

Education and Lifelong Education in order to promote further discussion and experimentation which would make it possible to define the role played by the new information technologies as a factor for change in the education system as a whole.

Following the Jurmala symposium, the Andorran Ministry of Education proposed holding a meeting of a limited number of experts in the spring of 2000 in order to pursue discussions and give effect to the recommendations, in particular with a view to launching

the project on learning and teaching in the information society. ■

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## Conference on "Linguistic diversity for democratic citizenship in Europe", (10-12 May 1999, Innsbruck - Austria)

The Conference was organised jointly by the Modern Languages Section and "Bundesministerium für Unterricht und kulturelle Angelegenheiten" (Austrian ministry of education and cultural affairs), with a financial contribution of the European Centre for Modern Languages. This Conference aroused great interest and was attended by more than 200 representatives of the CDCC's 44 member states, including policy makers, specialists and academics. Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly, the European Commission (DG XXII) and Unesco all played an active part. A Canadian delegation and representatives from India and Japan were also present. The scientific nature of this Conference was perfectly in line with the Council of Europe's action plan. On the one hand, speakers had studied the relationship between language education policies and other social and policy-related factors, and, on the other hand, specialists in policy formulation whose experience could contribute to the design and drafting of the guidelines document. Three types of language were covered in a single draft language policy: foreign languages, indigenous minority languages and the languages of migrants. There were three main objectives:

- to organise a meeting for the parties from the majority of fields and countries involved in the elaboration of educational language policies in Europe
- to draw the attention of decision makers to the social, economic, cultural, ethnic and political factors they had to take into account when planning language teaching;
- to take the first steps towards drawing up guidelines for language education policies, in order to encourage the learning of a wider range of languages.

The Conference sought to make political, administrative and educational policy makers, including pupils' parents, more aware of the importance of diversified language teaching and learning for European construction and for individuals' intercultural relations with others. It was also necessary to assess the challenges which linguistic diversity posed for the education sector, particularly to study the obstacles faced, and find ways of overcoming them.

Another task for the Conference was to develop a common approach to linguistic diversity and democratic citizenship. One of the topics covered was that of establishing plurilingualism as a key component of democratic citizenship. Learning foreign languages – those spoken outside the country concerned –

helps to develop the capacity to play an active role in European society rather than simply that of the nation state. Access to foreign languages is therefore a question of human rights and democratic citizenship at the European level.

Prior to the Conference, a survey was undertaken of linguistic diversity in Europe. This provided a framework for analysis and a set of conceptual tools, as well as some very revealing data on the obstacles to linguistic diversity, and possible solutions. The study will now be revised to develop and extend the analysis. Documents have been drafted by specialists as a basis for discussion and further work in this area.

The preparation of a document on the development of language policies will form part of the conference follow-up, and will also represent a new dimension to the Council of Europe's modern language activities. The document will be a sort of guide which will offer policy makers a framework for decision making and facilitate the assessment of national language policies in the educational field. As part of the European Year of Languages in 2001, it will be submitted to decision makers in draft form, with a view to undertaking experiments on the ground.

The process has been initiated by a group of experts and a number of preliminary studies in various sectors are currently being written up and will be published in 2000.

A brief survey carried out at the end of the conference showed that it was a great success, although there were certain criticisms of the size of the

working groups, because there were more participants than expected. The "outside" speakers – representatives of young persons and parents, and from the economic and political worlds – were particularly appreciated. The participants were convinced of the need to promote linguistic diversity, and of its importance.

The Conference proceedings will be available shortly. ■

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## European Year of Languages (EYL) - 2001

*On 19 January 1999, the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers declared 2001 European Year of Languages.*

### Aims and objectives

One of the main objectives of the European Year of Languages (EYL) will be to celebrate and enhance Europe's wide linguistic diversity as a source of mutual enrichment to be protected and encouraged. It will set out to increase people's awareness of the importance of learning more and a wider variety of languages throughout their lives, in a continent of ever-increasing interaction. The activities will emphasise the key role played by languages and intercultural skills in encouraging mutual understanding and a spirit of tolerance, as well as respect for identities and cultural diversity. It will also highlight the important contribution of language skills to active participation in the European democratic process and for employment and mobility in Europe.

The Year will help to promote European democratic citizenship by encouraging European citizens to develop plurilingualism, that is to achieve a degree of communicative ability in several languages, including those less widely used and taught.

For the Council of Europe, European Year of Languages 2001 will provide the opportunity to present and disseminate its work in the field of modern

languages to a wide audience, and in particular to launch the "Common European Framework of Reference", the "European Language Portfolio" and a document concerned with analysing and planning language policies in education. It will help to strengthen co-operation in the fields of language policies and teaching with other inter-governmental institutions, particularly the European Union and Unesco, and relevant non-governmental organisations. Finally, the Year will provide an opportunity to develop thinking and discussion about new directions for language policies and practice.

### The organisation of EYL

The year will be marked by a series of local, regional, national and international events, including language festivals. The aim will be to increase citizens' awareness of the importance of plurilingualism, but also to achieve greater balance in the language sphere. Support and encouragement must be given to learning languages that are less widely spoken or less frequently taught. EYL will therefore help to publicise the measures proposed in Recommendation (98) 6 of the Committee of Ministers on modern languages (March 1998) and Recommendation 1383 of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly (September 1998).

The Council of Europe's Secretary General has invited the authorities of each member state to support EYL and appoint a national co-ordinator. The latter's role will be to liaise between the secretariat and the European co-ordination group on the one hand, and his or her country's national co-ordinating body, which will promote and organise national events and co-ordinate national, regional and local activities.

### Co-ordination and partners

The European Year of Languages will be co-ordinated by the Modern Languages Division of the Council of Europe's Directorate General IV. To widen the scope of the Year, the Council has invited the European Union and Unesco to be associated with it as special partners. The European Commission has just adopted a proposal for a decision of the Parliament and the Council of Ministers confirming this involvement and Unesco has expressed its intention of actively participating.

The European Centre for Modern Languages will also contribute to the preparations for EYL. It is also planned to organise inter-sectoral activities within the Council of Europe and joint initiatives are under discussion. The

1. The term "plurilingualism" refers to the individual's language profile, the term "multilingualism" refers to society.

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## Sommaire

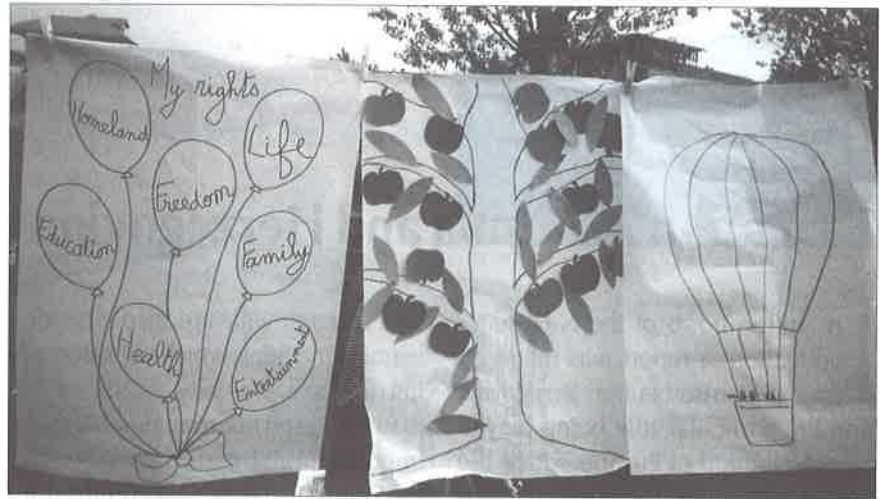
## Editorial

	Page
Editorial	1
Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina	2
Education for Democratic Development and Stability in South-East Europe: Informal Conference of ministers of education from the Region	4
Oslo Symposium: "Facing misuses of history"	5
The information technologies in schools: reasons and strategies for investment	6
Conference on "Linguistic diversity for democratic citizenship in Europe"	7
European Year of Language (EYL) – 2001	8
"The Tbilisi Initiative"	9
European studies for democratic citizenship	10
Books in brief	12
Council of Europe guidelines on the education of Rom/gypsy children in Europe	14
New ratifications of the Lisbon Recognition Convention	14
Calendar of Events	15
How to contact us	16

2000



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"Refugee Camp, Tirana: first signs of a new start"

*This double edition of the Education Newsletter is the first of a new millennium whose dawn has seen no let up to the now tragically familiar scenes of conflict around the continent brought about through a complex history of nationalism, inter-ethnic relations and post-communist transition. While people strive to realise their hopes and expectations for a democratic future based on human rights, social justice and prosperity through sustainable economic development, the potential for conflict as a result of inequality, social exclusion, intolerance and nationalism remains a constant threat. The immense scale of the challenges ahead could lead to the perception that organisations and people can do little to make a difference. Yet people around Europe can draw strength from the realisation that concerted action and solidarity can be the basis for future societal development. In parts of Europe which have recently suffered*

*the effects of war, the immediate objectives must be reconciliation, the establishment of the rule of law and the development of democratic institutions as a pre-requisite for economic development. These are common concerns, as we must all ensure that violence used as a means to gain and maintain power or to deal with conflict is consigned to the last millennium.*

*For this to be more than a utopian dream, far greater attention has to be given to education. Educational processes underpin all societal development, and it is therefore essential that educational rights are guaranteed to all citizens, that opportunities are made accessible to all, and that common core values are reflected throughout education systems. The languages, history and culture of others – and of the European culture common to all – must be taught and respected if peoples are to live together in peace.*