



The first [European day of languages](#) was held in 2001 as part of European Year of languages when hundreds of events were organised, reaching millions of people in 45 countries. Organised jointly by the EU and the Council of Europe, the European day of languages continues that work, to raise public awareness of the languages used in Europe, to promote cultural and linguistic diversity and to encourage people – schoolchildren and adults – to learn languages.

Following the success of the Year the Council of Europe declared a European Day of Languages to be celebrated on 26th of September each year.

Throughout Europe, 800 million Europeans represented in the Council of Europe's 47 member states are encouraged to learn more languages, at any age, in and out of school. Being convinced that linguistic diversity is a tool for achieving greater intercultural understanding and a key element in the rich cultural heritage of our continent, the Council of Europe promotes plurilingualism in the whole of Europe.

Our planet has over six billion people who speak between 6 000 and 7 000 different languages. A few languages are spoken by hundreds of millions of speakers, such as English or Chinese, but most are spoken by only a few thousand, or just a handful of speakers. In fact, 96% of the world's languages are spoken by just 4% of the people. Europeans often feel their continent to have an exceptional number of languages, especially when compared to North America or Australia. Yet, only 3% of the world's total, some 225 languages, are indigenous to Europe. Most of the world's languages are spoken in a broad area on either side of the Equator - in

southeast Asia, India, Africa, and South America. Many Europeans may think that a monolingual way of life is the norm. But between a half and two-thirds of the world's population is bilingual to some degree, and a significant number are plurilingual. Plurilingualism is much more the normal human condition than monolingualism. Diversity of languages and of cultures, as in the case of biodiversity, is increasingly being seen as a good and beautiful thing in itself. Each language has its own way of seeing the world and is the product of its own particular history. All languages have their individual identity and value, and all are equally adequate as modes of expression for the people who use them. We know from comparisons of the rates at which children learn to speak, that no language is intrinsically more difficult than any other language.

Besides the official aims, 26 September should also be about having some fun together. Every year throughout Europe, events are organised to celebrate languages: shows, kids' activities, music games, language courses, radio and TV programmes, conferences... The possibilities are endless.

### **Additional links:**

- [Council of Europe : Education and Languages](#)
- [European Commission : European Day of Languages](#)

**Source:** [European Day of Languages website](#)