



## Comitato nazionale federativo minoranze linguistiche d'Italia (CONFEMILI)

### **The linguistic minorities of Italy 23 years after L.482/99. A report.**

A heartfelt appreciation to the Ministry of the Interior which follows the implementation of the principles of the framework Convention in Italy with professionalism and attention.

Sincere thanks to the Council's Experts for the attention paid to Italy's linguistic minorities.

The commitment made by the Committee of Experts through the first 5 opinions has favored the improvement of the legislative situation in favor of minorities in Italy.

This short report presents an assessment of the Italian legislation twenty-three years after its promulgation with the positive sides and the critical issues and aims to update the reflections expressed to the Council of Europe in the CONFEMILI shadow report sent in 2019.

**The drafting of this Report will focus on the elements of development and innovation pursued, initiated and implemented in the last five years in implementation of the Framework Convention**

CONFEMILI is committed to the approval of law 482/1999 (Regulations regarding the protection of historical linguistic minorities) and law 38/2001 (Regulations for the protection of the Slovenian linguistic minority of the Friuli Venezia Giulia region) and participates, as a representative of minority associations, to the central and peripheral state bodies responsible for implementing the law itself, to the Technical Advisory Committee of Law 482/99 established at the Ministry for Regional Affairs.

#### **1) The legislation on minorities.**

The Italian Constitution provides with art. 6 that the Republic protects linguistic minorities with specific rules. To strengthen this principle, other provisions also contribute which, on the one hand, aim to ensure the conformity of the Italian legal system with the generally recognized norms of international law, and on

the other, pay attention to the adaptation of the principles and methods of legislation to the needs of autonomy and decentralization (art. 5).

The system of regional and local autonomies represents, in fact, an instrument of particular value for the protection and promotion of minorities. It is hardly necessary to remember that some minority groups residing in the border regions (Valle d'Aosta/Vallée d'Aoste; Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol) enjoy particular autonomy as the statutes of these regions have been approved with constitutional laws.

With law 482/99 and 38/01, our system wanted, in a framework of national unity, to recognize the plurality of linguistic and cultural expressions of our country and to enhance, at the same time, the role of autonomies, placing itself in the wake of the administrative decentralization through the attribution to local authorities of fundamental tasks in the implementation of the provisions contained in the law.

The protection law has made the guarantee for all minorities homogeneous and therefore also favored stable connections between minority communities with the same language, the same culture and the same traditions and this was also possible thanks to the full involvement and collaboration of the associations.

In recent years there have been no major developments in legislation regarding the protection of linguistic minorities.

Law 482/99 has as its objective the recognition, promotion and valorisation of the languages and cultures of historical linguistic minorities. The intention of the legislator was to ignore any linguistic protection rules that might become necessary following recent immigration into our country (See Introduction by speaker Maselli).

The protection is therefore aimed at the twelve linguistic communities present for centuries in the Italian territory as a consequence of different historical phenomena.

This law has fostered a favorable climate in our country and a sensitivity that is not superficial and not just folkloristic towards minority language communities. The law has given rise to various initiatives at a local, regional and national level in which thousands of people of all groups and ages participate, it has restored prestige to long-discriminated languages and pride to thousands of Italian citizens.

There are three pillars of the law:

- 1) the use of minority languages in public administration;
- 2) language teaching in school;
- 3) access to state TV.

The law provides a budget for its implementation. While the original budget in 1999 was equal to €10,000,000.00, for the year 2023 it is equal to €3,058,760.00 to which must be added the amount equal to €1,141,573.89 relating to the residual resources year 2022. **Therefore the total allocation amounts to €4,200,333.89.**

The reduction in funds does not make it possible to ensure financing for the projects planned by local authorities, nullifying the objectives of the Law and the international commitments signed by our country in favor of the protection of linguistic minorities

Since the promulgation of law 482/1999, financed with funds allocated by the State since 2001, the role of the Regions has been important. All have regional laws to protect minorities. In particular, Sardinia with Legislative Decree 13 January 2016 n. 16 which transfers the funds of Law 482 to the Region in the functions relating to the protection of the language and culture of historical linguistic minorities, this becomes the protagonist. It has been able to develop projects aimed at promoting the language and culture of minorities by implementing important synergistic actions between municipalities

a) the creation, by public administrations, of language desks

b) the establishment of training courses, aimed at the knowledge and oral and written use of the language admitted for protection, for personnel serving in public administrations;

d) the implementation of projects regarding toponymy;

e) the implementation of cultural initiatives.

Thanks to the funds of L.482, measures to promote languages have been intensified in the following areas: in language teaching in schools; in expanding the training offer in universities; in the adaptation of toponyms of state signs; in the activation of radio and television broadcasts in the language; Furthermore, 3 specialized institutes have been created in Calabria for the Arbereshe community, for the Greek community and for the Occitan community.

These initiatives have stimulated the development of relationships and partnerships with subjects outside the mere minority sphere (institutions, NGOs, local authorities), enhancing the potential as an effective wealth of the territory. And this has placed minorities in a relationship of dialogue/confrontation/encounter with larger realities, stimulated a healthy sense of competition, brought about new forms of financing involving human resources, increased the visibility and role of minorities as a factor of cooperation and integration inserting them into the European circuit considered as opportunities for growth and affirmation.

The creation of language desks has given good results; the personnel in charge worked to carry out their tasks as best as possible, developing effective activities to promote and enhance the minority language. Thanks to the strong motivation of the young employees, they were not alone websites of the various communities were activated but the computerization of services and the usability of data was guaranteed through the use of the provisions set out in the digital administration code. .

## **2) The positive aspects.**

After approximately 23 years of activity since the entry into force of law 482/99, it can be stated that the balance is positive, and the related effects are measured through a considerable increase in demand for the use of the minority language

As regards public administration, the Ministry for Regional Affairs has done its best to protect it.

On a practical level, protection is implemented through the distribution of the Fund's resources, managed by the Department for Regional Affairs, between the administrations and bodies that propose projects aimed at financing the conservation and dissemination of minority languages.

The Regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia and Sardinia, however, based on specific implementation rules of their Statutes, are allocated shares of the Fund which are then autonomously distributed by the Regions themselves among the respective territorial bodies.

The distribution activity, which is divided into several phases and which sees the participation of various public entities together with that of the bodies representing the interests of minorities, is carried out on the basis of primary and regulatory rules which, almost twenty years into their existence entered into force, they would need to be adapted to changing needs. through the Special Consultative Committee, it developed the criteria for allocating funds and financed the projects sent by local administrations and maintained relations with the bodies themselves. It must be said that, despite some bureaucratic difficulties in presenting the projects, there was fair participation from all the local administrations involved. The activity of the Department of Regional Affairs should be appreciated for the quality and timing of the work carried out as well as for the transparency and balance in the evaluation of the projects and in the ability of the Department to follow up on the proposals and indications presented by the Technical Committee of L.482/ 99.

The distribution activity would need to be adapted to changing needs. In the Notice, greater attention must be paid to writers in the language and to literature in general who are not present today.

At an administrative level there is a shortage of staff in small municipalities and therefore the drafting of projects is viewed with uneasiness. It would be appropriate to assign a contribution of part of the percentage to those who deal with the administrative procedure of the projects.

Without prejudice to the validity of the legislative system as a whole - also recognized by some sentences of the Constitutional Court - a modification of the Regulation implementing the law, introduced by the Presidential Decree, would be desirable. 2 May 2001, n. 345.

Through the regulatory change, the ways of distributing the fund, the functioning of the language desks (of those public bodies, that is, who are the first to interface with those who speak the minority language) and the cultural activities worthy of access to funding could be better detailed.

The role of the Regions could be redefined by providing for greater participation of the Regions in the distribution and reporting activities of the financed projects. It would be necessary to regulate the provision of an activity to replace the State with the Regions in all cases of inertia on the part of the Regions. – it would be desirable to amend the Regulation implementing the law, introduced by the Presidential Decree. 2 May 2001, n. 345.

In summary, our opinion on the activity of the Ministry of Regional Affairs in collaboration with the Technical Committee of Law 482/99.

When evaluating projects, their merit and innovativeness with regards to their impact on the minority context must be examined and appreciated.

Furthermore, the evaluation of projects should not be limited only on the basis of bureaucratic compliance with the provisions of the tender, but also on the basis of the contents and their impact on the valorisation of minority languages. However, it will be necessary to foresee the criteria in time and define the group of experts to whom the examination of the projects and in particular their impact on the promotion and valorisation of languages will be entrusted.

The Linguistic Minorities Advisory Committee at the Department could be a useful tool for examining and approving projects.

The activities of the various central and peripheral competent bodies must be better coordinated to optimize the use of funds. In particular, greater synergy with the Ministry of Education would be useful as intervention in the school environment is fundamental for the protection of minorities .

- a) Evaluation of merit of the projects presented, according to the evaluation grid for European projects.
- b) Pay attention to the project contents in order to preserve the minority language in the transition from one generation to the next.
- c) Implement coordination in the protection of minorities between the Department of Regional Affairs of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Education and the Regions.
- d) Carry out visits to the area and verify the results obtained

### **3)Language teaching in school;**

A precise scholastic discipline of the language is dictated by law 482/1999, which represented a notable opportunity for the valorisation and relaunch of the linguistic heritage of the minority language communities present in the area. The limit of the law concerns the consent of the parents for teaching/learning the language: it is the parents' approval that is referred to when deciding to launch a project.

Two studies after 10 and 20 years of the law offer us the possibility of being able to evaluate the State's commitment to the teaching of minority languages.

Unfortunately, Covid has made it difficult to implement the projects.

I would like to express some considerations. Some needs that appear to be of undoubted relevance significantly emerge from the research and conferences:

- 1) the need, clearly felt by the schools, for less "project precariousness", for a longer time for planning and carrying out the planned work, in order to guarantee continuity and stability to the projects;
- 2) the need to expand networking projects between schools, in order to strengthen the identity of each minority and break the isolation in which some of them find themselves, by connecting to schools in other areas, both, in the case of minorities transnational, to the countries of the roof languages, also in order to make the best use of resources in those activities, for which the financial advantages deriving from the expansion of the recipients are stronger;
- 3) The urgency of defining the typology of minority language teachers, identifying shared minimum requirements, in order to ensure if not complete homogeneity of the offer - difficult to achieve in such a heterogeneous type of teaching - at least a minimum common denominator among those who teach;
- 4) the opportunity to promote - where possible - a more lively and contextualized type of teaching of minority languages, using methodologies and more engaging content.

The project envisaged by the Ministry of Education is very positive and merits the creation of a network agreement between the schools of the minority language communities and the start of activities by the lead school: the "Sabatini" comprehensive institute in Borgia (CZ).

At the same time, funding for first cycle schools is also planned for the next two years.

But on all this I think the Ministry of Education's report is more up to date.

However, the research carried out confirms the planning capacity of schools in minority language communities, which despite having to deal with the progressive depopulation of their areas, show an appreciable desire to innovate their teaching activities through appropriate strategies. Thanks to the activation of language teaching, many schools have felt the need to connect with others to better respond to common needs... (the school projects are drafted better than those sent by local authorities to the Ministry of Regional Affairs).

#### **4) Furthermore, the critical issues must also be highlighted.**

From a verification of the projects the clear fact emerges that there are linguistic minority realities that are stronger not only numerically, but also territorially, I would say "shared with the territory". Significant, it seems to me, is the case of Friuli which in fact managed to have the most sustained financial resources. In fact, it is not enough to give linguistic communities the possibility of teaching their language in public schools but it is necessary to explain to them why such teaching is appropriate and useful above all for the future of their children and to inform them correctly. that this teaching is not an alternative, but additional to what the school already provides. Numerous experiences in Italy (in Friuli) and also in other European countries have demonstrated that the involvement of the teaching staff and their activation in favor of the teaching of the minority language are fundamental elements for such teaching to obtain the necessary results.

The teaching of minority languages in school can also benefit from general school standards.

I would like to draw your attention to the reforms of school systems which can also be effective for the teaching of minority languages. Law 13 July 2015, n. 107 "Reform of the national education and training system and delegation for the reorganization of the legislative provisions in force", has provided for some provisions which can, however, constitute important opportunities for the teaching of minority languages.

Firstly, the law, in providing for a strengthening of school autonomy aimed at strengthening the training offer and project activities, identifies, among the training objectives considered priority, "the valorisation and strengthening of linguistic skills, also through the use of the Content language integrated learning methodology".

It is the task of the individual educational institution to define in its three-year Educational Offer Plan initiatives to strengthen the educational offer and project activities also in order to reflect the needs of the cultural, social and economic context of the local reality.

Secondly, the law introduced, within the autonomy staff, positions to enhance the training offer in order to activate the projects that the school considers priorities: the so-called "enhanced staff".

Consequently, each educational institution can indicate the need for the places necessary to strengthen the training offer and therefore use the teachers present in its staff who are in possession of specific linguistic skills (also qualified for other levels of education) to activate the teaching of the minority language within the autonomy quota of 20% of the curriculum. Furthermore, educational institutions that intend to enhance the language and culture of minorities can make use of the funding provided for by Legislative Decree no. 60/2017, containing rules on the promotion of humanistic culture, on the valorisation of heritage and cultural

productions and on the support of creativity. In fact, this decree provided for the adoption of the Arts Plan which identified, also assigning specific funding, strategic priorities, among which there is also that of "guaranteeing linguistic pluralism and attention to minorities and local popular traditions".

Anyway, returning to L.482.

*A first point is to restore the original budget of the law of around 10,000,000 euros and then put the school at the center of the activity of promoting languages.* Therefore, the articles of the law regarding financing for projects carried out by linguistic minority schools must be reviewed. More substantial funds must be allocated to the Ministry of Education both to support pilot bilingualism experiences and to strengthen the activities of bilingual schools. One gets the impression that given the mortgages placed by successive governments, it appears necessary that other levels of government must intervene to make up for the cuts in national resources.

And we immediately think of the Regions, which constitute the most qualified, indeed fundamental body responsible for intervening in this matter at a local level.

It seems to me that the Regions are now the ones truly responsible for the policy of protection and promotion of the linguistic minorities present in their respective territories.

## **5) Mass media and minorities**

The assessment regarding the competences of the Department for Information and Publishing of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers is negative. In fact, the art. 12 of Law 482/99, which provides for the start of radio and television broadcasts in protected languages has not yet been fully implemented

The Council of Ministers met on Thursday 25 January 2024. The Minister of Business and Made in Italy Adolfo Urso provided a briefing to the Council of Ministers regarding the new service contract between the Ministry and Rai – Radiotelevisione Italiana S.p.a., to purposes of carrying out public radio, television and multimedia services.

Unfortunately, the new Service Contract 2023-2028 does not provide any response to the needs of the smaller minority language communities.

Rai, in order to support the integration of linguistic minorities, is required to guarantee - through the definition of specific agreements for corresponding services stipulated with the Presidency of the Council of Ministers pursuant to law 14 April 1975, n. 103 and subsequent amendments and additions - the production and distribution of radio and television broadcasts, as well as audiovisual content, in German and Ladin for the autonomous province of Bolzano, in Ladin for the autonomous province of Trento, in Sardinian for the region autonomous Sardinia, in French for the autonomous region of Valle d'Aosta and in Friulian and Slovenian for the autonomous region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

Furthermore, Rai is required to define, with the regions that request it, an operational project aimed at stipulating specific agreements with corresponding services to ensure the application of the provisions aimed at the protection of languages referred to in the law of 15 December 1999, n. 482, taking into account, more specifically, the following criteria:

- i) differentiation of needs according to the respective areas to which they belong;
- ii) need to pursue effectiveness and efficiency objectives;

iii) characteristics of the different distribution platforms with regard to the targets to be achieved.

This text is based on the project for the protection of linguistic minorities developed by RAI which in our opinion does not respect law 482/99 and the related Regulation implementing the Law.

This document, not made public, provides a synoptic picture of the distribution by region of the number of speakers of minority languages. These data - acquired from the Ministry of the Interior - present some critical issues related to their "age", but the RAI managers believe that these are not such as to have a significant impact on the current phase of setting up the project; in subsequent phases of the same, on the contrary, they state will have to develop suitable measures aimed at identifying more precise quantitative elements.

Rai's plan divides minority language communities into three blocks

- a) *Linguistic minorities pursuant to law 103/1975, i.e. the strongest minorities*
- b) *Friulian and Sardinian*
- c) *Other linguistic minorities protected by Law 482/99.*

While for the first two blocks it is planned to create both television and radio programmes. For other minorities, project activities for linguistic minorities take into account the relevance of linguistic strains in the different regions and the relative weight of each linguistic minority

For smaller minorities it is believed that the "objectives of effectiveness and efficiency" in the definition of protection measures can be achieved not with radio and television broadcasts but with targeted initiatives such as: • Dedicated Web and Televideo spaces • Dedicated Technical Support • Contents Dedicated to RaiPlay.

As can be seen, the project initiatives for weaker linguistic minorities described above are qualitatively different.

*( Please :See the Resolutions of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in past monitoring which criticized the failure to implement art. 12 of L.482.)*

We believe that it is the national government and the regional governments that must take action to stipulate the Conventions for all the minorities protected by L.482/99.

RAI is a public service also financed by minority language communities.

I also want to reiterate on this occasion the need to monitor the law

After 23 years from the approval of L.482 it is considered necessary to monitor the degree of implementation of the Law.

This monitoring constitutes an opportunity to reflect on the outcomes, both positive and negative, of the legislative and political measures implemented during these years.

The lack of disaggregated statistical data makes it difficult to set objectives and determine the tools to evaluate the impact of specific decisions.

## **6) Ratification of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.**



The Italian Parliament has not yet ratified the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages of the Council of Europe. In past legislatures, the Government has prepared its own bill, which has been approved by the Chamber of Deputies, but not yet by the Senate. The bill approved by the Chamber limits itself to ratifying the charter by applying the measures provided for in it to the languages of minorities already provided for by law 482

This stance seemed reductive to us, as our country also has other laws to protect linguistic minorities

However, we support the ratification proposal under discussion in the 1st Constitutional Affairs Commission of the Senate in the past legislature because after 23 years from the signature made in Strasbourg we can no longer wait.

There are currently some ratification bills under discussion in Parliament.

In the Chamber, Chamber Act 742 signed by DE MONTE and others: "Ratification and execution of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, done in Strasbourg on 5 November 1992" (742) which is assigned to the Representative of the Joint Commissions I Constitutional Affairs and III Foreign Affairs on 13 February 2023. Still under discussion.

In the Senate, Senate Act no. 230 signed by Tatjana Rojc (PD-IDP) currently being examined in the 1st (Constitutional Affairs) and 3rd (Foreign Affairs and Defense) commissions in the referring body.

The ratification of the Charter will allow Italy to return to being an exemplary system, on a European scale, for the protection of linguistic minorities and their cultures.

In fact, the ratification of the European Charter for Regional Or Minority Languages constitutes one of the final acts of the Italian State's commitment to the protection of linguistic minorities.

#### **7) A permanent conference for a more effective representation of minorities.**

The representatives of some minorities have complained about the lack of collaboration from the Regions, the proposal could be taken up again, appropriately modified, but in any case as an element of active involvement of the Regions in the application of law 482./99.

A few years ago the Minister for Regional Affairs Sen. Enrico La Loggia took the initiative to create a body representing minorities. Currently there is no collegial impulse body for linguistic minorities, but only a technical consultative committee which has the task of expressing opinions on the application of legislation regarding historical linguistic minorities. The Minister therefore wanted to create a permanent linguistic minorities conference composed of representatives of the state administrations, representatives of the Anci regions, of the linguistic minorities, of the Confemili, with the task of monitoring the status of the individual linguistic minorities and verifying the implementation of the legislation in the field; propose interventions of both a legislative and administrative nature and coordinate the actions of the varied world of minorities.

There is the possibility of a voluntary federation at a national level of organizations of multiple minorities on the basis of private law (and this is what we as CONFEMILI are trying to do) but there is also an experiment now attempted in a growing number of states which involves the creation of a minority council, a public body. I am referring to the Council of Ethnic Groups in Austria. Our country has its own long specific history of protection of linguistic minorities. *I think that in this case too it can give a response consistent with its legal tradition, creating a body similar to the State-Regions Conference.*

However, I want to underline the fact that international institutions, first and foremost, the Council of Europe, has recognized that Italy has made appreciable efforts to implement a coherent regulatory framework aimed at guaranteeing general protection to historical linguistic minorities. Naturally these rules must increasingly penetrate the state system which is made up not only of rules but also of behaviour, practices and customs

**Finally, I want to propose a sociological reflection on the general situation of our communities that our Friends have urged me to do.**

If we study the demographic evolution of our communities over the last century compared to the rest of Italy, we see that the community-speaking communities, and the mountain municipalities, as a rule, have suffered penalizations and demographic decline, due to a political culture, which favors the major centers to the detriment of the peripheral and mountain villages, where services are lacking and job opportunities are scarce, because overall the valley bottom and major centers are privileged. In the small mountain villages, adequate investments have not been made to provide them with the necessary services (roads, transport, schools, health, social, cultural and sporting centres, housing, production areas and companies, promotion of economic activities, offer of all the basic services for a community etc.). And as a result the mountain villages are becoming depopulated.

A linguistic minority cannot be saved if the original inhabitants, speaking the aforementioned language, are forced to leave the territory of historical settlement. Culture is therefore not enough, but a far-sighted 360-degree promotion of all aspects of social life, in particular economic development, is needed. If people have a job, whether employed or self-employed, and the necessary services they remain and procreate. Otherwise they disperse and the minority language gradually disappears.

As I mentioned before, steps forward have been made in these 23 years. But the successes achieved could be ephemeral if not supported by new aspirations. In our opinion, the most important measures should concern transversally, as is said today in a holistic conception, all fields of action and therefore also those concerning social policy, research and development. It is important to find the funds to continue financing projects that valorise minority languages. In my opinion, the creation of language centers is an appreciable idea, because it marks the State's decision to protect less widespread languages by supporting an ad hoc official. In my opinion, good professionalism has been achieved among the counter operators in knowing how to prepare projects to respond to the needs of the populations. The drafting of projects is often too complex and requires skills that many citizens do not possess, the language desk must increasingly become an office for promoting the language. However, participation in programs should be encouraged, rather than discouraged. Decentralized project management, creating a synergy between national law and regional laws to protect minorities, could encourage the growth of skills and responsibility; However, global management must be carefully and assiduously monitored by the Ministry.

There are many examples of good experiences in our communities and these must be known and appreciated through greater dissemination. We need to make known what is the most important experience in recent years. The positive acceptance of the cultural heritage received from past generations, in fact, eliminates inferiority complexes and fears of comparison. The recovery of one's ethnic-linguistic roots is, therefore, a path of openness, which leads to dialogue and understanding. It should not be forgotten that the weakest linguistic minorities live in isolated and increasingly uninhabited mountain areas.

The Ministry of Regional Affairs and Autonomy is about to approve a law on the mountains which provides measures to support residence, work, services and therefore against depopulation. It can be an important opportunity for the community-speaking communities that live in the mountains and are 1032 and can be supported. The reality of our communities must be included in this bill. We will ensure that this is done.

#### **8) Information from various minorities:**

At this point I take the liberty of reporting the observations received from the minority representatives.

##### **Puglia.**

Dr. Silvano Palama, a Greek scholar from Puglia, reports on the activities carried out by the Associations in Puglia, highlighting the context in which they operate and the difficulties encountered. He believes that the operators of the language desks should commit themselves to the recovery of the language. He would like greater support for publishing and publications. Furthermore, in his opinion, admission to funding for activities relating to research on the language of the minority and subsequent publication should be provided for (requirements for cultural projects). In this sense, the intervention of the Region appears indispensable.

Mrs. Ines Cavalcanti (Occitan) presents the rich activity carried out in recent years with language courses. The Chambra d'oc Association works tirelessly in the Piedmont area, in the Occitan, Franco-Provençal and French minority language municipalities with initiatives in the field of publishing (publication of a bilingual Occitan, Franco-Provençal-Italian online newspaper) monthly "Nòvas d'Occitania ", with the publication of books in the language, with the production of films (Bogre: the great European heresy by Fredo Valla will be presented in the Vatican in Rome on 5 May) with a prestigious annual award for languages in danger of extinction in the world: the Ostanà Prize : writings in the mother tongue, with musical reviews, translation of literary texts, territorial animation, computerized dictionaries.....Participate with Confemili in international events. And it works in concert with public bodies for the implementation of annual projects on law 482-99 since the first ministerial circular on the matter

The lawyer Gianpiero Boschero, Occitano draws a brief picture of the linguistic situation in Piedmont.

Occitan is fairly present in the Municipalities and Unions of Municipalities, but almost exclusively in oral form. Greater attention to the written form is observed in the Valle Maira language desk, which is based at the Espaci Occitan institution in Dronero.

It is believed that the functions of the language offices could be expanded in order to strengthen their role as a service, point of reference and promotion in the linguistic field for the communities in which they operate.

We agree with the existing provision that language desks must "ensure the computerization of services".

It would be very useful to encourage local authorities to require knowledge of the minority language when hiring new staff.

The courses organized in recent years for public employees have been very important in giving dignity to the language but, in the absence of incentives, they have not been able to inform public opinion, thus exercising a control function. In the case of the Occitans, the periodicals "correctly" belong to free cultural associations of private law. Law 482 of 1999, however, only finances public bodies and not associations.

Obviously this form of support, completely random and unpredictable, is useless and even harmful. In concrete terms: the magazine Valados Usitanos has ceased publication; the magazine Lou Temp Nouvel comes out with difficulty once a year; the monthly Ousitano Vivo has suspended paper publications and is reduced to a symbolic presence (one article per month) on the Espaci Occitan website.

A linguistic minority without its own press is evidently destined for extinction.

The weeklies published in the Piedmontese cities at the foot of the valleys (Cuneo, Saluzzo and Pinerolo) dedicate a certain space to Occitan culture, sometimes with sincere sympathy, but do not publish articles in Occitan

### **Sardegna**

Dr. Giuseppe Corongiu. Sardinian, he is of the opinion that the language desk must increasingly become an office for the promotion of the language and this must be taken into account in the revision of the Prime Ministerial Decree. In the Notice, greater attention must be paid to writers in the language and to literature in general who are not present today.

At an administrative level, Dr. Corongiu notes a shortage of personnel in small municipalities and therefore the drafting of projects is viewed with uneasiness. It would be appropriate to assign a contribution of part of the percentage to those who deal with the administrative procedure of the projects.

Finally, Dr Corongiu thanks the organizers of the video conference also because the presence of the State among the minority language communities enhances the prestige of the language.

Prof. Carlo Sechi (Catalan from Alghero.) The use of the Catalan language is alive in Alghero thanks to the Associations that operate through publications, private TV, theatre, library. These associations are also active in teaching the language, making up for the deficiencies of public school. Therefore, adequate teacher training is necessary.

Thanks to CONFEMILI, exchanges with minorities in Europe have been frequent and constant for many years. In particular, the intense cultural and scientific exchanges with Catalonia appear very advantageous.

A permanent table at the Ministry for Regional Affairs already proposed by other friends could be useful for strengthening ties between the various minority stakeholders for an exchange of best practices

The professor. Sechi states that the feeling of identity is an added value and must also be supported with cultural initiatives, with literary and language publishing works which have a limited market and are not supported by law.

### **Finally we present a brief report on Slovenian minority**

The application of the law for the protection of the Slovenian minority (L. n. 38/2001) still has some gaps. The problems are then highlighted with specific reference to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Article 9

In the distribution of funds for minority institutions referred to in Law 38/2001 in 2024, the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region has, in contrast with the regional consultative commission for the Slovenian minority, on its own initiative reduced the contribution for the the only Slovenian-language newspaper Primorski dnevnik, despite the fact that the amount of funds available for the activities of the Slovenian minority was not reduced compared to the previous year.

#### Article 11

Despite the promises of the competent authorities, the right of members of the Slovenian linguistic minority to have their own name and surname has not yet been fully implemented. In particular, on some documents, especially passports but not only, the names are not written with the correct spelling of the Slovenian language, including the diacritical signs č, š and ž.

#### Article 11

Between 2009 and 2013, the Friuli Venezia Giulia Region adopted 6 decrees with the list of public bodies and companies concessionaires of public services, obliged to display signs in the Slovenian language, in particular bearing bilingual names of the localities with the presence of the Slovenian minority . These decrees are applied partially and insufficiently and in particular totally ignored by some entities and companies. By way of example, we mention the two companies responsible for the public rail transport service, Trenitalia and the Italian railway network, which completely ignore this provision.

#### Articles 12 -14

The Slovenian minority enjoys a network of schools with the Slovenian language of instruction in the provinces of Trieste and Gorizia. In the province of Udine there is only one bilingual school in San Pietro al Natisone, a comprehensive institute. The teaching of Slovenian in remote areas (especially Val Canale, the municipalities of Tarvisio and Malborghetto) is limited and does not allow students to learn the language at a level that allows them to continue their studies in Slovenian.

Despite the available funding, the need to provide textbooks for Slovenian language schools, specific to the needs of the minority, is completely ignored.

Recently the authorities proposed the merger of some secondary schools, reducing the positions of managers from 4 to 2. The Slovenian minority considered this proposal not adequate to the needs.

Nothing has changed in relation to the establishment of a Slovenian section in the G. Tartini Conservatory of Music in Trieste, provided for by the law for the protection of the Slovenian minority (L. n. 38/2001, Art. 15).

The Slovenian school union has still not been recognized in all respects, as required by law (L. n. 38/2001, Art. 22).

#### Article 15

The provision of the Art is almost totally ignored. 21, paragraph 2 of Law 38/2001 which provides for adequate representation of the Slovenian minority in consultative bodies relating to the protection of social, economic and territorial interests.

**Now some reflections on the impact of the pandemic**, on the project activities planned for historical linguistic minorities and on any "adaptations" put in place to ensure the carrying out of the same activities

also in consideration of the measures adopted over time by the Government due to the protracted of the state of emergency. Various experiences can be gleaned from the contributions sent by members. **As for the German-speaking islands**

Briefly, it can be said that many activities of the associations have been reduced or eliminated due to Covid (e.g. Corale Polifonica Cimbra, Pro Loco, Luserna Documentation Center Museum, recreational and educational activities with children, closure of offices and bars, reduction of life social and therefore also opportunities for socialization and use of the local language. So Covid has negatively affected the conservation of minority languages.

**Mrs. Ines Cavalcanti, Occitan**, reports that during the recent pandemic the territories lost elderly people and with them historical memory. And to make language desks and language promotion activities work better in this period, it is essential that they become dynamic, active, attractive territorial actions, which are increasingly enhanced online.

**Instead Dr. Brezigar (Slovenian)**. specifies that the Slovenian minority has fully respected the rules established by the Government. Schools adopted distance learning, cultural activities were reduced in compliance with government decrees, but minority institutions (schools, libraries, mass media, associations...) continued with the activity, appropriately adapted to the situation.

**In general it can be said that the pandemic has put protection activity in crisis, because the Municipalities have found themselves managing emergency situations. Furthermore, the projects sent by schools have also decreased significantly due to remote courses.**

*CONFEMILI renews its gratitude to the Experts because with their support comfort the various components of civil society of minority language communities of which language represents the most relevant sense of identity. On behalf of the Committee that I chair, I intend to ensure the strongest support and collaboration for all the planned initiatives.*

To conclude, Law 482/99, which enhances the unity of our country through the multiplicity of its linguistic and cultural expressions, still retains its function as a reference standard in full recognition of the role that linguistic plurality has played in history and will still take place in the future of Europe.

*IL CONFEMILI hopes that these issues will be presented in the next opinion of the Advisory Committee*

*Thanks for your attention !*

Prof. Domenico Morelli

CONFEMILI

We thank them for their contributions our members :

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Roma, 7 febbraio 2024

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