  
Defne Yüksel on Lambrou Porfyra  
Yenice Şafak on Leontiou Mahaira  
in the vicinity of Flatro Bastion  
on old maps the river cut through the town

but Savorniano changed the flow  
to fill the moat with water.  
There on Sundays the domestic servants  
from Sri Lanka spread out their shawls  
and eat together.  
The palm trees remind them of home.

**ARTICLE 71: MIGRATION**

knock and it shall be opened  
and with what do I knock  
with the lion-headed knocker  
or do I ring the bell  
or later pound with my fist  
kick  
throw stones through the window  
then rocks  
and with what do I knock  
if nobody's at home

**ARTICLE 71bis**

What to tell you Princess Europe  
Daughter of Agenor king of Phoenicia  
In your father's country  
The sea still encircles the cedars  
That languish among the birches  
The ships still depart charged with the earth's damned  
From exile to exile their bundles a burden  
That never rests in the rumoured ports of riches  
Born from the talons of vultures ferrymen toss them to the dogs  
Who show them shipwreck after shipwreck in the jaws of Hell  
No rivers offer rafts to their dreams  
No dark snows on the mountains

Slake their thirst in brief gleams  
Need the callous bull such blithe disregard to remove you  
And let the wolves out of their lair?

**ARTICLE 71ter**

They fed her a scrap of bread –  
and tendrils of injera clung to my fingertips  
with stories  
of sleepless nights in Safi cells  
spent thumbing the darkness.

*You should have brought some earth with you, I said,  
it would remind you  
of cheeks baked coral red.* This island's parched –  
if everyone made an offering of earth  
then every livid memory would yield  
a new fable.

*Here, she said, look,* and spread her palm.  
I saw fear gripped against the cold nightface  
on a boat scratching its course on a Mediterranean blue  
and, cleaving to the roof of her mouth  
the many words from stories without end,  
her eyes brimming with anger, trickling  
sequins  
on her cheek.



**ARTICLE 72: EXILE**

El Cid's sword strikes to right  
and left at the heads of Moors  
and Christians, wins bread for the daughters  
of Campeador, who now, at the start  
of the 21st century, cower between  
Puerta del Sol and Gran Vía, lean dark  
small Elviras and Sols catch in the net  
of their dark glances Christians and Moors –  
men – on the right and the left, shivering  
as they earn their bread in Europe's midwinter:  
*Oh father, oh father, why did you leave us!*

**ARTICLE 72bis**

Far away from home,  
the smells,  
the sounds,  
the madness,  
the laughter,  
these present sorrows  
and the joys  
of the land of my birth,  
the songs of our birds  
whose names i guessed,  
the sounds of the rivers  
whose names  
i grew up trying to name  
with rhythm and dance,  
the shapes  
of the hills and mountains,  
how they told us  
they were a man dancing,

or a woman smoking a pipe,  
a crazy woman  
dancing to several lovers,  
the colours of the sky  
as it changed its many tempers  
to invoke the voices  
of thunder and lightning:  
all those shapeless colours,  
of butterflies and nameless things,  
all these remind me always

**ARTICLE 72ter**

Princess Europe  
Must my poor heart  
Old before its time  
Erase the untenable distance  
When it loved to see you again among the swallows  
Tenderest blend  
Guitars mixed with lutes sketching your canvas  
Woven by a myriad primitive winds  
Danube Tage Seine Volga Guadalquivir Rhine Meuse  
To embrace the giving sea  
The brotherly waves the storks that come and go  
Those free birds rebels to outrage  
To comfort the forests of mad dusk  
All this wheat for the sharing of bright harvests  
Far from the fog horns the cruel frontiers  
Sublime helmsman the wind has he yet chosen the sails?

**ARTICLE 73: FREEDOM OF RELIGION**

For here, in our city,  
there dwells beneath each one  
another god. With  
green beard,  
purple beard  
or peacock fan reared;  
goddesses, as well,  
with nine creamy breasts  
or feet dancing like a ping-pong ball  
or prime number baffling us all,  
or  
an empty box.

Upon leaving the seventy-seven houses of worship  
greetings pass between believer and rather less than believer and non-believer,  
they bow their heads and spend good money in each other's shops on  
milk or wine,  
sweet biscuits,  
salt crackers,  
blood-coral beads,  
holy books, forbidden books,  
copper cymbals,  
garlic and icons,  
red onions, yellow candles, silk hats and  
nutritious, speckled beans,

but never, never, never,  
never  
shall they breathe a word about  
theology.

*Hier muss ein jeder nach seiner Façon selig werden.*

For just like the rising sun the seventy-seven towers,  
like night owls and jackdaws the seventy-seven towers,  
just like rainbows the seventy-seven divine towers.

**ARTICLE 73bis**

What is cooing  
between one stone and another?!  
I thought twenty minarets  
above this church  
whose bells  
are an echo of a remote temple.  
Twenty minarets...  
No beginning for fear  
and no end for nostalgia.

What else?  
I've lived more than I ought to  
and died more than I ought to.  
However, no gods  
my hopelessness has not defeated  
and my forgiveness has not embarrassed.

**ARTICLE 73ter**

One day everything is clear; blood marked rhesus positive and saturated  
with the finest oxygen and  
the points of the compass are absolutely equal, so to the northeast

I sacrifice myself to my mighty predecessor Torgjerd Holgabrud,  
to the southeast the elephant god Ganesha waits on its throne,  
to the southwest the nut weevil grazes in the holy hazel tree, to  
the west Quetsalcoatl, the feather-clad snake greets me cordially in  
this world above worlds where maladies and distress shall be no more.

**ARTICLE 73<sup>quater</sup>: HYMN TO DISBELIEF**

We made god and his emissaries  
Who made the laws and its pleasantries  
Flanked between two tall facades  
Two rows of bars, two unwashed factions  
In a heavenly prison with its stained glass  
But we are, all the same, children of independence  
Will we ever accept that we are human  
Sentenced to live our lives in common  
We created god and his little brothers  
So we could proudly hack at one another  
If we forget them, then a day might come  
That will bring a peace to last forever

**ARTICLE 74: SECURITY**

One cat I got from an abandoned building site. His eye was glued shut, an ear partly severed and in his fur you could still see the teeth marks of the dogs. He lived under a cupboard for a week and didn't sleep, each time I got on my knees to look for him I'd find him crouching, with a glazed look, I could only tell he was still alive from the sucking motion of his flanks, a frightened oxygen pump. Later he would sometimes let you stroke him, if you were very careful he wouldn't bite. But one night he jumped onto the bed, a claw slashed into my eyebrow, blood ran down my nose into my mouth, I dived under a pillow to dodge the tiger in my house.

Another cat I found in the street, in a porch in the cold rain. She was so small that she was still full of trust. The first night she already slept in my bed, fell into such a deep sleep that all the life slid out of her young muscles, I played with her paws, tail, she became a toy cat filled with sand. At night she didn't hear the neighbours' dogs. That sleep is called: safety.

A friend who is deaf says: he's got the sweetest tom cat in the world. One night it jumps onto his head, his stomach, it viciously bites his toes. When he looks up, bewildered, he sees how, in the dim light, the door handle of the bedroom moves down, moves down without making any sound.

This is how cats talk to us: about the depths of sleep, the wild flesh of ancient fears.

**ARTICLE 75: HUMANITARIAN AID**

To partake of the bread of our combined blood  
Under the icy night sky  
I have offered my blood  
I have offered my strength  
and sacrificed my youth  
just to see the rebirth finally set free

Springtime comes back  
with its birds  
and pretends to forget  
how it becomes heartless  
I share in vain  
I will always be the outsider

**ARTICLE 76: THE FAILURE OF EUROPE**

Fortunate Europe has failed:  
vain, vacuous project, whose core  
was a real force, unutilised, betrayed.

Fortress of Europe, inhospitable stronghold  
that refuses to share its lost dream  
with others. But those who, obsessed with Europe,  
because they have nothing,  
undertake one last suicidal attempt,  
are headed for a death by drowning.  
Death girds up this continent with water,  
like an elastic chastity belt.  
Europe doesn't hand out life belts.  
It subsidises its cows till they are  
bloated, and leaves the sea alone.

**ARTICLE 76bis: CELEBRATING FAILURE**

May 7, 1945, Germany gave up, exhausted, defeated.

Nothing to cry about.

The Spanish Empire sank on 7/16/1898 in Santiago Bay.

Nothing to cry about.

May 18, 1941, the Duke of Aosta surrendered to the Ethiopians.

Nothing to cry about.

It would be necessary to look up the exact date  
when the Austro-Hungarian Empire crumbled.

And to declare in each country a national holiday  
on the day of its major defeat.

Because it's not in victory  
but in lost battles

that we learn the truth of who we are

and where it was that we took the wrong path.

**ARTICLE 77: THE STATUTE OF POETRY**

Poets are will-o'-the-wisps: they illuminate nothing but recall that light exists.

Poets are the cough and the stutter, the murmur and the silence of the world.

Poets are the Echoes of Tomorrow.





**PART V:  
EUROPEAN  
HYMN**

## The European Constitution in Verse

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Italian, Esperanto, French, Spanish, Catalan, Portuguese

Greek, Basque, Turkish, Arabic

Hebrew, Romani, Hungarian, Latvian

Romanian, Lithuanian, Slovene, Albanian, Armenian

Czech, Slovakian, Russian, Polish, Belarusian, Croatian, Bulgarian

Serbian, Bosnian, Macedonian, Estonian, English, Finnish

Yiddish, Swedish, Dutch, Danish, German, Norwegian, Icelandic, English

Breton, Gaelic, Frisian, Occitan

Urdu, Bambara, Malay, Ewe

Korean, Japanese, Chinese

Bengali, Lingala, Quechua, Sepedi/Northern Sotho

Quechua, Wolof, Swahili

Japanese, Filipino/Tagalog, Persian/Farsi, Xhosa

Papiamento, Zulu, Sesotho/Southern Sotho

Punjabi, Luxembourgish, Amhaars, Maori

Czech, Slovakian, Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian, Polish, Sorbian

The European hymn receives new words. Beethoven's *Ode an die Freude* is to be sung using the word for bread in a large number of European languages, official as well as lesser used ones. The major world languages and several non-European minority languages will also make their appearance.

Pane, pano, pain, pan, pa, paõ  
 Psomi, ogi, ekmek, khobz  
 Lehem, xumel, kenyér, maize  
 Païne, duona, kruh, büke, hatz

Chléb, chlieb, chleb, chlib, chleb, chleb, hleb, chljab  
 Hleb, hljeb, leb, leib, loaf, leipä  
 Broyt, bröd, brood, brød, Brot, brød, brauö, bread  
 Bara, aran, bôle, pan

Roti, balo, roti, bolo  
 Pahng, bureddo, mianboa  
 Roti, lipa, t'anta, senkgwa  
 T'anta, mbuuru, mikati

Pan, tinapay, nan, isonka  
 Pan, isinkwa, borotho  
 Roti, Brout, dabo, parãoa!  
 Chléb, chlieb, chleb, chlib, chleb, chleb, chlěb



# **FINAL PROVISION**

## The European Constitution in Verse

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I was blind as a tombstone until one day I saw in the world true hands.  
Not hands but a way of uniting without touching like leaves in the forest.

Now I know that the only song, the only dignity of old songs, the only poetry is  
what speaks its love to this world, to this loneliness that maddens and forsakes.

I keep quiet, I wait until my sorrow and my hope are like what walks in the street,  
until I myself can be in the body of all humans  
until it's possible to see with closed eyes the sorrow I already see with eyes open.



# Index of Titles

The poets and their translators can be identified per article. For the articles with more than one author, and for the preamble, the first three words of the section in question are given, with the name.

**INTRODUCTION** (David Van Reybrouck and Peter Vermeersch. Dutch, transl. Gergory Ball)

## **PREAMBLE**

[Nothing]

*Don't say Europe* (Leszek Szaruga. Polish, transl. Peter Vermeersch)

*Amid a charred* (Gerrit Komrij. Dutch, transl. Paul Vincent)

*Europe that flickers* (Geert van Istendael. Dutch, transl. Gregory Ball)

*I see bloody* (Antonio Gamoneda. Spanish, transl. Frank Bergon and Holly St. John Bergon)

[Beginning]

*Trumpet in tunnel* (Easterine Kire Iralu)

*We, it moans* (David Van Reybrouck. Dutch, transl. Kate Ashton)

*We know nothing* (Leszek Szaruga. Polish, transl. W. D. & K. B. Snodgrass with Justyna Kostkowska)

*At this moment* (Jüri Talvet. Estonian, transl. Harvey L. Hix)

*We who come* (Geert van Istendael. Dutch, transl. Gregory Ball)

[We]

*All of us* (Geert van Istendael. Dutch, transl. Gregory Ball)

[Mornings]

*We want no* (Xavier Queipo. Galicisch, transl. Gregory Ball)

*Awake. Awake* (Xavier Queipo. Galician, transl. Gregory Ball)

*May it be* (Fabio Scotto. Italian, transl. Judith Baumel)

*Feel the others'* (Kader Sevinç. Turkish, transl. Kader Sevinç)

[Voices]

*Let us not* (Manza. French, transl. Griffin Translations)

*So let us* (Xavier Queipo. Galician, transl. Gregory Ball)

*Black as the* (Geert van Istendael, transl. Gregory Ball)

*That the ruin* (Haris Vlavianos. Greek, transl. Mina Karavanta)



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## THE CONSTITUTION

1. Xavier Queipo (Galician, transl. Gregory Ball)
2. Manza (French, transl. Griffin Translations)
3. Xavier Queipo (Galician, transl. Gregory Ball)
4. *No borders, no* (Manza. French, transl. Griffin Translations)  
*Neither the bleating* (Abdellatif Laâbi. French, transl. Suzanne Buffam)  
*It is not* (Geert van Istendael. Dutch, transl. Kate Ashton)  
*No customs officers* (Jean-Pierre Verheggen. French, transl. Paul Vermeersch)
5. Xavier Queipo (Galician, transl. Gregory Ball)
6. Péter Kántor (Hungarian, transl. Michael Blumenthal)

## PART I: PRINCIPLES

7. Europe (Ekaterina Karabasheva. Bulgarian, transl. Ekaterina Karabasheva)
8. History (Laurence Vielle. French, transl. Griffin Translations)
  - 8bis Haris Vlavianos (Greek, transl. Mina Karavanta)
  - 8ter Xavier Queipo (Galician, transl. Gregory Ball)
9. The Union (Xavier Queipo. Galician, transl. Frank Bergon and Holly St. John Bergon)
10. Truth (Péter Kántor. Hungarian, transl. Michael Blumenthal)
  - 10bis Haris Vlavianos (Greek, transl. Mina Karavanta)
11. Freedom (Peter Vermeersch, transl. Kate Ashton)
  - 11bis Solitude (Kateřina Rudčenková. Czech, transl. Alexandra Büchler)
12. Constant incompleteness (Eugenijus Ališanka. Lithuanian, transl. Kerry Shawn Keyes)
  - 12bis Francis Dannemark (French, transl. Suzanne Buffam)
13. The rule of law (Manza. French, transl. Griffin Translations)
  - 13bis Xavier Queipo (Galician, transl. Gregory Ball)
14. The members (Xavier Queipo. Galician, transl. Gregory Ball)
15. The government (Geert van Istendael. Dutch, transl. Kate Ashton)
16. Power (Narcís Comadira. Catalan, transl. Robin Vogelzang)
17. The statute of violence (José Ovejero. Spanish, transl. Frank Bergon and Holly St. John Bergon)
18. Respect for minorities (Louise Rosengreen. Danish, transl. John Irons)

## PART II: FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

19. On the nature of rights (Liāna Langa. Latvian, transl. Margita Gailitis)
20. The right to be in-between (Patrick McGuinness)
21. The right of citizenship (Theo Dorgan)
22. The right to remember (Narcís Comadira. Catalan, transl. Robin Vogelzang)

## The European Constitution in Verse

---

23. The right to work (Agda Bavi Pain. Slovakian, transl. Dasha Brandtner)
24. The right to Laziness (José Ovejero. Spanish, transl. Frank Bergon and Holly St John Bergon)
  - 24bis The right to apple trees (Geert van Istendael. Dutch, transl. Gregory Ball)
25. The right to Housing (Geert van Istendael. Dutch, transl. Gregory Ball)
  - 25bis Niki Marangou (Greek, transl. Stephanos Stephanides)
  - 25ter Easterine Kire Iralu
  - 25quater Louise Rosengreen
26. The right to the use of abandoned places (Saila Susiluoto. Finnish, transl. Donald Adamson)
27. The right to walk (Laurence Vielle. French, transl. Griffin Translations)
  - 27bis The right to run (Louise Rosengreen. Danish, transl. John Irons)
  - 27ter Hymn to the church path (Geert van Istendael. Dutch, transl. Gregory Ball)
28. The right of the soil to wear down (Aleš Šteger. Slovene, transl. Erica Debeljak)
29. The right to slowness (Xavier Queipo. Galician, transl. Gregory Ball)
  - 29bis Hymn to the snowflake (Geert van Istendael. Dutch, Gregory Ball)
30. The right to silence
31. The right to language
  - Do you bear* (Hedina Tahirović Sijerčić. Romani, transl. Peter Vermeersch)
  - I took the* (Saila Susiluoto. Finnish, transl. Donald Adamson)
  - Taste every language* (Geert van Istendael. Dutch, transl. Gregory Ball)
  - Small and large* (Aleš Šteger. Slovene, transl. Erica Debeljak)
  - we poets always* (Jean-Pierre Verheggen. French, transl. Paul Vermeersch)
  - The right to* (Jean-Pierre Verheggen. French, transl. Paul Vermeersch)
32. The right to translation (Carles Torner. Catalan, transl. Robin Vogelzang)
33. The right to exile in art (Aleš Šteger. Slovene, transl. Erica Debeljak)
34. The right to eccentric behaviour and ideas (Franzobel. German, transl. Julia Samwer)
  - 34bis Péter Kántor (Hungarian, transl. Michael Blumenthal)
35. The right to stupidity (Eugenijus Ališanka. Lithuanian, transl. Kerry Shawn Keys)
36. The right to inscrutability (Petr Borkovec. Czech, transl. Justin Quinn)
  - 36bis Ulf Stolterfoht (German, transl. David McKay)
37. The right to complexity and to slow and profound understanding (Xavier Queipo. Galician, transl. Frank Bergon and Holly St John Bergon)
38. The right to fairytales (Clare Azzopardi. Maltese, transl. Albert Gatt)
39. The right to rage (Manza. French, transl. Paul Vermeersch)
40. The right to disconnect (Michal Habaj. Slovakian, transl. Marian Andricik)
41. The right to well-being (Kateřina Rudčenková. Czech, transl. Alexandra Büchler)
42. The right to food (Saila Susiluoto. Finnish, transl. Donald Adamson)

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43. The right to one's appetite, to obesity. (Jean-Pierre Verheggen. French, transl. Paul Vermeersch)  
 43bis The fundamental rights of the potato (Louise Rosengreen. Danish, transl. John Irons)
44. The right to marriages of convenience (Mircea Dinescu. Romanian, transl. Florin Bican)
45. The rights of very wicked children (Fabio Scotto. Italian, transl. Judith Baumel)
46. The right of very old ladies (Laurence Vielle. French, transl. Gregory Ball)
47. The right to ephemerality (Liāna Langa. Latvian, transl. Margita Gailitis)
48. The right to dream (Easterine Kire Iralu)

### **PART III: DECLARATIONS**

#### DECLARATIONS CONCERNING MUSEUMS

49. Don't say Europe (Leszek Szaruga. Polish, transl. Peter Vermeersch)
50. The damned and the pilgrim fathers (Paulo Teixeira. Portuguese, transl. David McKay)  
 50bis Gasterbeiters (Artur Punte. Russian, transl. Sasha Dugdale)
51. The sorrow of Europe (Gerrit Komrij. Dutch, transl. Paul Vincent)
52. The consolation of Europe (Gerrit Komrij. Dutch, transl. Paul Vincent)
53. Painting (Kamran Mir Hazar. Persian, transl. Judith Wilkinson)
54. CV (Hedina Tahirović Sijerčić. Romani, transl. Peter Vermeersch)
55. Time of transition (Leszek Szaruga. Polish, transl. W. D. & K. B. Snodgrass with Justyna Kostkowska)

#### DECLARATIONS CONCERNING LANDSCAPES

56. Antonio Gamoneda (Spanish, transl. Frank Bergon and Holly St John Bergon)
57. Under Harrier Hawks (Tsjëbbe Hettinga. Frisian, transl. Susan Massoty)
58. Antonio Gamoneda (Spanish, transl. Frank Bergon and Holly St John Bergon)

### **PART IV: POLICIES AND ACTION**

59. Democracy (Jean Portante. French, transl. Paul Vermeersch)
60. Representation (Eva Runefelt. Swedish, transl. Bill Coyle)  
 60bis Xavier Queipo (Galician, transl. Frank Bergon and Holly St John Bergon)
61. Decision-making sonnet (Peter Vermeersch. Dutch, transl. Kate Ashton)
62. The Free Market (David Van Reybrouck en Peter Vermeersch. Dutch, transl. Kate Ashton)  
 62bis Chenjerai Hove
63. Currency (Seamus Heaney)  
 63bis Geert van Istendael (Dutch, transl. Kate Ashton)  
 63ter Jacques Darras (French, transl. Paul Vermeersch)
64. Free movement of ideas (Xavier Queipo. Galician, transl. Gregory Ball)

## The European Constitution in Verse

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65. Free movement of persons (Eva Cox. Dutch, transl. Judith Wilkinson)
66. Transport (Eva Cox. Dutch, transl. Judith Wilkinson)
  - 66bis Louise Rosengreen (Danish, transl. John Irons)
67. Agriculture and fishing (Xavier Queipo. Galician, transl. Frank Bergon and Holly St John Bergon)
68. Environmental policy (Antonio Gamoneda. Spanish, transl. Frank Bergon and Holly St John Bergon)
69. Urban planning (Peter Vermeersch. Dutch, transl. Kate Ashton)
  - 69bis David Van Reybrouck (Dutch, transl. Kate Ashton)
70. Extension (Saila Susiluoto. Finnish, transl. Donald Adamson)
  - 70bis Geostrategic Hymn to Europe (Aleš Šteger. Slovene, transl. Erica Debeljak)
  - 70ter Street Map (Niki Marangou. Greek, transl. Stephanos Stephanides)
71. Migration (Eugenijus Ališanka. Lithuanian, transl. Kerry Shawn Keys)
  - 71bis Tahar Bekri (Arabic, transl. Suzanne Buffam)
  - 71ter Clare Azzopardi (Maltese, transl. Albert Gatt)
72. Exile (Jüri Talvet. Estonian, transl. H.L. Hix)
  - 72bis Chenjerai Hove
  - 72ter Tahar Bekri (Arabic, transl. Suzanne Buffam)
73. Freedom of religion (Geert van Istendael. Dutch, transl. Kate Ashton)
  - 73bis Faraj Bayrakdar (Arabic, transl. Mujeer Dahy)
  - 73ter Torild Wardenær (Norwegian, transl. John Irons)
  - 73quater Hymn to disbelief (Salem Zenia. Amazigh, transl. Paul Vermeersch)
74. Security (Eva Cox. Dutch, transl. Judith Wilkinson)
75. Humanitarian aid (Salem Zenia. Amazigh, transl. Paul Vermeersch)
76. The failure of Europe (Bart Vonck. Dutch, transl. Judith Wilkinson)
  - 76bis Celebrating failure (José Ovejero. Spanish, transl. Frank Bergon and Holly St John Bergon)
77. The statute of poetry
  - Poets are will-o'-the-wisps* (Francis Dannemark. French, transl. Suzanne Buffam)
  - Poets are the* (Franzobel. German, transl. Julia Samwer)
  - Poets are the* (Péter Kántor. Hungarian, transl. Michael Blumenthal)

**PART V: EUROPEAN HYMN** (David Van Reybrouck)

**PART VI: FINAL PROVISION** (Antonio Gamoneda. Spanish, transl. Frank Bergon and Holly St John Bergon)

# Authors

**EUGENIJUS ALIŠANKA** was born in Siberia, where his parents were in exile, but does not believe this had any influence on his poetry. He writes in Lithuanian.

**CLARE AZZOPARDI** from Malta was born in a party town on the coast. This young poet writes in both Maltese and English.

**FARAJ BAYRAKDAR** is a Syrian poet and journalist. He has spent fifteen years in prison. He was not spared the isolation cell and torture. The Syrian authorities granted him amnesty in 2000. He now lives in Stockholm in Sweden.

**TAHAR BEKRI** was born in Tunisia but has lived in Paris for more than thirty years. He writes the poetry of banishment, in both French and Arabic.

**PETR BORKOVEC** lives in the Czech Republic. He is a poet and has translated Russian, Hungarian and Korean poetry. As he once said, 'The linguistic feats of great translators can compete with the achievements of original literature.'

**EVA COX** started writing and reciting poems in 1999. She won the first Flemish Poetry Slam in 2001. Her work has been translated into English, Turkish, Russian and Arabic.

**NARCÍS COMADIRA** is one of the most important Catalan poets. His work has been translated in French, English, German, Galician and Spanish. He translated W.H. Auden, P.P. Pasolini and Luigi Pirandello.

**FRANCIS DANNEMARK** is a French-speaking poet from Belgium. He was born on the French border. He once worked as a night watchman, but literature suited him better.

**JACQUES DARRAS** was born in Northern France. He has translated Walt Whitman, Ezra Pound and Malcolm Lowry and is a very active essayist, editor and, of course, poet.

**MIRCEA DINESCU** from Romania was actively involved in the struggle against the Ceaucescu regime. It was he who, at a renowned press conference in 1989, announced the fall of the dictator. In his work, there is nevertheless still a lot of room for humour.

**THEO DORGAN** is a prominent figure in Irish literature. He is an editor, poet, writer, translator, scenarist and sailor. His work has been translated into Spanish and Italian.

**FRANZOBEL** is the pseudonym of the Austrian writer Stefan Griebel. He lives in Vienna, where he writes novels, scenarios, political essays and poetry. In the past he was also an actor and an artist.

**ANTONIO GAMONEDA** is a celebrated Spanish poet who has already won many prizes with his extremely visual poetry, including the Cervantes Prize in 2006. He is considered to be one of the greatest Spanish poets of the present time.

**MICHAL HABAJ** writes in Slovak. His work has been translated into several languages, and has received several awards. He works as a poet, prose writer and researcher at the University of Bratislava.

**SEAMUS HEANEY** is from Northern Ireland and writes poetry in English. In 1995 he won the Nobel Prize for Literature.

**TSÉBBE HETTINGA** is the greatest poet in Friesland (the Netherlands). He is almost blind, but his poetry is extraordinarily visual. He knows all his poems by heart.

**CHENJERAI HOVE** from Zimbabwe writes poetry, novels and essays, both in English and Shona, his father's language. His criticism of President Mugabe forced him into exile. Since then he has lived in Norway.

**EASTERINE KIRE IRALU** was born in Nagaland in India. In 2005 she was compelled to go

## The European Constitution in Verse

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into exile by the situation in that region. She loves telling stories and often includes music in her presentations. She currently lives in Norway.

**PÉTER KÁNTOR** is from Hungary. He studied Hungarian, Russian and English literature and was a member of the editorial staff of the literary magazine *Kortárs*. He publishes and translates, and has himself been translated into English and Russian.

**EKATERINA KARABASHEVA** is a young and passionate poet from Sofia in Bulgaria. She studies at the University of Trier in Germany. Her poems have appeared in several foreign periodicals.

**GERRIT KOMRIJ** is the godfather of Dutch poetry. He has compiled anthologies not only of six centuries of Dutch poetry, but also of Afrikaans poetry and Dutch children's poetry. He has been living in Portugal for many years now.

**ABDELLATIF LAÂBI** was born in Morocco. For his political commitment he was rewarded with 9 years in prison, followed by exile in France. He now lives in Paris and writes in French.

**LIĀNA LANGA**, from Latvia, started working as an art restorer and teacher once she had graduated. She has published two collections of poems, has made a documentary, studied philosophy and American literature in the USA and has won several prizes.

**MANZA** is one of the Brussels city poets. His parents came from Morocco, and he was born in Belgium. His poetry derives from his work as a rapper and slammer.

**NIKI MARANGOU** is a Cypriot poet, dramaturge, painter and the manager of a bookshop in her home city of Nicosia. She has twice won the State Prize for Poetry and twice for Prose.

**PATRICK MCGUINNESS** is a British poet from Wales. He was born in Tunisia, lives in Wales and teaches French at Oxford University.

**KAMRAN MIR HAZAR**'s life started in the mountains of Afghanistan, but when he was six months old his family immigrated to Iran.

There, he worked for several newspapers and magazines. He has had to contend with the strict censorship of the regime throughout his life.

**JOSÉ OVEJERO** comes from Spain, has lived in Germany for a long time and now commutes between Madrid, where he was born, and Brussels. He indefatigably produces novels, poetry and travel books and works for several magazines and newspapers.

**AGDA BAVI PAIN** is a controversial Slovak-Turkish writer and a singer in the banned group Liter Gena. He also writes for the cinema, theatre and major television shows.

**JEAN PORTANTE** from Luxembourg is a poet, translator, editor, journalist, scenarist and novelist. He is a member of the Académie européenne de Poésie and lives in Paris.

**ARTUR PUNTE** was born in Latvia and studied in Russia. He translates, writes poetry in Russian and Latvian and has organised several multimedia poetry projects.

**XAVIER QUEIPO** is from Spain and writes in Galician. He is a marine biologist and sailed the oceans for many years, but now works for the European Commission in Brussels. He is a member of the Brussels Poetry Collective, and also translates Joyce.

**LOUISE ROSENGREEN** is a young Danish writer and poet. She studied Danish language and literature at Roskilde University and, later, history in Berlin. She is currently studying at the writers school at Lund University.

**KATEŘINA RUDČENKOVÁ**, born and raised in Prague, has been publishing poems in Czech newspapers and literary magazines for ten years now. As well as being a poet, she works for the *Dobrá adresa* culture site.

**EVA RUNEFELT** is from Sweden, and in her work she tells of her experiences in helping the elderly and confronting disease and death. She has for several years been working with artists from a variety of disciplines. She is also an art critic.

**FABIO SCOTTO** from Italy teaches French literature in Milan. He is a poet, translator and essayist. His poems have been translated into several languages.

**KADER SEVINÇ** is from Turkey but lives in Brussels. She is the head of the European delegation of the Turkish socialist party. And she writes poems.

**HEDINA TAHIROVIĆ SIJERČIĆ** worked as a journalist for Bosnian television and radio in Sarajevo in the eighties. She later left for Canada and then Germany. She is a translator and writes children's books in Romany.

**ALEŠ ŠTEGER** was born in Slovenia. He has published several collections of poems, the non-fiction work *Berlin*, a collection of essays and a novel. He currently lives in Ljubljana, where he works as an editor.

**ULF STOLTERFOHT** is a German poet and translator from Berlin. His eclectic style draws on both the literary canon and slang, newspeak and the language of the young.

**SAILA SUSILUOTO** is a prose poet from Finland. Her first collection of poems won the Kalevi Jänti Prize for young writers in 2001.

**LESZEK SZARUGA** originates from a family of writers in Poland. Before the fall of communism he published his poetry on the unofficial circuit and did reports for Radio Free Europe, the BBC and Die Welle. He now teaches at the University of Warsaw.

**JÜRI TALVET** lives in Estonia, where he has been teaching at Tartu University for years. He writes, translates and, as a literary researcher, publishes essays and articles on literature and culture.

**PAULO TEIXEIRA** is a Portuguese poet born in Mozambique. His work is characterised by an unremitting melancholy and a singular awareness of the passing of time.

**CARLES TORNER** is a Catalan poet and writer. He has chaired the Committee for Translation and Linguistic Rights of International PEN and is currently in charge of the Humanities and Science Department in the Institut Ramon Llull.

**GEERT VAN ISTENDAEL** is the doyen of Dutch-language literature in Brussels. His full oeuvre includes non-fiction, poetry, essays, short stories and translations. He has translated Goethe, Heine and Brecht.

**DAVID VAN REYBROUCK** is a Dutch-speaking author in Brussels. Two years ago, while lunching at the bistro l'Achepot, he thought, 'Why don't we write a European Constitution in Verse?'

**JEAN-PIERRE VERHEGGEN** is a French-speaking poet from Belgium. In the sixties he worked for the well-known avant-garde magazine TXT. The main aim of his poetry is to make a pastiche of 'Poetry'.

**PETER VERMEERSCH** is a political scientist and Slavist from Brussels. He has published poems in *Het Liegend Konijn* and elsewhere and has a blog at [brievenuitbosvoorde.com](http://brievenuitbosvoorde.com).

**LAURENCE VIELLE** lives in Brussels. She is a French-speaking poetess, actress and an indefatigable walker. She is a member of the Brussels Poetry Collective.

**HARIS VLAVIANOS** was born in Rome, but grew up in Athens. As a result of a stroke of luck while playing poker he was able to retreat to a Greek island for a year to write poetry. Afterwards, he continued with poetry and also translated Zbigniew Herbert, Fernando Pessoa and John Ashbery.

**BART VONK** lives and works in Brussels. He has translated Césaire Vallejo, Federico García Lorca, Pablo Neruda, Antonio Gamoneda and José Saramago into Dutch and has published several volumes of poetry himself.

**TORILD WARDENÆR** is a Norwegian poet from Stavanger. She graduated in literary studies and is constantly experimenting in the prose poem genre. She has also translated British and American poetry.

**SALEM ZENIA** was born in Algeria. He writes poetry and prose in Amazigh, the Kabylie Berber language. He had to put up with censorship throughout his life. He now lives in Barcelona as a refugee.

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