

European Year of Languages 2001 Languages open doors



The Council of Europe and the European Union have joined forces during 2001 to organise this once-in-a-lifetime campaign. Its main aims are to promote the learning of more languages throughout life and to draw attention to the richness and value of the linguistic diversity of our continent where around 225 European languages and several hundred non-European languages are spoken.

The official European launch of the Year takes place in Lund, Sweden from 18-20 February where over 250 participants from the 45 participating

countries can share in the debates and festival aspects of this event. National launches involving the general public of all ages are also underway in most countries and details of these and of national programmes for 2001 can be found on the joint European Union/Council of Europe web site. A multitude of language festivals, competitions and challenges, exhibitions, seminars and media events of all kinds are planned. Well-known personalities have declared their support for the aims of the Year and some have even made a commitment to learn a new language in order to encourage others

to become actively involved in the spirit of the Year.

A joint Council of Europe/European Union information pack has been produced for the public and press. It has been translated into almost 40 languages and attractive posters and other promotional material are being developed in a wide range of languages. Two key events will serve to highlight in a particular way the aims of the Year: European Adult Language Learners' Week (5-11 May) and the European Day of Languages (26 September). A booklet to encourage and support

adult learning is being developed by the Council of Europe and the European Union and will be widely distributed free of charge. A variety of

other publications are available to promote the aims of the Year, including a Council of Europe brochure on the linguistic diversity of Europe. ■

Europe – a wealth of languages

Information on the main events, including special Council of Europe initiatives, and contact persons in each

country, can be found on the web sites: <http://www.eurolang2001.org>
<http://culture.coe.int/AEL2001EYL>

European Year of Languages information:
Council of Europe:
Modern Languages Division
Directorate of School,
Out-of-School and Higher Education
F-67075 Strasbourg

European Commission:
Directorate-General
for Education and Culture
Language Policy Unit (C5)
Rue de la Loi 200,
Office B7,06/37
B-1049 Brussels

**19-20 February,
Lund, Sweden**

Opening Event for the European Year of Languages 2001: "The challenge of linguistic diversity"

**5-11 May,
all member states
of the Council of Europe**

European Adult Language Learners' Week

**26 September,
all member states
of the Council of Europe**
European Day of Languages

**7-8 December,
Brussels, Belgium**
Closing event

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As the new year begins, the need for the Council of Europe in a European landscape which it has been instrumental in constructing is as strong as ever. The task of developing democratic, peaceful societies built upon shared values and principles is far from being accomplished. Perhaps such a vision of Europe will always remain elusive, but if we are to move closer towards it, our continued attention to the development of democratic education systems must stay at the heart of the Council of Europe's mission.

This edition of the education bulletin focuses upon some of our core programmes and activities which we are implementing both in partnership with other organisations and with other departments of the Council of Europe. As European societies are increasingly subject to economic, political and social pressure for rapid change, such cooperation is essential if we are to respond adequately to new challenges.

Education for Democratic Citizenship, (page 6), modern languages (page 2), history teaching (page 5), and the organisation of lifelong learning (page 7) are essential elements for a programme concerned about tomorrow's European citizens. Our programmes will therefore continue to work practically to develop critical thinking about the past, including its most sensitive and controversial aspects (see article page 4), as well as to promote plurilingual and inter-cultural education to prepare European citizens for a new future.

Increasingly, education programmes require justification in terms of their "political relevance". Yet is there any challenge before us which could be more crucial or politically relevant than developing genuinely democratic education systems? I cannot think of one.

Gabriele Mazza

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