MEMBER PROFILE

BRITTANY

Kelc’h An Dael
**Status:** Underrepresented territory  
**Population:** 4,475,295  
**Area:** 34,023km^2^  
**Capital City:** Nantes  
**Language:** Breton, French, Gallo  
**Religion:** Catholic

**OVERVIEW**
Brittany is an administrative region in north-west France. Historically, Brittany's territory was composed of both the current region of Brittany and the current department of Loire-Atlantique. This territory lost its independence at the end of the 15th century and was integrated to France during the 19th century. Since then, the Bretons have faced the progressive loss of their language and culture. KAD aims to recover a certain form of autonomy through the recreation of a Parliament of Brittany, and to preserve the linguistic and cultural features of Brittany, encouraging their usage and their study.

**UNPO MEMBER PERSPECTIVE**
The KAD (Kelc'h An Dael, meaning Circle of the Parliament) aims to recreate the Parliament of Brittany through Breton national elections. The organization is open to all patriot and democrat Bretons, whatever their political preferences.

The KAD will organize these elections in November 2016, after which it hopes to form a Breton Council of State.

The immediate goals of KAD are:
- To create a Parliament of Brittany in which the future of Brittany, Breizh, the Breton destiny will be decided;
- To be able to assemble all democratic, regionalist, autonomist, federalist and pro-independence Breton groups,
- To coordinate the actions of these adhering entities and associations in a confederal organisation.

**CURRENT ISSUES**
In November 2014, the French National Assembly passed a new law on the territorial organization of the French départements. Brittany is one of this law’s “victims”, as its provisions confirm the division of the region, rejecting the return of the historical capital city Nantes and the rest of the territory of Loire-Atlantique to within its borders.

France did not sign nor ratify the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. Bretons and other minorities are not legally recognized as existent in France.

In 2013, an opinion poll carried out for *Bretons Magazine* showed that around one in five residents of Brittany want to be independent from France. Moreover, 37% of Brittany’s residents would describe themselves as Breton. On the other hand, 48%
would rather call themselves French first. Although the majority of the Bretons do not wish to be independent, they certainly want more decentralization and more local powers.

Another issue is the Breton language. Due to the fact that the study of French is now mandatory in schools, the number of people speaking the Breton language is constantly decreasing. The language annually loses around 10,000 speakers, and the majority of fluent speakers today are aged 70 or over. This serious decline means that the language is in danger of extinction. Article 2 of the French Constitution of 4 October 1958 also states that "the language of the Republic shall be French", and France has not yet ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. This means that not only Breton, but all regional and minority languages in France, are currently endangered.

Although the Breton language is a central feature of Brittany's culture, the number of speakers had declined to around 250,000 by 2011, according to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). At the start of the 20th century, nearly 2 million people spoke this unique language.

Breton is a Celtic language that is mainly spoken in three departments of Brittany: Cotes d'Armor, Finistere and Morbihan. The language was introduced in the 5th and 6th centuries, when Celtic people from Britain crossed the Channel. In the 17th century, the Breton language was divided into four subgroups or regional dialects: Cornouaille, Leon, Vannes and Tregor. Although Breton is mainly Celtic in origin, the language also contains elements of French, developed over time.

It has been difficult for the Bretons to preserve and promote their cultural heritage. The history of Brittany is not taught in schools, and the first mention of the territory in official school history textbooks is of Anne de Bretagne, the last duchess, who was forced to marry the King of France in 1491. All previous historical events in the region are erased. Brittany has several significant archaeological sites, but their most valuable historical treasures are displayed in Paris.

**HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

In 56 B.C. Julius Caesar invaded Brittany. It became the Roman province of Gallia Lugdunensis, or Armorica. Although it was easy to make the name of the region Roman, it was not easy to "Romanize" the Celtic population. In the 5th and 6th century, however, the Romans withdrew from the region. They were replaced by other Celts from Britain who fled the Anglo-Saxon invaders, especially in the north-western part of the territory. Over the next 300 years, many new Celtic missionaries moved to the region with the aim of converting the Celts living in Brittany to Christianity. During this "Celtic migration", the
region became known by the name Bretagne (or Brittany, in English). It was at this time that Bretagne's residents first came to be known as 'Bretons'.

From the 10th to the 14th century, the dukes of Brittany managed to strengthen the unity and solidity of their rule in the territory, despite conflict and intervention by both English and French forces. This lasted until 1341, when the Breton War of Succession began. The Breton War of Succession was a conflict which, between 1341 and 1364, raged between the Counts of Blois, supported by the French, and the Montforts of Brittany, supported by the English, both sides seeking control of the Duchy of Brittany. The war ended with the signing of the first Treaty of Guerande, in which Brittany's neutrality in the continuing conflicts between England and France was signified.

In the 14th and 15th centuries, after 40 years of conflict, Brittany was able to rebuild itself. A parliament was created, and the Duchy became rather prosperous. At the end of the 15th century, however, Brittany's independence came to an end. England had been weakened as a result of the war with France, and thus the Kingdom of France was able to reinforce its authority.

King Francis I issued two edicts in 1532, through which the union of France and Brittany was formalized. However, the edicts also included a reorganization of Brittany's legal status, preserving its symbolic independence, and meaning that the Duchy could avoid most of the conflicts that took place within the kingdom during the 16th and the beginning of the 17th centuries. Brittany was able to preserve its fiscal and legislative autonomy, and the city of Nantes seized this opportunity to become one of the most important commercial centres of France during the 18th century.

Brittany's advancement however, was dealt a major blow on 4 August 1789, when, during the French Revolution, the National Constituent Assembly in Paris unanimously proclaimed the abolition of feudal privileges. As a result of this, Brittany lost its autonomy, its juridical existence, its parliament, and the agreements that were made within the framework of the edicts of 1532. In 1790, Brittany was divided in to five departments. In the 19th century, Brittany became increasingly integrated within the rest of France.

During the Second World War (1940-1944), France was governed by the Vichy Government of Philippe Petain. The Vichy Government divided France into administrative regions. The traditional Breton territory that had consisted of five departments was reduced to four. The department of Loire-Atlantique now belongs to the region "Pays-de-la-Loire".

In February 1992, under French President Francois Mitterrand, the Breton Parliament was mysteriously burned down during a demonstration of sailors. After only five hours, the whole building had crumbled under the flames of the three separate fires that had started on the roof. All of the historical memory of Brittany was reduced to ashes.

**CULTURE**

In Brittany, Celtic culture is still alive. Musical and dance traditions are still celebrated. There are several famous Celtic musical festivals in the region, including the "Festival Interceltique de Lorient" and the five-day "Festival de Cornouaille". During these festivals, Breton people wear traditional outfits, which would have been customary in daily life up until the first half of the 19th century. The unique Breton culture developed as a result of long isolation from the rest of France, and since unification with the larger country, Breton cultural traditions have been noticeably diminished in representation and cultural stature. Language is a good example of this: before unification, the vast majority of citizens spoke Breton, while today, most see French as their native language. Still, many Bretons are very proud of their identity. Many of them identify as Breton first and French second. Brittany and its people are very
proud of their heritage. Their culture and their rich tradition of Celtic music has more in common with Ireland, Wales and Cornwall than it has with France.

Brittany has its own flag, known as "Gwenn ha Du". The flag consists of nine black and white stripes and a scattering of ermines. While the black colour stands for the Eastern Gallo region (Nantes, Rennes, Saint Malo, Saint Brieuc, and Dol), the white colour stands for the Breton-speaking western region (Cornouaille, Leon, Vannes, and Tregor).
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