

Jean-Claude Trichet: Inauguration of the “Language of Money” exhibition and the Euro Exhibition

Speech by Mr Jean-Claude Trichet, President of the European Central Bank, at the inauguration of the “Language of Money” exhibition and the Euro Exhibition at the Museum für Kommunikation, Frankfurt am Main, 10 March 2010.

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Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here today at the Museum für Kommunikation in Frankfurt for the inauguration of two exhibitions. First, it is a particular honour for me, in my capacity as patron, to open the “Language of Money” exhibition. And, of course, it also gives me great pleasure to open the European Central Bank’s Euro Exhibition. These two complementary exhibitions share similar themes, of interest to me as a central banker. They explore the history, practicalities and overall role that money plays in our lives, and are indeed both very enlightening.

Whatever language we speak, there is no doubt that money plays an important role in communication, conveying messages directly or indirectly about our society, our status and our values. The “Language of Money” exhibition examines the role that money plays in our lives.

Naturally I am very interested in the language of money and, in particular, the language of the euro. The euro should speak both of Europe’s diversity and its common culture, its history and its future. And indeed it does, through the architectural motifs on our banknotes and the cultural symbols on the national sides of our coins.

Take the name “euro”, for instance. When choosing the name, it was purposely decided that it should not favour any specific language, but speak rather of Europe. And so the word “euro” entered our vocabulary: a new word for a new European currency. Today, of course, the word does not seem new at all. The euro has become one of the most tangible elements of Europe for the 330 million European citizens who use the euro as their common currency on a daily basis.

Since the creation of the euro, it has also become clear how important a role the single currency can play in the realisation of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe. The number of countries participating in Economic and Monetary Union has grown over the years and today the euro is used in 16 Member States of the European Union, covering an area that stretches from Cyprus to Ireland and from Portugal to Finland.

The euro also has a recognised role beyond Europe. Also on the international stage, people have confidence in the euro as a currency. And this confidence is crucial.

You will recall my earlier comment that the euro speaks a language of both common culture and diversity. You will see evidence of this in the European Central Bank’s Euro Exhibition, which is also on show here, having just come to the end of a successful showing at the Museum für Kommunikation’s partner museum in Berlin.

As you walk through the Euro Exhibition, you will without doubt recognise the images of bridges, which feature on the back of our euro banknotes. The bridges symbolise communication between the people of Europe, and between Europe and the rest of the world. They also represent the connection between past and future, and symbolise our European future. If you look at the national sides of the euro coins, you will see evidence of the diversity that I have spoken of, with national icons and symbols representing the national heritage and culture of each Member State of the European Union.

Overall, the Euro Exhibition provides visitors with an opportunity to familiarise themselves with our currency, the euro. Various interactive displays enable them to explore subjects ranging from the history of money to the production of euro banknotes. You can also learn how to check the security features of euro banknotes.

Lastly, as the euro is the currency of euro area citizens of all ages, the Euro Exhibition also takes the younger generation into consideration. In the kids' corner, children can enjoy the educational computer games, learn more about the features of euro banknotes from the interactive displays or follow the story of Anna and Alex as they catch counterfeiters. For those of you here who have children, this is a good opportunity for them to learn about the euro in an entertaining way.

Before I conclude, I would like to offer my sincere thanks to Ms Kugler, Mr Gold and their teams for their cooperation and for making this evening a success. We at the European Central Bank fully support activities aimed at educating the public in financial and economic matters, and we are truly grateful for our partners' contribution to achieving this goal. Many thanks to you all.

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, it is a pleasure for me to declare the exhibitions open.

Thank you.