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Focus on minorities and languages in European Parliament

The European Parliament's Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages has held its inaugural meeting of the new parliamentary term in Strasbourg.

The group is a cross party gathering of MEPs concerned with minority and language issues.

Catalan-speaking EFA MEP **Jordi Sebastià** from Valencia has been elected as one of three co-Chairs of the group along with Hungarian-speaking MEP Kingal Gál and Nils Torvalds, a Swedish-speaking Finn.

The group has played a significant role in past parliaments in raising the profile of minority issues, and promoting linguistic diversity and languages rights.

One former chair of the intergroup is former EFA MEP François Alfonsi from Corsica, who is well known for his influential report to the European Parliament calling for action to help Europe's endangered languages.

In its manifesto published in April 2014, the grouping said:

"We, members of the European Parliament and of the Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages of the European Parliament stress that fundamental freedoms, human rights and equal opportunities shall be provided for all citizens of the European Union including persons belonging to minorities.

"We note that national minorities make up 8% of the European Union's population while regional or minority languages are spoken by nearly 50 million people, 10% of the EU population. Immigrant minorities make up 6.5% of the EU population, more than 30 million people. We regret that the protection of minorities does not deserve greater attention in the institutions of the European Union."

The Intergroup for Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages will meet monthly in Strasbourg and plans to invite people and groups affected by the issues concerned to give evidence to MEPs.

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