

European Day of Languages



It has never been easier to communicate with people across the globe – whether in written form or through verbal conversation. From instant messaging to video calls and from important business documents to tourism leaflets, the only limit to your connection with others is your ability to speak the same language. With over 6,000 languages spoken worldwide (over 200 of these originating in Europe alone), the Council of Europe and the European Union created a day dedicated to linguistic diversity: the European Day of Languages.

Origin

Initially intended to be a one-off event, the European Day of Languages was first celebrated during the European Year of Languages in 2001. Since then, the event has been celebrated annually across Europe on 26th September and continues to be an occasion that promotes language learning and multilingual fun.

Inspiration

The inspiration behind the European Day of Languages comes from the core beliefs held by the Council of Europe. It is their belief that language skills are a necessity and a right for everyone and that solely speaking one language can prevent individuals from taking advantage of amazing opportunities throughout their lives.

The Council of Europe's intention when creating the European Day of Languages was to raise awareness of three key points:





- Europe is rich and diverse in its languages and this should be preserved and enhanced.
- People in Europe need to diversify the languages that they learn so that they become plurilingual, including less widely used languages.
- If people are to play their full part in being a citizen of Europe (not just one country within Europe), they must develop some degree of proficiency in two or more European languages.

It is hoped by the Council of Europe that learning new languages will also teach people about cultures and traditions in countries other than their own. In turn, this will promote tolerance and respect among citizens of the world.

Learning a New Language

There are many amazing benefits to learning a new language:

- Being able to speak a few words of a new language when you are abroad can help you to find the things that you need and can help you to communicate more easily with the new friends that you make. It can help you to thank others for their kindness or to ask for help when you need it.
- By learning a new language as a child, you will open up lots of employment opportunities that you can explore as an adult. Speaking a language other than your own is a useful skill in many industries and will allow you to speak to colleagues and clients around the world.
- Studying a foreign language can help you to gain a deeper understanding of how your language works. So, while you are improving at speaking another language, you're also improving your knowledge of the language that you already know.
- Speaking another language opens the door to a wide range of art, music, film, philosophy and science that you may never have got to experience.



No one is too old to learn a new language and to enjoy the experiences that doing this may bring. While it is often thought to be easier to learn a new language as a child, it is never too late to start.



Hints and Tips

Learning a new language can seem daunting at first but, with these hints and tips, you'll become fluent in no time:

- Try to have as much conversation as possible in your new language. Whether you're talking to someone who speaks the language fluently or speaking to a friend who is learning too, having a conversation is proven to help with learning a new language more quickly than you would learn by studying in silence.
- Start by learning common words that you will use frequently. There is little point in learning the word for 'ventriloquist' when you do not know the word for 'door'. Learning words that you use often will help them to stick in your memory and will be much more useful for you in day-to-day conversation.
- Label the items that you use frequently with their name in the language that you are trying to learn. For example, if you are trying to learn Spanish, you could stick a label saying 'agua' on your bottle of water. Seeing these labels and repeating the word regularly will help you to remember it more easily.
- Practise speaking to yourself in your new language. Whether it's aloud or in your head, challenge yourself to say something in the language that you're trying to learn. If you find that you don't know how to, use this as a starting point for your next language lesson.