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European Free Alliance

EFAy intervention at the UN Forum on Minority Issues

"Effective practices for education in, and the teaching of, minority languages"

Good morning,

We are here on behalf of the European Free Alliance youth, a network of 30 youth organisations representing stateless nations and minorities from all across Europe.

Firstly, as a youth organisation we would like to point out the lack of young voices in the panels, especially when dealing with a topic such as education. This issue directly affects all young citizens and therefore we would recommend the Forum to consider bringing young voices into the discussions.

Having read the recommendations developed in the European regional forum, we have to say that we strongly agree with them, and we consider them as good base to improve the status of minority languages. NEVERTHELESS, we feel like young people are not acknowledged and not given the role that they should play in this process. They are the core of educational policies, and for these to be successful, young people have to be, not only taken into consideration, but also actively included in the decision-making processes.

One of the recommendations that we especially would like to highlight are the "immersion programmes" in minority languages. Many of our members come from backgrounds where this method is already being used for the revival or the strengthening of minoritized languages and has proven to be the only successful method to create a fully bilingual, or even multilingual, youth.

We also find that non-formal educational practices should be considered when developing effective learning methods for minorities. These can especially be useful when dealing with a small minority language, or in cases where the lack of public funding hinders the development of further language policies.

Finally, we encourage everyone to keep fighting stigma against minority languages and to continue promoting them as an asset. Thank you.