

**PRESS RELEASE**  
**BBAW-18/2021**

## **New Berlin Center for the Documentation of Endangered Languages**

Endangered Languages Documentation Programme (ELDP) and Endangered Languages Archive (ELAR) move to Berlin with new grant from Arcadia

**Berlin, July 19, 2021** In the wake of globalization and urbanization, many languages will not be spoken anymore because fewer and fewer children are learning the languages of their ancestors. Without any recordings of the languages and the knowledge encoded in them, humanity risks losing intangible cultural heritage and linguistic diversity. Of the estimated 7000 languages spoken worldwide, half are acutely threatened. A new center for documentation and preservation of these endangered languages is therefore being created in Berlin: In July 2021, [the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme \(ELDP\)](#) will move to the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW). The program, led by Dr. Mandana Seyfeddinipur, will receive 21 million euros in funding from Arcadia Fund over the next 10 years. The digital [Endangered Languages Archive \(ELAR\)](#), also led by Mandana Seyfeddinipur, will be relocated and further expanded by the BBAW in the future.

The ELDP was founded in 2002 at SOAS University of London with support from Arcadia and has since made more than 500 grants for projects to document languages worldwide. The program conducts training in language documentation, preserves the digital multimedia collections in ELAR, and makes them freely accessible for the communities, researchers and the public. In the coming ten years, over 200 documentation projects will be funded. In addition, international conferences and summer schools for documenters, speakers and researchers are planned. The programme moves to Berlin at the start of the United Nations' International Decade of Indigenous Languages (2022-2032). ELDP is planning a series of events to mark the start of this important time.

Academy President Prof. Dr. Christoph Marksches emphasizes the great importance of the ELDP and ELAR for the Academy: "With the Endangered Languages Documentation Programme and the Endangered Languages Archive, the BBAW is expanding its focus in the field of languages. I am especially looking forward to the many grantees and scholars from all over the world and the scholars who are coming to us from London and will now work here. I am proud that this great project has found a new home at the Academy."

Mandana Seyfeddinipur, director of ELDP and ELAR, emphasizes the role of Berlin as a new location, particularly in light of the Humboldt brothers: "ELAR and ELDP fulfill Wilhelm von Humboldt's vision of documenting, comparing and understanding

languages in their diversity. At the same time, it goes far beyond his vision by compiling language data on many endangered languages, preserving them in digital form and making them publicly accessible free of charge."

The planned transfer of ELAR is the first step towards building a comprehensive "Humboldt Language Archive". In further steps, it is planned to link ELAR with other documentations of endangered languages, in particular the data from the [Documentation of Endangered Languages programme \(DOBES\)](#) funded by the Volkswagen Foundation from 2000 to 2013. They form part of [The Language Archive \(TLA\)](#) which was established in 2010 at the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics and headed by Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Klein. DOBES currently includes over 100 endangered languages, some of which are already extinct, for which data have been collected in about 70 countries. The DOBES data, along with several other collections at TLA (250 languages in total), were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in October 2015 as [Selected data collections of the world's language diversity at The Language Archive](#). The "Humboldt Language Archive" project will initially be funded for three years with 600,000 Euros from the Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and Media.

The Academy will celebrate the relocation of ELDP and ELAR from London to Berlin, the launch of the Center for the Documentation of Endangered Languages, and initiation of the digital Humboldt Language Archive project with a ceremony on September 8, 2021 at 3 p.m. in the Leibniz Hall: Speakers will include Minister of State Prof. Monika Grütters, the Director of ELDP and ELAR, Mandana Seyfeddinipur, Academy member Wolfgang Klein, and Academy President Christoph Markschies.

## **About Arcadia**

Arcadia is a charitable fund of Lisbet Rausing and Peter Baldwin. It supports charities and scholarly institutions that preserve cultural heritage and the environment. Arcadia also supports projects that promote open access and all of its awards are granted on the condition that any materials produced are made available for free online. Since 2002, Arcadia has awarded more than \$777 million to projects around the world.

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