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## ITALIAN

The Italian language in education in Slovenia

| Regional dossiers series |

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## Contents

Glossary .....	2
Foreword .....	3
1        Introduction.....	5
2        Pre-school education.....	19
3        Primary education .....	22
4        Secondary education.....	29
5        Vocational education .....	33
6        Higher education .....	35
7        Adult education.....	40
8        Educational research.....	44
9        Prospects.....	48
10       Summary statistics .....	51
Endnotes .....	53
Education system in Slovenia.....	54
References and further reading.....	55
Addresses .....	66
Other websites on minority languages .....	73
What can the Mercator Research Centre offer you?.....	74

## **Glossary**

<b>CEFR</b>	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
<b>FL</b>	Foreign language
<b>L1</b>	First language acquired (native language/mother tongue)
<b>L2</b>	Second language acquired
<b>TL</b>	Target language



## Foreword

- background** The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning aims at the acquisition, circulation, and application of knowledge in the field of regional and minority language education. Regional or minority languages are languages that differ from the official language of the state where they are spoken and that are traditionally used within a given territory by nationals of that state forming a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population. For several years an important means for the Mercator Research Centre to achieve the goal of knowledge acquisition and circulation has been the Regional dossiers series. The success of this series illustrates a need for documents stating briefly the most essential features of the education system of regions with an autochthonous lesser used language.
- aim** Regional dossiers aim at providing a concise description and basic statistics about minority language education in a specific region of Europe. Aspects that are addressed include features of the education system, recent educational policies, main actors, legal arrangements, and support structures, as well as quantitative aspects, such as the number of schools, teachers, pupils, and financial investments. This kind of information can serve several purposes and can be relevant for different target groups.
- target group** Policymakers, researchers, teachers, students, and journalists may use the information provided to assess developments in European minority language schooling. They can also use a Regional dossier as a first orientation towards further research or as a source of ideas for improving educational provisions in their own region.
- link with Eurydice** In order to link these regional descriptions with those of national education systems, the format of the regional dossiers follows the format used by Eurydice, the information network on education in Europe. Eurydice provides information on the

administration and structure of national education systems in the member states of the European Union.

### **contents**

The remainder of this dossier consists of an introduction to the region under study, followed by six sections each dealing with a specific level of the education system. These brief descriptions contain factual information presented in a readily accessible way. Sections eight to ten cover research, prospects, and summary statistics. For detailed information and political discussions about language use at the various levels of education, the reader is referred to other sources with a list of publications.



## 1 Introduction

### language

Italian is a Romance language spoken by about sixty million people in Italy, and by another ten million Italian citizens and descendants in the world.

Italian derives diachronically from Latin and is the closest national language to Latin. Unlike most other Romance languages, Italian retains Latin's contrast between short and long consonants. As in most Romance languages, stress is distinctive. In particular, among the Romance languages, Italian is the closest to Latin in terms of vocabulary. Lexical similarity is 89 % with French, 87 % with Catalan, 85 % with Sardinian, 82 % with Spanish, 78 % with Rhaeto-Romance and 77 % with Romanian. Evidence of people, speaking *Latin* and *Latinum vulgare* first and Italian later living alongside the Istrian coast goes back to the Bronze Age, and the populations have been mixed ever since. A 2001 population census counted 23 languages spoken by the people of Istria.

Over the past century, the population inside and outside the Slovenian territory borders has undergone several dramatic changes, from World War I, World War II, to the referendum on independence of the Republika Slovenija (Republic of Slovenia; hereafter: Slovenia) from the Socijalistička Federativna Republika Jugoslavija (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) in 1990, the declaration of independence and sovereignty of Slovenia in 1991 and, finally, the admission of Slovenia to the European Union in 2004. Throughout the years, the individual historical changes influenced considerably the demographic structure, the social and economic status of its inhabitants, particularly in multi-ethnic and multilingual areas near the national borders.

Today Slovenia remains one of the smallest members of the European Union with a progressive economic development in spite of its territorial dimensions. Slovenia is a small nation and for a long time the Slovenes have lived under foreign rule and fought for the recognition of their rights. Many of the Slovenian

people still live across the borders of Slovenia. Slovenia is therefore especially active in regulating the status of the minorities and very sensitive when it comes to their protection.

#### population

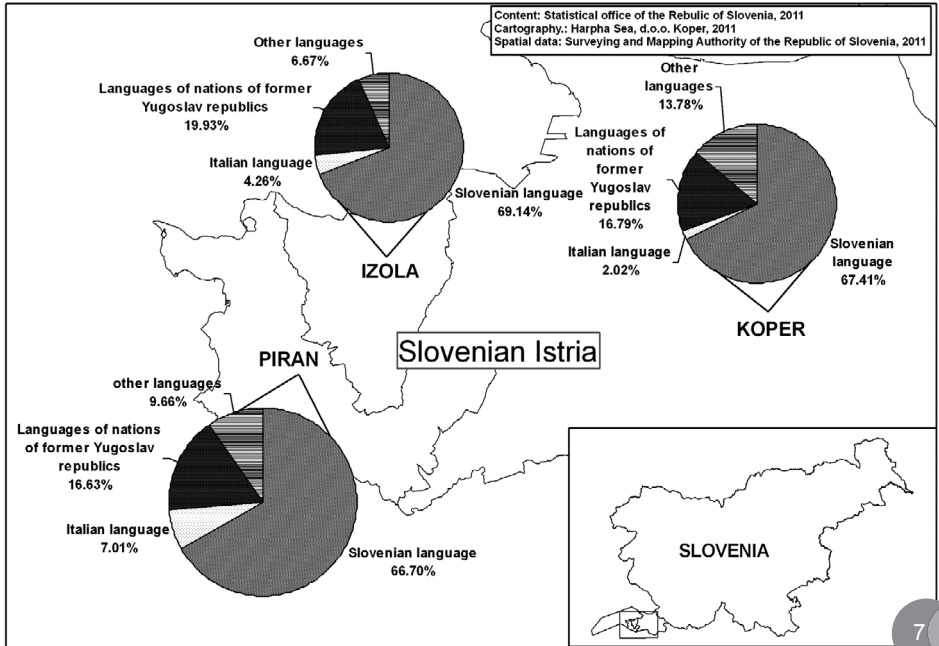
In Slovenia, there are two bilingual regions inhabited by linguistic minorities: the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (south-west) with an Italian community and Prekmurje (north-east) with a Hungarian community.

According to the Popis 2002 (Population Census 2002; hereafter: Census 2002. *Statistični urad Republike Slovenije, 2003*), of a total population of 1,964,036, the Slovenian part of the population of Slovenia amounted to 1,631,363, whereas the Hungarian and Italian communities amounted to 6,243 and 2,258 inhabitants respectively. Other communities, which do not have this status of minority community were: 38,964 Serbs, 35,642 Croats, 21,542 Bosnians, 6,186 Albanians, and 3,972 Macedonians. A special group of non-Slovenian inhabitants is composed of 3,246 Romany people.

Although the rights of the Italian community have been legally and formally constantly protected, the number of its members was reduced after the annexation of the coastal region and its hinterland by the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1943). The population of coastal towns was replaced by the population from the interior areas of Slovenia (management and administrative cadre) and from other Istrian towns and hamlets (mainly Croatian peasants, but Slovenian as well).

The linguistic structure of the urban centres of Koper, Izola and Piran became completely reversed. Before, the Italian language was present at all levels of communication and it was considered a prestigious language; suddenly, the use of Italian was reduced to family communication. This was also the result of the post-war climate in which there was a tendency to identify as fascist all that was Italian. The ancient urban centres were inhabited by immigrants who communicated in various dialects





Map 1: Republic of Slovenia, languages in bilingual region Istria (Source: Statistični urad Republike Slovenije, 2011).

belonging mostly to Slovene and Italian, as well as to Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian.

The Treaty of Osimo, signed in 1975 by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the Italian Republic definitely divided the Free Territory of Trieste (1947-1954) between the two states. The establishment of the border-reality altered dramatically the role of the traditional gravitation and irradiation (economic and cultural) centre like Trieste, reducing or even annulling its relation to the Istrian hinterland. Thus, the minority population, likewise the Italian population that held the absolute majority as far as 1946, numbers today less than 2 %. Later on, the post-war exodus effects were increased by territorial and demographic development processes, rather than a lack of a formal protection of the Italian minority.

Today, the municipalities where the members of the Italian community reside and where the Italian language is an official language besides Slovene, are as follows (Slovene name followed by the Italian one):

Koper/Capodistria municipality with the settlements Ankaran/Ancarano, Barizoni/Barisoni, Bertoki/Bertocchi, Bošamarin/Bossamarino, Cerej/Cerei, Hrvatini/Crevatini, Kampel/Campel, Kolomban/Colombano, Koper/Capodistria, Prade/Prade, Premančan, a part of the settlement Spodnje Škofije/Valmarin, Šalara/Salara and Škocjan/San Canziano,

Izola/Isola municipality with the settlements Izola/Isola, Dobrava/Dobrava presso Isola and Jagodje/Valleggia,

Piran/Pirano municipality with the settlements Piran/Pirano, Portorož/Portorose, Lucija/Lucia, Strunjan/Strignano, Seča/Sezza, Sečovelje/Sicciola, Parecag/Parezzago and Dragonja/Dragogna.

(Sources: *Občine Koper*, 2008; *Občine Izola* 1999; *Občina Piran*, 1999).

The bilingual educational model for primary education in the above-mentioned areas with an Italian community provides that all children attending primary school (with Slovene as medium of instruction) must possess at least passive knowledge of Italian. The communication and the comprehension between the Slovenes and the Italians are thus better. Moreover, the prestige and function of Italian as the minority language, incremented by the juridical and linguistic policy, neutralises the assimilation pressure on the Italian language. The realisation of the language status policies can be observed in daily public life in the municipalities of Koper, Izola and Piran: bilingual public signs, bilingual functioning of all institutions and enterprises, guaranteed number of the minority group representatives in local governmental structures, right to veto questions related to the minority group, and seats guaranteed to the Italian members in the Slovenian Parliament.

**language status** For small countries like Slovenia, it is of vital importance to appreciate the cultures of the neighbouring countries and to master their languages. Due to its geopolitical and cultural position, Slovenia has always represented an area of contact among Central European and Mediterranean cultures and languages. To Slovenian citizens, plurilingualism and multiculturalism have always been natural living conditions.

Today's constitutional and legislative ground for the protection of the linguistic minorities originates in the documents passed by the Socialistična republika Slovenija (Socialist Republic of Slovenia as part of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) in 1974. The Ustava Socialistične Republike Slovenije of 1974 (Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia of 1974; hereafter: 1974 Constitution), in particular articles 250 and 251, granted the Italian (and Hungarian) minorities the right to "da svobodno uporabljata svoj jezik, izražata in razvijata svojo nacionalno kulturo ter v ta namen ustanavljata organizacije, uporabljata svoje narodnostne simbole ter uresničujeta druge" (freely use their language, express and develop their national culture, and in order to do so, establish organisations and use their national symbols – translation by author, *Skupščina SRS, 1974*).

Due to the democratic regulation of the juridical and normative system prior to the independence, the conservation of minority languages and cultures has continued after 1991. Article 11 of the Ustava Republike Slovenije (Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia; hereafter: 1991 Constitution) determines Slovene as the official language in Slovenia; Hungarian and Italian are also considered as official languages in the areas of Italian and Hungarian communities (Skupščina Republike Slovenije, 1991). Slovenia also signed (3 July 1997), ratified (4 October 2000) and enforced (1 January 2001) the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe, 1992).

After the declaration of independence in 1991, the political, social, cultural and economic context of Slovenia has altered considerably, while there has been almost no change in the

language policy and language planning. Linguistic planning in Slovenia has thus given ground to a social organisation that protects languages spoken by its citizens by means of the legislation and 1991 Constitution. The latter determined Slovene as the national language and expressed the necessity to protect the minority languages.

The Urad Vlade Republika Slovenija za narodnosti (Office of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for Nationalities; hereafter: Office for Nationalities) is an independent professional service within the government of Slovenia. The basic provisions on the protection of minority communities are set out in the 1991 Constitution, whilst more detailed provisions are included in the legislation in various areas, that in any way relate to the position of the Italian and Hungarian communities and the Roma community. The relevant ministries are responsible for carrying out the provisions. With such a division of responsibilities, the main duty of the Office for Nationalities is global supervision of the realisation of the provisions of the law on the protection of nationalities, monitoring the practical effects, drawing attention to problem areas, preparing suggestions and initiatives for the Government and other state bodies, and preparing analyses and reports on the wider issues of the protection of nationalities, together with the relevant ministries.

Furthermore, there are some responsibilities that are exclusively in the domain of the Office for Nationalities, most of all those which are not covered by different ministries (financing of the main self-governing organisations of the Italian and Hungarian communities, co-financing of bilingualism and other constitutional rights in those municipalities, where both minority communities live autochthonously, co-financing of the mutual cultural organisations residing in Croatia, and co-financing of the Italian and Hungarian radio and TV programs). There are also some responsibilities regarding the Roma community that lives in Slovenia traditionally, historically, such as financing of the main Roma organisation (Zveza Romov Slovenije; Roma Union of Slovenia), indirectly co-financing of the Roma

associations all over the country, and finally co-financing of the Roma activities in the field of media.

**status of  
language  
education**

The 1991 Constitution guarantees the members of the two minority communities the protection of the fundamental human rights, including the right to use the mother tongue, to maintain and develop the mother tongue culture and national peculiarities (article 5), and the special common rights, including the free use of the mother tongue in private and public life (article 11), the use of national symbols, establishment of various associations and organisations, development of cultural activities, information and education in the mother tongue, participation in matters of general public concern through the minority groups representatives in the Parliament and local government. The implementation of those rights is financially and morally supported by Slovenia (article 64).

The areas in which bilingual education is compulsory are defined in the *Zakon o osnovni šoli* (Primary School Act) of 1996, *Zakon o gimnazijah* (Secondary Education Act) of 1996, and *Zakon o poklicnem in strokovnem izobraževanju* (Vocational and Technical Education Act) of 1996.

From a historical perspective, ethnic specifics of Slovenia have encountered great changes in the past and, due to that particular reason, resulted in a great sensitivity toward the question of the Slovene language as the language of the state and other languages in this region even before reaching independence in the year of 1991. The conservation of minority languages in Slovenia is regulated by the ethnic autochthony principle that guarantees rights to linguistic minorities independent of the number of their speakers. As a compulsory part of the educational system of the majority, the minority language is guaranteed its conservation and moreover its expansion.

As mentioned above, the protection of Italian and Hungarian minority rights is defined in the 1991 Constitution, while special rights of members of both minority communities in the field of

education are more precisely defined in the Zakon o posebnih pravicah italijanske in madžarske narodne skupnosti na področju vzgoje in izobraževanja (Act Implementing Special Rights of Members of the Italian and Hungarian Ethnic Communities in the Field of Education) of 2001. The law stipulates specific rights related to the contents, organisation, and financing of education. This assures equal opportunities related to the access to education and to the selection of a profession. Consequently, this results in equal integration into society and the development of the individual's cultural and national identity. The special minority rights are also stipulated by all national legislation in the fields of education and schooling.

The use of Italian as medium of instruction is stipulated in article 3 of the Zakon o organizaciji in financiranju vzgoje in izobraževanja (Organisation and Financing of Education Act, 1996), article 6 of the Primary School Act, article 8 of the Secondary Education Act, and article 8 of the Vocational and Technical Education Act. All those articles stipulate that all areas inhabited by Slovenian population and members of the Italian community, which are defined as linguistic minorities, must contain pre-schools and schools with Italian as medium of instruction and communication. In such areas, all children attending Italian schools must also learn Slovene, and all children attending Slovenian schools must also learn Italian.

Besides minority languages, Slovenian students receive instruction in several foreign languages. Italian is a language of communication in the areas next to the Italian border and it is taught as a foreign language in the rest of Slovenia.

#### **education system**

Both the Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport (Ministry of Education and Sport) as well as the wider public in Slovenia give high priority to education. The present decade has been characterised by reforms. The reforms were sweeping and fundamental, as they had to be given political, economic and social changes which accompanied the move to independence in 1991.

Slovenia drafted a white paper on education (Bela knjiga o vzgoji in izobraževanju v Republiki Sloveniji, Krek, 1995; Krek 2011) which served as the basis for the preparation and adoption of new legislation (six acts regulating the organisation and funding of education, pre-schools, primary schools, secondary education, vocational education and training, and adult education were adopted in 1996). The curricula and assessment systems were also radically changed in the period 1995-2000. Since 1999, efforts have been made to improve the effectiveness and transparency of the system.

The Slovenian educational system can be divided into the following categories:

- Pre-school education
- Primary education (structure of primary and lower secondary education)
- Secondary education (post-secondary non-tertiary including)
- Post-secondary vocational education
- Higher education (graduate and post-graduate studies)

Compulsory educational provision in Slovenia is meant for children between five and fifteen years old, with all children receiving a year of pre-school education and nine years of primary education. The primary school is divided into three three-year cycles. After the primary school students receive three to four years of secondary education, namely four years in general secondary education (classical, scientific, technical-technologic, or art) or a vocational training school, or three years in a professional school. Secondary education terminates with a final examination: general secondary education is terminated by the *matura* exam or the licence exam, the professional school is terminated only by the licence exam. The *matura* exam allows university enrolment, while the licence exam does not without extra exams. Besides the regular university programmes, short-cycle professional training university programmes have been developed recently. At the same time, curricula of individual disciplines have been reorganised as to gain educational efficacy.

**private and  
public**

In Slovenia, there are some private schools, but in the ethnically mixed region where Italian is used as medium of instruction or as the second language, there are no private schools.

**bilingual  
education  
forms**

The educational model of the ethnically mixed region of Slovenian Istria can be marked as a socially firmly supported preservation model (Baker & Prys Jones, 1998)<sup>1</sup> with an enrichment component (the possibility of the acquisition of the Italian language by the pupils of the majority community).

There are no truly bilingual forms of education in the ethnically mixed region of Slovenian Istria. Schools operate with either Slovene or Italian as medium of instruction (the latter attended mainly by students of the Italian minority community). However, it is mandatory for the pupils of those schools with Slovene as medium of instruction to learn the Italian language (Italian as L2), and for the pupils of the schools with Italian as medium of instruction to learn the Slovene language (Slovene as L2). At primary and secondary schools with Slovene as medium of instruction pupils receive lessons of Italian as the second language two hours a week, while at schools with Italian as medium of instruction students receive on average three hours of Slovene as the second language a week (Primary School Act, 1996, articles 6 and 16; Secondary Education Act, 1996, article 8; Vocational and Technical Education Act, 1996, article 8).

More than 8,000 pupils in schools with Slovene as medium of instruction in the coastal region learn Italian as the second language from pre-school to the secondary level of education. The so-called coastal model of the second language acquisition in primary school was established by law in 1959, and the one for pre-school and secondary education in 1980.

The didactic concept of Slovene as the second language has been intensively developed in the past few years. In addition to national projects (e.g. Models of bilingual education in Primary Schools of Slovenian Istria/Modeli dvojezičnega izobraževanja v osnovni šoli: Vzgoja za sožitje v šolah narodnostno mešanega

okolja Slovenske Istre, Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport, Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper. 1997 – 1998), international projects (e.g. Tempus Joint European Project 3767: Teaching foreign/second languages in pre-primary and primary sector, 1992-1995; Čok, 1994) and also didactic strategies for early second language acquisition in bilingual environments were developed.

In Slovenia, Italian is taught from pre-primary to university: as a mother tongue (L1 in schools with Italian as medium of instruction) and as a second language (L2 in schools with Slovene as medium of instruction) in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria, and as a foreign language (FL) in the central and northern regions of Slovenia. Objectives, teaching approaches, teaching/learning methods, didactic techniques and levels of language proficiency described in the curriculum for the Italian language teaching are based on the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR) of the Council of Europe (1996). As a rule, teachers and experts collaborating in the Italian educational curriculum, are members of the Italian community.

The presence of Italian language speakers, i.e. members of the minority community, enables the pupils in Slovenian schools a first-hand usage of the language outside school. In school, the pupils are introduced to the Italian language in sequence, namely after the mother tongue; they start learning it as the compulsory second language in the first period of primary education and continue up to the final *matura exam* (baccalaureate). Thus we can talk about early learning of a second language and its extensive teaching.

The formal introduction to the second language takes place prior to the primary school education: children receive a year of the second language teaching already in pre-schools. The pre-school curriculum provides children with a first contact with the second language in playful activities, so that they learn to recognise it and to appropriate its basic lexical nucleus. It is extremely rare that children of five or six years old have had

no contact with the Slovene or Italian language as the second language before they enter pre-school or primary school.

The bilingual educational model in the Slovenian coast was established in 1959. According to the Council of Europe language proficiency levels CEFR, pupils finishing primary schools reach the A2 (Way stage) to B1 (Threshold) level, while at the end of higher secondary education students reach the B2 (Vantage) or C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency) level.

Italian as FL is taught in schools in the central and northern regions of Slovenia as the second or third FL. Pupils receive Italian as FL learning in the third cycle of primary schools. In higher secondary education it is taught mostly in high schools and vocational schools.

The objective of teaching/learning Italian as FL is basically the development of the four skills at the primary school level. Some aspects of the Italian culture are introduced as well, so that students are able to compare the two cultures (Slovenian and Italian), to identify the peculiarities, the differences, and to develop cultural identity.

In the western area of Slovenia, alongside the border with Italy (Nova Gorica, Northern primorska region), Italian holds a particular position as a neighbouring language. Although the education received in schools is facultative as foreign language education (in the third cycle of primary schools and in secondary education), the pupils have constant contacts with the Italian language and culture through daily activities (films, sports activities, mass media, books, shopping, lifestyle). In fact, they learn Italian even before they enter primary school.

<b>Territory</b>	<b>Ethnic affiliation of pupils</b>	<b>Medium of instruction (school)</b>	<b>Languages taught as subjects (by method applied)</b>	<b>Curriculum specifics</b>
Slovenia (state territory)	Slovene, Romany <sup>2</sup> , Native speakers of other languages <sup>3</sup>	Slovene	Slovene as L1 FL I and II optional FL III	National curriculum
Ethnically mixed region of Slovenian Istria – Italian national community	Italian, Slovene, Native speakers of other languages	Italian	Italian as L1 Slovene as L2 FL I (8/9 years) and FL II (4 years) in Secondary + optional FL III	National curriculum adapted and enriched with contents from Italian history, geography and culture
	Slovene, Italian, Native speakers of other languages	Slovene	Slovene as L1 Italian as L2 FL I (8/9 years) and FL II (4 years) in Secondary + optional FL III	
Ethnically mixed region of Prekmurje – Hungarian national community	Hungarian, Slovene, Romany, Native speakers of other languages	Bilingual: Slovene and Hungarian	Hungarian as L1 and L2 Slovene as L1 and L2 FL I and II (8/9 years) and FL II (4 years) in Secondary + optional FL III	National curriculum adapted and enriched with contents from Hungarian history, geography and culture

*Table 1: Distribution of languages used as medium of instruction and subjects in the Slovenian curriculum (Source: Nečak Lük, 2003).*

#### **administration**

The national curriculum for all educational levels of education is conceived, implemented and monitored at national level, except higher education. Once the national curriculum is prepared by professionals, it must be approved by the *Strokovni svet za splošno izobraževanje* (National Council for General Education)<sup>4</sup> and monitored by the *Zavod republike Slovenije za šolstvo* (National Education Institute). The municipality monitors the standards of pre-school education. All educational institutions and all legal entities operating in the ethnically mixed regions are obliged to operate in both official languages by law.

**inspection<sup>5</sup>**

The Inšpektorat R Slovenija za šolstvo in sport (Inspectorate for Education and Sport; hereafter: Inspectorate)<sup>6</sup> is managed by the Chief Inspector. Inspectors perform supervision. Laws limit their authority. They are not allowed to attend classes without the permission of the school's head teacher. When it is necessary to establish or assess a certain fact during inspection, educational experts are employed. Experts for individual educational fields are placed on the list of appointed experts by the relevant Strokovni svet (Council of Experts; there are several councils, e.g. a general one, for vocational education and for higher education). When violations are identified, inspectors are authorised to initiate necessary measures and determine the deadline for correcting the violations.

As far as higher education is concerned, the jurisdiction of the Inspectorate is limited to the supervision of pre-enrolment announcement procedures and deadlines, making sure that they are performed in compliance with law. The scope of inspection in private educational institutions is more limited than in public institutions. In private institutions inspectors only check the organisation, funding and provision of state-approved curricula.

**support  
structure**

Pedagogical support and the development of teaching materials are in the domain of the National Education Institute, as well as higher educational institutions (i.e. faculties of education and humanities) educating teachers in different disciplines. Teachers of the Italian language can receive their education at the Filozofska fakulteta (Faculty of Arts) of the Univerza v Ljubljani (University of Ljubljana) and at Fakulteta za humanistične študije Koper (Faculty of Humanities in Koper) of the Univerza na Primorskem (University of Primorska). The use of the Italian language in education is constantly improved by national projects that follow the Council of Europe strategies in language education.

## 2 Pre-school education

**target group** Pre-school education in Slovenia is organised in two age groups: the first age group includes children between one and three years old and the second age group includes children between three and six years old. Mixed age groups are combined groups of children from both age groups.

**structure** The Vzgojni program za vrtce (Educational Programme for the Education and Care of Pre-School Children) contains detailed content and precise guidelines for its implementation covering the following education areas: physical and health education, intellectual education, music education, art education, rhythmical movement education. Each specific activity is chronologically defined and the sequencing of the activities and tasks is also determined. Prior to 1999, a minutely planned life in pre-school institutions offered little possibility for a more individual approach to the children and also failed to take into account the various interests of children, their capabilities, and biorhythms. The work in pre-school institutions was often dictated by the health and hygienic standards and practical requirements of the daily routine.

The Kurikulum za vrtce (National Curriculum for Pre-School Institutions) was approved in March 1999 by the National Council for General Education of the Republic of Slovenia. It was introduced gradually in the beginning of the school year 1999/2000. Since the school year 2001/2002, all children in pre-school institutions have been educated according to the new curriculum. The curriculum for pre-school institutions contains, in addition to the objectives and principles of curricular renewal, also six areas of activities: movement, language, art, nature, society, and mathematics. In addition to these areas of activities, the global objectives and the objectives of an individual area of activities, examples of activities for individual age groups and the role of the adults are defined as well.

In the ethnically mixed regions, the programme lasts two years before the child reaches school age and is conducted in the child's mother tongue and in the language of the region.

The national curriculum for pre-school education was conceived, implemented and monitored at the national level. After the period of monitoring the National Education Institute of Slovenia launched in 2002 a new project on language use and methods of L1 and L2 acquisition. It referred to the modifications introduced in the curriculum (Ministrstvo za šolstvo in šport, 2002). The project has given to pre-school educators some basis for modernisation of early language learning but after the pilot the following phase was not conceived.

### legislation

Pre-school education is regulated by two acts adopted in February 1996: The Organisation and Financing of Education Act and the Zakon o vrtcih (Pre-School Institutions Act). Article 3 of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act stipulates the use of the teaching language. Thus all areas inhabited by Slovenian population and members of the Italian community, which are defined as ethnically mixed regions, must establish pre-schools with Italian as medium of instruction as well. The Organisation and Financing of Education Act also regulates the conditions for the implementation and specifies the method of management and financing of education and training in all areas of education. The Pre-School Institutions Act regulates pre-school education conducted by public and private pre-school institutions (tasks of pre-school institutions, objectives and principles, types of programmes in pre-school institutions, financing, terms and conditions for employment of instructional and professional support staff, work obligations of pre-school teachers and pre-school teacher assistants, collection and protection of personal information in pre-school institutions, etc.).

The new legislation at pre-primary level has introduced several systemic changes:

- Parents and children can choose between a public and a private pre-school institution and between various programmes;
- Reduced number of children in a group and reduced number of children per professional;
- Improved organisation of space in pre-school institutions;
- Increased level of education of pre-school teachers and pre-school teacher assistants;

- Increased level of education of managing staff in pre-school institutions;
- A pre-school institution can also offer different programmes.

The Organisation and Financing of Education Act envisages a reduction of the number of children per class by the year 2003/2004, when the entire generation of six years old children should have been enrolled in nine-year primary education. Thus the children between one and three years old should number a maximum of twelve children per class and the groups of children between three and six years old should number a maximum of twenty-two children per class. In classes of the first age group, two professionals must be present at least six hours daily, and in classes of the second age group two professionals must be present at least four hours daily.

**language use** In Slovenian Istria the Italian language is taught as the second language in Slovenian pre-school institutions at the age of five and the same is the case for Italian pre-school institutions where the Slovene language is taught as the second language.

**teaching material** The materials used by Italian pre-schools in Slovenia and Croatia are partly published by Edizioni Italiane (EDIT), a publishing house in Croatia, whose operation is co-financed by Slovenia. The teaching material at the pre-primary level is usually published in Italy.

#### statistics

School year 2011/2012			
Municipality	Pre-school	Number of Groups	Children
Koper	Delfino Blu Koper	10	200
Izola	L'Aquilone	3	126
Piran	La Coccinella Piran	6	127
Total		19	453

Table 2: Pre-schools using Italian as medium of instruction in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (Source: National Education Institute, unpublished data).

### 3 Primary education

#### target group

Children reaching the age of six years old are eligible for enrolment in the first class of nine-year primary education. On the proposal of parents, medical services or the commission for the placement of children with special needs, the enrolment can be postponed for a year.

Primary education is free. Parents pay no tuition fees. They do, however, bear the costs of textbooks and learning materials. The state has facilitated the establishment of textbook holdings: pupils can borrow textbooks and pay a fee not exceeding one third of the textbook price.

As a rule, children enrol in schools located in the school district of their residence. The school is obliged to enrol all children from its school district. The law provides for a possibility of enrolling in a school in another school district if that school agrees to admit the child.

22

#### structure

In Slovenian primary schools, teaching is structured by disciplines (languages, maths, natural and environmental contents, arts, etc.). Various forms of cross-curricular teaching can be found in practice. One of such forms at the class level is integrated learning. Project work is also gaining in importance. Cross-curricular teaching is typical for activity days organised by schools in all grades as part of the compulsory programme.

In addition to traditional teaching methods, work is carried out in small groups and in pairs. In the past ten years, new teaching models have been implemented and evaluated within the framework of numerous projects. The SOROS programme is quite common, and some schools use the Wambach method (Wambach & Krnić, 1990).

Primary schools are fairly well equipped with modern teaching technology. The Ministry of Education and Sport has systematically invested in the development of computer supported learning in recent years. There is practically no primary school without a computer classroom. Many have installed small computer

laboratories in school libraries and multimedia equipment in at least one classroom.

In 1996, a new Primary School Act was adopted. It provides for a nine-year primary education, which is compulsory. The foundations for this new curriculum were set with the white paper on education (Krek, 1995). The new reviewed version of this document was published in 2011 (Krek, 2011).

The Primary School Act defines several aims to be achieved with the reform of primary education. The most important are: to increase autonomy and professional accountability of schools and teachers, to strengthen the active role of pupils, to foster a balanced physical and psychological development of individuals (of their cognitive, emotional, social, and other characteristics), to prepare pupils for high quality of life, life-long learning and employment, to develop pupils' capacity for independent creative and critical reflection and judgement, to train them to face and solve problems, to improve the integration of interdisciplinary knowledge, to implement diverse forms and methods of work, to achieve internationally comparable standards and levels of knowledge, and to provide suitable material and human resources for carrying out the curricula.

An important new feature introduced by the nine-year primary education is pupils' enrolment at the age of six instead of seven years old. Curriculum developers paid attention to children's age at entering school, therefore the first grade syllabi are designed in such a way that children are not overburdened and that play can be used as a method of work. In classes with more than fifteen pupils, teaching is shared by a teacher and a pre-school teacher.

Primary education is divided into three cycles, each consisting of three grades.

The first cycle is characterised by the descriptive assessment of pupils and the fact that they usually have the same teacher in all three grades. Recently the introduction of foreign language in second grade is proposed as a pilot project in some schools. In the second cycle, assessments are descriptive and numerical

during the school year, and only numerical at the end of it. Fourth graders begin to learn a first foreign language. The forms of flexible differentiation are gradually introduced. Schools can apply them in teaching the mother tongue, foreign languages and mathematics. A certain number of periods (which is not to exceed one fourth of the annual quota of periods for the subject involved) in one, two or three subjects are not taken with the rest of the class. Instead, pupils form a learning group that matches their abilities and interests. They can transfer to another group any time during the year.

In the third cycle, marks are only numerical. In addition to compulsory subjects, pupils choose three of the offered electives, of which two must be in social sciences and humanities and one in science and technology or vice versa. Schools have the obligation to offer a second foreign language, religious education, civic education and ethics as optional subjects. Flexible differentiation is practised up to the seventh grade. In the eighth and ninth grades, partial external differentiation is carried out in teaching the mother tongue, foreign language and mathematics. These three subjects are taught in learning groups matching pupils' abilities and interests. After consulting their teachers, school counsellors and parents, pupils select one of the three levels of difficulty for each of the mentioned subjects.

They successfully complete primary school if they obtain passing grades in all ninth-grade subjects.

In Slovenian Istria the Italian language is taught compulsory as the L2 in primary schools with Slovene as medium of instruction (and vice-versa Slovene as L2 in schools with Italian as medium of instruction) from the first grade forward.

The tables below indicate the number of hours of Italian in Slovenia as L1, L2 or FL.

Primary education			
Language status	first cycle	second cycle	third cycle
Compulsory subject: L1	6	5	4
	7	5	3.5
	7	5	4.5

Table 3: Number of hours of Italian as L1 in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (Source: National Curricular Council, 1996).

Primary education			
Language status	first cycle	second cycle	third cycle
Compulsory subject: L2	2	2	2
	2	2	2
	2	2	2

Table 4: Number of hours of Italian as L2 in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (Source: National Curricular Council, 1996).

Primary education			
Language status	first cycle	second cycle	third cycle
Facultative subject LF			2
			2
			2

Table 5: Number of hours of Italian as FL in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (Source: National Curricular Council, 1996).

## legislation

The Primary School Act (1996) determines general educational aims, regulates the right to choose between public and private schools or home schooling, defines the compulsory and extended programme and organisation in primary schools, sets forth the manner and rules concerning enrolment, pupils' rights, duties, basic rules concerning the assessment, grading of pupils and their progress to a higher grade, awarding certificates. It also stipulates the basic rules on home schooling and basic education of adults. The act enables mainstreaming of children with special needs.

All schools started with the new first grade curriculum for children of six years old in 2003/2004; in the same year, all children eligible to attend the sixth grade in the old eight-year primary school system were taught the seventh grade curriculum of the new nine-year primary education.

**language use**

In areas with the Italian minority, there are primary schools with Italian as medium of instruction and Slovene as compulsory subject and others that provide instruction in Slovene and Italian as compulsory subject. The weekly number of periods in schools of those areas is slightly higher than elsewhere, because pupils are taught an additional subject, the second language.

The use of the Italian language in education is constantly improved by national projects that follow the Council of Europe strategies in language education.

In the past ten years in Slovenia early language teaching has become well established in primary schools. According to the new nine-year primary education curriculum, pupils begin to learn the first foreign language in the fourth grade (nine years old) of all primary schools. English is taught in most primary schools. In some schools, especially those near the Austrian border, pupils can choose between English and German. Italian is also quite common, lastly also French is offered in more than sixty primary schools. Foreign languages are often taught as electives in primary schools. If English is taught as the first foreign language, German is offered as the second foreign language and vice versa in the seventh grade of nine-grade school. In Slovenian Istria the second language (Italian in Slovenian schools, and Slovene in Italian schools) and the first foreign language are taught.

Following the data of the target oriented research project “The efficiency of bilingual education models in ethnically mixed areas – a challenge and advantage for a Europe of languages and culture”, conducted between 2006 and 2008 (Čok, 2009), the researchers found out that the education model for the development of multilingualism in primary school in Slovenian Istria has so far failed to achieve the intended results. Taking into account the research data, decrease in interest, and consequently also the level of success, in Italian as L2 when compared to English as FL, as well as achievements in Italian as L2 when compared

to Slovene as L2, or even Hungarian as L2 in Slovenia, it can be concluded that the ultimate objective (attaining bilingualism in the majority of the population) has only been partially met. Thorough analysis of the primary school curriculum implementation in ethnically mixed regions of Slovenian Istria is needed in order to evaluate the effectiveness of the model.

#### teaching material

Teachers mostly use books and manuals published by Slovenian editors, Italian publishing houses, as well as by EDIT. A considerable part of the materials is prepared by the teachers themselves.

Pedagogical support and the development of teaching materials are in the domain of the National Education Institute, as well as higher educational institutions (i.e. faculties of education and humanities) educating teachers in different disciplines.

Examples of publications of EDIT are: Tijan (n.d.), De Zan et al. (2010), Janda-Abbaci et al. (2007), Bendelja et al. (n.d.), Koščec & Devernay Cimić (n.d.), Cerovski (2008), Bošnjak et al. (n.d.) and Džapo et al. (n.d.).

Examples of publications of the National Education Institute are: Mulec et al. (2011), Križman et al. (2009) and Beznec et al. (2005).

#### statistics

School year 2011/2012			
Municipality	Primary-school	Groups	Pupils
Koper	Pier Paolo Vergerio il Vecchio Koper	22	210
Izola	Dante Alighieri	9	93
Piran	Vincenzo e Diego de Castro Piran	13	105
Total		44	408

Table 6: Primary schools using Italian as medium of instruction in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (Source: National Education Institute, unpublished data).

In the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria, Italian as L2 is a compulsory part of the educational programmes in 17 primary schools (5,767 students in 2001/2002).

In the school year 2001/2002, there were 1,069 pupils (16 primary schools) receiving Italian as FL in primary schools outside the bilingual regions of Slovenian Istria (Zudič Antonič, 2002).

## 4 Secondary education

### target group

Anybody who has successfully completed primary education can enrol in secondary education. Education is organised in one cycle only. When enrolling, students are normally fifteen years old. The students in a particular class are thus of the same age. As a rule, one teacher teaches a subject to the same group of students for several years. In one class there are, as a rule, thirty-two students, and only with special permission of the Ministry of Education and Sport also thirty-three or thirty-four students. If there are more candidates for an individual school than there are free places available, the schools carry out selection procedures on the basis of special criteria: school marks in mother tongue, mathematics, foreign language, general marks in the last four years of primary education, results from a special testing of knowledge in primary education in mother tongue and mathematics, and results from special national competitions in mother tongue, mathematics, physics, chemistry, foreign languages and history.

### structure

The secondary education system consists of general, vocational and technical (professional) education. Vocational and technical education are described in the fifth chapter on vocational education.

According to the Secondary Education Act (1996) there are two types of general secondary education: *splošne gimnazije* (general secondary schools) and *strokovne gimnazije* (secondary schools with specialisation). Part of the general secondary schools is also an one-year course with final exams. These programmes are established as a preparation for academic higher education. The one-year course ensures the graduates from four-year technical programmes or three-year vocational programmes to prepare for the examination.

Part of the programmes of general secondary schools is also *klasična gimnazija* (classic grammar school), the International Baccalaureate programme, and programmes of the private Catholic schools.

In secondary education in Slovenian Istria, Italian as FL is taught in almost every school. Students who did not learn Italian prior to secondary education learn Italian at the lower levels (A1 – A2). Learning Italian at the primary level and at the secondary level is followed with the choice of Italian at the final *matura* exam. On average, students in primary education reach the A2 (Way stage) to B1 (Threshold) proficiency level, secondary school graduates may even reach the B2 (Vantage) level.

The tables below indicate the number of hours of Italian as L1, L2 or FL in Slovenia.

<b>Secondary education</b>						
Programme	Language status	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total teaching hours
Secondary school (general and specialisation)	L1	4	4	3	3	490
Vocational school	L1	3	4	4	-	385
Classic grammar school	L1	4	4	4	4	560

*Table 7: Number of hours of Italian as L1 in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (Source: National Curricular Council, 1996).*

<b>Secondary education</b>						
Programme	Language status	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total teaching hours
Secondary school (general and specialisation)	L2	2	2	3	3	350
Vocational school	L2	3	3	3	3	420

*Table 8: Number of hours of Italian as L2 in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (Source: National Curricular Council, 1996).*

Secondary education						
Programme	Language status	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total teaching hours
Secondary school (general and specialisation)	FL2	3	3	3	3	420
	FL3	-	3	3	3	315
	FL3	2	2	2	2	280
Vocational school	FL2	3	3	3	3	420
Classic grammar school	FL3	-	-	4	4	280

Table 9: Number of hours of Italian as FL in Slovenia (Source: National Curricular Council, 1996).

**legislation** The Secondary Education Act (1996 and 2007) regulates the general secondary education that gives non-vocational or technical education and prepares students for study at the university level.

**language use** In areas with the Italian minority, there are secondary schools with Italian as medium of instruction and others that provide instruction in Slovene. In schools with Italian as medium of instruction, students are obliged to learn Slovene as their second language (L2); in schools with Slovene as medium of instruction, Italian is one of the compulsory subjects.

**teaching material** Teachers of Italian schools mostly use books and manuals published by Slovenian editors, published by Italian publishing houses, as well as by EDIT. A considerable part of the materials is prepared by the teachers themselves.

Examples of publications of EDIT are: Dakić (n.d.) and Šverko (2009).

Examples of publications of the National Education Institute are: Bukovec et al. (2008) and Barle et al. (2006).

**statistics**

<b>School year 2011/2012</b>			
Municipality	Secondary school	Groups	Pupils
Koper	Gian Rinaldo Carli	4	44
Piran	Antonia Sema	4	40
Total		8	84

*Table 10: Secondary schools with Italian as medium of instruction in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (Source: National Education Institute, unpublished data).*

In the school year 2001/2002, in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria, Italian as L2 is a compulsory part of the educational programmes in 7 secondary schools (general secondary schools, technical and commercial vocational training schools, and hotel, nautical and medical schools) with 2,778 students (Zudič Antonič, 2002).

In the school year 2001/2002, there were 7,240 students learning Italian as FL in 44 secondary schools outside the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (Zudič Antonič, 2002).

## 5 Vocational education

### target group

Anybody who has successfully finished primary education or at least seven classes of primary education can enrol in vocational schools. Admission is also possible for students who have finished primary education for children with special needs. The education programme can determine special psychophysical abilities; if they are necessary for successful education and practical work in particular activities or branches.

When enrolling, students are normally fifteen years old. But participation in vocational education is possible up to the age of twenty-five years old.

Short-term vocational education is organised in classes following special standards. In individual classes the maximum number of students is twenty-five, the minimum twenty. If there is a student with special needs integrated into the class, the maximum number is twenty, if there are two students with special needs eighteen, and if there are three such students, the maximum number is fifteen.

During practical work in a school workshop, students are divided into groups with a maximum of ten students.

### structure

Vocational and technical secondary education in Slovenia includes:

- Short-term vocational education that usually lasts two and half years
- Secondary vocational education that as a rule lasts three years
- Secondary technical (professional) education that usually lasts four years

These programmes prepare for entrance to the labour market or further education in vocational colleges or a professionally oriented higher education. After successfully completing the one-year vocational course, graduates from secondary education can obtain appropriate vocational education to enter the labour market.

The curriculum for the aforementioned levels of the vocational qualification has to be harmonised with the common goals, which were determined by the Council of Experts of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational and Technical Education. The Council determined that the principle of complexity of lessons and relevance of knowledge has priority over the principle of systematic and scientific foundation. Knowledge from natural science subjects is integrated into professional subjects; in all learning objectives there is an emphasis on practical knowledge, which is relevant for life and professionally useful. Syllabi for general subjects and subjects of specialisation are based on inductive and functional approach in selection of knowledge.

#### legislation

The Vocational and Technical Education Act (1996) regulates vocational and technical secondary education (and post-secondary vocational education), and prepares apprentices and students for occupation and entrance to the labour market. There are no special regulations regarding vocational education in the Italian language.

#### language use

In areas with the Italian minority, there are general secondary schools in Koper/Capodistria and Piran/Pirano and one vocational school in Izola/Isola with Italian as medium of instruction and others that provide instruction in Slovene.

#### teaching material

Teachers mostly use books and manuals published by Slovenian editors, published by Italian publishing houses, as well as by EDIT. A considerable part of the materials is prepared by the teachers themselves.

#### statistics

School year 2011/2012			
Municipality	Secondary school	Groups	Pupils
Izola	Higher and vocational school Pietro Coppo	18	60
Total		18	60

Table 11: Vocational secondary school with Italian as a medium of instruction in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (Source: National Education Institute, unpublished data).

## 6 Higher education

### structure

Secondary school graduates from ethnically mixed regions can continue their education on higher or university level either in Slovenia, Italy or Hungary. In Slovenia, Italian language and literature is offered as a study programme at the *Oddelek za romanske jezike in književnosti* (Department for Romance Languages and Literature) of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana. The department has a strong tradition in Italian language and literature studies; it enrolls about two hundred students per year.

As a newly established public university, University of Primorska is the only university in Slovenia to have a European orientation from the very beginning. The university was founded in 2003 by the Parliament Decree: *Odlok o ustanovitvi Univerze na Primorskem* (Decree on establishing the University of Primorska). By founding a new university, the state set up a centre of knowledge in its western border area, thus facilitating the transmission of knowledge from the young Slovenian state to Europe and the rest of the world. Two basic activities undertaken by all current or future University of Primorska undergraduates (in particular non-philological students) regardless of their study programme are aimed at mastering several foreign languages and developing better knowledge of the mother tongue (i.e. Slovene).

At the University of Primorska, the Italian language is a study discipline at two levels: bachelor and master degree. Italian is taught also as a L2 or as a language for special purposes (LSP). At the *Center za jezike Univerze na Primorskem* (Centre for Languages of the University of Primorska), established in 2005, the Italian language and six other languages are offered to all students of the university.

### legislation

The *Zakon o visokem šolstvu* (Higher Education Act) of 2006 regulates higher education in Slovenia. Parliamentary decrees regulate the public universities University of Ljubljana and *Univerza v Mariboru* (University of Maribor) in 2000, and University of Primorska in 2003.

**language use**

Slovene is the language of education, only philology courses are taught in foreign languages. The University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, and the University of Primorska, Faculty of Humanities, are offering studies of Italian language and literature. At the University of Primorska, Faculty of Education, some courses and workshops for teachers at Italian schools are given in Italian. Within the curriculum of primary school teachers, the module of early Italian language teaching is offered optionally.

**teacher  
training**

In Slovenia, language teachers must be graduates from a four-year teacher training degree course. Teacher training courses are provided at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana and the Faculties of Education of the University of Ljubljana, University of Maribor and University of Primorska. Teachers of the Italian language can receive their education at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana (four-year graduate courses) and the Faculty of Education in Koper (four-year course). Faculty of Arts graduates are formally equipped to teach Italian at all levels.

**primary training**

In the framework of the curricular reform, a great need for appropriately educated foreign language teachers in the second cycle of primary school was indicated. Part of the solutions are newly established programmes for education of teachers of class-based instructions in the field of English, German and Italian language teaching in the second cycle of primary school. Therefore the Faculty of Education of the University of Primorska provides a perfecting course designed for primary teachers who are equipped to teach Italian as L2 in all areas of the primary curriculum for the first and second cycle. The structure of the programme is as follows:

- Modern Italian language (morphology, syntax, phonetics and phonology, pragmatics and vocabulary): 525 hours;
- Overview of the Italian literature and children's literature: 90 hours;
- Didactics of the Italian early language teaching: 135 hours.

By the end of the course, the student with the master degree in Primary Grade Teaching becomes a teacher with an additional certificate (license) for second language teaching in the second cycle of primary schools. Italian language teachers receive an additional statement issued by the Ministry of Education and Sport stating that the license applies also to the first cycle in primary schools in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria.

### **in-service training**

The National Education Institute is the largest provider of in-service teacher training in Slovenia. Supported by university and research institute experts, the National Education Institute's pedagogical consultants operate in individual disciplines. The consultants for Italian teaching provide for permanent in-service training of Italian teachers at all levels. They organise refresher courses, seminars, meetings with Slovenian and Italian experts on linguistics and introduce approaches and teaching techniques congruent to new curriculum programmes.

Refresher courses and seminars are planned annually by experts and by teachers from the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ljubljana, mostly in literature and grammar. They are edited in a catalogue published by the Ministry of Education and Sport and in part financed by the public source. Catalogues are distributed in schools prior to the beginning of the school year so that teachers plan in advance which forms of training they would like to attend. As a rule, each teacher has five days (per school year) at his/her disposal to spend in professional refresher courses. Although refresher courses are not compulsory and take place on Saturdays or holidays, the majority of teachers attend courses regularly.

Experts from Italy are often called in to participate in courses for Italian language teachers, from the Università per Stranieri di Perugia (University for Foreigners Perugia), Università per Stranieri di Siena (University for Foreigners of Siena), Università degli Studi di Roma "La Sapienza" (University of Rome), Office for Bilingualism and Foreign Languages of the

Autonomous Province of Bolzano, Istituto IARD RPS (IARD) in Milan, and Divulgazione Lingua Italiana (DI.L.IT.) in Rome. The Ministero degli Affari Esteri (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) of the Italian government offers five teachers (working abroad) the possibility to attend a refresher course at the University for Foreigners Perugia or University for Foreigners of Siena.

In Slovenia, the Unione Italiana (Italian Union) in Slovenian Istria has taken the initiative to cherish the contacts between the Italian community living in Istria and their homeland. Together with the experts of the National Education Institute, the Italian Union facilitates exchanges and co-operation in the fields of culture, schooling, and education. It also collaborates with the Consolato Generale d'Italia a Capodistria (Consulate General of Italy in Koper), which represents the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Italian government, with the Università Popolare di Trieste (Adult Education Institute of Trieste), and lately also with the Istituto Italiano di Cultura (Italian Cultural Institute) in Slovenia. The jointly organised seminars usually receive good marks when the participants evaluate their contents, method of work, and organisation.

The following seminars are organised:

- Training of teachers employed in schools with Italian as medium of instruction (Italian as the mother tongue). The organisers plan the courses in accordance with the annual plan of work. The traditional one-week course of Italian language and culture is held twice a year: in October in Portorož, Slovenia, and in July in Italy. The teachers also attend fairly short training courses organised during the school year by the National Education Institute.
- Training of teachers of the Italian language in schools with Slovene as medium of instruction. This training is also organised for teachers of Italian as a second (foreign) language. The courses (course in early Italian language teaching: IARD; courses organised during the week of the Italian language and culture) testify to good co-operation between Slovenian and Italian institutions.

Each year, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Italian government awards a certain number of grants for studying in Italy. Students can submit their applications on condition that they have finished a secondary school with Italian as medium of instruction.

**statistics**

No data available.

## 7 Adult education

### structure and language courses

Adult education presents a complex and outstretched field including formalised and very structured forms of adult education leading to certificates and degrees, as well as non-structured and non-formal forms in which adults enrol because of their wish to acquire various and different knowledge for their personal and professional growth and development. This complexity and dispersion of the adult education field is mirrored in the varied network of educational institutions dealing with adult education, as well as in various types and forms of educational programmes in which adults participate.

In principle it is possible to divide providers and institutional bearers of adult education into three groups.

The first group is represented by institutions for the education of adults; the example of such institutions are the so called “ljudske univerze”. These are organisations where the main activity is the education of adults (the following programmes are carried out to a greater extent: basic adult education, foreign languages, computer programmes, programmes on improving the skills of people employed in legal, financial and managerial topics).

The second group is formed by organisations for the education of adults and youth. Their main activity is the education of the youth, but they also organise and offer programmes of adult education. Such education is also carried out, on the basis of concession, by some private educational institutions.

The third group of organisations is extremely wide and diversified and also provides the education of adults, and could be defined as “other organisations” offering education for adults, with their basic activity being not adult education.

Private educational organisations (mainly second and third group) are the youngest as regards the origin. At the beginning, they were all more or less involved in language education and in programmes of professional improvement (computer and IT education and training, financial management, etc.). Later on, quite a lot of these organisations enlarged their offer so that now they

offer a variety of possibilities of different educational programmes as well as forms of education. They carry out general non-formal education as well as the formal one that leads to qualifications.

In areas with the Italian minority there are courses in Italian language, mostly organised by the Adult Education Institute of Trieste. They are offered to teachers from pre-primary to secondary level as in-service training.

In the framework of curricular renovation of adult education programmes, the renovation of language programmes began in 1998. Based on the analysis of existing publicly acknowledged adult educational programmes for foreign languages and on the survey of the performers of these programmes (Svetlik, 2001; Medveš et al., 2000), the Curricular Commission for Public Programmes for Adult Education mentioned in article 7 of the Zakon o izobraževanju odraslih (Adult Education Act, 1996; amended in 2006), which operated at the Regional Curricular Commission for Adult Education of regional units of the National Education Institute, decided to renovate the programmes for English, German, French and Italian. Based on national and international documents, guidelines and directives (e.g. Resolucija o nacionalnem programu izobraževanja odraslih v Republiki Sloveniji do leta 2010; Resolution on the National Adult Education Programme in the Republic of Slovenia in 2010), workgroups, which involve the experts of the Faculty of Arts, University of Ljubljana of the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education, and private language schools prepare new or renovated educational programmes for English, German, French and Italian.

**language use**

Courses for adults are given in Slovene; courses in Italian language are organised at the vocational school Pietro Coppo or organised at the self-government offices of the Italian nationality.

**statistics**

Data regarding the number, hours, and attendees of publicly acknowledged programmes in general, and of Italian courses specifically, in the year 2000/2001.

	Number of language programmes	Total number of teaching hours	Enrolled attendees	Attendees, who successfully completed the programmes	Male Female
Italian	227	14,673	1,908	1,832	671 1,161
Total of publicly acknowledged programmes	1,780	124,203	13,743	13,040	5,371 7,669

Table 12: Public language Programmes for Adults in 2000/2001 (Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, unpublished data).

The Državni izpitni center (National Examinations Centre) started to implement external knowledge examinations in languages with a test exam date in April 2001 and a first exam date in June 2001. Since then, 765 candidates took the exams during nine exam dates.

Educational organisations, which deal with adult language education (according to the latest data of the Statistični urad Republike Slovenije (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia), there are already ninety-nine of such organisations) and other organisations, which are enrolled in the register of the Ministry of Education and Sport, offer a number of other language education programmes. This includes programmes for all other languages, and programmes, which do not include only general language, but are specialised – adjusted to an individual target groups (e.g. people from different professions, and business and non-business branches), different needs (e.g. preparations for exams, courses for strengthening of subject knowledge) and different language functions (e.g. courses intended only for conversation).

The table below displays statistical data available regarding these programmes in general, specified for Italian:

## THE ITALIAN LANGUAGE IN EDUCATION IN SLOVENIA

	Number of language programmes	Total number of teaching hours	Enrolled attendees	Attendees, who successfully completed the programmes	Male Female
Italian	202	11,598	1,521	1,246	573 673
Programmes, which are not publicly acknowledged	2,455	172,038	18,934	15,813	6,853 8,960

*Table 13: Adult language education programmes, that are not publicly acknowledged, specified for Italian in 2000/2001 (Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, unpublished data).*

## 8 Educational research

At the suggestion of schools, professional institutions, higher education institutions and research organisations the Ministry of Education and Sport chooses a school for an experimental introduction of an innovation. The National Education Institute monitors the implementation of pilot projects.

There are many forms for the planned introduction of early foreign language teaching. Some projects monitoring practice on the national level have been completed, although practice is continued through the mechanism of optional classes. The following projects had the greatest impact on language teaching practice, including the Italian language:

- The Early Foreign Language Teaching in Nursery Schools project started in 1998, followed in 2009.
- The project "Foreign Language at Primary Level" (1990/1991-1996) covered 20 % of primary schools that had introduced teaching of a first foreign language (English and German) in grades three and four. The practice of early foreign language teaching in primary schools is also continued in schools not included in the project.
- The project "Bilingual Models in Primary Schools" is also underway as part of the reform and establishment of adapted school system models in bilingual regions. The bilingual regions being Slovenian Istria and Prekmurje, dealing with Italian and Hungarian as medium of instruction.
- Slovenia was involved in a pilot project of the Council of Europe, "European Language Portfolio", lasting from 1998 until 2000, which is now in the phase of wider implementation. Two evaluations (in 2002 and in June 2003) were carried out. The European Language Portfolio as an internationally comparable tool for evaluation and self-evaluation of learning achievements of pupils, students and adult participants in language education proved extremely successful and popular in Slovenia.
- Slovenian experts were involved in preparing the Language Education Policy profile/Prerez jezikovne politike (2003).

- In Slovenia, teachers of Italian (as the mother tongue or as a second/foreign language) participate in the project “Socrates lingua Le avventure di Hocus e Lotus” implemented by the University of Rome. The project deals with early language learning/teaching from a holistic point of view. Slovenia joined it in 2002 and since then there have been regular training for the use of the holistic method. The Slovenian project partners are the National Education Institute and the Faculty of Education of the University of Primorska.
- In addition, the Office of Education of the Republic of Slovenia and the National Education Institution collaborate with the Istituto Regionale Ricerca Educativa Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Regional Institute of Research and Education of Friuli-Venezia Giulia) in the implementation of the language portfolio into Italian primary schools with Slovene as medium of instruction.
- The learning tool that should be used by pupils in primary schools introduces the self-assessment method. The method is being developed by the experts participating in the Modern Languages project (Council of Europe). Few models were accredited (Godunc et al., 2004; Čok et al., 2010).
- COMENIUS-2.1 project: Promotion of Minority Languages in Multilingual Areas with regard to Teacher Training (2003-2006) dealing with aspects of teaching strategies and strategies of learning, teaching a minority language without prejudices, politics in teaching minority languages.
- COMENIUS-2.1 project: Identifying training models in multilingual areas (INFO), 2004-2007.

Italian in Slovenian Istria has an educational role in the life and education of an individual. Direct contact of two cultures in the living environment creates his/her cultural identity. The pupils are exposed to the language and experience both the need and the possibility to use it; they can learn the language in their own environment. The processes of becoming conscious of language structures and vocabulary acquisition, and their direct usage in communication situations, stimulate inter-linguistic influences. The transfer of linguistic knowledge has a positive

influence on the formation of conscience regarding language as a system; furthermore, inter-linguistic interferences, which often mark the mother tongue of the pupils, also emerge. The target second language is defined by the high-level criteria of linguistic and communication competence (mastery of language on the level of a native speaker).

In the research on second language utterance formation, a more suitable didactic model was prepared (Čok, 1996), which was based at the primary level and followed the concepts of compulsory education in Slovenia. Beside intercultural education, the Italian language teaching should take into account the special needs of children from ethnically mixed regions, as well as include early second language learning principles. The research findings present characteristics of the second language utterance formation in the Italian language, the structure of children's guided communication in this language and the role of the pupil and the teacher in communication exchange. The observation of cross-linguistic influences and phenomena of mother tongue transfer into the Italian language motivated the researchers to assess the interdependencies of both languages. The case findings have proved that in the learning process the frequency of second language contact is important, that the awareness of mother tongue is essential for a successful second language acquisition, and that the influence of a co-ordinated language education is more important for positive results in both languages than accelerated second language learning.

Researchers of the Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče (Science and Research Centre) of the University of Primorska are dealing with applied research work and implementations of its data on intercultural issues, cultural awareness and language awareness; European citizenship and issues in multi-literacy; student's portfolio development; language resource centres and innovation in language teaching. Knowledge-based identity and intercultural awareness consider knowledge as understanding of the otherness besides the knowledge of oneself and the knowledge of procedure. This approach in study programmes or integrated

modules will stress the difference between isolated national identities and a meta-identity as an expanded cultural resolution or cultural network for cross-cultural identification and re-identification of single and a study population in enlarged social structures and relationships.

Intercultural linguistic communication centred research is running within a few projects:

- Languages as Social Cohesion and Human Capital (2004-2007) (Čok & Novak-Lukanovič, n.d.).
- Language as a Bridge to Intercultural Communication & Understanding: Teaching Module, LABICUM.
- Bilingual education in the ethnically mixed areas of Slovenia: Bilingual models efficiency as a challenge for the Europe of languages and cultures. Research project V5-0247 (Čok, 2008).

Data analysis from a study performed in the period 2006-2008 among pupils of the eighth grades of primary school along the Slovene and Italian border gives suggestions regarding the extent of the necessity to upgrade bilingual educational models performed in the border mixed area, in accordance with the goals of preservation, protection and development of minorities as an added value of bilingual environments: a suitable undergraduate teacher training, new didactics, a harmonisation of syllabuses and textbooks with the school's mission, and consolidation of incentives from the immediate and, above all, wider European area.

## 9 Prospects

With its accession to the European Union, Slovenia accepted the challenges posed by the integration processes to new democracies. The European Union is founded on 'unity in diversity': diversity of cultures, languages, customs and beliefs. It is this diversity that makes it a common home to all its nations. Several mother tongues are a source of wealth and a bridge to greater solidarity and mutual understanding. Article 22 of The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (European Union, 2000) states that the European Union shall respect cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. Article 21 prohibits discrimination based on a number of grounds, including language. Together with respect for the individual, openness towards other cultures, tolerance and acceptance of others, respect for linguistic diversity is a core value of the European Union (European Union, 2005).

When joining the European Union and forming national and political sovereignty, Slovenia embarked on reforms that approximated its political system and various subsystems to European standards. Since 1996, the country has been changing its educational system, with reforms involving not only all educational levels (from pre-schools to universities), but also all types of schools: those attended by the majority Slovenian population, by minority communities and by children with special needs.

In 2003, Slovenia responded to the initiative by the Council of Europe and embarked on the preparation of the "Language Education Policy Profiles". The co-operation between experts and Council of Europe policy-makers has yielded good results, including recommendations related to Italian language teaching that encourage language and cultural diversity and interculturalism. Authentic textbooks for Italian and reference books for teachers (Čok, 2001b; Čok et al., 2003a; Zorman et al., 2005) have been published only for early language teaching, and in the future children will also have the possibility to use a language portfolio, which was accredited in 2010. Nevertheless, one could say that the curricular reform should further build on earlier and

current initiatives to promote more diversified language learning (language use and language teaching/learning) and further development of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism. The acquisition of real linguistic proficiency is not only a fundamental right of each citizen in our democracies, but also a real necessity since monolingualism has no real place in European society, if it ever did at all. The promotion of democratic citizenship in Europe and support for the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of Europe are two key ideas pursued by the Council of Europe.

The preservation and further development of languages spoken by minorities depend not only on quality of the bilingual education, but also on factors outside the school environment. Effective legislation, equal treatment of minority languages and high awareness related to the use of language in a certain society strengthen the general sensitivity of a society and the possibility to increase the use of minority languages outside family or school settings. With language being a social act, its reflection involves active interaction with other people through a process of cognitive, social and cultural exchange.

In accordance with European policies, the teaching of Italian as a second language (minority, neighbouring language) to the majority population and Italian as first language to the minority has been witnessing radical changes. Minority schools, which in the past mostly protected and preserved the linguistic and cultural identity of a certain minority community, have been facing a new challenge. In the area where the borders have been abolished marked by a competitive market of knowledge, they should develop good educational practices and become central institutions of interculturalism and plurilingualism. Consequently, they will have to alter their mission and enhance it with the new values. In view of that, it is of vital importance to train teachers in the ethnically mixed region of Slovenian Istria for new tasks and challenges. An area that creates new knowledge and fosters the exchange of good practices becomes better and richer. The offer of European programmes related to linguistic education (Phare, Socrates, Leonardo, Lingua), acts, and declarations strengthening the status of minorities, obligations of

national policies of members of the European Union, and cross-border programmes of co-operation open the platform, not only to further develop schools with Italian as medium of instruction, but also to educate the population to live in co-existence. Istria is a region of linguistic and cultural contact that can enrich its tradition of co-existence of various nations with values such as empathy, intercultural dialogue, and mutual learning, which serve as the basis for the development of multiculturalism and a democratic national policy in Europe.

## 10 Summary statistics

Nationality	Number of inhabitants
Slovenian	1,631,363
Hungarian	6,243
Italian	2,258
Serbs	38,964
Croats	35,642
Bosnians	21,542
Albanians	6,186
Macedonians	3,972
non-Slovenian inhabitants; Romany people	3,264

Table 14: Different nationalities represented in the population of Slovenia (Source: Census 2002).

School year 2011/2012			
Municipality	Pre-school	Number of Groups	Children
Koper – Capodistria	Delfino Blu Koper	10	200
Izola	L'Aquilone	3	126
Piran	La Coccinella Piran	6	127
Total		19	453

Table 15: Pre-schools using Italian as medium of instruction in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (Source: National Education Institute, unpublished data).

School year 2011/2012			
Municipality	Primary-school	Groups	Pupils
Koper	Pier Paolo Vergerio il Vecchio Koper	22	210
Izola	Dante Alighieri	9	93
Piran	Vincenzo e Diego de Castro Piran	13	105
Total		44	408

Table 16: Primary schools using Italian as medium of instruction in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (Source: National Education Institute, unpublished data).

<b>School year 2011/2012</b>			
Municipality	Secondary school	Groups	Pupils
Koper	Gian Rinaldo Carli	4	44
Piran	Antonia Sema	4	40
Total		8	84

Table 17: Secondary schools with Italian as medium of instruction in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (Source: National Education Institute, unpublished data).

<b>School year 2011/2012</b>			
Municipality	Secondary school	Groups	Pupils
Izola	Higher and vocational school Pietro Coppo	18	60
Total		18	60

Table 18: Vocational secondary school with Italian as a medium of instruction in the bilingual region of Slovenian Istria (Source: National Education Institute, unpublished data).

Data regarding the number, hours, and attendees of publicly acknowledged programmes in general and of Italian courses specifically, in the year 2000/2001:

	Number of language programmes	Total number of teaching hours	Enrolled attendees	Attendees, who successfully completed the programmes	Male Female
Publicly acknowledged programmes	1,780	124,203	13,743	13,040	5,371 7,669
Italian	227	14,673	1,908	1,832	671 1,161

Table 19: Public language Programmes for Adults in 2000/2001 (Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, unpublished data).

	Number of language programmes	Total number of teaching hours	Enrolled attendees	Attendees, who successfully completed the programmes	Male Female
Italian	202	11,598	1,521	1,246	573 673
Programmes, which are not publicly acknowledged	2,455	172,038	18,934	15,813	6,853 8,960

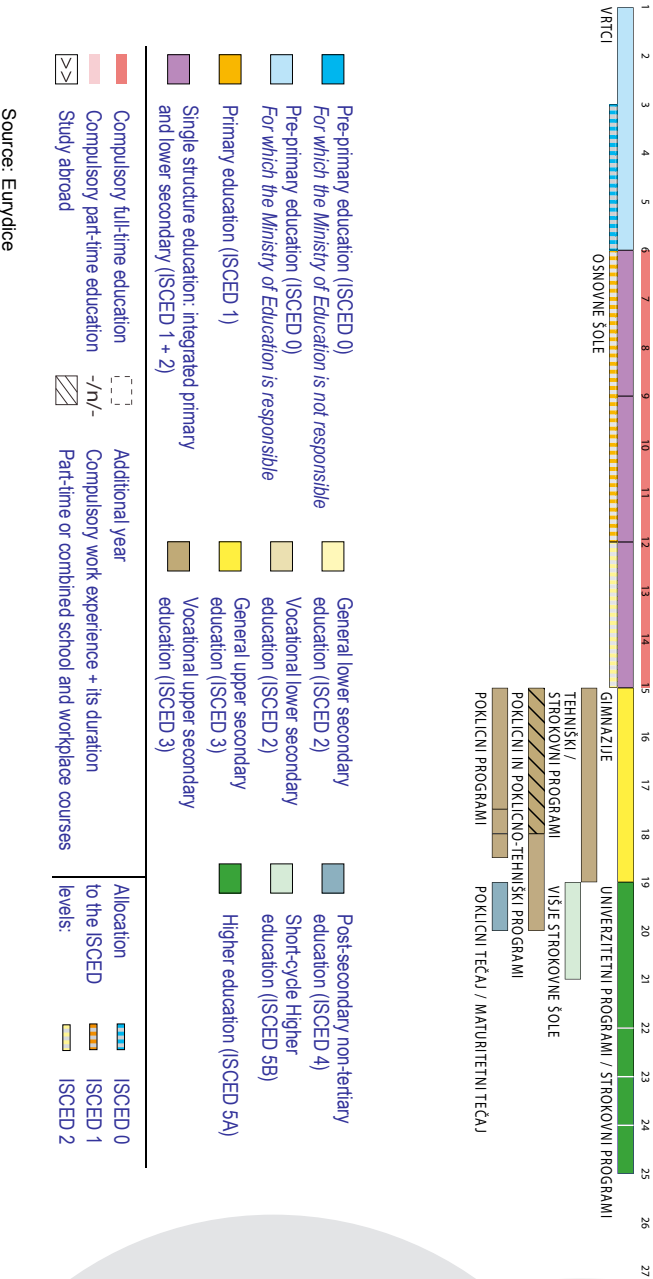
Table 20: Adult language education programmes, that are not publicly acknowledged, specified for Italian in 2000/2001 (Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, unpublished data).

## Endnotes

- 1 The experts estimate that it is possible to find typological varieties among the educational models. First, a model stimulating the development of bilingual abilities of the minority communities, while at the same time supporting the mother tongue of the pupils. Second, a model developing bilingual abilities only to a limited extent, either on the account of the loss of the first language or the lack of the development of the second language. The former model is called a strong and the latter a weak form of bilingual education (Nečak Lük, 2003).
- 2 Romany communities are settled mainly in the regions of Prekmurje and Dolenjska.
- 3 This refers to native speakers of languages of the former Yugoslav republics. The educational legislation grants children of foreign citizens, or of stateless persons, living in Slovenia, additional education in their mother tongue.
- 4 More on secondary education in Slovenia: [www.eurydice.si](http://www.eurydice.si)
- 5 Information in this section is based on Eurybase of Eurydice; [eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index\\_en.php](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php).
- 6 More on the Inspectorate: <http://www.iss.gov.si/en/> [Accessed May 2012].

Education system in Slovenia

Structure of the education system in Slovenia 2011/2012



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## Other websites on minority languages

<b>Mercator Network</b>	<b><a href="http://www.mercator-network.eu">www.mercator-network.eu</a></b> General site of the Mercator European Network of Language Diversity Centres. It gives information about the network and leads you to the homepages of the network partners.
<b>Mercator Research Centre</b>	<b><a href="http://www.mercator-research.eu">www.mercator-research.eu</a></b> Homepage of the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning. The website contains the series of Regional dossiers, a database with organisations, a bibliography, information on current activities, and many links to relevant websites.
<b>Mercator-Media</b>	<b><a href="http://www.aber.ac.uk/~merwww">www.aber.ac.uk/~merwww</a></b> Homepage of Mercator-Media. It provides information on media and minority languages in the EU.
<b>Mercator-Legislation</b>	<b><a href="http://www.ciemen.org/mercator">www.ciemen.org/mercator</a></b> Homepage of Mercator-Legislation. It provides information on minority languages and legislation in the EU.
<b>European Commission</b>	<b><a href="http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/languages-of-europe/doc139_en.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/education/languages/languages-of-europe/doc139_en.htm</a></b> The website of the European Commission gives information about the EU's support for regional or minority languages.
<b>Council of Europe</b>	<b><a href="http://conventions.coe.int">http://conventions.coe.int</a></b> <i>European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages</i> (1992) and <i>Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities</i> (1995). European Treaty Series 148 and 157, Strasbourg.
<b>Eurydice</b>	<b><a href="http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php">http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice/index_en.php</a></b> Eurydice is the information network on education in Europe. The sites provides information on all European education systems and education policies.

## What can the Mercator Research Centre offer you?

**mission & goals** The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning addresses the growing interest in multilingualism and the increasing need of language communities to exchange experiences and to cooperate in a European context. The centre is based in Ljouwert/Leeuwarden, the capital of Fryslân – the bilingual province of the Netherlands – and hosted at the Fryske Akademy (Frisian Academy). The Mercator Research Centre focuses on research, policy, and practice in the field of multilingualism and language learning. The centre aims to be an independent and recognised organisation for researchers, policymakers, and professionals in education. The centre endeavours to promote linguistic diversity within Europe. The starting point lies in the field of regional and minority languages. Yet, immigrant languages and smaller state languages are also a topic of study. The centre's main focus is the creation, circulation, and application of knowledge in the field of language learning at school, at home, and through cultural participation.

74

### partners

In 1987 Mercator Education started cooperation with two partners in a network structure: Mercator Media hosted at the University of Wales in Aberystwyth and Mercator Legislation hosted at the Ciemen Foundation in Barcelona. This network has developed into the Mercator European Network of Language Diversity Centres, which consists of the three aforementioned partners as well as the Centre for Finnish Studies of Mälardalen University in Sweden and the Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Hungary. Besides, the Mercator Research Centre, the successor of Mercator Education, expands its network in close cooperation with a number of other partner organisations working in the same field. This cooperation includes partners in Fryslân, as well as partners in the Netherlands and in Europe. The provincial government of Fryslân is the main funding body of the Mercator Research Centre. Projects and activities are funded by the EU as well as by the authorities of other regions in Europe with an active policy to support their regional or minority language and its culture.

**research** The Mercator Research Centre develops a research programme on the basis of the data collections available. Research activities focus on various aspects of bilingual and trilingual education, such as interaction in multilingual classrooms, language proficiency in different languages, and teachers' qualifications for the multilingual classroom. Whenever possible, research will be carried out in a comparative European perspective. Research results are disseminated through publications and conferences in collaboration with European partners.

**conferences** The Mercator Research Centre organises conferences and seminars on a regular basis. Themes for the conferences include: measurement & good practice, educational models, development of minimum standards, teacher training, and the application of the Common European Framework of Reference. The main target groups for the Mercator Research Centre are professionals, researchers, and policymakers from all member states of the Council of Europe and beyond.

**q&a** Through the Question and Answer service available on our website ([www.mercator-research.eu](http://www.mercator-research.eu)) we can inform you about any subject related to education in minority or regional languages in Europe. The experts in our extensive database of experts can also provide relevant information.



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