

## LANGUAGE NEWS:



**The European Year of Languages 2001** is a celebration of Europe's linguistic diversity and promotes language learning and related skills. It is organised by the European Union and the Council of Europe.

Most of the participating countries have already organised or planned events and activities within the framework of the European Year of Languages (EYL).

Information regarding the EYL project may be found on the following web-sites:

- European Year of Languages:  
<http://www.eurolang2001.org>
- The European Commission:  
<http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/languages/actions/year2001.html>
- The Council of Europe:  
<http://culture.coe.int/AEL2001EYL/index.html>

Furthermore, each participating country has chosen a national co-ordinating body to organise the European Year of Languages. The European Commission has published an address list of the different Co-ordinating Bodies at the following web address:

- <http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/languages/actions/contact.html>

*Please contact your National Co-ordinating Body for more details.*

In Denmark, the Danish Ministry of Education launched the European Year of Languages by organising an opening conference, which took place in Copenhagen on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2001. We are publishing below a message from the Secretary General of the Council of Europe addressed to the conference.

\*\*

February 2001

### **Message from the Secretary General of the Council of Europe**

I am very pleased that Denmark is launching its campaign for the European Year of

Languages. This special Year, which is being organised by the Council of Europe and the European Union, involves 45 countries in a wide range of local, national and European initiatives.

Our aim is to encourage more people to learn more languages. Language skills are a necessity for ALL today. No one is ever too old – or indeed too young – to begin and I hope that many in Denmark will take up the challenge to learn a new language in 2001.

‘Languages open doors’ is one of our slogans – doors to opportunity for employment, study and travel. But language learning does much more. It offers us insights into other societies and cultures, other ways of seeing and doing things. It helps us develop the positive acceptance of diversity which we need to live and work together peacefully in our multilingual and multicultural societies.

In 2001 we celebrate in a special way the linguistic and cultural diversity of Europe. Our other slogan – ‘Europe, a wealth of languages’ – is a reminder that we should see this diversity as a valuable source of enrichment rather than as a possible barrier to communication and co-operation. The Council of Europe aims to protect and promote our rich linguistic heritage through the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and we look forward to more ratifications in 2001.

We have been working with considerable success for three decades to improve approaches to the teaching of modern languages. This year we are launching a Common European Framework of Reference for Languages to assist in setting standards and evaluating results. We are also beginning the process of introducing a European Language Portfolio in our member States. This is a personal document which will support individuals in their life-long language learning and which will give recognition to their linguistic and intercultural experiences at all levels.

I trust that these and other Council of Europe initiatives in 2001 will support your efforts to promote the aims of the European Year of Languages. I thank you for your commitment and wish you a successful and enjoyable Year.

Walther SCHWIMMER

