

"European Day of Languages"



The idea to launch a "European Year of Languages" was born at the Council of Europe during a Project's Final Conference in April 1997 organized by the Language Policy Division. The proposal, supported by representatives of member states, was examined by various bodies and the European Commission was invited to join in.

In January 1999, the Committee of Ministers declared 2001 the "European Year of Languages" and the European Union joined in by a Declaration in June 2000.





The aims of the Year were:

- to increase awareness of Europe's linguistic heritage and openness to different languages and cultures;
- to motivate European citizens to develop plurilingualism, that is, to achieve a degree of communicative ability in a number of languages, including those less widely used and taught;
- to encourage and support lifelong language learning for personal development.

Some Results

- ✓ -the events were attended by national co-ordinators of all 45 participating countries.
- ✓ - an exhibition with posters and promotional material from all 45 participating countries was presented in the Council of Europe building in Strasbourg on the occasion of the European Day of Languages 2001.
- ✓ - national launch events were held in various member states and often attended by a representative of the Language Policy Division.
- ✓ a joint European Commission/Council of Europe website in eleven languages was developed and updated throughout the Year.
- ✓ the Council of Europe set up a specific EYL website (2000-2002), to include regular contributions from its member states.



Some Results

- ✓ 1.000.000 copies of European Year information texts were distributed, including 500.000 of the joint Commission/Council of Europe Guide "How you can learn languages".
- ✓ the European Commission realised a "Eurobarometer" public opinion survey on languages which was completed in December 2000 and results were announced in February 2001.
- ✓ many thousands of events took place at national, regional and local level throughout the Year.
- ✓ at least 70 national newspapers, and many television and radio stations across Europe covered the European Year, including a one-day regular broadcast on 26 September.



Did you know that...

1. There are between 6000 and 7000 languages in the world - spoken by six billion people divided into 189 independent states.

2. There are about 225 native languages in Europe - about 3% of the world's total.



Did you know that...

3. Most of the world's languages are spoken in Asia and Africa.

4. At least half of the world's population are bilingual or plurilingual (they speak two or more languages).

5. Many languages have 50,000 words or more, but individual speakers normally know and use only a part of the total vocabulary: in everyday conversation people use the same few hundred words.

6. Languages are constantly



6. Most European languages belong to three broad groups: Germanic, Romance and Slavic.

7. Most European languages use the Latin alphabet. Some Slavic languages use the Cyrillic alphabet. Greek, Armenian, Georgian and Yiddish have their own alphabet.

8. The non-European languages most widely used on European territory are Arabic, Chinese and Hindi, each with its own writing system.

9. Due to the influx of migrants and refugees, Europe has





EUROPEAN DAY OF LANGUAGES

September 26th

