

Europe is a continent where many different languages are spoken, and that exciting mix of languages is increasing as people travel and move between countries more. You may only know one of your country's "official" languages, but the chances are you can hear a whole range of others being spoken in a town or city near you. Tune into different radio stations in many places in Europe and you will hear a large variety of languages.

Learning a new language can be fun and useful, whether it's for travelling, making new friends, discovering other cultures or looking for work in another country.

MODERN LANGUAGE TEACHING

One of the most important skills for tomorrow's Europeans will be the ability to communicate in more than one language. Over the years, the Council has been ideally placed to promote co-operation and share its expertise on language learning based on the principles of the European Cultural Convention. Encouraging people to understand other languages and cultures will help to improve communication and their understanding of each other, which will also help in the fight against intolerance (see fact sheet 7). Being able to communicate more directly can also bring cultural and economic benefits.

"HOW DO YOU SAY...?"

Teaching languages isn't simple, which is why methods for teaching are being developed through Modern Languages projects at the Council of Europe. Teaching materials and expertise are also shared through expert groups, workshops and seminars on language

learning. Much of this goes on at the European Centre for Modern Languages (ECML) based in Graz, Austria, whose mission is to encourage excellence and innovation in language teaching and to help Europeans learn languages more efficiently. ECML's programmes are complemented by those of the Language Policy Division at the Council's headquarters in Strasbourg.

➔ www.ecml.at

PROTECTING AND DEVELOPING MINORITY OR REGIONAL LANGUAGES

In most countries more than one language is spoken by a significant number of people, yet some of these languages are spoken by fewer and fewer people, or are not given enough recognition by other people. As a result, they are "dying out". The Council of Europe works to protect these languages and, to do this, has drawn up the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. (See also the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.) The charter aims to protect the historical, regional or minority languages of Europe, developing cultural traditions and heritage. This means respecting and promoting the use of these languages, whether at school or in public life.

➔ www.coe.int/minlang

"Do you speak Sámi?"

The Sámi languages are spoken in Finland, Norway, Sweden and in parts of Russia



COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

➔ *"Those who know nothing of foreign languages, know nothing of their own."*

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

CELEBRATING LANGUAGES: EUROPEAN DAY OF LANGUAGES, 26 SEPTEMBER

The European Day of Languages is a day for celebrating linguistic diversity – that means taking pride in the many different languages spoken and the richness of culture they bring. This day is all about discovering more about languages and what they have to offer, and to:

- Alert the public to the importance of language learning and diversify the range of languages learnt in order to increase multilingualism and intercultural understanding;
- Promote the rich linguistic and cultural diversity of Europe;
- Encourage lifelong language learning in and out of school.

➤ www.coe.int/EDL

SHOWING OFF YOUR LANGUAGES: THE EUROPEAN LANGUAGE PORTFOLIO

Knowledge of more than one language is a useful skill. If you're learning a language, then the European Language Portfolio (ELP) is for you! It's great for writing down and thinking about what you're learning, so you can show people what you know and what level you're at. Check out what it has got to offer here:

➤ www.coe.int/portfolio/

➤ MORE TO DISCOVER!

➤ www.ecml.at

➤ www.coe.int/minlang/

➤ www.coe.int/EDL

➤ www.coe.int/portfolio

LEARNING AND SPEAKING LANGUAGES ACTIVITIES SHEET

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Pride in one's own language is natural, but what happens when we want to communicate with those who speak another language? Should they be forced to learn ours? Would it be better if we all spoke the same language? Here we look at language diversity and try to assess its effects on our lives together.

WHICH LANGUAGES ARE SPOKEN IN YOUR REGION?

Most countries have one or more official languages, but most regions also have populations which speak a dialect or even another language. Ask your pupils to do some research at home with relatives and friends.

How many different languages and/or dialects can they find?

Which ones are officially recognised?

How long have these languages been spoken in your region?

Where do these languages come from?

LEARNING LANGUAGES IN SCHOOL

Nowadays more importance is being attached to learning languages in schools. What is the situation in your school? Examine the following questions with your pupils:

What opportunities are there in your school?

- Which languages can be learnt and what were the reasons for these specific languages being chosen?
- How many languages do your pupils want to learn and why?
- What opportunities do they have for practising that language?

MAKING YOURSELF UNDERSTOOD

Sometimes when people go to another country on holiday they don't make much of an effort to learn the language before they go. You don't have to learn a lot, but a few words can go a long way, especially in terms of appearing more respectful and polite.

In pairs, ask your pupils to imagine being in a place where your language isn't spoken and think about what situations they might need to know some key phrases. What if they were lost trying to find their hotel? Or they needed some help? Ask your pupils to pick a scenario, and perhaps try to act out how much they could do with hand gestures, to see when they would really need to know the words.

CONTACT WITH A SCHOOL IN ANOTHER COUNTRY

Experience has shown that pupils can gain greatly in motivation to learn another language if they have the possibility to really use it.

There are many ideas and techniques for co-operating with schools in other countries:

- Joint project work with another school class;
- Writing letters and e-mails and working together to produce a joint website;
- Making a video film around a particular theme.

WHICH FIGURE IS BEHIND THIS QUOTE? →

"Those who know nothing of foreign languages, know nothing of their own."

Answer on the back *





Safeguarding and protecting regional or minority languages

The European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages protects "native" languages that are different from the official language or languages and their various dialects.

The Charter does not apply to languages spoken by migrants but it protects, subject to certain restrictions, "non-territorial languages", in other words languages used by nationals of a state which cannot be identified with a particular geographical area. In Europe this applies, in particular, to Yiddish and the language of the Roma.

SOURCES

- * **Johann Wolfgang von Goethe:** *Maxims and Reflections (Maximen und Reflexionen)*, Goethe, Rivages, rivages / poche