



Ministero dell'Interno

DIPARTIMENTO PER LE LIBERTA' CIVILI E L'IMMIGRAZIONE
DIREZIONE CENTRALE PER I DIRITTI CIVILI, LA CITTADINANZA E LE MINORANZE

HISTORICAL LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to be able to address this meeting to share with you updated information on the measures undertaken by our Country to guarantee the **protection of historical linguistic minorities.**

I would like to confirm the attention paid by Italy towards minorities, fully complying with the commitments that were entered into.

Over the last few years a multiplicity of initiatives promoted by the Central Authorities of the State and by Local Authorities have strengthened the protection and promotion of the rights of the members of linguistic minority communities. The regional legislation enhancing local languages and cultures was also considerably developed.

With its ruling No. 159/2009 the Constitutional Court stressed that this protection is a fundamental principle of the Italian legal system and it is a meeting point among other "supreme" principles such as the pluralistic principle and the equality principle.

With a view to the protection of minorities, the **Department for Regional Affairs** of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers has allocated the necessary resources to fund the projects submitted by local authorities subdivided according to four types of interventions: linguistic helpdesks, language training, topographical indications and cultural activities.

Almost all **projects** have been carried out in a satisfactory manner; through their linguistic helpdesks, many municipalities have translated into the minority



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language documents that were considered important and they have also made them accessible on the internet.

The **linguistic helpdesks** are the real point of contact between the minority language speaking population and the public administration.

The interventions connected with the **linguistic training** of local authorities staff accompany the activities of linguistic helpdesks, thereby increasing the possibility of using historical minority languages in relations between citizens and public offices.

As far as **topographical indications** are concerned, interventions are aimed at completing existing indications with the toponyms of the historical linguistic minorities.

Various projects have been initiated in all the 13 Regions where the presence of historical linguistic minorities is recognized.

It is worth mentioning that in some regions with a special statute (Aosta Valley, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Sardinia or Trentino-South Tyrol) there exist ad hoc legislations that considerably supplement state funding for linguistic minorities, thereby favouring a widespread promotion of minority languages and cultures, as well as a timely issuing of funding; there is expectation for the forthcoming common programmes, characterized by subsidiarity and differentiation and aimed at the realization of the interests of the various stakeholders.

On the whole the implementation status of law N. 482/1999 for the protection of linguistic minorities has been positively assessed, as indicated by the increase in the request to use the minority languages and by a higher awareness of their value, by the organization of official events as well as by initiatives aimed at the preservation of the written heritage.

Our legislation guarantees the **access to media** for persons belonging to linguistic minorities.



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Thanks to the digital switchover in 2010, new prospects have opened up for minorities. The reception of programmes has been guaranteed throughout the territory where the minorities are settled and the main programmes of the public and private television companies of the Republic of Slovenia can also be seen. As far as the press is concerned, the relevant law on publications envisages the funding of newspapers published in the minority languages.

As far as the **training of teachers** of minority languages is concerned, a Master degree course is being organized for qualified training with a University certification intended for teachers charged with the early teaching of minority languages.

The Master degree course is the reaction to the needs more often expressed by the stakeholders and by the teachers themselves, namely a training in a glottodidactic methodology that is homogeneous on the national territory while respecting the local linguistic differences.

As far as textbooks are concerned, one of the priorities for the issuing of funding is the realization of handbooks or didactic instruments to be posted on-line on a web platform made available by the Ministry of Education, as final objective of the projects submitted by the school networks.

In allocating funding, the Study Group on Minorities of the Ministry of Education has given preference to the projects submitted by interregional networks of schools in order to reduce the gap between the North and the South of the Country.

The national legislation also envisages the use of **bilingual identity cards** as well as the **restoration of the original form of names and surnames** in case they had been modified. To this end, the decree of the Ministry for Public Administration and Innovation of 2 February 2009 guarantees that all State Administrations make use



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of a single representation of the diacritical signs contained in the Latin character alphabets used to write the names and surnames of Italian citizens; for this reason the software in use by the competent offices has been updated. As a result, minority language speaking citizens can apply for a bilingual identity card in Italian and Slovenian with the diacritical signs.

Mr. President,

The aim of my short speech was highlighting the activities that the Administrations both at central and local level have carried out and are still carrying out for the protection of historical linguistic minorities.

The Italian Government intends to remain constantly open towards any contribution that may be useful to better achieve the envisaged objectives.