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Europe's Endangered Languages: report calls for action

Press Release from EFA MEP François Alfonsi

The European Parliament has called for urgent action to protect the continent's endangered languages.

The call was made in a report by Corsican MEP **François Alfonsi** which was adopted today by an overwhelming majority. Mr Alfonsi is the European Parliament's only Corsican-speaking MEP.

This is the European Parliament's first detailed study of the issue of language diversity and protecting endangered languages in Europe in a number of years. There has been no major, in-depth international study into endangered languages since the 1990s.

The report calls for more to be done to help 'intergenerational transmission' so that languages are passed on from one generation to another. It also calls for clarity on the EU funding that may be available to support endangered languages over the coming years.

The European Union currently has 23 official languages, but there are over a hundred endangered languages spoken across the continent.

Speaking after the vote, Mr Alfonsi said:

"Language diversity is part of Europe's rich cultural heritage. Respect for linguistic diversity is enshrined in the Lisbon Treaty.

"Today's vote is an acknowledgement that much more needs to be done to protect endangered languages.

"This means learning from countries that have succeeded in saving their languages. It also means making funding available at EU level where necessary.

"As I've said before, this will require a joint effort between the European Commission and Europe's nations and regions to preserve and promote our rich linguistic heritage.

"We will be socially, culturally, and I believe, economically poorer, if we allow Europe's linguistic diversity to be further eroded. Let's work together to give Europe's endangered languages a brighter future."

Plaid Cymru MEP **Jill Evans** (Wales), President of the EFA Group in the European Parliament said:

"This report is a significant step forward in protecting and promoting language diversity in Europe. We have long experience in Wales of campaigning for language rights.

"I'm pleased that some of our experiences in language planning played a part in informing this report. But we too still have a long way to go to secure the long term survival of the Welsh language.

"Experience has shown that multilingualism is not only culturally important, but is also of social and economic importance. Europe's rich linguistic tapestry reaches far beyond the 23 official languages of the European Union and this diversity is something to celebrate."

The report was adopted with 645 votes in favour, 26 against, and 29 abstentions.

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Jill Evans

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