

**Press Release –
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**‘Talking your language’ –
international conference hears about the benefits of multilingualism**

As Scotland’s new leadership prepares to consider the nation’s place within Europe, a one-day conference, *‘In My Own Words – services for young children in a multilingual society,’* held in Edinburgh today, will examine the benefits of nurturing indigenous languages from the earliest age.

Latest estimates show that more than half the world’s population lives in “multilingual” areas, with 23 official languages, over 60 regional minority languages, and hundreds of immigrant minority languages spoken in Europe alone.

Delegates at today’s event, hosted by Children in Europe, will hear from international language experts about how best to support identity and diversity in the early years, how to create language-friendly environments, and about the benefits of encouraging the use of indigenous languages in increasingly multilingual classroom environments.

The conference will also focus on how services for children can affect their experiences of being multilingual, and will consider the policy implications for the EU, and how they should be approaching linguistic diversity.

Dr Priscilla Clarke, executive director of FKA Children’s Services in Australia will discuss how to support identity, diversity and language in the early years setting. Other speakers include Dr Daithí Ó Murchú, the principal of Gaelscoil Ó Doghair, which focuses on the Irish language, and Serap Sikcan, co-ordinator of the Kinderwelten project in Berlin. Both of these practitioners’ methods of learning and teaching have proved beneficial in allowing young children to be naturally exposed to other languages.

There will also be an opportunity for delegates to hear about how to support young people who speak any one of the 300 plus immigrant minority languages found in the UK. Tessa Humby, from the City of Edinburgh’s English as an Additional Language Services team, will examine ways of developing plurilingualism, without devaluing the child’s native tongue.