

*A message from the President of the European Parliament, Professor Jerzy Buzek, sent especially for the Inauguration of the First International Week of Reading to Children and launching "All of Europe Reads to Kids" programme held on June 1, 2011 in Cieszyn and Cesky Tesin. The message was translated into English.*

Dear All,

I am delighted that, even though I am currently in Brussels, I am still able to celebrate the inauguration of the programme "All of Europe Reads to Kids" with you in this manner. I must say that there is a lot to celebrate. Please bear in mind that this programme and the idea behind it was initiated here in Poland for the very first time. Thanks to the campaign, which has now been functioning for ten years, an ever increasing number of children can count on reading their favourite books with their parents or guardians. This is very important, because by allowing the youngest amongst us to discover the magical world of literature – first of fairy tales, then of animal books, and eventually of ambitious literary fiction – we give them the key to understanding the reality that surrounds them. We support their development, we help them create their own characters and establish their own perspective.

As President of the European Parliament, I have become a patron of the Polish undertaking to encourage reading aloud to children. Today, I appeal to individuals, organizations and institutions in the European Union, asking them to support the development of such programmes in their own countries. Reading aloud not only strengthens the empathic skills and sensitivity of youngsters. It also rewards children with a feeling of belonging to traditions and thoughts which have evolved in communities over the course of centuries. It is here in Europe that we are building bridges between generations, societies, and even between countries. Your meeting today is clear evidence of this. I am extremely pleased that you are giving Europe a signal today from Cieszyn, a town on the Polish-Czech border, the area of Poland that I originate from. By reading to children, we actively invest in their future, as well as our own future, and the future of the entire European Union.

Dear Friends, let's read to children every day. I am certain that if they fall in love with literature at a young age, their life as adults will be richer and more colourful. All the best.