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## **ASTURIAN**

**The Asturian language in education in Spain**

| 2nd Edition |

| Regional dossiers series |



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This Regional dossier was originally compiled by Dr Xosé Antón González-Riaño of the Universidá d'Uviéu. He and Dr Alberto Fernández-Costales, also of the Universidá d'Uviéu, updated the dossier in 2014. Unless otherwise stated academic data refer to the 2011-2012 school year and come from the Statistical Department of the Regional Ministry of Education and Culture (Planning Department, Educational Institutions and Infrastructure).

Contact information of the authors of Regional dossiers can be found in the Mercator Database of Experts ([www.mercator-research.eu](http://www.mercator-research.eu)).

From August 2012 onwards Ineke Rienks and Saskia Benedictus-van den Berg have been responsible for the publication of the Mercator Regional dossiers series.

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## 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 of and basic statistics on 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

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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 concerned, 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

In the Principáu d'Asturies (Principality of Asturias), an Autonomous Community located in the north-west of Spain, *Bable*, *Asturianu*, or *Llingua asturiana* are the names given to a Romanic language that owes its origins to Latin and which constitutes the own language of this region. Nevertheless, the designations *Astur-leonés* or *Leonés* are also used, particularly in philological studies since Asturian has been the language of a large part of the former Kingdom of Asturias, which, after successive conquests, became the Kingdom of León.

García Arias (1992) points out that some documents appear from as early as the 10<sup>th</sup> century containing the clear linguistic features of Asturian. However, it is from the 13<sup>th</sup> century onwards that it becomes possible to speak of a wealth of documentation in Asturian: documents written by notaries such as contracts, wills, and the like. The importance of the Asturian language in the Middle Ages is illustrated by, for example, the *Fueru d'Avilés* (Act of the City of Avilés) – considered to be the first document written in Romanic – and the *Fueru d'Uviéu* (Act of the City of Oviedo) or the Asturian version of *de Fueru Xulgu* (General Legislation). All of these (13<sup>th</sup>-century) documents were legal in nature and acted as the laws for towns and cities or for the population at large. However, it is noteworthy that by the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century documents were written more and more in Castilian, supported deliberately by the Trastámara dynasty, thus making the civil and ecclesiastical service of the Principality increasingly more Castilian. As a result, the Asturian language disappeared from written texts but continued to survive orally by being handed down from generation to generation.

Modern Asturian literature began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century with the clergyman Antón González Reguera and continued up until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In this period, according to Ruiz de la Peña (1981), the literature written in Asturian could stand up to the best written in Castilian within the region. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the erudite and intellectual Jovellanos was conscious of the historical and

cultural value of what he termed “our language” and expressed the urgency for the compilation of a dictionary and a grammar and for the creation of a language academy. It took more than a century for the efforts of Asturian politicians to turn this into reality since it was not until 1980 that the then *Conseyu Rexional d’Asturies* (Regional Council of Asturias, the transitory government body of Asturias) officially created the *Academia de la Llingua Asturiana* (Academy of the Asturian Language).

As far as linguistic variants are concerned, the old classifications set out by Menéndez Pidal continue to be employed: central, western, and eastern Asturian. By and large, dialectal differences are phonetic in character, the syntax being preserved within parameters of significant conformity (Cano González, 1987).

Bearing legal questions in mind, the *Estatutu d’Autonomía d’Asturies* (Statute of Autonomy of Asturias), signed as an organic law by King Juan Carlos in December 1981, set out in Article 4 that: “*Bable* [as the Asturian language is also termed] will enjoy protection. Its use and dissemination via the mass media and its teaching will be promoted, respecting, in all instances, local variations and the voluntary nature of learning the language”. This resulted in the Government of the Principality of Asturias initiating a somewhat modest linguistic policy. Thus, in 1985, the *Oficina de Política Lingüística* (Bureau for Linguistic Policy) was created in order to prepare action campaigns to promote the use of Asturian and its standardisation. Despite its activities falling far short according to social demands (Llera-Ramo, 1994), what can be said with certainty is that government policy and, above all, the work of the Academy of the Asturian Language had the effect of Asturian regaining self-respect and use. For example, while this linguistic policy had an effect on education, it also had an impact on the development of modern literature and, without many difficulties, on the presence of the language in the media (radio, television, and press), the appearance of publishers and record companies who published and wrote in Asturian, the incorporation of the Asturian language within the context of new technologies, its institutional use, etc.



With reference to the establishment of linguistic standards, the Academy of the Asturian Language published the “Normes Ortográfiques y Entamos Normativos” (Standard Spelling and Normative Principles) in 1981 and updated them later in 1993 through the release of the “Normes Ortográfiques y Conxugación de Verbos” (Standard Spelling and Conjugation of Verbs). With linguistic unity having been consolidated at the written level, the Academy pursued its standardisation work further and, in 1998, brought out a fundamental work entitled: “La Gramática de la Llingua Asturiana” (Grammar of the Asturian Language). Finally, in 2000, it published the “Diccionariu de la Llingua Asturiana” (Dictionary of the Asturian Language), a work containing more than 50,000 lexical entries in the Asturian language.

Before ending this section, it needs to be emphasised that the renewal of the linguistic dignity and the revitalisation of Asturian is a process that, step by step, continues to achieve greater institutional recognition. Quoted below as proof of this is the motion of 10 October 1997, adopted by the Xunta Xeneral del Principáu d'Asturies (Asturian parliament): “Asturian or *Bable*, being the native language of our community, occupies an essential place in the cultural heritage of Asturias. Its nature as a distinctive means of human communication makes it a fundamental structure in social life, an element of collective identity and a factor in understanding and coexistence, being at the same time a symbol and testimony of our history, in the way in which it collects, preserves and transfers the collective experience of our people from one generation to another” (*Actes de la Xunta Xeneral del Principáu d'Asturies, Sesión del 10 d'ochobre de 1997*).

### population

Nowadays, the Asturian language is a living reality within the territory of Asturias, while small communities speaking Asturian can also be found in areas that do not belong administratively to the Principality: for example, to the north and west of León, to the west of Zamora, and the area around Miranda (a nucleus belonging to the north of Portugal which in 1998 declared Mirandés to be an official language, i.e. a dialect of its own linked to the linguistic domain of Astur-leonés).

# EDUCATION AND LESSER USED LANGUAGES

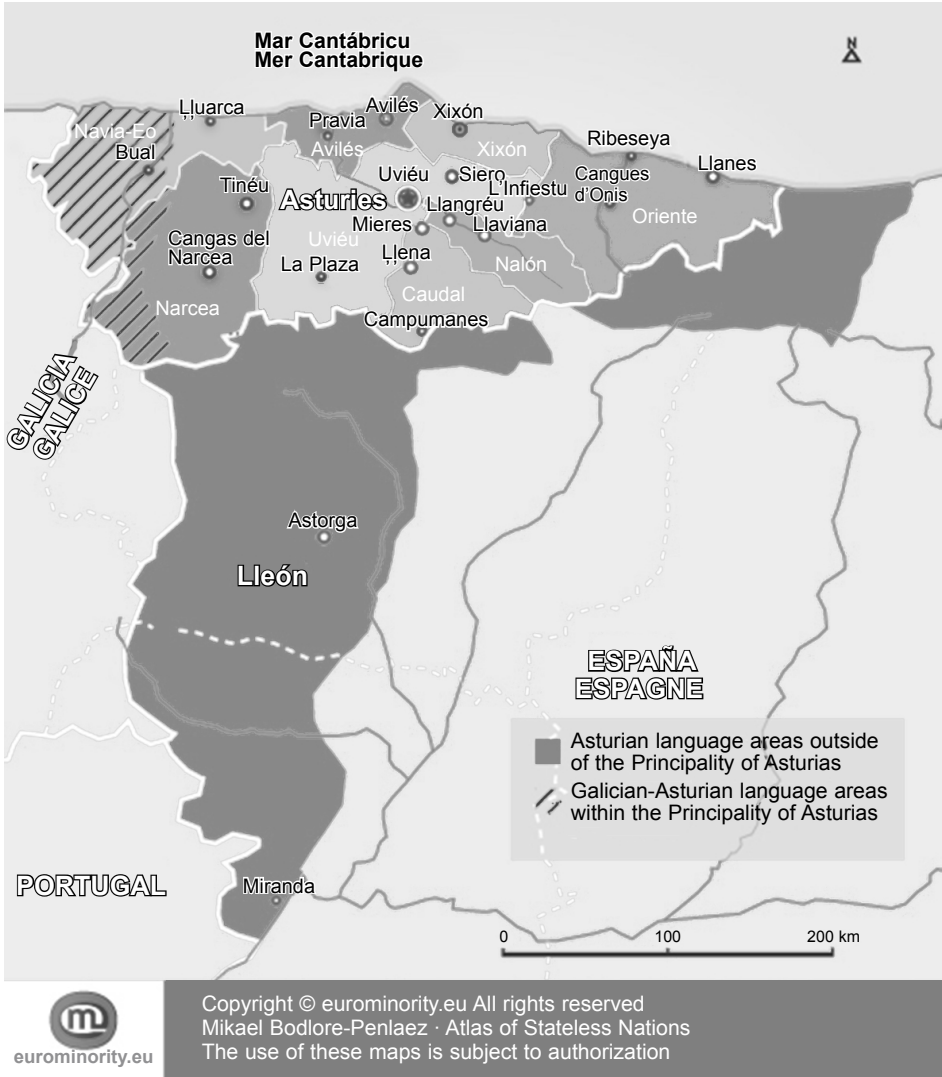


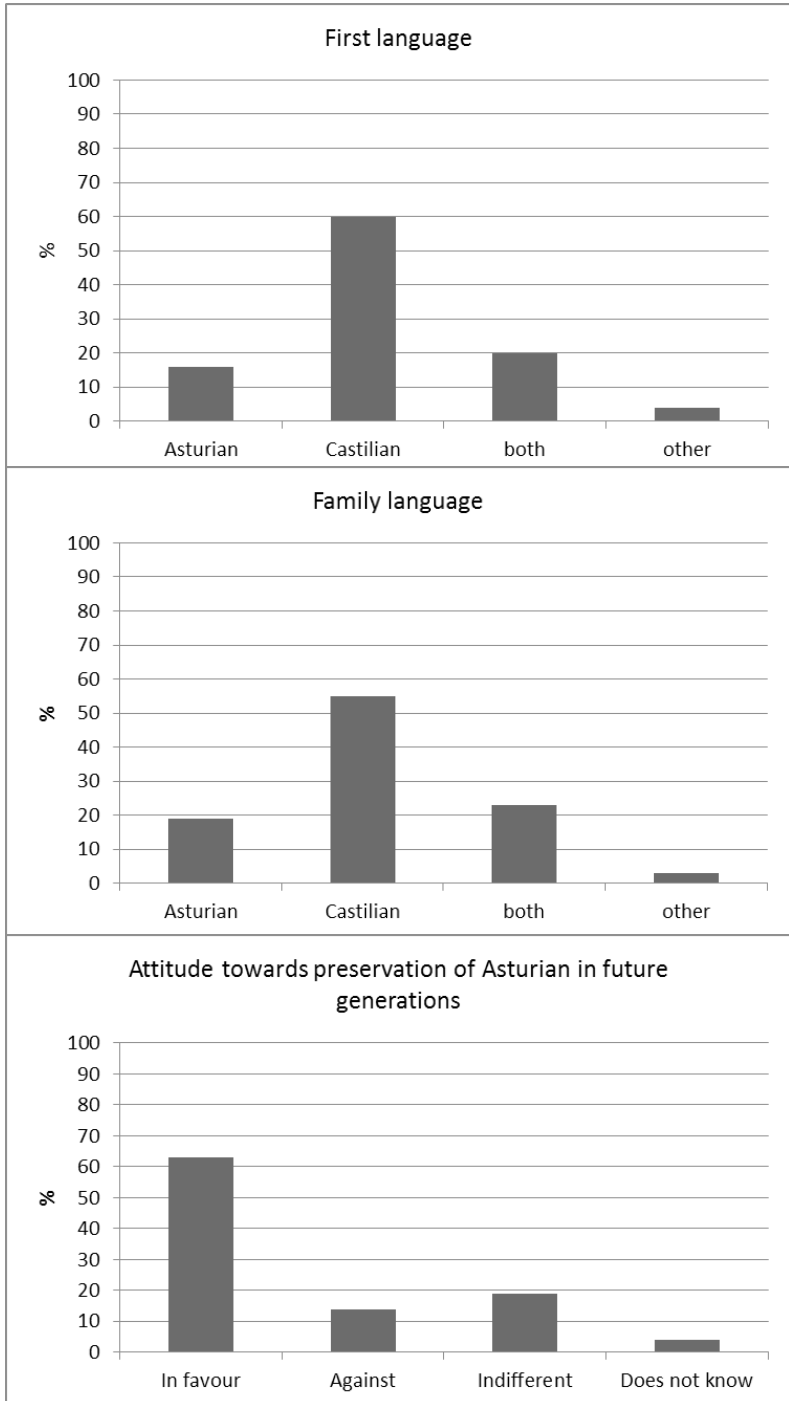
Figure 1: The area where Asturian is spoken (the Principality of Asturias in the north; its border indicated by the thick white line). (Source: adapted from Eurominority.eu)

The inhabitants of the Principality of Asturias account for 1.07 million people (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 2014). Given that this is within a territory covering 10,565 km<sup>2</sup>, the population density is 101 inhabitants per square kilometre. According to the most recent studies, 42% of the population report having Asturian as their family language – about 19% report having Asturian only and 23% report having both Asturian and Castilian (Llera-Ramo & San Martín, 2003). As regards León (Castile-León), although data need to be further analysed, it can be stated that around 10% of the population report having Asturian (known as “Leonés” in the area) as their family language (González-Riaño & García-Arias, 2008), while in Zamora this percentage drops to 9% – bearing in mind that only a small area of the territory is included in the scope of the traditional language shared with Asturias (González-Riaño & García-Arias, 2011). It is worth mentioning that the total population of the province of León amounts to 490,000 inhabitants while in Zamora there are 28,500 people in the area where the traditional Astur-Leonese language is spoken.

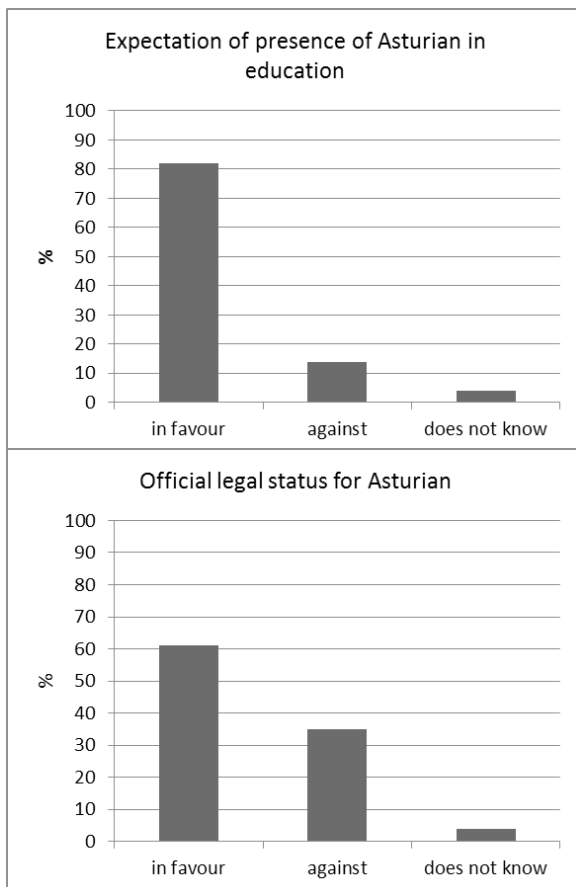
As far as Miranda (Portugal) is concerned, around 60% of the population have a good communicative competence as active speakers of Asturian – or “Mirandés”, as it is known in this area (Merlán, 2009). The estimated population of Miranda reaches 6,300 inhabitants in the area where the traditional language shared with Asturias is spoken.

Sociolinguistic studies to interpret the aforementioned situation have been elaborated in Asturias, particularly since 1977, and were at their most rigorous in 1994, with the first study by Llera-Ramo, which found that a third of the population (about 350,000 people) used Asturian frequently, and in 2003, when Llera-Ramo and San Martín published the previously mentioned “Segundo Estudio Sociolingüístico para Asturias” (Second Sociolinguistic Study for Asturias). This investigation took a sample of 1,300 people older than 16 years from the Autonomous Community of the Principality of Asturias. The most relevant results of this study are presented below:

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On the basis of those data, we can state that, despite the decrease in the number of speakers of Asturian in the last decades and the difficulties in intergenerational transmission, in Asturias there are conditions to further continue with the process of language revitalisation in an ambitious way and with approaches similar to those of the other bilingual communities of the Spanish state whose languages are recognised with official legal status.

**language status** Article 4 of the Statute of Autonomy of Asturias (1981) cites that the teaching of Asturian has to be promoted, as well as its use and its dissemination in the media. In order to develop an appropriate legal framework, the Asturian Parliament passed the

Llei d'Usu y promoción del Bable/Asturianu (Use and Promotion of Bable/Asturian Act) in 1998. Among other measures, its provisions establish that:

1. Asturian is the traditional language of Asturias.
2. All citizens have the right to employ Asturian in speech or in writing.
3. The use of Asturian (oral or written) by the citizens of the Principality of Asturias will have full legal validity.
4. The official names of the towns and municipalities of the Autonomous Community will be in Asturian.

In view of the above, it can be said that the Asturian language has a legal status that allows its standardisation and social revitalisation to be expanded upon. In fact, it has enjoyed “quasi-official” legal regulation ever since recognition (1981) was given to its right of use and the validity of its use by institutions dependent on the Autonomous Government.

**status of  
language  
education**

The Use and Promotion of Bable/Asturian Act (1998) also guarantees the teaching of Asturian and the promotion of its use within the educational system. Other provisions in the act establish that:

1. The Principality of Asturias guarantees the voluntary teaching of Asturian at all levels and grades in the educational system.
2. Although it is a voluntary subject, the teaching of Asturian will be a full part of the curriculum (i.e. it will be taught within the teaching timetable and, to all intents and purposes, will form a part of a student's school record).
3. It is the Principality's responsibility to enact the Curriculum Decrees for the Teaching of the Asturian Language.
4. The Principality will establish the procedures for the writing of textbooks.
5. The University of Oviedo, via its departments, will carry out the initial training and qualification of Asturian language teaching staff at the various educational levels.

On December 10<sup>th</sup> 2013 the Spanish Parliament passed a new law on education. This is the Ley Orgánica de Mejora de la Calidad Educativa (Organic Law for the Improvement of Education Quality, or LOMCE). This law will compel regional governments to regulate the curriculum structure in every community, including the role and status of regional languages. In the case of Asturian, this law guarantees its teaching as the regional language in better conditions than in the current situation.

### **education system**

The Autonomous Community of the Principality of Asturias is fully competent in educational matters: in other words, it manages the entire educational system. The educational levels and structure that it comprises are, as we shall see, the same as in the rest of the Spanish State. Education is compulsory for children aged 6 to 16.

In 2007, the Government of the Principality of Asturias adopted the Decreto del Currículum (Curriculum Decree) in which it established the conditions for teaching Asturian in pre-school education (from 3 to 6 years), primary education (from 6 to 12 years), compulsory secondary education (from 12 to 16 years), and baccalaureate (from 16 to 18 years).

In 2010 the Universidad d'Uviéu (University of Oviedo), an institution of higher education which is funded by the Government of the Principality of Asturias, modified its Regulations (Estatutos de la Universidad d'Uviéu, or Statutes of the University of Oviedo) by establishing (Article 6) that "Asturian will be object of study, teaching and research in the corresponding scopes. Likewise, the use of Asturian will be regulated by the Statute of Autonomy of Asturias and the complementary legal dispositions, guaranteeing the non-discrimination of its users. The University of Oviedo will promote, in the framework of its duties, the necessary actions to recognize and develop Asturian" (Estatutos de la Universidad d'Uviéu, p. 23). In accordance with that, the teaching of Asturian at the University of Oviedo has been fully recognised since 2010, when the university adapted to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA).

**private  
and public**

Educational establishments in Asturias can be distinguished as follows: a) those in state ownership, b) those privately owned but supported by state funds, and c) those completely privately owned and run. In percentages, state educational establishments predominate (approximately 65%), followed by private educational establishments subsidised with state funds (around 25%), and followed, finally, by private institutions in the strict sense of the word (over 10%).

The teaching of the Asturian language is mostly linked to state education and, within state education, to the primary level (pupils aged 6-12). Asturian has a minor presence in private educational establishments, although within the educational planning envisaged by the Consejería d'Educación, Cultura y Deporte del Principáu d'Asturies (Regional Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of the Principality of Asturias) its extension has been planned for the whole educational network depending on the state budget. This is only logical when we take into account that the majority of private educational establishments (essentially religious in nature) are 100% subsidised with state funds. Consequently, the students enrolled in these establishments should have the same rights as those in the state sector.

**bilingual  
education forms**

Although the Use and Promotion of Bable/Asturian Act (1998) establishes the possibility of using Asturian as a medium of instruction, educational establishments, generally speaking, only offer the teaching of the Asturian language as a subject, reserving its use as a tool of communication for complementary academic activities: school press, theatre, festivals and recitals, cultural daytrips, etc. In any event, there are isolated experiments of partial language immersion in Asturian that demonstrate the high educational value of this practice.

**administration**

In Spain, the Ministerio de Educación (Ministry of Education) regulates the basic structure of the educational system. The Ministry determines the stages of education and common grades (including the basic curriculum) for all the Autonomous Communities by means of organic laws approved by the



Spanish parliament. However, management and educational administration is in the hands of the autonomous governments. Consequently, in the Principality of Asturias, matters relating to all levels of education depend wholly on the Regional Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, which has various administrative departments to ensure that the educational system runs properly. Thus, for example, everything relating to the teaching organised for the Asturian language is found within the *Serviciu d'Ordenación Académica* (Administrative Department of Academic Regulation) (regulations, curricular materials, qualification recognition, etc.).

With regard to local administration (in the municipal sphere), the town/city councils (municipal government bodies) establish agreements with the Administrative Department for Culture of the Principality to offer Asturian language courses for adults. These, while completely effective from the point of view of basic literacy, do not include more advanced educational programmes regulated by the academic body.

The use of the Asturian language by the Asturian government is confined to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport: promotional reading campaigns, advertisements, announcements of cultural competitions, the publication of resolutions in the *Boletín Oficial del Principado de Asturias* (Principality of Asturias Official Gazette, or BOPA), etc. The use of the Asturian language in parliamentary life is occasional and restricted to particular political groups.

Finally, it should be pointed out that a relevant number of Asturian councils (local administration) are using Asturian as the usual language for communication within the context of their territory and areas of responsibility, which generates the practice of bilingualism in the administrative and social life of the municipal councils (documentation, official advertisements, road signs, etc.).

### inspection

The inspection and monitoring of the official teaching of the Asturian language and the educational system depends, as in

all areas of the curriculum, on the *Serviciu d'Inspeición Téunica Educativa de la Consejería d'Educación, Cultura y Deporte* (Technical Educational Inspectorate of the Regional Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport). The inspectors have a perfect knowledge of the provisions in the Use and Promotion of Bable/ Asturian Act of 1998 and guarantee it is fully accomplished.

**support  
structure**

The Academy of the Asturian Language is the ultimate linguistic body in the Principality of Asturias, and it determines the official spelling standards to be applied in written documents and in teaching. Simultaneously, it is the author of the *Gramática de la Llingua Asturiana* (1998) (Grammar of the Asturian Language) and the *Diccionariu de la Llingua Asturiana* (2000) (Asturian Standard Dictionary). Its contribution to the educational sphere is complemented by what are known as the Advanced Linguistic and Cultural Courses (single-subject treatises recognised by the Regional Ministry of Education and Culture), the aim of which is permanent training and retraining of Asturian language teaching staff. In this vein, the publication entitled *Estaya Pedagóxica* (Pedagogical Area) is meant for this purpose. This collection, addressing teachers, contains educational books that attempt to convey the latest educational trends in language teaching. For its part, the Government of the Principality relies on the Department of Academic Regulation to organise everything relevant to the regular teaching of the Asturian language.

The Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana (Association for the Defence of the Asturian Language) is a politically independent organisation that works to raise social awareness and to support other institutions (particularly, municipal councils) when organising short courses, conferences, musical events, etc. Its ultimate objective is to achieve the official status of the Asturian people's historic language, in the sense stipulated by the Spanish Constitution. On the other hand, the *Iniciativa pol Asturianu* (Initiative for the Asturian Language) is also concerned about dignifying Asturian through particular activities: dissemination courses, demands and proposals to official institutions (in Asturias and Spain), contacts at European level, addressing language issues, etc.

## 2 Pre-school education

**target group** Pre-school education is organised in two school stages: nursery education for age 0-3 and infant education for age 3-6. It is a voluntary stage in education. In the majority of establishments it starts at the age of 3 to such an extent that practically all children in this age group attend school.

**structure** The pre-school curriculum includes the area of languages, communication, and representation. Pre-school education is usually part of primary schools.

Although the contribution made by the pre-school institutions and/or bodies in relation to the Asturian language is slight at this level of education, the majority of teaching unions (which represent teachers belonging to all educational stages) in Asturias demand the inclusion of Asturian within their syllabi and the option to use it as an instrument, particularly where the home language of pupils is Asturian.

In 2009, the Regional Ministry of Education and Culture of the Principality of Asturias (Consejería d'Educación y Ciencia del Principáu d'Asturies) published a key document titled *Tratamiento de la Lengua y Cultura Asturiana en la Educación Infantil* (Dealing with Asturian Language and Culture in Infant Education) aiming to encourage teachers raise positive attitudes towards the Asturian language without dismissing the achievement of an elementary communicative competence in Asturian. The expectation is that this document promotes the standardisation of the teaching of Asturian at this stage, which in 2013 had a small participation with 70 teachers in pre-school education.

**legislation** In addition to the already mentioned Use and Promotion of Bable/ Asturian Act of 1998, the Curriculum Decree of the Principality of Asturias of 2007 establishes the possibility of teaching Asturian language and culture in pre-school institutions, including them in the area Languages: Communication and Representation, which is covered in the curriculum of pre-school education.

**language use** Formally speaking, the language of instruction is Spanish. However, for educational reasons, the teachers in many rural parts of Asturias utilise Asturian as their first means of contact with pupils since this is the language used at home. Similarly, children’s songs (traditional or contemporary), tales, stories, legends, etc., use the medium of the Asturian language.

**teaching material** Everything related to the development of pupils physically and in terms of their motor functions is produced by specialised private companies. The materials employed for the educational development of pupils are created by the teachers themselves or by private publishers. The Regional Ministry of Education and Culture and the Academy of the Asturian Language collaborate in the occasional publication of materials intended for the linguistic teaching of Asturian (focusing on children’s’ vocabulary, literary works, cartoons, etc.). For instance, it is worth mentioning *El Mio Primer Vocabulariu n’Asturianu* or *Tratamiento de la Lengua y Cultura Asturiana en la Educación Infantil*.

**statistics** In the school year 2011-2012 the following numbers of pupils were enrolled in pre-school in Asturias:

<b>pupils in pre-school education</b>		
	total number of pupils	number of pupils taught Asturian
state educational establishments	20,040	1,300
private educational establishments	8,190	0
all establishments	28,230	1,300

Table 1: *Pupils in pre-school education in the school year 2011-2012 (Source: Statistical Department of the Regional Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013).*

So far, there is no detailed information available on the presence of Asturian in pre-school education; however, we can state that no positive increase can be detected.

### 3 Primary education

**target group** In Asturias, as in the rest of Spain, primary education constitutes a mandatory level of education for children between 6 and 12 years of age.

**structure** Primary education comprises three academic stages, each of which takes two academic years (First, Second, and Third Cycle). The teaching areas are as follows: a) knowledge of the natural, social and cultural environment, b) artistic education, c) physical education, d) Castilian language and literature, e) community language and literature, f) foreign language (English, in most cases, although some schools offer additional languages).

**legislation** In addition to the already mentioned Use and Promotion of Bable/Asturian Act of 1998, the Curriculum Decree of the Principality of Asturias of 2007 establishes the objectives, contents, evaluation, and methodological provisions included in the curriculum of Asturian language for this educational stage.

**language use** In the stage of primary education Asturian is a full subject but, leaving aside specific situations and/or situations that form part of pilot experiments, it is not the language of instruction. In any event, as indicated previously, the teaching of the Asturian language is a full part of the curriculum, despite it being voluntary, and is integrated within the pupil's school record. As a general rule, there are two lessons per week for the Asturian language, each lasting an hour.

Furthermore, the establishments involved with teaching Asturian are distributed throughout the territory of the Principality, although they are concentrated in particular in the central industrial areas (the larger municipalities of Uviéu, Xixón, and Avilés and the coal mining areas of the Rivers Nalón and Caudal). Within rural areas, the southwest region of Cangas del Narcea contains the majority of the population of Asturian speakers. In both these areas (central as well as the periphery) there are examples of educational establishments that provide the teaching of Asturian

at a high level, and this has a positive impact on the knowledge of the social and cultural environment.

**teaching material**

The teaching materials in general (textbooks, dictionaries, reference books, audiovisuals, etc.) are produced by private publishers based in Asturias or in other Autonomous Communities in Spain. With respect to the teaching of the Asturian language, the publication of material “covering all academic needs” is carried out by private Asturian companies specialised in the publication of books in Asturian. In parallel with this, the Academy of the Asturian Language edits collections of children’s and junior literature, such as *Escolin*.

**statistics**

In the 2011-2012 school year, 18,179 pupils studied Asturian in primary education, most of them within the state system. The percentage of voluntary attendance in Asturian language classes amounts to nearly 65%.

pupils in primary education		
	total number of pupils	number of pupils taught Asturian
state educational establishments	31,050	17,235
private educational establishments	11,694	944
all establishments	42,744	18,179

*Table 2: Pupils in primary education in the 2011-2012 school year (Source: Statistical Department of the Regional Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013).*

These data are rather interesting, as they, when compared to data of previous years, show a certain consolidation in the number of students of Asturian, in spite of the decrease of the total number of students.

#### 4 Secondary education

**target group** Secondary education constitutes a second mandatory level of education for pupils aged 12 to 16.

**structure** Secondary education is composed of two academic stages – *Primer Ciclo* and *Segundo Ciclo* (First and Second Cycle), each taking up two academic years. Those stages are the same for all pupils. The teaching areas are as follows: a) natural sciences, b) social sciences, geography, and history, c) physical education, d) plastic arts and visual education, e) Castilian language and literature, f) community language and literature, g) foreign language, h) mathematics, i) music, and j) technology. When students complete the two academic stages, they receive the *Certificado de Educación Secundaria* (Certificate of Secondary Education).

**legislation** In addition to the already mentioned Use and Promotion of Bable/Asturian Act of 1998, the Curriculum Decree of the Principality of Asturias of 2007 establishes the objectives, contents, evaluation and methodological provisions included in the curriculum of Asturian language for this educational stage.

**language use** Asturian is an optional subject of study in secondary education but has been insufficiently introduced due to particular administrative problems that the Government of the Principality of Asturias has been trying to solve since it was given full authority in education. These problems refer to administrative issues, reluctance on behalf of some secondary schools to offer Asturian, limited development of the legislation as regards the teaching of Asturian, etc. The teaching of the Asturian language is a full part of the official curriculum, although not all students take the subject, nor do all schools offer it.

Asturian is not normally used as a medium of instruction: only in experimental settings and according to the availability of teaching staff.

**teaching material** General curriculum materials (textbooks, dictionaries, reference books, audiovisuals, etc.) are produced by private publishers throughout Asturias and Spain. Published materials cover the specific needs of students as regards Asturian at this educational stage. For instance, textbooks published by the publishers Trave and VTP.

**statistics** The number of pupils studying Asturian in secondary education in the school year 2011-2012 was 3,633. Of these, 3,445 attended state educational establishments with the other 188 at private institutions. The percentage of students given the option to follow this course of study is very low.

<b>students in secondary education</b>		
	total number of pupils	number of pupils taught Asturian
state educational establishments	19,895	3,445
private educational establishments	9,706	188
all establishments	29,601	3,633

*Table 3: Students in Secondary Education (Source: Statistical Department of the Regional Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013).*

As in the school levels discussed above, a stable tendency can be detected as regards the number of students taking Asturian; however, it is worth mentioning that the total school population has decreased in the last 5 years.



## 5 Vocational education

<b>target group</b>	Vocational education constitutes a non-obligatory level of education for students aged 16 to 18.
<b>structure</b>	Vocational education is structured along to two lines: 1) the Bachillerato (Baccalaureate; secondary education qualification), which takes two academic years and grants access to university education; and 2) Formación profesional (professional training qualification), which also takes two academic years and grants access to the technical and labour-related environment. Separate specialisations exist in both cases. The establishments offering this type of education are Centros de Formación Secundaria Post-Obligatoria (Centres of Non-compulsory Secondary Education), which can be public or privately held.
<b>legislation</b>	In addition to the already mentioned Use and Promotion of Bable/Asturian Act of 1998, the Curriculum Decree of the Principality of Asturias of 2007 establishes the objectives, contents, evaluation and methodological provisions included in the curriculum of Asturian language for this educational stage.
<b>language use</b>	At present, Asturian is not a subject of study in professional training qualification, but it is included in <i>Bachillerato</i> , although in a symbolic way (only a small number of establishments offer this option in Bachillerato due to the problems mentioned previously).
<b>teaching material</b>	The curriculum materials (textbooks, dictionaries, reference books, audiovisuals, etc.) are produced by private publishers based in Asturias and in other Autonomous Communities in Spain and cover the specific needs of students for this educational stage.
<b>statistics</b>	No statistics are available as regards vocational training; the data related to Bachillerato correspond to the students enrolled in state establishments in the academic year 2011-2012 and are presented below.

## EDUCATION AND LESSER USED LANGUAGES

<b>students in bachillerato</b>		
	total number of pupils	number of pupils taught Asturian
state educational establishments	9,436	267

*Table 4: Students in Bachillerato (Source: Statistical Department of the Regional Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013).*

## 6 Higher education

**structure** The University of Oviedo (founded in 1604) is the only university in the Principality of Asturias. At this establishment students take courses of study to obtain the qualifications of a University bachelor's degree (4 years) and University Master's Degree (1 or 2 additional years). The University of Oviedo also provides PhD programmes, and all the study programmes have been adapted to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) as from 2010.

**legislation** As has been mentioned in this report, the University of Oviedo promotes the teaching, use and research of the Asturian language. Article 6 of the Statutes of the University of Oviedo, modified in 2010, establishes the non-discrimination of Asturian speakers.

**language use** Asturian can be used at the university in line with the Use and Promotion of Bable/Asturian Act (1998). However, practice shows that this is a minority activity and is preferred for subjects related to the philological study of Asturian (linguistics, sociolinguistics, education, etc.).

The Scientific Memoranda (e.g. internal reports which are published on a yearly basis) of the university show the increased presence of courses and scientific work that employ Asturian. In the courses based in the Departments of Philology and Educational Sciences, there are distinct subjects relating to the Asturian language, such as *Llingua Asturiana* (Asturian Language) or *Didáctica de la Llingua Asturiana* (Asturian Language Teaching) that show an acceptance and demand among students.

In addition, Asturian is increasingly used in PhD theses, Masters' theses and final Degree projects. In all cases, the use of Asturian in this scope is subject to a specific regulation of the University of Oviedo aiming to protect and promote the use of Asturian for academic purposes. Likewise, the corporate

website of the University of Oviedo is fully available in Asturian. Finally, it is worth mentioning that university authorities use Asturian in relevant acts for the academic and cultural life.

**teacher training** In Asturias teacher training for all levels is provided by the University of Oviedo.

### **pre-primary training**

No specific training is provided for this educational stage in relation to Asturian, although there are transversal contents (in all the courses, specifically in the area of Languages, Communication, and Representation) promoting awareness and tolerant attitudes among teachers towards the teaching of Asturian.

### **primary training**

Teacher training of Asturian teachers is carried out in similar conditions to the rest of curricular fields, and it is today a fully regulated field of study at university. The University of Oviedo offers the “mention” (a minor) of Asturian Language, which includes subjects related to Asturian philology, literature, sociolinguistics, and language teaching. This two-year minor is included in degree programmes which last four years, and it is addressed at students of teacher training for primary education.

### **secondary training**

As in the previous case, the initial teacher training in Asturian is fully regulated by means of a minor in Asturian language included in several degrees in philology. This minor includes subjects related to philology, history, literature, socio-linguistics, dialectology, and research. Besides, prospective secondary school teachers must take the master’s degree in teacher training, choosing the specialisation in Asturian, which intends to update language contents and introduce students to current trends in language teaching methodologies. This masters’ degree includes an internship in which student-teachers work three months in a secondary school under the supervision of a mentor-teacher.

**in-service training**

There are several programmes intended to provide continuous training for university graduates (teachers of primary and secondary education). Among these initiatives, it is worth mentioning the courses provided by the Universidad Asturiana de Branu (UABRA) (Asturian Summer University), which is integrated within the University of Oviedo, with a wide educational offer on cultural, linguistic, and methodological elements.

**statistics**

In the case of prospective teachers of primary and secondary education, there are *numerus clausus* limiting the size of the groups to 40 people per academic course. In any case, these degrees meet all the demands and requirements of the schools as regards teacher training.

There are no data available on the number of students that study Asturian.

## 7 Adult education

**structure and  
language  
courses**

In the educational system of the Principality of Asturias, adult education is carried out in two ways: a) in a regulated and official fashion through the Centros de Educación Permanentes para Adultos (Permanent Adult Education Centres), dependent on the Regional Ministry of Education and Culture, and b) in another, more informal way, reliant on the local administration (town/city councils). The teaching of the Asturian language is provided in both cases, although there are no reliable statistics.

**language use**

In the Permanent Adult Education Centres, the language of instruction is Castilian, with a limited use of Asturian, which is restricted to non-core contents in the curriculum and to Asturian language courses. However, initiatives intended to promote lifelong learning include a wide variety of courses dependent on town halls and cultural associations that use Asturian as a medium of instruction.

**statistics**

There are no statistics available regarding adult education.

## 8 Educational research

Asturias is witnessing the consolidation of distinct lines of research relating to the presence of Asturian in education. Therefore, we should set out by quoting the study undertaken by the S.O.E.V. (Servicio de Orientación Escolar y Vocacional; Educational and Vocational Orientation Service) of the then delegation of the Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia (State Ministry for Education and Science) in Asturias (1989) entitled “Investigación sobre la Escolarización de la Llingua Asturiana: su Incidencia en el Currículum Escolar” (Research into the Teaching of the Asturian Language: its Impact in the Educational Curriculum). This study involves *ex-post-facto* research that attempts to compare the opinions of students, parents, and teachers with respect to results of the teaching of the Asturian language. The general conclusion of the study cited revealed that “[t]he incorporation of the Asturian language within the curriculum does not have a negative influence on the teaching-learning process. On the contrary, it has a positive influence on the evaluation of other indicative aspects of people’s socio-cultural identity” (p. 131).

Since then, virtually all studies relating to the teaching of Asturian have been conducted under the auspices of the University of Oviedo. Consequently, another more qualitative report is the one conducted by González-Riaño (1994) entitled “La Interferencia Lingüística Escolar: Estudio Etnográfico en un Contexto Asturiano” (Linguistic Interference in Education: an Ethnographic Study within an Asturian Context) in which a study was made of the verbal behaviour of a group of children (in an urban sphere) who did not receive Asturian lessons in the first stage of their primary education. The general conclusion expressed was that “[t]he oral competence in Castilian of the pupils studied was muddled with Asturian expressions, particularly at the phonological, phonetic and syntactical levels (...). Lexical interference was exhibited, to a lesser extent, by pure forms of Asturian or by Asturian-Castilian hybridisation that referred to traditional aspects of Asturian culture” (p. 363).

From the perspective of its educational implications, the research cited concluded that the systematic teaching of Asturian is the most coherent way for engaging in an analysis concerning “interlingualism”, “error analysis”, etc. The mutual contamination arising between Asturian and Castilian could be overcome and, at the same time, it contributes towards maintaining Asturian as a language of communication at all levels.

Bermúdez de la Vega’s study (1995) is of particular interest, the title of which leaves little room for doubt “Posibilidades d’una Enseñanza n’Asturianu: delles Esperiencias” (The Possibilities of Teaching in Asturian: some Experiences). Obviously, this deals with research presented by the author as a point of departure for standardising not only the teaching of the Asturian language but also the teaching *through* that language. Effectively, this study presents various experiments in different schools, at different levels and with different subjects, showing that the Asturian language can be a perfect means of communication at all stages of education in all disciplines and at all levels. De la Vega emphasises “[it is] often a tool of great emotional and motivational strength, as much for the teacher as for the students” (p. 23).

Another important study is that by González-Riaño and San Fabián Maroto (1996) entitled “La Escolarización de la Lengua Asturiana. Su Incidencia en el Rendimiento Educativo” (The Asturian Language in Education: Its Impact on Educational Performance). This project compares the performances of pupils in the sixth year of primary education “with” and “without” Asturian. The general conclusion advances that positive results derive from teaching the Asturian language, especially with reference to reading comprehension levels in Castilian and the levels of orthographic command in that language. Furthermore, the study shows that the presence of Asturian within education has a positive influence on learning matters related to the specific reality of Asturias, since improvements are seen in grades referring to knowledge of the social, natural and cultural environment of our community. In other words, the teaching of Asturian does not only make the acquisition of linguistic



knowledge and skills possible, but also acts as a means of more closely involving the natural, social and cultural environment of the Principality of Asturias.

Research also related to instrumental learning is that presented by Huguet (2000) entitled “Desequilibrio entre Lenguas y Rendimiento Escolar. El Lenguaje como Mediador del Éxito Académico en Contextos Bilingües” (Imbalance between Languages and Educational Performance. Language as the Mediator for Academic Success in Bilingual Contexts). This is a broad study – in fact, it covers virtually all of the secondary education establishments in Asturias that offer Asturian courses – which attempts to confirm the impact of the teaching of Asturian on aspects such as the practical command of Castilian and mathematical performance. The conclusions of this research are important since, on the one hand, they corroborate the existing relationship between the teaching of the Asturian language and competence in Castilian and, on the other hand, they reveal a tendency that the teaching of Asturian is favourable to mathematical reasoning.

From another perspective, Dyzmann (2000) deals with fieldwork entitled “Averamientu al Contautu de Llingües (Asturianu/Castellán) nel Principáu d’Asturies” (An Approach to Language Contact (Asturian/Castilian) in the Principality of Asturias): a study on the contact between languages that arises among the students at a secondary educational establishment in an Asturian area with an urban context. Leaving aside the conclusions that identify the degree and types of Asturian-Castilian interference detected, the study also has a bearing on other aspects and emphasises, for example, the positive expectations that the teaching of Asturian in schools generates among young students.

It is worth mentioning the research done by González-Riaño and Huguet Canalís (2001), entitled “Actitúes Sociollingüístiques del Alumnáu de Secundaria n’Asturies” (Sociolinguistic Attitudes of Students of Secondary Education in Asturias). This involves

a study of how Asturian secondary school students evaluate Asturian and Castilian. The conclusions allow to confirm issues such as: 1) in general, secondary-school students are as favourably predisposed towards Asturian as they are towards Castilian, 2) the students who study Asturian are more positive in their outlook on Asturian and Castilian, 3) the student segment that does not study Asturian has a positive outlook on Castilian but is far less favourably predisposed towards Asturian, 4) students who consider themselves bilingual in Asturian and Castilian are favourably predisposed towards both languages, 5) students with either Asturian or Castilian as mother tongue regard the non-maternal language with suspicion, and 6) there are no discernible differences with respect to Asturian or Castilian in terms of social class.

With the title “Les Llingües n’Asturies: Usu y Valoración de la so Importancia Educativa” (Languages in Asturias: Use and Appraisal of their Importance in Education), González-Riaño and Armesto-Fernández (2004) investigate the use and the attitudes towards Asturian of prospective teachers of primary education taking this degree at the University of Oviedo. This research shows the prospective teachers have an acceptable knowledge of the regional language and some very positive attitudes regarding the cultural and educational value of the teaching of Asturian in primary education; this holds in particular for students who were born in Asturias and who have learned Asturian when they were in primary education.

Finally, we can quote another study by González-Riaño and Armesto-Fernández (2012) titled “Enseñanza de la Lengua Minoritaria y Satisfacción del Profesorado: el Caso de Asturias” (Teaching the Minority Language and Teacher Satisfaction: the Case of Asturias). This study, covering the whole educational system in Asturias, attempts to determine the satisfaction level of teachers teaching Asturian in primary and secondary education, as well as identify problematic issues. The conclusions establish that teachers’ satisfaction focuses on elements related to the implementation of and the commitment to Asturian language

and culture, the relations with the educational community, and the academic results of students, while negative aspects are related to the insufficient recognition by authorities, the low social prestige, the lack of an adequate legal framework (official status) for the teaching of Asturian, and guaranteeing the language revitalisation process in an effective way.

## 9 Prospects

The present state of linguistic revitalisation in Asturias, the results from teaching, the extraordinary literary development achieved, and the social expectations and demands allow us to view the Asturian language as having an encouraging future. That notwithstanding, and in order to safeguard this, it is necessary for it to be recognised fully as the official language of the Principality. Taking the words of Llera-Ramo – without any doubt, the researcher who best understands the Asturian sociolinguistic reality – the following can be stated: “[I]et us finish by saying that bilingualism is clearly the linguistic future desired and imagined by the great majority of Asturians, expressing it with great pragmatism and moderation (...). It demands a great regional consensus at the institutional level and from people of influences and leaders of public opinion on the linguistic standardisation to reinforce the already important linguistic identity of Asturians (...). Majority opinion is in favour of equality of treatment in relation to the other languages of the Iberian peninsula. Standardisation and joint official status are the measures by which Asturians stamp their aspirations for linguistic justice” (1994, p. 177).

Whatever the case, the above should not be understood as an example of exaggerated optimism since it should be borne in mind that problems exist which emanate from the resistance of sectors in society – in the minority yet powerful – who argue against standardisation and linguistic revitalisation in Asturias and who convey the idea that those who defend the Asturian language are acting out of sectarian and/or nationalist interests. To convince Asturian society that such suspicions are totally unfounded and that the right to one’s own language is a profoundly democratic right is the great challenge placed before the Asturian language.

Most teacher unions in Asturias demand the development of new educational possibilities that include partial-immersion in this language.

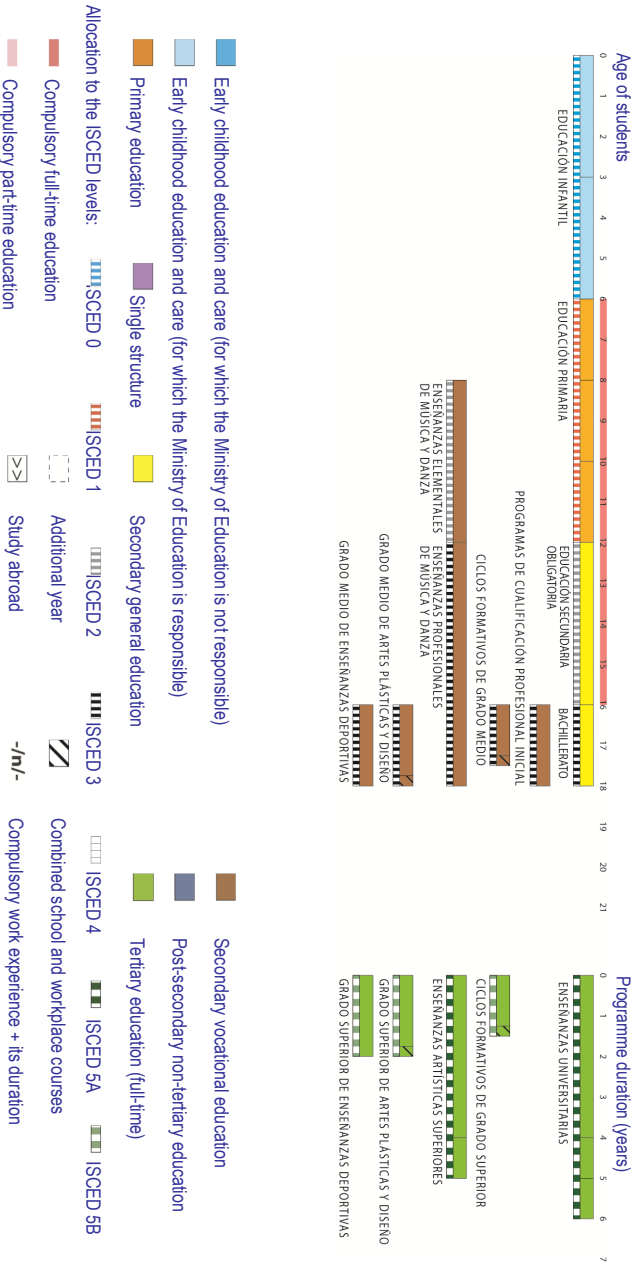
## 10 Summary statistics

<b>students of the Asturian language at the basic levels 2011-2012 academic year</b>	
<b>Educational Level</b>	<b>Number of students taking Asturian as a subject</b>
Pre-school education	1,300
Primary education	18,179
Secondary education	3,633
Bachillerato	267

*Table 5: Students of the Asturian language at the basic levels. (Source: Statistical Department of the Regional Ministry of Education and Culture, 2013).*

### Education system in Spain

The structure of the education system in Spain 2013/2014



Source: Eurydice (2013)

## References and further reading

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*Llei 1/98 del Principáu d'Asturies, del 23 de marzu, d'Usu y promoción del Bable/Asturianu* [The Use and Promotion of Bable/Asturian Act] (1998). BOPA n. 73. Available at: [www.xuristes.as/version.htm](http://www.xuristes.as/version.htm) [Accessed February 2014]

This law establishes Asturian as the traditional language of Asturias, guarantees the juridical validity of the use of Asturian by Institutions dependent on the Autonomous Government and establishes Asturian education at all educational levels.

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## Addresses

**Presidencia del Gobiernu del Principáu d'Asturies** (Presidency of the Government of the Principality of Asturias)

C/ Suárez de la Riva, 11, 33007, Uviéu/Oviedo

T +34 985 10 67 87

W [www.asturias.es](http://www.asturias.es)

**Xunta Xeneral del Principáu d'Asturies (Parlamentu)** (Parliament of the Principality of Asturias)

C/ Fruela, nº 13 - 33007, Uviéu/Oviedo

T +34 985 10 75 00

F +34 985 10 75 34

W [www.jgpa.es](http://www.jgpa.es)

**Consejería d'Educación, Cultura y Deporte del Principáu d'Asturies** (Regional Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of the Principality of Asturias)

Pz. España, 5 - Planta 3ª, 33007, Uviéu/Oviedo, Asturias

T +34 985 10 86 01

F +34 985 10 86 11

W [www.educastur.es](http://www.educastur.es)

**Ministerio de Educación, Cultura y Deporte** (Ministry of Education, Culture, and Sport of the Government of Spain)

Calle Alcalá, 34

28014 Madrid

T +34 91 701 80 00

W [www.mecd.gob.es/portada-mecd](http://www.mecd.gob.es/portada-mecd)

**Universidá d'Uviéu** (University of Oviedo)

C/ San Francisco 3, 33003 Uviéu/Oviedo

T +34 985 10 3000

E [rector@uniovi.es](mailto:rector@uniovi.es)

W [www.uniovi.es](http://www.uniovi.es)

**Academia de la Llingua Asturiana** (Academy of the Asturian Language)

C/L'Águila 10, Apartáu de Correos 574 E-33080, Uviéu/Oviedo

T +34 985 21 18 37

F +34 985 22 68 16

E [alla@asturnet.es](mailto:alla@asturnet.es)

W [www.academiadelalingua.com](http://www.academiadelalingua.com)

**Xunta pola Defensa de la Llingua Asturiana** (Association for the defence of the Asturian language)

C/ La Gascona, 12-3u. 33001 Uviéu/Oviedo

T +34 985 229 553

F +34 985 20 56 28

E [info@exunta.org](mailto:info@exunta.org)

W [www.exunta.org](http://www.exunta.org)

## EDUCATION AND LESSER USED LANGUAGES

**Iniciativa pol Asturianu** (Initiative for Asturian)

Conseyu de Moicedá de Xixón

Avenida Manuel Llana 68, 33208 Xixón - Asturias

E [contactu@iniciativapolasturianu.org](mailto:contactu@iniciativapolasturianu.org)

W [www.iniciativapolasturianu.org](http://www.iniciativapolasturianu.org)

**Asturies.com** (Digital journal in the Asturian language)

E [info@asturiactiva.com](mailto:info@asturiactiva.com)

W [www.asturies.com](http://www.asturies.com)

**Asturnews.com** (Digital journal in the Asturian language)

C/ Martínez Vigil 15 Bajo - 33010 Uviéu/Oviedo (Asturies)

T +34 985 26 40 51

E [info@asturnews.com](mailto:info@asturnews.com)

W [www.asturnews.com](http://www.asturnews.com)

## Other websites on minority languages

- Mercator Network** [www.mercator-network.eu](http://www.mercator-network.eu)  
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.
- Mercator Research Centre** [www.mercator-research.eu](http://www.mercator-research.eu)  
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.
- European Commission** <http://ec.europa.eu/languages>  
The website of the European Commission gives information about the EU's support for language diversity.
- Council of Europe** <http://conventions.coe.int>  
*European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages* (1992) and *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* (1995). European Treaty Series 148 and 157, Strasbourg.
- Eurydice** <http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice>  
Eurydice is the information network on education in Europe. The site 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.

**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 Stockholm 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.









**Available in this series:**

**Albanian; the Albanian language in education in Italy**  
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c/o Fryske Akademy  
Doelestrjitte 8  
P.O. Box 54  
NL-8900 AB Ljouwert/Leeuwarden  
The Netherlands

T 0031 (0) 58 - 234 3027  
W [www.mercator-research.eu](http://www.mercator-research.eu)  
E [mercator@fryske-akademy.nl](mailto:mercator@fryske-akademy.nl)