

# Newsletter for July 2019

Number 41, July 2019

Happy Esperanto Day!

# ESPERANTO DAY 2019



July 26th,  
2019

Learn Esperanto:  
[www.lernu.net](http://www.lernu.net)

Information about languages:  
[www.lingvo.info](http://www.lingvo.info)

Information on  
intercultural communication:  
[www.esperanto.net](http://www.esperanto.net)  
[www.uea.org](http://www.uea.org)

Indigenous  
cultures also  
need justice in  
communication.



Esperanto – the International Language

July 26 was the date in the year 1887 when L.L. Zamenhof, of Warsaw, published his first book on Esperanto, launching what was then called the International Language on a history of constant use from that day to this. Esperanto Day, as July 26 is now designated by its speakers, is an occasion to look back on this continuous history and to look forward to the future. Rejected by the League of Nations in the 1920s and enjoying relatively little official recognition even today, Esperanto is in some respects an underground movement.

Many people are still surprised to learn that Esperanto speakers number in the hundreds of thousands (maybe in the millions), and that the language has undergone steady development and expansion since the days when Zamenhof started it with a tiny thousand-word vocabulary and a few simple rules of grammar. It is now a full and complete language, with speakers to prove it. UNESCO recognizes this, and the UNESCO journal UNESCO Courier is published in an Esperanto edition.

This year, Esperanto Day will fall during the annual World Esperanto Congress (taking place this year in Finland). Even though this is the 104th congress, there are some people who are still astounded to learn that the language is the sole language of these events, or that there are many thousands of books in Esperanto, or that there are native speakers of Esperanto, or that over two million people have downloaded the Esperanto app from Duolingo.

We invite you to join us on Esperanto Day in celebrating this force for world peace and understanding, this movement that stands firmly behind the United Nations and the Sustainable Development Goals (advocating for them all across the world, discussing their virtues and shortcomings in thousands of meetings and conversations, working tirelessly for international communication). **Happy Esperanto Day to the world!**

**Young Esperanto speakers work for the Sustainable Development Goals**



A delegation of TEJO, the organization of young Esperanto speakers, took part in the [SDG Global Festival of Action](#) in Bonn, Germany, on May 2-4. The event was organized by the United Nations as part of its Campaign for Action. TEJO's General Secretary, Konstanze Schönfeld (Tuŝka), and TEJO volunteer Manuela Burghilea represented the organization. The goals of the festival were to support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals across the world, to make connections across the various continents, and the showcase new projects.

Tuŝka offered her impressions of the event:

"People were very enthusiastic about Esperanto, downloaded the Duolingo app, and asked about our intercontinental activities. For the past several years, people's impressions of Esperanto have been visibly improving.

"There was plenty of space (at the festival) for young people to create together, discuss issues, comment critically. I hope that in the future we will be able to attend the event again, next time with a larger delegation of young Esperanto speakers." (*TEJO Aktuale*)

## TEJO to meet in Slovakia in July

"Kontraŭ antaŭjuĝoj – Against prejudices" is the theme of this year's International Youth Congress, organized by the Slovak branch of TEJO, the world Esperanto youth organization, from July 28 to August 4. You can read about this year's event at <https://ijk2019.tejo.org/en/> or watch the welcome video at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cKx7yWsTbLo>

## Language symposium emphasizes the need to listen as well as talk

In a world in which both problems and solutions are becoming global in nature, we must learn to listen to the world in all its diversity – in the languages of ordinary people. That was one of the main conclusions of the Annual Symposium of the Study Group on Languages and the United Nations, which met in New York on May 9 and 10, 2019.

"**Listening, Talking and Taking Action in a Multilingual World**" was the theme of the symposium, which brought together UN staff and diplomats, representatives of nongovernmental organizations, academics and language experts for two full days of lectures, papers, and discussion.

The linguistic dimension of the UN's work, said symposium participants, is often neglected or simply taken for granted – both the formal use of the six UN working languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish) within the UN, and also the UN's interface with a public that speaks literally thousands of different languages.

Two-way conversation is both a linguistic challenge and a necessity, since the UN needs buy-in from all parties, including the larger public that it serves both directly and through its member-states.

Symposium participants noted that UN Secretary-General António Guterres, is working to change the lack of attention to language. "Multilingualism is a core value of the United Nations," Secretary-General Guterres has declared – particularly in an environment in which the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals cannot be achieved without active cooperation and input at every level of society.

Three keynote speeches emphasized contrasting aspects of this issue. Thomas Ricento, professor of education at the University of Calgary and a specialist in applied linguistics, stressed misunderstandings about the nature of language – misunderstandings that can lead to poorly designed language policies. Ambassador Narjess Saidane, of the International Organization of La Francophonie, suggested that linguistic inequality undermines the UN's message and creates a sense of inferiority among those who are forced to adapt to their more linguistically powerful neighbors.

Director of internationalization at Facebook, Iris Orriss, by contrast, pointed to the fact that Facebook is widening the languages it uses to embrace more and more linguistic diversity. This openness to diversity might serve as a model for the UN, as various participants observed.

Among the contributors to the program in New York were ambassadors and representatives from Mali, Canada, Portugal, Spain, and the League of Arab States, as well as staff from numbers of UN offices and divisions.

Support was provided by the Center for Applied Linguistics (Washington DC), the Esperantic Studies Foundation, La Francophonie, the Universal Esperanto Association, and others. Birkbeck, University of London provided support for a parallel workshop at the United Nations.

The Study Group on Language and the United Nations ([www.languageandtheun.org](http://www.languageandtheun.org)) seeks to create dialogue on UN language policy and on the UN's use of language and languages in dealing with its many constituencies.

Next year's symposium will take place on May 7, 8 and 9, in New York City and in Princeton, New Jersey. Titled "Language and Migration: Experience and Memory," it will be sponsored in part by Princeton University. (Call for papers: <https://piirs.princeton.edu/event/conference-language-and-migration-experience-and-memory>)

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