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EU must be ready for enlargement from within

EFA press release

Speaking ahead of an important conference in the European Parliament on '*Independence in Europe*', a group of MEPs have urged EU leaders to think ahead and prepare for the enlargement of the European Union from within its existing borders.

The conference on Wednesday 17 November - '*Independence in Europe: Equality for Nations in the 21st Century*' - features speakers from mainstream democratic nationalist parties including the Scottish National Party, Plaid Cymru, N-VA (Nieuw-Vlaamse Alliantie), Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya and Bloque Nacionalista Gallego.

The MEPs argue that the EU needs to be ready for 'internal enlargement', a process whereby stateless nations which are part of existing EU Member States become EU members in their own right. The conference will also look at the size of nations and economic integration as well as discussing the importance of civic nationalism and cultural diversity in nation building projects.

Plaid Cymru MEP **Jill Evans** (President of the EFA Group) said:

"Independence will allow us to play a full part in Europe. I want Wales to be an equal partner not an onlooker in the European Union. Together our parties in EFA work for constitutional change that will allow people to determine their own future. This conference will demonstrate how that would benefit not only our own nations and regions but would help build a better Europe."

N-VA MEP **Frieda Brepoels** commented:

"This conference will address many of the questions that people have concerning pro-European democratic nationalism. As part of its ongoing evolution, the European Union should prepare for its eventual enlargement from within. I have no doubt that inclusive, democratic nationalism will play a crucial role in the EU's further development."

SNP MEP **Ian Hudghton** said:

"My party wants to see Scotland play its full part in the European Union as a member in its own right. We simply seek the normal status of independence enjoyed by other European nations so that our citizens are fully empowered to achieve their potential. An independent Scotland would be an enthusiastic EU member, helping build a stronger Europe and a stronger Scotland."

Catalan MEP **Oriol Junqueras** said:

"There is a growing body of academic research which supports the assertion that smaller nations are better equipped to deal with economic difficulty in the longer term. This is particularly relevant during this current time of economic difficulty when we see how, for example, the size of the Spanish state has not helped avoid recession. Catalonia is netly contributing 10% of its GDP to Spain each year and yet the state has hugely increased its debt, threatening the euro and Euro stability. Catalan independence is clearly in the EU interest."

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