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PRESS RELEASE

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European Day of Languages: multilingual magic, from speak-dating and cocktails to fun in the library 'bath'

No-one will be lost for words: from a multilingual 'speak-dating' session in Prague, to a world café in Sofia, a rap challenge in Århus, European languages cocktail bar in Budapest, foreign language poetry evening in Cardiff and a 'linguistic bath' at 30 libraries in Berlin – these are just a few of the highlights of the European Day of Languages, taking place at venues throughout Europe tomorrow, 26 September ([see list of events](#)). The European Commission will mark the occasion by hosting a special event in Limassol (Cyprus), where more than 400 delegates will look at ways to improve language learning and discuss the role of languages in a globalised world.

"People sometimes ask me if languages really matter in the era of globalisation. My response is simple: the day when Europe ceases to speak all of its many languages is the day that Europe – as an idea, as a project – ceases to exist. One of the EU's most fundamental objectives is to work together for a better society while fully respecting our differences. Language is essential to this mission. If we no longer take the trouble to learn our neighbours' languages, then we are less likely to understand their concerns. That is why language teaching and learning is one of our top priorities in the new Erasmus for All programme," said Androulla Vassiliou, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth.

The European Day of Languages, organised jointly by the European Commission and the [Council of Europe](#), has been held every year since 2001. The Council of Europe is also helping to promote a wide range of awareness-raising initiatives in its 47 member countries as part of the "Talk to me!" campaign led by the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, Austria. The events focus on encouraging people of all ages, in and out of school, to embrace language learning, and to celebrate cultural and linguistic diversity.

[Erasmus for All](#), the European Commission's proposed new education, training and youth programme for 2014-2020, will boost support for language teaching and learning. The programme envisages a significant increase in funding which would enable up to 5 million people to receive EU grants to study, train or volunteer abroad – nearly twice as many as compared with today under the 2007-2013 programmes. One of the prime objectives of these 'mobility' learning experiences is to help individuals to improve their language skills and enhance intercultural understanding.

Next steps

The Erasmus for All proposal is currently under discussion by the Council and the European Parliament and is expected to be adopted in the first half of 2013.

On 27 September, Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou will present awards to five projects which have shown outstanding performance in promoting the teaching and learning of languages at the "Multilingualism in Europe" conference in Limassol.

Background

A multitude of languages is spoken in the European Union: there are 23 official languages (the accession of Croatia to the EU will make it 24 next year), as well as around 60 regional and minority languages, and more than 175 migrant languages.

The EU invests currently around **€1 billion a year** on boosting language skills and other competences through initiatives such as Erasmus, which enables higher education students to spend part of their studies or training through a work placement in another country. More than 400 000 predominantly young people benefit from EU grants each year through Erasmus (higher education), Leonardo da Vinci (vocational training) and Youth in Action (volunteering/youth work) to work, study or volunteer abroad. In addition, the EU invests around €50 million a year to support language-based activities and projects.

The '**Multilingualism in Europe**' conference in Limassol marks the 10th anniversary of the 2002 Barcelona European Council, where heads of state and government called for the teaching of two foreign languages from a very early age and for the development of a linguistic competence indicator to measure progress in language learning. At the conference, an exhibition will display outstanding European language learning projects and provide information on the European Union's language services and media specialised in European affairs.

The European Language Label was established more than ten years ago to recognise innovative language learning and teaching projects. The first European Language Label of the Labels awards will be presented by Commissioner Vassiliou at the Limassol event. Coordinators in the participating countries each nominated one national language project with exceptional European added value. The projects were evaluated by a European jury, which selected the five overall winners.

The European Commission and the Council of Europe intend to sign a formal **partnership agreement** in 2013 which would strengthen their cooperation on multilingualism and language learning in areas such as assessment, recognition of qualifications, exchange of experience and data, ICT-based tools, education in the language of the host country for adult migrants, and education in the main language of instruction for children of migrant origin.

For more information

[MEMO/12/703](#) FAQs on multilingualism and language learning

European Commission: [Language website](#)

[European Language Label](#)

[Languages for business and employability](#)

European Commission services: [Interpretation](#) and [translation](#)

[European Centre for Modern Languages](#)

[Androulla Vassiliou's website](#)

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