

Message of the Chair of the Local Organizing Committee Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson

Dear LREC 2014 Participants,

On behalf of the Local Organising Committee, the Local Advisory Board, and all the participating organisations I would first of all like to express my profound gratitude to UNESCO and to the Director-General Madam Irina Bokova for kindly agreeing to act as patron for the conference. I would also like to thank Madam Vigdís Finnbogadóttir, UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for languages and former president of Iceland, for her invaluable support.

Iceland is a country with a rich literary heritage and Icelandic is known for having changed less in the course of the last thousand years than most other languages having a documented history. In the conference bag that you received upon arrival at the conference venue you will find a small booklet, a gift from the local organisers. The title of the booklet is *Hávamál – the Sayings of Óðinn*. It contains an English translation of the famous poem *Hávamál* which is more than one thousand years old. Icelanders today can still read and understand the text of *Hávamál* as it is preserved in the 13th century manuscript *Codex regius* – there is no need for translation. We want to keep it that way.

However, we now feel that Icelandic is being threatened by globalisation and modern technology. Our precious language, which the manuscripts have preserved for us for almost thousand years, might be lost in only a few decades, if it does not adapt to current and future information technology. Icelandic language technology is still in its infancy, and the META-NET survey of 30 European languages demonstrated that language technology support for Icelandic is very limited. Therefore, it is both symbolic and extremely important for us to have the LREC conference here in Iceland – the first time the conference is held outside of the Mediterranean area. It will hopefully raise awareness of the importance of language technology, among politicians, policy makers, academics, journalists, and not least the general public.

I would like to thank all who have made it possible to have the conference here in Iceland – the ELRA team in Paris and Pisa, the Programme Committee and all the reviewers, the Local Committees, our conference bureau Congress Reykjavík, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, and others who have supported the conference in various ways. I cannot mention all the people involved but I want to single out two names. Guðrún Magnúsdóttir first mentioned to us the idea of having LREC in Iceland, and she convinced the ELRA team that this was possible – and feasible. Sigrún Helgadóttir has been the secretary of the Local Organising Committee and has done a tremendous job in organising and coordinating innumerable things that had to be taken care of.

Let me conclude by welcoming you all to Iceland, to Reykjavík, UNESCO city of literature, and to the Harpa Concert Hall and Conference Centre, winner of the 2013 European Union Prize for Contemporary Architecture – Mies van der Rohe Award. I sincerely hope you will enjoy LREC 2014, and that the conference and your visit as a whole will be an unforgettable experience.

Eiríkur Rögnvaldsson
Chair of the Local Organising Committee