

26 October 2008

Open letter to:  
The European Parliament  
All Concerned with Cave Protection and Research

Re: Support for Written Declaration 66—  
Protection of Caves as a Cultural, Natural and Environmental Heritage

Caves are a hidden yet priceless resource. Located underground, out of public view, their contents buried by layers of stone, as well as darkness, fear, and superstition, they are the overlooked jewels of Europe.

- European caves are many of the most important and unique archaeological and religious sites in the world.
- Their beautiful crystalline deposits are economically important to many regions which show caves to tourists.
- Those crystals, as well as mud on cave floors, contain precious records of past climates vital to understanding and solving today's problems of climate change.
- Rare and unique species in caves help us understand our own biology, and some offer potential cures to human diseases and other needs.
- Caves provide homes to bats, which eat tons of agricultural insect pests each year, improving harvests and reducing the need for chemical treatment of crops.
- Approximately 65% of groundwater used for drinking in Europe comes from cavernous areas.

Modern cave science began in Europe. I applaud the authors of Written Declaration 66 for their forward-thinking proposal to the European Parliament to insure that Europe retains its leadership in cave science, but also to develop leadership in cave protection for the benefit of all people in Europe and the world. I strongly support this declaration and urge the European Parliament to support it too.

Sincerely,



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