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Press release | 20.03.2018

Action to end language inequality in Europe

Press release from EFA MEP Jill Evans (Wales)

Plaid Cymru MEP **Jill Evans** today presents her draft report on *'Language equality in the digital age'* to the European Parliament's Culture and Education Committee.

The report identifies the issues facing minority and lesser-used languages in Europe. English is currently the most widely spoken language online, and many services are unavailable in all languages.

Ms Evans' report considers how new technologies can be used to increase the use of minority languages online, rather than a pose a risk to them.

Ahead of the Culture and Education Committee meeting in Brussels this morning, Plaid Cymru MEP **Jill Evans** said:

"This report raises awareness of the issues minority languages face in Europe, which is so important for us in Wales. Welsh language education and literature is thriving, and our music scene is stronger than it has been for years. However, in the digital age, languages such as Welsh are struggling in the face of the dominance of English.

"The problem is that people are spending so much time in an almost entirely English language digital world, so their use of smaller languages is decreasing. New technologies like Siri and Alexa are changing the way we live our lives, but are currently unavailable in minority languages.

"However, we need to see technology not as a danger, but rather as an opportunity to achieve language equality in Europe.

"There has already been progress. Working with the Welsh Language Commissioner, Microsoft has developed Welsh interfaces and Facebook has adapted its interface to be inclusive of minority languages, and there are excellent services such as Cysill and Cysair, which have hugely improved Welsh translation services online.

"Policies should encourage the development of programmes that will help smaller languages achieve the same level of digital support as more widely spoken languages.

"Europe's diversity is remarkable. With 80 different languages, we should be using our multilingualism to our advantage, developing policies that will encourage us all to use our own languages, to ensure true linguistic equality in the digital age".

Ends.

Notes: Jill Evans' draft report on 'Language equality in the digital age'.

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