



ELEN statement to the French Government regarding the Diwan Breton immersion schools.

20th February 2021

On behalf of the European Language Equality Network, the international NGO for the protection and development of European lesser-used languages, we express all of our support to the Diwan Breton immersion schools, and to call on the French state to immediately reverse its decision to cut the amount of teaching in Breton.

That we should have to ask this in the 21st century of a modern European state, in a European Union dedicated to the protection of its linguistic diversity, and as the world prepares to celebrate International Mother Language Day, only reflects what a dire situation we have come to regarding French treatment of the so-called 'regional' languages on its territories. The French state must cease its backward 19th century policies and systemic discrimination designed to eradicate these languages.

Language rights are human rights, and in this regard, France has failed as a state to offer any protection to its own citizens who speak a 'regional' language. Even during a major health crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic it failed to offer the most basic health information in regional languages despite recommendations from the UN, Council of Europe, and OSCE to do so.

France must also cease and desist in its deliberate, persistent campaign against Diwan that seeks to undermine the school organization, demoralize its staff,

European Language Equality Network (ELEN)

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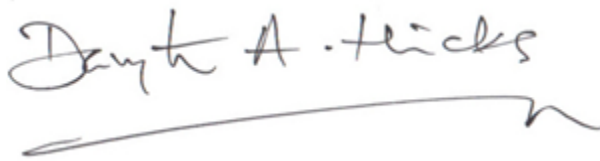
students and parents, which it has conducted since the school was first formed in 1977.

We therefore call on France to reverse its decision regarding the hours of teaching and give our full support to the request of teachers, to students and parents of the Diwan colleges and the Diwan network, for the maintenance of three hours of weekly Breton teaching by class and not by level. Granting these hours per level when there are several classes at the same level means cutting hours and possibly jobs. If the current attack against Diwan is successful, tomorrow it could be the public or Catholic Breton bilingual colleges and schools.

Furthermore, in order to begin to address the systemic discrimination by the French state against the languages, we call on France to:

- Ratify the Council for Europe's European Charter for Regional of Minority Languages, as required for EU Member-States.
- Bring forward legislation for a Breton Language Act that will ensure language rights and support Breton-medium education;
- Fully support the Paul Molac Bill on regional languages that will be voted on in the National Assembly in April.

On behalf of ELEN,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Davyth A. Hicks". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line that serves as a decorative underline.

Davyth Hicks, ELEN Secretary-General.

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