

THE EUROPEAN DAY OF LANGUAGES CELEBRATED AT THE MECHANICAL-TECHNICAL SECONDARY SCHOOL “15. MAJ”, NIŠ, SERBIA

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Over a hundred students from the mechanical-technical secondary school “15.maj” upgraded their learning experience by stepping away from their desks and blackboard on September 26th to take part in an innovative event. “Speak to the Future” was supposed to be just a simple school wallpaper project, but following the perceived interest for exploring different languages and cultures and the visit of representatives of the Council of Europe, the students felt compelled to organize an event that would promote language and cultural diversity and bring people together.

The Council of Europe and the European Union jointly declared the year 2001 the European Year of Languages and successfully joined millions of people from 45 participating countries in celebration of linguistic diversity of Europe and promoting language learning. Due to the initial success of the Year of Languages, the Council of Europe has established September 26th as the European Day of Languages.

The fact that our school hosted a delegation of the Council of Europe in early September to discuss an action plan for starting up new production profiles in the field of mechanical engineering and the implementation student companies projects, was an additional incentive to set up an event for the celebration of the European Day of Languages and organize a large fair of countries and languages called “Speak to the Future” on September 26th, 2014.

The students decided to join the celebration of this important day and organized an all-day event, a fair of countries and languages in the school hall. The event was registered at the official EDL website (<http://edl.ecml.at/> and <http://edl.ecml.at/tabid/1772/EventID/7458/Default.aspx>). The student Parliament supported the organization and participated in it. The Organizing Committee was led by Ljubica Miladinović, English teacher, and Jovan Milić, a fourth year student. It also included Slavica Jukić, the school principal, Ana Radulović, Serbian language teacher, Bojana Jovanović, physical education teacher and Oliver Mihajlović, mathematics teacher.

The fair was officially opened by Biljana Nikolić, the coordinator of the American Corner in Niš. “Learning other languages is a way towards improving mutual understanding and overcoming cultural differences. When we begin to learn a new language, we begin to explore the world around us and recognize the value of other languages. It is wonderful how these young people remind us how language learning is important and age is not a limit. It is never too late to learn a new language and enjoy the possibilities that it opens.”, were the words that struck a chord with everyone present. Biljana was a featured speaker, inspiring students to find activities they are passionate about and attend lectures, participate in creative workshops, learn English or become members or volunteers of the Corner and make their school days more

than just studying. She encouraged the attendees to challenge themselves to participating in new projects. A welcoming speech was also held by students in Serbian, English, Hungarian, Italian and Spanish.

Led by the belief that linguistic diversity is a way to achieve greater intercultural understanding and that it is an important component of the rich cultural heritage of our continent, the students made posters honoring numerous countries and languages to promote plurilingualism. The organizers invited the citizens of Niš who wanted to learn more about European countries to come and have fun at the event. The guests included representatives of the EU Info Centre and of the Slovenian cultural center “Franc Prešern”, representatives of the Directorate of Education, Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, numerous technical schools, as well as students of the Law and Administration secondary school and “Bora Stanković” grammar school, Niš. The Law and Administration school students brought a poster dedicated to Greece and the Greek language as their contribution and during the day all the students jointly created one large poster where they exchanged messages and thoughts about languages and language learning. The posters illustrated the diversity of languages and their related cultural symbols as well as the diversity of the English-speaking world.

Groups of students prepared lectures on the cultures of certain countries, their symbols, music, food, customs. The students held presentations about the Russian, Hungarian, German, Norwegian and Roman languages. A second year student Anita Abedinović had an exceptional performance of three songs in three different languages (Serbian, English and Roman).

The enthusiasm of the guests and hosts made this celebration a day to remember. The school principal Slavica Jukić remarked:

“Seeing our students this motivated to do more than just attend classes I feel a new sense of purpose.”

For those who were unable to attend the fair, there was a live broadcast of the event at <http://speaktothefuture.tk/> where news and updates about the event could also be found.

The event was presented in the local media (newspapers, TV and radio stations) and on social networks.



One of presentation on “Speak to the Future”