



THE EUROPEAN DAY OF LANGUAGES 26 SEPTEMBER 2012

Statement by Snežana Samardžić-Marković
Director General of Democracy of the Council of Europe

Well developed language skills are a necessity and a right for EVERYONE – this is one of the key messages of the European Day of Languages, celebrated annually on 26 September at the initiative of the Council of Europe.

Europe is rich in languages – there are over 200 European languages in daily use and many other languages are spoken by citizens whose family origins are in other continents. Respect for cultural and linguistic diversity and support for language learning are at the core of the work of the Council of Europe.

The ability to understand and use several languages allows people to develop their full potential as confident and successful individuals and as efficient social actors. Well developed language abilities allow people to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by modern democratic societies and to exploit the possibilities for personal contacts across borders and cultures. Language skills are an important pre-requisite to gain full access to innovations offered by rapid technological advancement and globalisation.

Linguistic diversity is an important resource to be recognised, valued, used and cherished. Language learning brings benefits to all ages – no one is too old to learn a new language and enjoy the opportunities it opens up. Learning other peoples' languages is another way of helping us to understand each other better and overcome our cultural differences.

In celebrating languages today, let us recognise the richness of linguistic diversity in Europe and the value that can be derived from it, so that the benefits can be felt throughout the year.