

A multilingual region

In a Europe that is making linguistic diversity and multilingualism one of its strategic objectives - as shown, inter alia, by the establishment of an ad hoc "European Commissioner for Multilingualism" – the Friuli Venezia Giulia region can play a key role thanks to a linguistic situation that is unique in Europe. In fact, only Friuli can boast a centuries-old coexistence on the same territory, still alive, of the three language branches of the Old Continent: Latin (Friulian and Italian), Germanic (German and German-speaking communities) and Slav (Slovene and local Slovene dialects). The phenomenon partly affects also Venezia Giulia where autochthon communities of Latin and Slav origins have cohabited for many centuries, though strongly influenced by German culture for historical reasons.

In recent years many actions have been undertaken, whether legislative or administrative, aimed at protecting the linguistic and cultural heritage that is particularly complex and diversified in terms of history, number of people speaking the language and protection needs. The largest community is Friulian, present in 178 municipalities in the provinces of Udine, Gorizia and Pordenone which will be dealt with in some detail in the following chapters.

On the border between Friuli Venezia Giulia and Slovenia, there are 32 Slovene-speaking municipalities. In the last decade, this national minority (already protected by the London Memorandum of 1954) has obtained great forms of juridical recognition by regional and state institutions, starting from Law 482/99. Soon after, a law on the Slovene minority was also approved (Law 38/2001) which contains "global" measures that regulate it. In particular, the law guarantees the right to one's own name or its reinstatement in Slovene, it develops the right to use the language in relationships with the public administration, in toponymy and in schools, it sets up a "Joint Institutional Committee for the problems of the Slovene community" and promotes the collaboration of cross-border populations, the minority and its cultural institutions, in a climate of mutual help, to encourage and implement joint policies on adjacent territories. More recently, Law no. 26/2007 integrated the state law, defining the key lines of the action policies of the Region in favour of the minority.

Finally, the German communities of Friuli Venezia Giulia are present in five municipalities of the province of Udine: Sauris, Paluzza, Pontebba, Malborghetto-Valbruna and Tarvisio. Through Law 4/99, the Friuli Venezia Giulia region has promoted specific actions aimed at protecting and enhancing the value of Germanic communities, providing for the granting of loans for cultural activities, but especially linguistic ones, of both cultural clubs and associations and of the five Municipalities with German-speaking citizens.

The recognition route of autochthon Germanic communities present on the regional territory was completed in 2009, with the approval of the comprehensive legislative protection text: Regional law no. 20/2009 entitled " Legal regulations for the protection and promotion of German-speaking linguistic minorities of Friuli Venezia Giulia".