

Press Release

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Council of Europe to co-organise workshop on multilingualism

Strasbourg, 18.02.2008 – The effectiveness of international standard-setting tools related to multilingualism will top the agenda of an international workshop jointly organised by the Council of Europe and UNESCO in Paris on 21 February.

Existing legal texts such as the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe and the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage will be examined by over 150 governmental and non-governmental experts attending the event.

"In order to protect all our languages as the expression of the cultural diversity of our continent we must take positive measures to promote their use," said Gabriella Battaini-Dragnoni, Council of Europe's Director General of Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport. "The Council of Europe pursues multilingualism as a means of promoting, protecting and preserving diversity of languages and cultures at local, national or European level."

At a pan-european level, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages - the only international treaty specifically devoted to the protection and promotion of regional or minority languages - is celebrating its 10th anniversary this year. Ten years after its entry into force, the workshop will provide the opportunity to assess how the Charter operates in practice and to what extent it protects European cultural heritage.

The event will also examine linguistic policies put into effect in different continents, with a special perspective on Africa's experience of linguistic diversity and multilingualism. The workshop will highlight case studies from countries such as Hungary and Paraguay and examples of good practices of the interaction of non-governmental organisations with state institutions and local governments.

The workshop will be held on the International Mother Language Day, celebrated on 21 February every year since 2000 and will also mark this year the start of the International Year of Languages announced by the United Nations General Assembly.

The workshop will be open to the press.

For more information: <http://www.coe.int/minlang/>

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