



International  
Mother  
Language Day

21 February

To contact us:  
Section for Education for Universal  
Values  
Division for the Promotion of Quality  
Education  
Education Sector  
UNESCO  
7 Place de Fontenoy  
F-75352 Paris 07 SP  
France  
Tel: +(33) 1 45 68 09 60  
<http://www.unesco.org>



### *Why International Mother Language Day?*

Linguistic and cultural diversity represent universal values that strengthen the unity and cohesion of societies. The recognition of the importance of linguistic diversity led to UNESCO's decision to celebrate International Mother Language Day.

### *When was it launched?*

The 30th session of the General Conference of UNESCO in 1999 decided that the Organization would launch and observe an International Mother Language Day on 21 February every year throughout the world.

### *What does it celebrate?*

International Mother Language Day's objective is to promote linguistic diversity and multilingual education, and to develop fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

### *Who is involved?*

UNESCO's Director-General launches the celebration and gives the orientation, but it is the Member States worldwide who are the key players through their national institutions and associations. As well as widespread media interest, schools, universities and cultural associations play an active part in promoting the goals of International Mother Language Day.

### *What can you do?*

#### **Some practical suggestions for:**

##### **Schoolteachers:**

- ◆ Do pupils know that many children in their schools may have mother language(s) that are different from the languages used in their schools?
- ◆ Teachers can get these children to introduce themselves and talk about their families and their cultures, and teach a little of their mother language to other children.
- ◆ They can read poetry, tell a story or sing a song in their mother language.

- ◆ Paintings and drawings with captions in mother languages can be displayed inside and outside schools.

##### **University students:**

- ◆ They may know that their fellow students come from a different culture and use a different language but they don't take the time to find out more. This is the opportunity to do so.
- ◆ They can make a survey on mother languages existing on the campus by interviewing fellow students and publish the results on internet.
- ◆ Cultural activities such as films, plays and music that celebrate different languages can be organized.

##### **The media:**

- ◆ Every year UNESCO produces press information about the Day.
- ◆ Local and national media can play a part by producing articles on the local languages spoken in their regions and the cultural expressions of these languages.
- ◆ It is particularly important that this be not only the printed media, but also the radio and television.