

# ITALIAN

## The Italian language in education in Slovenia

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition



Regional Dossier series

The Italian language in education  
in Slovenia

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

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## Foreword

### *background*

Regional and minority languages are languages that differ from the official state language. The Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning uses the following definition for these languages, as stated in the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML):

Regional and minority languages are languages traditionally used within a given territory of a state by nationals of that state who form a group numerically smaller than the rest of the state's population; they are different from the official language(s) of that state, and they include neither dialects of the official language(s) of the state nor the languages of migrants.

The Mercator European Research Centre aims to acquire, apply, and circulate knowledge about these regional and minority languages in education. An important means to achieve this goal is the Regional Dossier series: documents that provide the most essential features of the education system of regions with a lesser-used regional or minority language.

### *aim*

The aim of the Regional Dossier series is to provide concise descriptions of minority languages in education, mainly in Europe but also in other parts of the world. 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, and pupils, and financial investments. Because of this fixed structure, the dossiers in the series are easy to compare.

### *target group*

The dossiers serve several purposes and are relevant for policymakers, researchers, teachers, students, and journalists who wish to explore developments in minority language schooling in Europe. They can also serve as a first orientation towards further research, or function as a source of ideas for improving educational provisions.

### *link with Eurydice*

The format of the Regional Dossiers follows the format of Eurydice – the information network on education in Europe – in order to link the regional descriptions with those of national

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education systems. Eurydice provides information on the administration and structure of national education systems in the member states of the European Union.

### ***contents***

Every Regional Dossier begins with an introduction about the region in question, followed by six chapters that each deal with a specific level of the education system (e.g. primary education). Chapters 8 and 9 cover the main lines of research on education of the minority language under discussion, and the prospects for the minority language in general and in education in particular, respectively. Chapter 10 provides a summary of statistics. Lists of (legal) references and useful addresses regarding the minority language are given at the end of the dossier.

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## Regional Dossier series

# The Italian language in education in Slovenia

2<sup>nd</sup> Edition

**Nives Zudič Antonič**

**Anja Zorman**

*University of Primorska*

### Summary

#### **Italian and its status in education in Slovenia**

In the Slovene Littoral, Slovene and Italian are official languages and thus they share equal status in public and private life. Learners in this region attend schools either with Slovene as the medium of instruction or with Italian as the medium of instruction, from pre-school to upper secondary education, and receive additional compulsory education in Italian as a second language (L2; Slovene schools) or Slovene L2 (Italian schools). Enrolment is open to all learners, regardless of their linguistic and cultural origin. In Slovenia, Italian is offered as a first language (L1) and L2 in the bilingual areas in the Slovene Littoral and as a foreign language in the rest of the national territory.

#### **Italian in educational research**

Educational research on Italian is conducted by the Department of Italian Studies and Faculty of Education at the University of Primorska, the Science and Research Centre in Koper, the Department of Italian and Faculty of Education at the University of Ljubljana, and the National Education Institute. The University of Primorska and the Science and Research Centre in Koper are the only institutions that conduct research specifically on Italian as L1 and L2. The Department of Italian Studies at the University of Primorska offers a doctoral study programme in Italian L1 literature, L1 and L2 linguistics, and didactics.

#### **Prospects for Italian in Slovenia**

The institutional support for bilingualism, enshrined in the Constitution and legislation of Slovenia, requires continuous monitoring due to the ever-changing social context. The major challenges today are to enhance motivation for learning Italian in school and to ensure constant exposure to the language outside school. To achieve this aim, more systematic solutions are required if schools are to continue to carry out the role of supporting the maintenance and further development of plurilingualism and interculturality in the coastal bilingual area.

## La lingua italiana nel sistema educativo sloveno

2<sup>a</sup> edizione

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### **Riassunto**

#### **L'italiano e il suo status nel sistema educativo sloveno**

Nel territorio sloveno del Litorale, lo sloveno e l'italiano sono lingue ufficiali e quindi hanno pari dignità nella vita pubblica e privata. Gli allievi di questa regione hanno la possibilità di frequentare scuole con lingua d'insegnamento slovena o scuole con lingua d'insegnamento italiana dalla scuola dell'infanzia alla scuola superiore, e in base alle rispettive scuole ricevono un'istruzione supplementare obbligatoria in italiano come seconda lingua (L2) (nelle scuole slovene) o sloveno L2 (nelle scuole italiane). L'iscrizione è aperta a tutti gli allievi, indipendentemente dalla loro origine linguistica e culturale. In Slovenia, l'italiano è offerto come prima lingua (L1) e L2 nelle aree bilingui del territorio sloveno del Litorale e come lingua straniera nel resto del territorio nazionale.

#### **L'italiano nella ricerca educativa**

La ricerca educativa sull'italiano è condotta dal Dipartimento di Italianistica e dalla Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione dell'Università del Litorale, dal Centro di Ricerche Scientifiche di Capodistria, dal Dipartimento di Italiano e dalla Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione dell'Università di Lubiana e dall'Istituto dell'Educazione della Repubblica di Slovenia. L'Università del Litorale e il Centro di Ricerche Scientifiche di Capodistria sono le uniche istituzioni che conducono ricerche specifiche sull'italiano come L1 e L2. Il Dipartimento di Italianistica dell'Università del Litorale offre un programma di dottorato in letteratura italiana L1, linguistica L1 e L2 e didattica.

#### **Prospettive per l'italiano in Slovenia**

Il sostegno istituzionale al bilinguismo, sancito dalla Costituzione e dalla legislazione slovena, richiede un monitoraggio continuo a causa del perenne cambiamento del contesto sociale. Oggi le sfide principali riguardano il rafforzare la motivazione all'apprendimento dell'italiano a scuola e garantire un'esposizione costante alla lingua al di fuori della scuola. Per raggiungere questo obiettivo sono necessarie soluzioni più sistematiche se si vuole che la scuola continui a svolgere il ruolo di sostegno al mantenimento e ad un ulteriore sviluppo del plurilinguismo e dell'interculturalità nell'area bilingue costiera.

## Italijanski jezik v izobraževanju v Sloveniji

2. izdaja

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### **Povzetek**

#### **Italijanščina in njen položaj v izobraževanju v Sloveniji**

V Slovenskem primorju sta uradna jezika slovenščina in italijanščina in torej imata enak ugled v javnem in zasebnem življenju. Učenci in dijaki obiskujejo vrtce in šole s slovenskim učnim jezikom ali šole z italijanskim učnim jezikom, in sicer od predšolske vzgoje do srednješolskega izobraževanja. Obenem se kot obvezni učni predmet učijo italijanščino kot jezik okolja (J2; slovenske šole) ali slovenščino J2 (italijanske šole). Vpis v vrtce in šole je odprt vsem otrokom, učencem in dijakom, ne glede na njihov jezikovni in kulturni izvor. V Sloveniji se italijanščina torej poučuje kot J1 in J2 na dvojezičnih območjih Slovenskega primorja ter kot tuji jezik v preostalem delu države.

#### **Raziskovanje italijanščine na področju vzgoje in izobraževanja**

Z raziskovanjem italijanščine v vzgoji in izobraževanju se v Sloveniji ukvarjajo Oddelek za italijanistiko in Pedagoška fakulteta Univerze na Primorskem, Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče v Kopru, Oddelek za romanistiko in Pedagoška fakulteta Univerze v Ljubljani ter Zavod Republike Slovenije za šolstvo. Pri tem se le Univerza na Primorskem in Znanstveno-raziskovalno središče Koper ukvarjata specifično z raziskovanjem italijanščine J1 in J2 na področju vzgoje in izobraževanja. Oddelek za italijanistiko Univerze na Primorskem izvaja doktorski študij književnosti, jezika in didaktike italijanščine kot J1 in J2.

#### **Perspektive za italijanščino v Sloveniji**

Institucionalna podpora dvojezičnosti, ki je zapisana v Ustavi in zakonodaji Republike Slovenije, potrebuje nenehno spremljanje in prilagajanje stalno spreminjajočemu se družbenemu kontekstu, v katerem se izvaja. Trenutno je največji izziv zvišanje motivacije za učenje italijanščine v šoli in zagotavljanje stalnega stika z jezikom izven šole. Doseganje tega cilja potrebuje systemske rešitve, da bi šolam omogočili, da še naprej učinkovito opravljajo svojo vlogo pri podpori in nadaljnem razvoju večjezičnosti in medkulturnosti dvojezičnega prostora Slovenskega primorja.



## List of Abbreviations

<b>CEFR</b>	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
<b>COE</b>	Council of Europe
<b>ECTS</b>	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>FL</b>	Foreign language
<b>L1</b>	First language
<b>L2</b>	Second language
<b>MIZŠ</b>	Ministrstvo za izobraževanje, znanost in šport (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport)
<b>SURS</b>	Statistični urad Republike Slovenije (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia)
<b>UL</b>	Univerza v Ljubljani (University of Ljubljana)
<b>UP</b>	Univerza na Primorskem (University of Primorska)
<b>ZGim</b>	Zakon o gimnazijah (Upper Secondary Education Act)
<b>ZOFVI</b>	Zakon o organizaciji in financiranju vzgoje in izobraževanja (Organisation and Financing of Education Act)
<b>ZOsn</b>	Zakon o osnovni šoli (Basic School Act)
<b>ZPIMVI</b>	Zakon o posebnih pravicah italijanske in madžarske narodne skupnosti na področju vzgoje in izobraževanja (Act Regulating Special Rights of Members of the Italian and Hungarian National Communities in the Field of Education)
<b>ZPSI</b>	Zakon o poklicnem in strokovnem izobraževanju (Vocational Education Act)

ZRSŠ	Zavod Republike Slovenije za šolstvo (National Education Institute)
ZVrt	Zakon o vrtcih (Kindergarten Act)



# 1 Introduction

## *language*

Italian is a Romance language spoken by approximately 60 million Italian citizens (Istituto Nazionale di Statistica, n.d.). Beyond national borders, towards the east, Italian is spoken by around 20,000 Italian nationals in Slovenia and Croatia on the west coast of Istria (Državni zavod za statistiku Republike Hrvatske, n.d.; Statistični urad Republike Slovenije, SURS, 2002). In addition to this compact ethnic group, there are also small linguistic islands in other republics of ex-Yugoslavia; these are remnants of the colonisations that took place during the time the Austro-Hungarian monarchy was assigned as temporary administrator of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. In this area today, there are only a handful of Italian speakers in the following settlements: Štivor near Prnjavor and Mahovljani near Banja Luka (today Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Pakrac, Ploštine near Pakrac, and Ciglanica near Kutina (today Croatia). These Italian speakers are descendants of emigrants from Trentino and the northern part of Veneto, and very few from Friuli in Italy. A more consistent community of Italian speakers is in Štivor, while elsewhere only a few families still speak a dialectal Italian (Rosario, 1979; Sanga, 1983; Skubic, 1988).

Italian is also spoken by part of the population in Switzerland (Canton Ticino and some Alpine valleys in the Canton of Graubünden, especially in Bregaglia). In France, Italian is spoken in a very small part of the French Riviera between Menton and Nice, as well as on the island of Corsica. The Italian population in the former colonies in Africa is not significant, but Italian is still the family language of the strong economic emigration in some Western European countries and others worldwide, especially in Canada, the USA, Argentina, and Australia. The vast majority of Italian emigrants in Anglo-Saxon countries are proficient speakers of English, while their Italian is their ancestors' dialect.

Italian is the official language of the Republic of Italy, the Republic of San Marino, and of the Vatican City State, together with Latin. Alongside Slovenian and Croatian, it is the official language of the coastal municipalities of Istria and, next to German and French, of the Swiss Confederation.

This Regional Dossier focuses on the Italian spoken in the south-west part of Slovenia, bordering Italy to the west and Croatia to the south. The Slovene-Italian area is situated in the northern part of the Istrian peninsula, today divided into two states, namely the Republic of Slovenia and the Republic of Croatia.

The Istrian Peninsula was first Romanised in the 3rd century BCE with the spread of the Roman Empire to the East and it was organically included in Roman Italy by the emperor Augustus in 27 BCE (Crevatin, 1975). Until the 5th century, Istria remained economically

prosperous and substantially peaceful under Byzantine administration, but in the 6th century, it suffered the Lombard presence and the Avar-Slavic migrations that weakened the unity of Istrian Romany. In conjunction with the Croatian pressure, which had created a wedge between the north and south, between Poreč and Rovinj, and a second wedge between the mouth of the river Timavo and Trieste, the premises were laid for the internal differentiation of local linguistic varieties. Although we cannot speak of an actual isolation of south-western Istria, only here are the Romance dialects preserved for which an autochthonous origin has been hypothesised; in the rest of the region, a linguistic change in favour of Venetian occurred (Crevatin, 1975; Ursini, 1998). In those parts of the Istrian Peninsula, in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with the rise of *Comuni* (Municipalities), a pro-Venetian current spread in the Istrian merchant classes, which “contributed to spreading a psychological humus, a climate that was favorable to the acculturation and assumption of the Venetian dialect” (Milani Kruljac, 1999, p. 78, own translation).

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Italy reached linguistic unity, and this had direct repercussions that affected Venice, where from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century official documents were drawn up in Italian. Similarly, in Istria, Italian was used as a communication tool and a clear chronological progression towards the Tuscan norm in the Istrian statutes between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries can be observed (Ursini, 1998), and Venetian definitively settled as *koinè*. Venetian spread through the following four channels: the political-administrative and military apparatus, the economic-commercial organisation and trade routes, the ecclesial organisation, and the scholastic organisation and culture (Crevatin, 1975).

From the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards, Slavs and Morlachs settled in the Istrian countryside, giving rise to an extremely varied ethnic and linguistic situation. In the cities, Venetian was favoured as the only means of a wide-ranging communication. The majority presence of the Slavs in the countryside made the Venetian dialect necessary for communication outside the cities. Ultimately, Venetian, as a prestigious language, became the preferred code. In 1813, Istria was occupied by the Austrians and following the Congress of Vienna (1815), it officially passed under the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Habsburgs brought together culturally and linguistically diverse people, guaranteeing local administrations and schools in Italian, Slavic languages, and Hungarian. German became the language of official administration, but Venetian remained the dominant language in communication (Crevatin, 1975, 1989). The most significant result of this last wave of Venetisation is the fluidity of the ethnic-linguistic borders, which lasted until World War II; in those years, a real bilingualism spread among the population, with the Italian speakers gradually gaining importance (Crevatin, 1975). The events that devastated Istria in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, first fascism, and subsequently the communist regime, are equally the cause of not only all the tragedies and dramas that occurred, but also of the current linguistic situation in the region.

As Milani Kruljac and Orbanić (1991) point out, the outline of the current sociolinguistic situation in the Istrian-Kvarner triangle must be based on the massive post-World War II exodus of Italians. The immediate consequences were the reduction in the number and the territorial discontinuity of Italian speakers, the reduction of the Istrian Romance dialect varieties, and, consequently, a shift in language use in social interaction, with the Romance varieties as marked and used in fewer communication domains.

Today, the Italian on the west coast of Istria and in the Kvarner Gulf is officially standard Italian, but it is usually replaced by the Istrian-Venetian dialectal variety, particularly in informal conversation and in the family milieu. The standard variety, although it holds official language status in addition to Slovene in the Slovene Littoral and is protected by law, is a live variety spoken in circumscribed areas and it is used in specific contexts, such as in school, in means of communication and information dedicated to the Italian minority, in the Italian department of the public library Srečko Vilhar in Koper, in associations organised by the Italian community, as well as in public use, both by Italian nationals and as a second language (L2) by other inhabitants of the Slovene part of Istria.

The contemporary European policies orientated towards the protection of endangered linguistic minorities in Europe bring new hope that Italian and Romance dialects will continue to be spoken in Istria, maintaining a centuries-old multilingual heritage of the Istrian Peninsula.

### ***population***

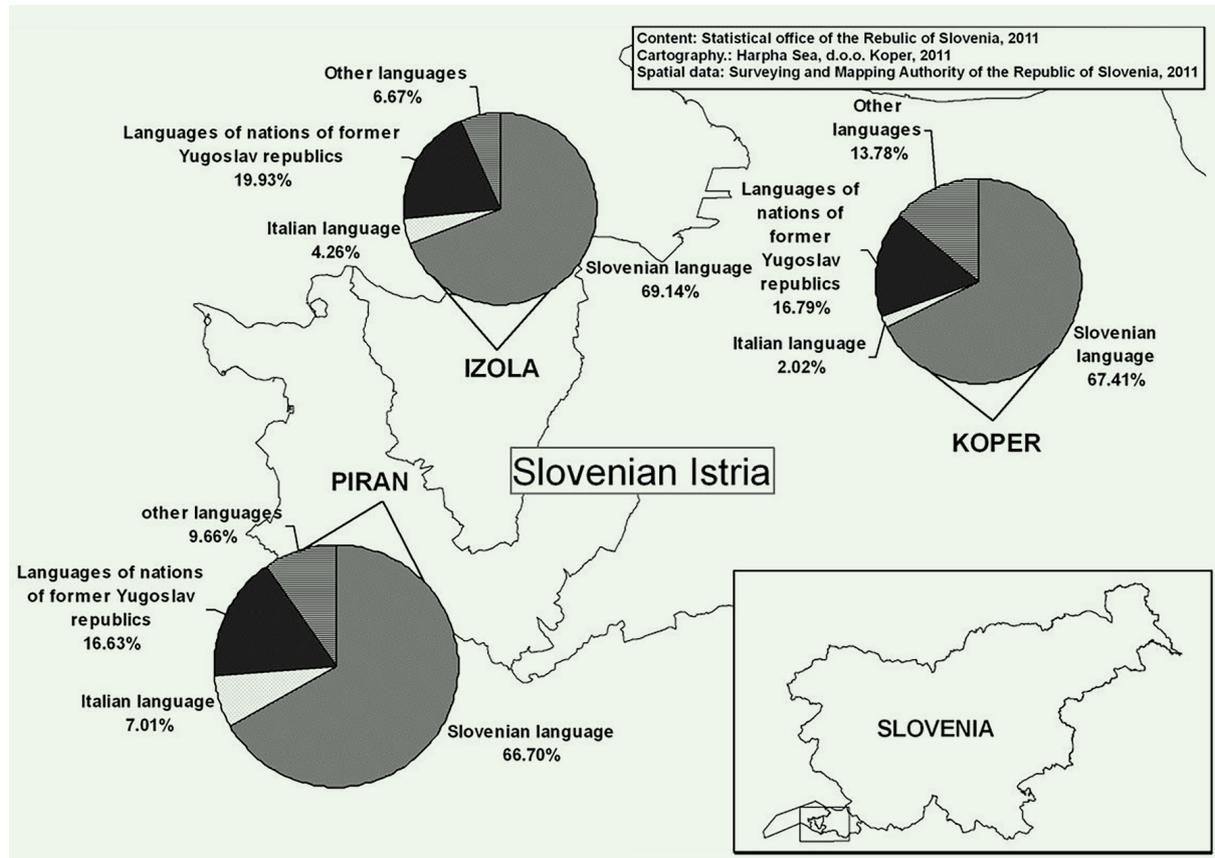
Evidence of speakers of Latin and *Latinum vulgare* and later of Italian along the Istrian coast dates back to the Bronze Age, and the population inhabiting the Istrian peninsula has been mixed ever since. The 2002 Census (SURIS, 2002) counted more than 11 languages spoken by the inhabitants of the Slovene Littoral (i.e. the Slovene part of Istria; see [Figure 1](#)), of whom 2,913 (2.85%) declared to be Italian speakers. Out of 1,964,036 Slovene citizens, 2,258 declared to be Italian nationals. This was the last survey that collected data on nationality.

Following the Italian armistice in 1943 and the annexation of the Istrian peninsula to the former Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia after World War II, the number of Italian nationals decreased dramatically. The population of coastal towns, predominantly Italian, was replaced by populations of other Istrian towns and hamlets, from other Slovene regions and other Yugoslav republics. The dramatic alteration in the ethnic structure of the Istrian peninsula caused the change in the linguistic structure of the urban centres of Koper, Izola, and Piran as well. Before the massive emigration, known as the great Istrian-Dalmatian exodus of Italians from Istria to Italy first, and from there approximately a quarter of Istrian-Dalmatian emigrants moved to Australia, other European countries, and North and South America (Zudič Antonič, 2014), the Italian language was used 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 all that was Italian tended to be identified as fascist. The ancient urban centres were inhabited by immigrants who spoke various dialects, mostly Slovene and Italian, but Croatian, Serbian, and Bosnian, among others, as well.

The Treaty of Osimo (1975), signed in 1975 by the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia and the Republic of Italy, conclusively divided the Free Territory of Trieste (1947–1954) between the two states, and annexing Zone B, formed by a small portion of the north-western part of the Istrian peninsula, to Yugoslavia. The new political border dramatically

altered all economic and cultural relations of Trieste and the Istrian hinterland, and it triggered a new wave of exodus of Italians from the region. In the Slovene Littoral, the Italian ethnic group represented most of the population until 1946, but today it only accounts for approximately 2% (SURS, 2002).

**Figure 1** Languages in the bilingual region of Istria in the Republic of Slovenia.



Note. From Čok and Zudič Antonič (2012). Data from SURS (2002).

The population of the Slovene Littoral belongs to one of the five bi- or plurilingual areas in Istria and the Kvarner Gulf (Croatia). Languages spoken in the Slovene Littoral by the majority of the population are Slovene and Italian dialects. A typical representative of this area is a bilingual Slovene or Italian national. In the border area between Slovenia and Croatia, Slovene, Croat dialects, and Istrian-Venetian are spoken. A speaker of this area is typically trilingual, belonging to the Slovene, Croatian, or Italian ethnic groups. The third bilingual area is on the national territory of Croatia (Istria and the Kvarner Gulf). The fourth and the fifth groups of bi- or plurilingual speakers in Istria are speakers of the Istrian-Romanian language and Istrian-Romance (*Istrioto*), respectively. They do not live in clustered geographical areas, rather, they are scattered throughout the Istrian peninsula. The newcomers, although substantial in number, do not represent linguistic nuclei important for the region. They are usually assimilated linguistically, or completely isolated, as is the case of the Albanian population in the area (Filipi, 1988/89).

Through receiving education in Italian from pre-school to upper secondary school, Italian nationals, who are native speakers of Italian, and other nationals, enrolled in schools with Italian as the medium of instruction, develop the highest levels of communicative competence in Italian. As a first language (L1), Italian is a compulsory subject at the matura exam at the end of upper secondary education. Results students achieve in Italian L1 at the matura exam are comparable to results in Slovene L1 and Hungarian L1 (see yearly reports from 1995 onwards, prepared by the National Examination Centre; Državni izpitni center, [n.d.](#)). At the time of writing this Regional Dossier (2023), data on the proficiency of adult speakers of Italian as L1 were not available.

Slovene and other nationals, enrolled in schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction in bilingual areas of the Slovene Littoral, are offered compulsory learning of the language in primary and secondary school so as to achieve a level of communicative competence in Italian (B1/B2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages – CEFR) that allows communication in both languages. However, the use of Italian as L2, particularly with young people, is mostly limited to school learning. The entire population in the bilingual areas of Istria comes into contact with Italian through bilingual inscriptions, while the frequency of interaction in Italian L2 with Italian speakers and contact through the media vary significantly from person to person. In general, the competence in Italian L2 is age-related. The older the speaker, the higher the level of competence they possess. In a study conducted in 2020, the average self-reported level of proficiency in speakers aged 40 and older was 4.03 (with 1 as the lowest proficiency and 5 as the highest), 3.04 in the age group 20–40 years, and 2.40 in speakers aged 20 or younger (Zorman, [2021](#)).

### *language status*

The Italian ethnic group in Slovenia is granted protection by the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter referred to as Constitution; Ustava Republike Slovenije, [1991](#)), laws, and other regulative documents at the national and regional levels. These grant the protection and the development of the Italian language and culture in public and private life. Article 11 of the Constitution stipulates Slovene and Italian as official languages in the Slovene Littoral. The exercise of the constitutional rights of national minorities in the Republic of Slovenia is monitored by the Committee of the Republic of Slovenia for National Communities (Komisija Vlade Republike Slovenije za narodnosti, [n.d.](#)). Italian is an official language besides Slovene in the settlements defined as bilingual by the statutes of the municipalities of Koper-Capodistria (place names are given in Slovene-Italian), Izola-Isola, Piran-Pirano, and Ankaran-Ancarano, namely 13 settlements out of 105 in the municipality of Koper-Capodistria (Barizoni-Barisoni, Bertoki-Bertocchi, Bošamarin-Bossamarino, Cerej-Cerei, Hrvatini-Crevatini, Kampel-Campel, Kolomban-Colombano, Koper-Capodistria, Prade, Premančan-Premanzano, part of the settlement Spodnje Škofije (Valmarin), Šalara-Salara, and Škocjan-San Canziano; see Article 7, Statut mestne občine Koper, [2005](#)), three settlements out of nine in the municipality of Izola-Isola (Dobrava, Izola-Isola, and Jagodje; Statut občine Izola, [1995](#)), eight settlements out of 15 in the municipality of Piran-Prano (Piran-Pirano, Portorož-Portorose, Lucija-Lucia, Strunjan-Strugnano, Seča-Sezza, Sečovlje-Sicciole,

Parecag-Parezzago, and Dragonja-Dragogna; Statut občine Piran, 1999), and the settlement Ankaran-Ancarano in the municipality of the same name (Statut občine Ankaran, 2015).

A specific Act Regulating Special Rights of Members of the Italian and Hungarian National Communities in the Field of Education was passed in 2001 (Zakon o posebnih pravicah italijanske in madžarske narodne skupnosti na področju vzgoje in izobraževanja, ZPIMVI, 2001). It regulates the integration of schools with Italian as a medium of instruction into the national education system, aims of instruction and education in Italian minority schools, adaptations due to linguistic peculiarity, organisation and operation, the use of didactic materials, and the issue of official documents such as school reports and diplomas.

As for the area of education, linguistic minorities' rights are determined by laws, on individual fields of human activity, and their fulfilment is monitored by the ministries responsible for these fields. The list of acts that regulate the right to use the Italian language in the Slovene-Italian bilingual area is available on the Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia website (PIS Pravno-informacijski sistem, n.d.-a).

A global supervision of the realisation of legal provisions on the protection of linguistic minorities is carried out by the Government of the Republic of Slovenia Office for Nationalities (Urad Vlade Republike Slovenije za narodnosti), an independent body operating within the government. Besides the supervision, this office is responsible for drawing attention to problems, preparing suggestions and initiatives that are presented to the government and its bodies, as well as cooperating with relevant ministries in preparing analyses and reports on wider issues regarding the protection of nationalities. Its government-independent activity is related to the (co-)financing of self-governing organisations of Italian and Hungarian communities, and the implementation of bilingualism and other constitutional rights of linguistic minorities in their areas of residence (Italian and Hungarian minority media, cultural, and other associations).

Today's constitutional and legislative ground for the protection of the linguistic minorities in the Republic of Slovenia originates in the Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia (Ustava Socialistične republike Slovenije, 1974) passed by the Socialist Republic of Slovenia (as part of the former Yugoslavia) in 1974. Due to the democratic regulation of the juridical and normative system prior to the independence of Slovenia in 1991, the conservation of minority languages and cultures has continued ever since. Moreover, the Republic of Slovenia signed (3 July 1997), ratified (4 October 2000), and enforced (1 January 2001) the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (Council of Europe, CoE, 1992).

### ***status of language education***

At national level, the right for historic minorities in the Republic of Slovenia to receive education in their L1 is enshrined in the Constitution (Ustava Republike Slovenije, 1991) and it is regulated by laws, namely by the Act Regulating Special Rights of Members of the Italian and Hungarian National Communities in the Field of Education of 2001 (ZPIMVI, 2001), the

Kindergarten Act of 1996 (Zakon o vrtcih, ZVrt, 1996), the Basic School Act of 1996 (Zakon o osnovni šoli, ZOsn, 1996), the Upper Secondary Education Act of 1996 (Zakon o gimnazijah, ZGim, 1996) and the Vocational Education Act of 1996 (Zakon o poklicnem in strokovnem izobraževanju, ZPSI, 1996).

The use of Italian as a medium of instruction is stipulated by Article 3 of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (Zakon o organizaciji in financiranju vzgoje in izobraževanja, ZOFVI, 1996), passed in 1996, and it is required by Article 6 of the Basic School Act (ZOsn, 1996), Article 8 of the Upper Secondary Education Act (ZGim, 1996), and Article 8 of the Vocational Education Act (ZPSI, 1996). These articles also determine the compulsory learning of Italian in schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction, situated in bilingual areas of the Slovene Littoral.

Similar to legislation that regulates the language status of Italian as a minority language, legislation at the bases of the status of language education in Italian as a minority language in the Republic of Slovenia originates from documents passed by the former state of Yugoslavia. The General Education Act (Splošni zakon o šolstvu, 1958) that ensures national minorities education in their language was passed in 1959 by the People's Republic of Slovenia. The act stated that in areas where national minorities live, they are granted education in nursery schools (Article 72), primary schools (Article 71), and upper secondary schools (Article 73), and pre-service teacher training (Article 74) in the minority language as a medium of instruction. In 1982, a specific Act on Special Rights of Members of the Italian and Hungarian National Communities in the Field of Education was passed (Zakon o posebnih pravicah italijanske in madžarske narodne skupnosti na področju vzgoje in izobraževanja, 1982).

The learning of Italian as L2 in schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction in areas that are defined by municipalities' statutes as bilingual was introduced by law by the Socialist Republic of Slovenia in 1980 with the Act on the Education and Care of Pre-school Children (Zakon o vzgoji in varstvu predšolskih otrok, 1980, Article 17) for children aged 11 months to 7 years, with the Basic School Act (Zakon o osnovni šoli, 1980, Article 19) for pupils aged 7 to 15 years, and with the Career-oriented Education Act (Zakon o usmerjenem izobraževanju, 1980, Article 19) for students aged 15 to 19.

Legal regulation of the status of Slovene and Italian minority education in Italy and Slovenia, respectively, is based on the London Memorandum (1954), signed on 5 October 1954, and ratified by the Socialist Federative Republic of Yugoslavia on 25 October 1954. The London Memorandum was not ratified by the Republic of Italy. In 1975, the two states signed an agreement, the Treaty of Osimo (1975), in which provisions of the London Memorandum were agreed upon bilaterally. After gaining independence in 1991, the Republic of Slovenia became the legal successor of Yugoslavia in these agreements.

According to the London Memorandum (1954) and the Treaty of Osimo (1975), the Italian minority school network cannot be altered without the consent of the Republic of Italy, which holds part of the responsibility for the Italian schools in Slovenia. To enhance the

provisions contained in the international documents, various agreements regarding pupils', students', and teachers' contacts with the motherland, in-service teacher training, and scientific research were stipulated between the Republic of Slovenia and Republic of Italy. The umbrella agreement, based on Article 8 of the Treaty of Osimo (1975), is the Programme of Cultural Cooperation between the Government of the Republic of Slovenia and the Government of the Republic of Italy 1995–1998, signed in 1994 and ratified by the Republic of Slovenia in 1995 (Uredba o ratifikaciji Programa kulturnega sodelovanja med Vlado Republike Slovenije in Vlado Republike Italije v letih, 1995–1998, 1994), and the subsequent agreements on cultural cooperation between the two governments. The agreement regulates the exchange of school advisors for the Italian minority in Slovenia and the Slovene minority in Italy, in-service training for teachers in minority schools on both sides of the border, the financing of scholarships for pre-service training, traineeships and language improvement of minority school teachers, supply of books for minority schools' libraries, didactic materials and textbooks, and the financing of educational trips to the motherland for all primary school pupils and teachers. For the Italian minority schools in Slovenia, these activities are financed or co-financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Agreements on the interstate collaboration in the field of culture and education are published on the website of the Italian Cultural Centre in Ljubljana (Ambasciata d'Italia Lubiana, n.d.). The list of laws passed by the Italian government regarding the Italian minority in Slovenia and Croatia are available on the Italian Union website (Unione Italiana, n.d.). All Slovene-Italian bilateral agreements are published on the Slovene Government website (GOV.SI, n.d.-a), and on the national Official Gazette website (PIS Pravno-informacijski sistem, n.d.-b).

### ***education system***

After Slovenia gained political independence in 1991, the regulation of the education system at all levels was systematised in 1996 with education laws for all levels of education and instruction (ZGim, 1996; ZOsn, 1996; ZPSI, 1996; ZVrt, 1996). Laws were designed based on concepts specified in the White Book on Education and Instruction in the Republic of Slovenia (hereinafter referred to as the White Book; Krek, 1995). Principles on which education and instruction in Slovenia are founded are based on the common European inheritance of political, cultural, and moral values, namely human rights, state of law, plural democracy, tolerance, and solidarity. The principle of equality guarantees equal opportunities to receive education, while the principle of freedom ensures the possibility of choice.

The concepts in the White Book aim at ensuring high educational standards and comparability of the Slovene education system with those of other European countries, so as to allow for mutual recognition of qualifications. The importance of languages within the Slovene education system (Slovene as L1, L2, learners' L1 other than Slovene, and minority languages) and language learning (L2, foreign language – FL) in general is stressed. In the White Book, solutions to reform the system and the content of education and instruction were suggested, in particular the transition from the 8-year to 9-year compulsory basic education and, consequently, earlier admission to primary school (at age 6) and

13-year pre-tertiary education. A conceptual content reform of each subject area was also suggested. The responsibility of the conceptual layout of the education system has thus been transferred from legislative bodies to competent government departments, such as the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (Ministrstvo za izobraževanje, znanost in šport – MIZŠ). Today, legislation merely defines the structural framework and procedures for the approval of content changes, while objectives, content, and didactic guidelines are outlined by subject commissions appointed by the MIZŠ, and they are stated in subjects' curricula.

In the White Book, it was also suggested that upper secondary education should be concluded with an external examination, either a final exam in vocational education or a matura exam in general and upper secondary vocational and technical education. Final examinations are regulated by Regulations on Final Examinations (Pravilnik o zaključnem izpitu, 2008) and the Matura Examination Act (Zakon o maturi, 2007).

Since the first edition of the White Book was published, various solutions it had suggested have been altered. In 2011, a new edition of the White Book was thus issued, offering a systematic overview of the structure and the functioning of the Slovene education system, and suggesting measures to ensure a quality functioning of the school system in the future (Krek & Metljak, 2011). Strategic challenges and orientations of the Slovene education system aim at developing knowledge in the society of knowledge and for sustainable development, at striving for quality general education in all areas of instruction, at skillful use of modern information communication technologies, at education for values and understanding the value of knowledge as well as responsibilities and rights of learners in the education system, and at developing lifelong learning. With reference to language, the White Book stresses the importance of Slovene as L1 and L2, Italian and Hungarian as L1 and L2 in nationally mixed areas, L1s of immigrant children, as well as the importance of learning FLs.

The basic goal of the education system in Slovenia is to guarantee the optimal development of individuals regardless of gender, social and cultural background, religion, racial, ethnic and national appurtenance, or physical and mental constitution or disability. In line with the Constitution (1991), in the Republic of Slovenia, citizens are free to decide whether to enrol in education; only the basic education for pupils aged between 6 and 15 years is compulsory and receives full public financing. Tertiary education institutions are autonomous.

The education system of Slovenia includes pre-school (ages 11 months to 6 years), basic education and basic education with an adapted education programme, which both include primary and lower secondary education (ages 6–15), upper secondary education that encompasses general education (ages 15–19) and short upper secondary vocational education (ages 15–16), upper secondary vocational education (ages 15–17), upper secondary technical education (ages 15–18) and a 2-year upper secondary technical education to continue upper secondary vocational education, and tertiary education (see *Education system in Slovenia*). The state is also responsible for music schools, educational institutions for children with special educational needs, and adult education. Schools with minority languages as the medium of instruction are part of the national education system, operating on the legal regulation, principles, and curricula passed by the responsible state institutions.

## ***private and public***

In the Republic of Slovenia, there are some private nursery schools (GOV.SI, [n.d.-b](#)) and six private primary schools (GOV.SI, [n.d.-c](#)) that implement officially accredited programmes. In the Slovene-Italian bilingual area, there are no private primary or secondary schools, and there are only four private nursery schools (GOV.SI, [n.d.-d](#)).

## ***bilingual education forms***

In the Slovene Littoral, there are schools with Slovene and schools with Italian as the medium of instruction. The school enrolment system is open to all nationalities. In primary schools (ages 6–15) and in secondary schools (ages 15–19) situated in settlements defined by municipal statutes as bilingual (Statut mestne občine Koper, 2005; Statut občine Ankaran, 2015; Statut občine Izola, 1995; Statut občine Piran, 1999), children attend compulsory learning of the L2. In schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction, Italian is taught as a compulsory subject, while in schools with Italian as the medium of instruction, children learn Slovene (ZGim, 1996, Article 8; ZOsn, 1996, Article 6; ZPSI, 1996, Article 6).

Within the education system of Slovenia, nine schools operate with Italian as the medium of instruction, namely three nursery schools (*Delfino Blu* in Koper-Capodistria, *L'Aquilone* in Izola-Isola, and *La Coccinella* in Piran-Pirano), three primary schools (*Scuola elementare Pier Paolo Vergerio il vecchio* in Koper-Capodistria, *Scuola elementare Dante Alighieri* in Izola-Isola, and *Scuola elementare Vincenzo e Diego De Castro* in Piran-Pirano), two general upper secondary education schools (*Ginnasio Gian Rinaldo Carli* in Koper-Capodistria and *Ginnasio Antonio Sema* in Piran-Pirano), and one upper secondary vocational education school (*Scuola media Pietro Coppo* in Izola-Isola). Education and instruction in Italian are thus offered from pre-school to upper secondary education. As a rule, teachers and experts collaborating in the Italian educational curriculum are members of the Italian ethnic group.

Yearly, more than 8,000 children in schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction in the Slovene Littoral learn Italian as L2 (B. Straus, personal communication, MIZŠ – Department of Educational Development and Quality, August 19, 2022). In line with the CoE, language proficiency levels defined in the CEFR (CoE, 2001), at the end of the primary school, children are expected to have reached A1 (Break-through) to B1 (Threshold) level, while at end of the secondary school, children reach B1 (Threshold) to B2 (Vantage) level.

In the western area of Slovenia, alongside the border with Italy (Nova Gorica and the Northern Primorska region), Italian holds a particular position as a neighbouring language. Although in schools Italian is taught as a facultative subject and as FL education (in the third cycle of primary schools and in secondary education), children have constant contact with the Italian language and culture through daily activities (e.g. films, sports activities, mass media, books, shopping, and lifestyle). Some children therefore learn Italian even before they enter primary school.

At the tertiary level, the study of Italian is offered by the University of Ljubljana (Univerza v Ljubljani – UL) and the University of Primorska (Univerza na Primorskem – UP). Courses in Italian are offered only by the Faculty of Education (UP) within the pre-service education of pre-school and primary school teachers.

### ***administration***

The right to education in the L1 for all minorities, including the Italian minority, was first regulated by the General Education Act (Splošni zakon o šolstvu, 1958), passed in 1959 by the then People's Republic of Slovenia, and later on by the Act on Special Rights of Members of the Italian and Hungarian National Communities in the Field of Education (Zakon o posebnih pravicah italijanske in madžarske narodne skupnosti na področju vzgoje in izobraževanja, 1982) passed in 1982 by the then Socialist Republic of Slovenia. The learning of Italian as L2 is also regulated by law, specifically by the Act on the Education and Care of Pre-school Children (Zakon o vzgoji in varstvu predšolskih otrok, 1980), the Basic School Act (ZOs, 1980), and the Career-oriented Education Act (Zakon o usmerjenem izobraževanju, 1980), all passed in 1980 by the then Socialist Republic of Slovenia as part of former Yugoslavia.

The Government of the present-day Republic of Slovenia, as the legal successor of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia, has adopted the legislation from its predecessors that continues to guarantee the maintenance of the bilingual model founded in the late 1950s and 1970s.

The education system of Slovenia is organised mainly as a public service and implemented through officially accredited programmes. Legislation allows the founding of private educational institutions that implement their own programmes, which undergo the accreditation procedure through the National Council for General Education as well, thus offering citizens the choice of education in line with their individual world views (ZGim, 1996, Article 8; ZOFVI, 1996; ZOs, 1996, Article 6; ZPSI, 1996, Article 6).

Public institutions are regulated, founded, financed, and supervised by state and local authorities. The MIZŠ is authorised and responsible for planning and managing educational policies and systemic regulations. It plans or participates in planning national programmes and financial plans for pre-school, basic, secondary, and tertiary education. It is responsible for budget execution, infrastructure investments, information systems, and the status regulation of employees. Moreover, the MIZŠ participates in the regulation of enrolment calls and in deciding which upper secondary schools implement which programme (i.e. programme distribution). Schools apply for new programmes every year, then the ministry studies the demand, and the state approves (a handful of) those applications.

To implement the planning and managing of ministerial educational policy, and to prepare regulations and national programmes, the Government appoints the following national councils of experts: National Council for General Education (Strokovni svet RS za splošno izobraževanje), National Council for Vocational Education (Strokovni svet RS za poklicno

in strokovno izobraževanje), National Council for Adult Education (Strokovni svet RS za izobraževanje odraslih), and the Council for Higher Education (Svet za visoko šolstvo).

Curricula from pre-school to secondary education are thus conceived, implemented, and monitored at the national level. They are designed by committees appointed by the Ministry of Education, approved by the National Council for General Education (Strokovni svet RS za splošno izobraževanje), and their implementation is monitored by the National Education Institute (Zavod Republike Slovenije za šolstvo – ZRSŠ). All textbooks used in schools are also approved by the National Council for General Education (Strokovni svet RS za splošno izobraževanje). Standards of pre-school education are monitored by municipalities.

At the tertiary level, curricula are proposed by universities and validated and monitored by the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency (Nacionalna agencija za kakovost v visokem šolstvu).

All educational institutions and legal entities operating in the Slovene-Italian bilingual area are obliged by law to operate in both official languages (Slovene and Italian). Each law contains an article in which it specifies that in bilingual areas of the Republic of Slovenia, Italian (and Hungarian) are used as official languages besides Slovene.

The Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (Ministrstvo za delo, družino, socialno delo in enake možnosti) is competent for the social state of children and families, pupils, and secondary and tertiary students. Some other ministries are competent for individual common questions in education, such as health, culture, and public administration.

### ***inspection***

Supervision of the education system is performed at the national level by the Inspectorate of the Republic of Slovenia for Education and Sport (hereinafter referred to as Inspectorate; Slovene: Inšpektorat Republike Slovenije za šolstvo in šport). It operates within the MIZŠ in terms of inspection control on the implementation of laws and other acts that regulate education and instruction in public nursery schools, primary schools, schools at secondary level, music schools, educational institutions for children and young people with special needs, and private adult education organisations that operate within official programmes. The Inspectorate controls the use of public funds and the operation of dorms for primary school pupils and secondary school students, and its authority is limited by the School Inspection Act (Zakon o šolski inšpekciji, 2005). When necessary, the Inspectorate requests expert opinions from experts appointed by the ministerial council (Strokovni svet Ministrstva RS za izobraževanje, znanost in šport) for individual fields of expertise. When an irregularity is identified, the Inspectorate determines the measures and deadlines for its correction. In private schools, the Inspectorate intervention is limited to the control of the organisation of education and instruction, compliance with national curricula, and the use of public funds.

At the tertiary level, the control of quality is performed by the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency (Nacionalna agencija za kakovost v visokem šolstvu). The Inspectorate supervises only pre-enrolment procedures and deadlines to ensure their implementation is in compliance with the law.

### ***support structure***

Public educational institutions that act as support to the education system in terms of development, professional help and control, quality monitoring, counselling, and alike are founded by the government. At the time of writing this Regional Dossier (2023), the following institutions were active: the National Education Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (ZRSŠ), the Institute of the Republic of Slovenia for Vocational Education and Training (Center RS za poklicno izobraževanje), the National Examinations Centre (Državni izpitni center), the Educational Research Institute (Pedagoški inštitut), the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (Andragoški center Republike Slovenije), the National School of Leadership in Education (Šola za ravnatelje), the Centre for School and Outdoor Education (Center za šolske in obšolske dejavnosti), and the Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes (Center za mobilnost in evropske programe izobraževanja in usposabljanja).

The ZRSŠ is responsible for in-service teacher training and the development of teaching materials as well as consulting support for teachers. Experts on didactics in individual fields of education and instruction are constantly involved in the Institute's activities. The National School of Leadership in Education (Šola za ravnatelje) operates within the Institute and is responsible for the training and professional development of headteachers and candidates.

Attention to Italian as a minority language as well as L2, and to intercultural education and dialogue, is paid by national and international projects that follow the CoE's policies on language education (see *Educational research*).

## 2 Pre-school education

### *target group*

Pre-school education is for children aged 1 to 6 years or until they start compulsory primary education (GOV.SI, [n.d.-e](#)).

### *structure*

Pre-school education is provided by public and private nursery schools, and by private providers (childminders), authorised by the MIZŠ. Nursery schools provide education and care to the following two age groups: children aged 1 to 3 years and children aged 3 until they start compulsory primary education. Education programmes are carried out by pre-school teachers and pre-school teaching assistants. The work is organised in full-day, half-day, or part-time programmes, in line with parents' needs. Pre-school education is not compulsory and, as such, it is paid for by parents or a child's legal guardian.

Pre-school education follows the national curriculum (Bahovec et al., 1999), approved in 1999 by the National Council for General Education (Strokovni svet RS za splošno izobraževanje), a body of the MIZŠ. It is implemented based on the principles of democracy, pluralism, autonomy, professionalism and responsibility of employees, equal opportunities for children and parents according to the children's individual characteristics, the right to choose and diversity, and maintaining a balance between children's physical and mental development. The curriculum is organised into the following six areas of learning and development: physical development, language and communication, art, nature, society, and mathematics. For each area, objectives are defined, and examples of activities for individual age groups as well as the role of adults in those activities are described. The emphasis is also implicitly on the hidden curriculum (i.e. through guidelines on adults' communication and conduct with children), namely on elements of educational influence on children through attitudes and indirect activities that are not defined in the curriculum and often carry a stronger impact than those defined. The hidden curriculum deals with values, behaviour, beliefs and attitudes. The attitude a teacher has towards, for example, the Italian minority is implicitly transferred to pupils. With the help of the hidden curriculum, teachers can either negatively or positively influence their pupils in a way that is more powerful than the contents of a textbook or a (visible) curriculum since pupils, particularly young children, are not cognitively, psychologically, and emotionally equipped to critically process adults' behaviour.

In nursery schools with Italian as the medium of instruction, education and instruction are implemented following the national curriculum with adaptations regarding language and some cultural content related to the motherland.

The role of minority nursery schools in ethnically and linguistically mixed areas is to create the foundations for the development of bilingualism in the members of the two national groups. To meet these requirements, the curriculum (Bahovec et al., 1999) used in Italian minority pre-school education contains integrative parts oriented to the cultural legacy of both educational and didactic groups, which are adapted to models of education and instruction for bilingualism.

In 2002, the ZRSŠ issued a Compendium to the Nursery School Curriculum in Nationally Mixed Areas (Cotič et al., 2002). It states that nursery schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction, situated in bilingual areas of the Slovene Littoral, are obliged to sensitise children to Italian as L2. The process of sensitisation is not a direct instruction of the language. Teachers and their assistants thoughtfully and professionally chose those content, forms, and manners of activity that allow children to become familiar with Italian. These activities aim to raise children's awareness of the cohabitation of the two languages and cultures in their environment, and to develop adequate communicative competence in Slovene and Italian. Both teachers and assistants are proficient in Italian and possess professional and specific didactic competences to conduct the process of the sensitisation of children with the language. The compendium contains specific information on the adaptation of educational processes in the areas of language, society, and arts, stating objectives, and examples of activities.

### ***legislation***

Pre-school education in the Republic of Slovenia is regulated by the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI, 1996) and the Kindergarten Act (ZVrt, 1996). The use of the Italian language as a medium of instruction in minority nursery schools is determined by Articles 3 and 5 of the respective acts. The organisation, implementation, and aims of education and instruction in minority nursery schools, use of didactic materials, and other adaptations to the national pre-school system are regulated by the Act Regulating Special Rights of Members of the Italian and Hungarian National Communities in the Field of Education (ZPIMVI, 2001), which was passed in 2001.

All legislation regarding education is proposed by the MIZŠ and passed by the national government.

### ***language use***

Italian is used as the medium of instruction in three nursery schools situated in the Slovene Littoral (*Scuola dell'infanzia Delfino Blu* in Koper-Capodistria, *Scuola dell'infanzia L'Aquilone* in Izola-Isola, and *Scuola dell'infanzia La Coccinella* in Piran-Pirano), in accordance with Article 3 of Organisation and Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI, 1996) and Article 5 of the Kindergarten Act (ZVrt, 1996). These nursery schools are all public institutions.

In nursery schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction, situated in bilingual areas, Italian is used in activities that promote children's familiarisation with the language. Where possible, in pre-school education, the *one person-one language* model is applied.

### ***teaching materials***

In the Republic of Slovenia, textbooks for all curricular subjects, including languages, are approved by the National Council for General Education (Strokovni svet RS za splošno izobraževanje). The list of available textbooks is published on the website of the MIZŠ (n.d.). The advisor for Italian minority schools at the ZRSŠ and nursery school teachers analyse the didactic material available. The ZRSŠ then makes an official request for the approval of the chosen material to the National Council for General Education. When the approval procedure is complete, the decision is published in the Official Gazette and the textbook appears on the list. In case no textbook is present on the list, teachers are free to use any textbook available on the market.

Didactic materials used in pre-school education in the Slovene Littoral are not bilingual, since the Slovene-Italian bilingual model, implemented in nursery schools, is language-based (schools with Slovene and schools with Italian as the medium of instruction).

Nursery schools with Italian as the medium of instruction use teachers' guides and exercise books for children developed and published in Italy for their pre-school education. These textbooks are taken off the market a few years after their publication, and due to this dynamic process on the Italian market, textbooks do not necessarily appear on the Slovene official ministerial list of approved textbooks. Teachers often find out about new textbooks during in-service training courses from publishers' sales teams and university trainers.

According to data collected from nursery schools (H. Susman, personal communication, teaching assistant at the nursery school La Coccinella, August 26, 2022; M. Bertok, personal communication, head of the nursery school Delfino Blu, August 19, 2022), the following didactic materials were in use at the time of data collection: *La fabbrica delle idee (The Factory of Ideas)*, *Piccole mani (Small Hands)*; Publisher: Del Borgo scuola), *Esplorare nuove avventure con i bru.co.fa. (Explore New Adventures with the bru.co.fa)*, *I laboratori Raffaello (Raffaello workshops)*, *A scuola.it. (To school.it)*; Publisher: Raffaello), and *Classi aperte (Open classrooms)*; Publisher: Edizioni Capitello). Materials are imported from Italy and paid for by the Italian Government as part of their responsibility for Italian minority schools.

In addition to teachers' guides and exercise books for children, imported from Italy, in nursery schools, both with Italian and with Slovene as mediums of instruction, teachers produce their own teaching materials that are either based on the imported didactic materials or relate to the bilingual area in which the schools operate.

## *statistics*

In the school year 2021/22, in the three nursery schools with Italian as the medium of instruction situated in the Slovene Littoral, 530 children were enrolled, and 73 teachers were employed (C. Valentič Kostić, personal communication, head of the nursery school L'Aquilone and primary school Dante Alighieri, August 29, 2022; M. Bertok, personal communication, head of the nursery school Delfino Blu, August 19, 2022; M. Hrvatin, personal communication, head of the nursery school La Coccinella, August 26, 2022).

## 3 Primary education

### *target group*

Primary education is for pupils aged 6 to 15 years (GOV.SI, n.d.-f).

### *structure*

Primary education is compulsory, and it is organised in a 9-year primary school, which includes lower secondary education. It is provided by public and private primary schools, with less than 1% attending private schools (according to SURS, n.d., in the school year 2021/22, 195,414 pupils were enrolled in primary schools, of whom 1,943 were enrolled in private schools), by educational institutions for children with special educational needs, and by institutions responsible for adult education. The programme is divided into three 3-year periods. Classes one to five are taught by class teachers, while classes six to nine are taught by subject teachers. Individual subjects, such as physical education or languages, may be taught by subject teachers throughout the basic school. The maximum number of pupils per class is 28, or lower in specific circumstances, such as age combined classes, national minority education, or the presence of Roma pupils or children with special educational needs.

Primary education takes place in the morning 5 days per week, from Monday to Friday. The weekly obligation of pupils within the compulsory programme is prescribed by the Basic School Act (ZOSn, 1996). In the first period, the maximum number of teaching hours is 24, in the second period 26, and in the third period 30. In schools in nationally mixed areas, where L2 is taught, the maximum number of teaching hours in the first period is 26, in the second period 28, and in the third period 32. In the first 3-year period, the grading is descriptive, and in the second and third periods, it is numeric. Primary education is completed when a pupil gains a sufficient grade in all ninth-year subjects; no additional testing is required to transition to upper secondary education (see *Secondary education*). Primary schools have compulsory FL classes and offer elective FL2 and FL3 classes. In the Slovene Littoral, schools have compulsory L2 and FL classes and offer FL2 and FL3 classes (GOV.SI, n.d.-g).

Primary education is determined by a general study plan and curricula for each compulsory and elective subject (GOV.SI, n.d.-g). It provides teachers and other school staff with guidelines and concepts required to perform other forms of work with pupils, such as morning and after-school care, outdoor education, out-of-school activities, as well as cross-curricular activities. Other documents that regulate school staff's work are attached to the general study plan and curricula.

## *legislation*

Primary education in the Republic of Slovenia is regulated by the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI, 1996) and the Basic School Act (ZOSn, 1996). The use of Italian as a medium of instruction in minority primary schools is determined by Articles 3 and 6 of respective acts. The organisation, implementation and aims of education and instruction in minority primary schools, use of didactic materials, and other adaptations to the national primary education system are regulated by the Act Regulating Special Rights of Members of the Italian and Hungarian National Communities in the Field of Education of 2001 (ZPIMVI, 2001), the Rules Defining the Field of Education of Teachers in 9-year Bilingual Elementary Schools and nine-year Elementary Schools with Italian as Teaching Language of 2006 (Pravilnik o smeri izobrazbe učiteljev v devetletni jezični osnovni šoli in devetletni osnovni šoli z italijanskim učnim jezikom, 2006), and the Rules on norms and standards for the implementation of the basic school programme in bilingual basic schools and basic schools with Italian as the language of instruction of 2005 (Pravilnik o normativih in standardih za izvajanje programa osnovne šole v dvojezičnih osnovnih šolah in osnovnih šolah z italijanskim učnim jezikom, 2005). All legislation regarding education is proposed by the MIZŠ and passed by the Government.

## *language use*

Italian is used as the medium of instruction in three primary schools situated in the Slovene Littoral (*Scuola elementare Pier Paolo Vergerio il vecchio* in Koper-Capodistria, *Scuola elementare Dante Alighieri* in Izola-Isola, and *Scuola elementare Vincenzo e Diego De Castro* in Piran-Pirano), in accordance with the Article 3 of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI, 1996) and Article 6 of the Basic School Act (ZOSn, 1996). In primary schools with Italian as the medium of instruction, education and instruction are implemented following the national programme with adaptations regarding language and some cultural content related to Italy. Italian language teaching has the duty to maintain, valorise, and promote the historical presence of the language, culture, and identity of the Italian minority in the nationally mixed area of the Slovene Littoral. In addition to the language, there are some curricular adaptations for social sciences, history, and geography (Crasnich et al., 2011).

In primary schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction, situated in bilingual areas of the Slovene Littoral, Italian is taught as a compulsory subject for 2 teaching hours (45 minutes each) a week throughout the 9-year basic education. Learning begins in the first class of primary school, before which many pupils have already come into contact with Italian in their environment. School offers a direct learning of language, which is concurrent to pupils' L1, and it is extensive since it is compulsory to the end of upper secondary education. The main objective is to develop the level of communicative competence in Italian that would allow intercultural contact with Italian speakers and to foster positive attitudes towards the Italian culture in general. By the end of primary school, pupils will have received 624 hours of Italian as a subject and they are expected to have developed a communicative competence at A1–A2 or B1 level. Due to the heterogeneous nature of previous knowledge

and knowledge gained outside school, teachers differentiate their work in the classroom and guide pupils to the best level they can achieve. Ideally, all pupils should reach level B1, but the reality is that this is close to impossible for children with limited to no contact with Italian outside school. In contrast, children with contact with Italian are supported to reach level B1, hence the flexibility in the expected results. Therefore, all pupils ideally aim for B1, but in reality, some reach A2 and some even A1. Some children are immigrants who have to tackle three (foreign) languages concurrently, namely, Slovene, Italian, and English. The curriculum of Italian as L2 in the Slovene Littoral (Šečerov et al., 2011a) defines general and specific objectives of the subject; it lists learning content, and standards of knowledge, acquired after each 3-year period, and provides teachers with didactic recommendations.

In schools in the Slovene Littoral that are situated outside bilingual areas, Italian is offered as an elective subject for 2 teaching hours a week in the third 3-year cycle and as an extracurricular activity in the first and second 3-year cycles.

Italian is offered at the two institutions for children with special educational needs (Center za komunikacijo, sluh in govor – Centre for Communication, Hearing and Speech; Center za usposabljanje Elvira Vatovec – Centre for Adapted Education Elvira Vatovec), operating in the bilingual areas of the Slovene Littoral. These institutions are open to children of all nationalities, and their mobile unit provides professional support to Slovene schools and to Italian minority schools.

All primary schools in the Slovene-Italian bilingual area in the Republic of Slovenia are public institutions.

### ***teaching materials***

Textbooks and related exercise books and teachers' guides are approved by the National Council for General Education (Strokovni svet RS za splošno izobraževanje). The list of available textbooks is published on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MIZŠ, n.d.). The advisor for Italian minority schools and the advisor for Italian as L2 at the ZRSŠ, and primary school teachers analyse the didactic material available. The ZRSŠ then makes an official request for the approval of the chosen material to the National Council for General Education. When the approval procedure is complete, the decision is published in the Official Gazette and the textbook appears on the list. In case no textbook is present on the list, teachers are free to use any textbook available on the market.

Textbooks for Italian in primary schools with Italian as the medium of instruction are developed and published in Italy. These textbooks are taken off the market a few years after their publication, and due to this dynamic process on the Italian market, textbooks do not necessarily appear on the Slovene official ministerial list of approved teaching materials.

According to data collected from schools and the ZRSŠ (R. Kalc, personal communication, National Education Institute/ZRSŠ, senior advisor for classes 1 to 5 in the Italian minority primary schools, August 23, 2022; N. Deželak, personal communication, Italian language teacher at the primary school Dante Alighieri, August 22, 2022; L. Chirissi, personal communication, Italian language teacher at the primary school Pier Paolo Vergerio il vecchio, August 29, 2022), the following textbooks were in use at the time of data collection: *I mini gialli dei dettati* (*Small mysteries of dictations*; Publisher: Erickson), *Italiano più* (*Italian plus*), *Amico faro* (*Lighthouse friend*; Publisher: Raffaello Scuola), *Navighiamo insieme: Italiano* (*Let's sail together: Italian*; Publisher: Mondadori Education), *Nuovo Amicolibro* (*The new bookfriend*; Publisher: Mondadori Scuola), *Sorrìdoimparo cresce* (*Smilelearn grows up*), *Punto per punto* (*Point by point*), *La valigia delle storie* (*A suitcase of stories*), *A rigor di logica* (*Strictly logical*; Publisher Fabbri), *Nuova officina dei linguaggi* (*A new workshop of languages*; Publisher: Giunti), *Mille scintille* (*Thousand sparks*; Publisher: Pearson), *Come noi: Letture per la vita* (*The same as us: Readings for life*), and *Dimmi di sì! Grammatica con metodo* (*Say yes to me! Grammar with method*; Publisher: Mursia Scuola). Materials are imported from Italy and paid for by the Italian Government as part of their responsibility for Italian minority schools.

In schools with Italian as the medium of instruction, other curricular subjects are taught using textbooks published in Italy (e.g. Italian, figurative art education (primary), music (primary), social sciences (primary), natural sciences (primary), geography (primary), history, national culture and ethics, and housekeeping). To adhere to the curricula, Italian translations of Slovene textbooks are prepared for some subject areas, such as mathematics, fine arts, music, social sciences (lower secondary), home economics, geography (lower secondary), physics, chemistry, biology, natural sciences (lower secondary), natural sciences and technics, and technics and technology (*Io e la società 1, 2* [*Society and me 1 & 2*], *Io e l'ambiente 1, 2* [*The Environment and me 1 & 2*], *Due per tre, lo impari con me* [*Two by three, learn with me*], *Il mio primo approccio alla fisica 1, 2* [*My First Approach to Physics 1 & 2*], *Economia domestica* [*Home Economics*], and *Espressione artistica 6, 7, 8, 9* [*Artistic Expression 6, 7, 8 & 9*]). These textbooks are published in Slovenia, and are developed by experts in individual subject fields and didactics of those subject areas. Italian translations are published by the ZRSŠ, Modrijan, and Debora e Bevke: Bograf, all based in Ljubljana. In addition, some compendia to textbooks have been developed and published specifically for Italian minority schools by the ZRSŠ (*Caleidoscopio, Attraverso il tempo: alla scoperta della nostra regione* [*Kaleidoscope, Through Time: The Discovery of our Region*]).

Currently (2023) approved textbooks for Italian as L2, offered as a compulsory subject in primary schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction, situated in bilingual areas in the Slovene Littoral, were developed and produced in Italy by the publishing houses Alma (*In bocca al lupo, ragazzi! 1* [*Break a leg, young people! 1*]), Edilingua (*Progetto italiano junior 1, 2* [*Junior Italian Project 1 & 2*]), and ELI (*Amici d'Italia 1, 2* [*Italy Friends 1 & 2*]).

## *statistics*

In the school year 2021/22, 193,081 pupils were enrolled in primary education in Slovenia (SURS, n.d.). In the bilingual areas of the Slovene Littoral, 633 pupils were enrolled in primary schools with Italian as the medium of instruction, and 6,212 received Italian as a compulsory subject in primary schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction (B. Straus, personal communication, MIZŠ – Department of Educational Development and Quality, August 19, 2022). In Italian schools, 136 teachers were employed overall, of whom seven were teachers of Italian (N. Zigante, personal communication, head of the primary school Vincenzo e Diego de Castro, August 29, 2022; C. Valentič Kostić, personal communication, head of the primary school Dante Alighieri, August 29, 2022; H. Maglica, personal communication, head of the primary school Pier Paolo Vergerio il vecchio, August 29, 2022). In Slovene schools, Italian as L2 was taught by three teachers (see [www.os-koper.si](http://www.os-koper.si); [www.antonukmar.si](http://www.antonukmar.si); [www.dusanabordona.si](http://www.dusanabordona.si); [www.oslivade.si](http://www.oslivade.si); [www.osvsmuc.si](http://www.osvsmuc.si); [www.oskosmac.si](http://www.oskosmac.si); [www.oslucija.si](http://www.oslucija.si); [www.ossecovlje.si](http://www.ossecovlje.si)).

At institutions for children with special educational needs (Center za komunikacijo, sluh in govor – Centre for Communication, Hearing and Speech; Center za usposabljanje Elvira Vatovec – Centre for Adapted Education Elvira Vatovec), two Italian language teachers were employed in the school year 2021/22. Moreover, there were 42 teachers and 12 accompanying teachers working at the schools' mobile unit to offer support to children with special educational needs who are integrated into mainstream primary schools. The mobile unit offers support in different subjects taught in Slovene and Italian schools in the area. Mobile unit teachers who visit Italian schools are fluent speakers of Italian (see [www.cksg.si](http://www.cksg.si); [www.cuevs.si](http://www.cuevs.si)).

## 4 Secondary education

### *target group*

General upper secondary education is intended for students aged 15 to 19 years.

### *structure*

General upper secondary education aims to prepare students for study at tertiary level and is implemented with different types of 4-year secondary school (Slovene: *gimnazija* – gymnasium) programmes, namely general high school and classical high school, and the following three types of professional high school programmes: technical high school, high school of economics, and high school of arts. At the end of all high school programmes, students take the general matura exam. Students who have finished upper secondary vocational education or 3 years of a high school programme and have not been enrolled in the school system for at least a year or have passed the examination at the level of year 3 of high school and wish to continue to study at tertiary level, in a programme that requires a matura exam diploma, are offered a 1-year matura course.

Both general high school (general and classical) and professional high school (technical, economical, and artistic) are organised as a 4-year programme with compulsory and elective subjects. Upper secondary students learn at least two FLs. Students in the Slovene Littoral learn Italian as L2 and at least one FL, which is usually English.

At the general matura exam, an external examination at the national level, Italian is a compulsory subject in schools with Italian as the medium of instruction. In schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction, the matura exam is elective and can be taken at basic level (B1) or advanced level (B2).

At the general upper secondary schools with Italian as the medium of instruction, education and instruction are implemented following the national programme (ZPIMVI, 2001, Article 2), with adaptations regarding language and cultural content related to the motherland. Italian language teaching has the duty to maintain, valorise, and promote the historical presence of the language, culture, and identity of the Italian minority in the nationally mixed area of the Slovene Littoral. In addition to the language, there are some curricular adaptations for history, geography, art history, and history of music (Crasnich et al., 2008).

General upper secondary schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction, situated in the bilingual area of the Slovene Littoral, offer students learning of Italian as a compulsory subject. During the 4-year upper secondary education, students attending general and clas-

sical high school receive 350 hours of Italian as a subject, while students attending professional high school programmes receive 420 hours.

Learning Italian as L2 follows European linguistic policies (Krek & Metljak, 2011; Šečerov et al., 2011b), in particular the CEFR (CoE, 2001) and the CEFR companion volume with new descriptors (CoE, 2018), and the Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (European Commission, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, 2019). The main objectives are to develop the level of communicative competence in Italian that would allow intercultural contact with Italian speakers, to foster mutual understanding and respect, and to integrate knowledge with other subject areas.

At the end of upper secondary education, students are expected to have developed a communicative competence at level B1/B2. The curriculum of Italian as L2 in the Slovene Littoral (Šečerov & Zorman, 2008) defines general objectives and competences of the subject, its specific objectives and learning content, the expected learning results, and cross-curricular connections, and provides teachers with didactic recommendations.

### ***legislation***

General secondary education in the Republic of Slovenia is regulated by the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI, 1996) and Upper Secondary Education Act (ZGim, 1996). The use of Italian as a medium of instruction in minority upper secondary schools is determined by Articles 3 and 8 of the respective acts. The organisation, implementation, and aims of education and instruction in the minority upper secondary schools, the use of didactic materials, and other adaptations to the national education system are regulated by the Act Regulating Special Rights of Members of the Italian and Hungarian National Communities in the Field of Education (ZPIMVI, 2001), which was passed in 2001. All legislation regarding secondary education is proposed by the MIZŠ and passed by the Government.

### ***language use***

Italian is used as the medium of instruction at two general upper secondary schools situated in the Slovene Littoral (*Ginnasio Gian Rinaldo Carli* in Koper-Capodistria and *Ginnasio Antonio Sema* in Piran-Pirano) in accordance with Article 3 of the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI, 1996) and Article 8 of the Upper Secondary Education Act (ZGim, 1996). At upper secondary schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction, situated in bilingual areas of the Slovene Littoral, Italian is taught as a compulsory subject. All general upper secondary schools in the Slovene-Italian bilingual area in the Republic of Slovenia are public institutions.

## **teaching materials**

Textbooks and related exercise books and teachers' guides are approved by the National Council for General Education (Strokovni svet RS za splošno izobraževanje). The list of available textbooks is published on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (MIZŠ, n.d.). The advisor for Italian minority schools and the advisor for Italian as L2 at the ZRSŠ, and secondary school teachers analyse the didactic materials available. The ZRSŠ then makes an official request for the approval of the chosen material to the National Council for General Education. When the approval procedure is complete, the decision is published in the Official Gazette and the textbook appears on the list. In case no textbook is present on the list, teachers are free to use any textbook available on the market.

Textbooks for Italian in upper secondary schools with Italian as the medium of instruction are developed and published in Italy. These textbooks are taken off the market a few years after their publication, and due to this dynamic process on the Italian market, textbooks do not necessarily appear on the Slovene official ministerial list of approved textbooks.

According to data collected from schools (A. Dessardo, personal communication, Italian language teacher at the high school Gian Rinaldo Carli, August 22, 2022; D. Manzo, personal communication, Italian language teacher at the high school Antonio Sema, August 24, 2022), the following textbooks were in use at the time of data collection: *Letteratura e oltre (Literature and beyond)*, *Letteratura aperta (Open literature)*, *Guida allo studio e all'esame di stato (Study and state examination guide)*, *Antologia della Divina Commedia (Anthology of the Divine Comedy)*, *Italiano. Regole e creatività (Italian. Rules and creativity)*, and *Grammatica interattiva. Lessico (Interactive grammar. Vocabulary; Publisher: La Nuova Italia)*.

At the general upper secondary schools with Italian as the medium of instruction, other curricular subjects are taught using textbooks published in Italy (e.g. Italian, music, figurative art, geography, history, physics, philosophy, and informatics). To adhere to curricula, Italian translations of Slovene textbooks are prepared for some subject areas, such as mathematics, music, biology, chemistry, sociology, and psychology (*Sociologia [Sociology]*, *Introduzione alla psicologia [Introduction to Psychology 1]*, *Chimica 1 per il ginnasio [Chemistry 1 for High schools]*, *I numeri complessi [Complex numbers]*, chapter from the textbook *Planum*, *Le funzioni geometriche e i vettori [Geometric functions and vectors]*, chapter from the textbooks *Planum* and *Spatium*, *Funzioni polinomiali e razionali fratte [Polynomial functions and rational fractional]*, chapter from the textbook *Spatium*). These textbooks are published in Slovenia, and they are developed by experts in individual subject fields and didactics of those subject areas. Italian translations are published by the ZRSŠ. In addition, some compendia to textbooks have been developed and published specifically for Italian minority schools by the National Education Institute (*Taumascopio, Storia degli sloveni [Thaumascope, Slovene History]*).

Approved textbooks for Italian as L2 (in 2022/23), offered as a compulsory subject at general upper secondary schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction, situated in bilingual areas in the Slovene Littoral, were developed and produced in Italy by Guerra (*Rete! 2, 3 [Web! 2 & 3]*, *Nuovo Rete! A2, B1 [New Web! A2 & B1]*), Loescher (*Nuovo contatto A2, B1 [New Contact A2 & B1]*) Edilingua (*Nuovissimo progetto italiano 1, 2 [The Newest Italian Project 1 & 2]*, *Allegro 3 (Cheerful 3)*), ELI (*Caffè Italia 2 [Café Italy 2]*), and Casa delle lingue (*Al dente 3, 4 [Al dente 3 & 4]*) publishing houses.

### **statistics**

In the school year 2021/22, 25,151 students were enrolled in the general upper secondary schools in Slovenia (Černoša & Rački, 2021). In bilingual areas of the Slovene Littoral, 98 students were enrolled in general upper secondary schools with Italian as the medium of instruction, and 39 teachers were employed overall, of whom two were teachers of Italian (D. Manzo, personal communication, Italian language teacher at the high school Antonio Sema, August 24, 2022; L. A. Licen, personal communication, head of the high school Gian Rinaldo Carli, August 19, 2022). The available data for Italian as L2 are aggregated for upper secondary and vocational schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction; at the upper secondary level, 2,745 students overall received Italian as a compulsory subject (B. Straus, personal communication, MIZŠ – Department of Educational Development and Quality, August 19, 2022), and 16 teachers of Italian were employed (see [www.gimnazija-koper.si](http://www.gimnazija-koper.si); [www.seps.si](http://www.seps.si); [www.sts.si](http://www.sts.si); [www.geps.si](http://www.geps.si)).

## 5 Vocational education

### *target group*

Vocational education is divided into the following three groups: (i) 2-year short upper secondary vocational education (students aged 15–16; Ministrstvo za vzgojo in izobraževanje Republike Slovenije, [n.d.-a](#)) that ends with a final exam (Slovene: *zaključni izpit*), (ii) 3-year upper secondary vocational education (students aged 15–17; Ministrstvo za vzgojo in izobraževanje Republike Slovenije, [n.d.-b](#)) that ends with a final exam, and (iii) 4-year upper secondary vocational-technical education (students aged 15–18; Ministrstvo za vzgojo in izobraževanje Republike Slovenije, [n.d.-c](#)) that ends with a vocational matura exam. In addition, students who have concluded upper secondary vocational education (aged 17 or above) are eligible to enrol in a 2-year upper secondary technical education cycle to improve their career opportunities (Ministrstvo za vzgojo in izobraževanje Republike Slovenije, [n.d.-d](#)).

### *structure*

The 2- and 3-year upper secondary vocational education programmes mainly aim to prepare students to obtain qualifications for a specific occupation to enter the labour market. Students enrolled in the 2-year short upper secondary vocational schools and the 3-year upper secondary vocational schools conclude the study programme with a final exam. The 4-year upper secondary vocational-technical and the 2-year technical education cycle prepare students to continue education at the tertiary level. At the end, students take the vocational matura exam.

Students who have completed year 4 of high school or upper secondary technical school are also eligible to enrol in a 1-year vocational course to obtain a qualification for a specific occupation (e.g. business technician, gastronomy and tourism, pre-school education, software technician, catering technician, or touristic technician; Ministrstvo za vzgojo in izobraževanje Republike Slovenije, [n.d.-e](#)).

Short upper secondary vocational education is organised as a 2-year programme with general subjects, technical modules with school-based practical lessons, employer-based practical training, and an open part of the programme that is agreed upon with economic entities (e.g. companies, such as shops, banks, and hotels).

Upper secondary vocational education is organised as a 3-year programme with general subjects, technical modules with school-based practical lessons, employer based practical training, students' elective activities, and an open part of the programme that is agreed upon with economic entities.

Upper secondary vocational-technical and technical education is organised as a 4-year programme or a 2-year programme for students who have completed an upper secondary vocational programme. It includes general subjects, compulsory and elective technical modules, practical training that is partly school and partly employer based, students' elective activities, and an open part of the programme that is agreed upon with economic entities.

At the vocational matura exam, an external examination at the national level, Italian is a compulsory subject in schools with Italian as the medium of instruction. In schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction, the vocational matura exam is elective and can be taken at level B1.

Learning Italian as L2 follows European linguistic policies, in particular the CEFR (CoE, 2001), with its companion volume with new descriptors (CoE, 2018). The main objective is to develop a level of communicative competence in Italian that would allow basic intercultural contact with Italian speakers (Krek & Metljak, 2011; Šečerov et al., 2016).

The curriculum of Italian as L2 in vocational education in the Slovene Littoral (Šečerov et al., 2016) defines general objectives of the subject, specific objectives and examples of learning activities, minimum standards in learning results, assessment, and didactic recommendations for teachers.

## ***legislation***

Vocational education in the Republic of Slovenia is regulated by the Organisation and Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI, 1996) and Vocational Education Act (ZPSI, 1996). The use of the Italian language as a medium of instruction in upper secondary vocational schools is determined by Articles 3 and 8 of the respective acts. The organisation, implementation, and aims of education and instruction in the minority upper secondary vocational schools, use of didactic material, and other adaptations to the national vocational education system are regulated by the Act Regulating Special Rights of Members of the Italian and Hungarian National Communities in the Field of Education (ZPIMVI, 2001), which was passed in 2001. All legislation regarding vocational education is proposed by the MIZŠ and passed by the Government.

## ***language use***

Italian is used as the medium of instruction in one upper secondary vocational school (*Scuola media Pietro Coppo* in Izola-Isola), in accordance with Article 3 of the Organisation

and Financing of Education Act (ZOFVI, 1996) and Article 6 of the Vocational Education Act (ZPSI, 1996). Education and instruction are implemented following the national programme with adaptations regarding language and some cultural content related to the motherland. Italian language teaching has the duty to maintain, valorise, and promote the historical presence of the language, culture, and identity of the Italian minority in the nationally mixed area of the Slovene Littoral. In addition to the language, there are some curricular adaptations for history, geography, art history, and history of music (Crasnich & Fusilli Skok, 2009).

In upper secondary vocational schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction, situated in bilingual areas of the Slovene Littoral, students receive 128 (2-year short upper secondary vocational education), 164 (3-year upper secondary vocational education), 262 (4-year upper secondary technical education) or 136 (2-year additional upper secondary technical education) hours of learning Italian as a compulsory subject. Students enrolled in the 2- and 3-year vocational schools are expected to reach level A2 or A2+ in communicative competence in Italian, while students attending the 4-year or the additional 2-year upper secondary technical education are expected to reach level B1.

All upper secondary vocational schools in the Slovene-Italian bilingual area in the Republic of Slovenia are public institutions.

### ***teaching materials***

Textbooks and related exercise books and teachers' guides are approved by the National Council for General Education (Strokovni svet RS za splošno izobraževanje). The list of available textbooks is published on the website of the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (Ministrstvo za izobraževanje, znanost in šport Republika Slovenija, n.d.). The advisor for Italian minority schools and the advisor for Italian as L2 at the ZRSŠ, and vocational upper secondary school teachers analyse the didactic material available. The ZRSŠ then makes an official request for the approval of the chosen material to the National Council for General Education. When the approval procedure is complete, the decision is published in the Official Gazette and the textbook appears on the list. In case no textbook is present on the list, teachers are free to use any textbook available on the market.

Textbooks for Italian in upper secondary vocational schools with Italian as the medium of instruction are developed and published in Italy. These textbooks are taken off the market a few years after their publication, and due to this dynamic process on the Italian market, textbooks do not necessarily appear on the Slovene official ministerial list of approved textbooks. According to data collected from schools (L. Eler, personal communication, Italian language teacher at the upper secondary vocational school Pietro Coppo, August 22, 2022), the following textbooks were in use at the time of data collection: *Letteratura aperta (Open Literature)*, *Laboratorio di letteratura (Literature Workshop)*; Publisher: Rizzoli, and *Italiano (Italian)*; Publisher: Le Monnier Scuola).

At upper secondary vocational schools with Italian as the medium of instruction, other subjects are taught using textbooks published in Italy (e.g. Italian, arts, geography, history, physics, psychology, biology, philosophy, informatics, chemistry, and economics). To adhere to curricula, Italian translations of Slovene textbooks are prepared for some subject areas, such as mathematics and psychology (*Introduzione alla psicologia* [Introduction to psychology], *I numeri complessi* [Complex numbers], chapter from the textbook *Planum*, *Le funzioni geometriche e i vettori* [Geometric functions and vectors], chapter from the textbooks *Planum* and *Spatium*, and *Funzioni polinomiali e razionali fratte* [Polynomial functions and rational fractions], chapter from the textbook *Spatium*). These textbooks are published in Slovenia and developed by experts in individual subject fields and didactics of those subject areas. Italian translations are published by the ZRSŠ. In addition, some compendia to textbooks have been developed and published specifically for Italian minority schools by the National Education Institute (e.g. *Taumascopio, Storia degli sloveni* [Thaumascope, Slovene History]).

Currently (2023) approved textbooks for Italian as L2, offered as a compulsory subject in upper secondary vocational schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction, situated in bilingual areas in the Slovene Littoral, were developed and produced in Italy by the publishing houses Guerra (*Rete! 1, 2, 3* [Web! 1, 2 & 3], *Nuovo Rete! A1, A2, B1* [New Web! A1, A2 & B1]), Loescher (*Nuovo contatto A2, B1* [New Contact A2 & B1]) Edilingua (*Nuovo progetto italiano 1, 2, 3* [New Italian Project 1, 2 & 3], *Nuovissimo progetto italiano 2*, [The Newest Italian Project 2] *Allegro 1, 2, 3, 4* [Cheerful 1, 2, 3 & 4]), and ELI (*Caffè Italia 1, 2, 3* [Café Italy 1, 2 & 3]).

## **statistics**

In the school year 2021/22, 47,303 students were enrolled in upper secondary vocational schools in Slovenia (Černoša & Rački, 2021). In bilingual areas of the Slovene Littoral, 73 students were enrolled in upper secondary vocational schools with Italian as the medium of instruction, and 20 teachers were employed overall, of whom two were teachers of Italian (D. Vodopija, personal communication, administrative office at the upper secondary vocational school Pietro Coppo, August 23, 2022). The available data for Italian as L2 are aggregated for upper secondary and vocational schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction; 2,745 students overall received Italian as a compulsory subject (B. Straus, personal communication, MIZŠ – Department of Educational Development and Quality, August 19, 2022), and 15 teachers of Italian were employed (see [www.seps.si](http://www.seps.si); [www.sts.si](http://www.sts.si); [www.srednjasolaizola.si](http://www.srednjasolaizola.si); [www.geps.si](http://www.geps.si)).

## 6 Higher education

### *structure*

Tertiary education in Slovenia is organised as short-cycle higher vocational education and as higher education.

Short-cycle higher vocational education is implemented as a 2-year study programme, based on coordinated and clearly defined by employers' needs, and is offered by both public and private universities and other higher education institutions. This form of education is explicitly profession-oriented with 40% of the study programme implemented in businesses. The study is worth 120 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits, and graduates are awarded a short-cycle higher education diploma. The list of available short-cycle vocational education programmes is published on the website of the MIZŠ.

In line with the Bologna Process, higher education is divided into three cycles, namely first cycle (Slovene: *dodiplomski študijski programi prve stopnje* – vocational and academic study programmes), second cycle (Slovene: *podiplomski magistrski študijski programi druge stopnje* – postgraduate master's study programmes, or *enoviti magistrski študijski programi druge stopnje* – integrated 5-year master's study programmes), and third cycle (Slovene: *podiplomski doktorski študijski programi tretje stopnje* – postgraduate doctoral study programmes). On 31 May 2019, in the Republic of Slovenia, 144 study programmes were accredited as short-cycle higher vocational study programmes, 249 as first-cycle higher education study programmes, 453 as second-cycle master's study programmes, eight as integrated 5-year master's study programmes, and 116 as third-cycle doctoral study programmes (MIZŠ, 2022). Study programmes are carried out as a full-time, part-time, or distance learning study. At the end of each cycle, graduates are awarded a diploma.

Higher education in Slovenia is carried out by public and private universities and higher education institutions. In the academic year 2021/2022, at the three public universities (UL, UP, and University of Maribor), 81.6% of students were enrolled across all three cycles, while the remaining 18.4% of students were enrolled in private universities (University of Nova Gorica, University of Novo Mesto, and Nova univerza), and in other higher education institutions (39 according to MIZŠ, 2022; see also SURS, n.d.). All must comply with state regulations and implement officially accredited study programmes. Study programmes are validated by the Slovenian Quality Assurance Agency (Nacionalna agencija za kakovost v visokem šolstvu), which is also responsible for quality monitoring after a study programme has been validated.

## ***legislation***

Strategic objectives of each form (i.e. full-time, part-time, or distance learning study) and level of higher education are determined by the national higher education programme (Resolucija o nacionalnem programu visokega šolstva do 2030, 2022), adopted by the National Assembly of the Republic of Slovenia (Državni zbor Republike Slovenije). In Slovenia, higher education is regulated by the Higher Education Act (Zakon o visokem šolstvu, 1993). The activity of self-managed student associations is regulated by the Students Association Act (Zakon o skupnosti študentov, 1994).

## ***language use***

In higher education in Slovenia, the medium of instruction is Slovene. In language study programmes, the target language may be the medium of instruction. Italian is taught at the UL and the UP. At the latter, pre-service teacher training in pre-school and primary education, conducted in Italian, is also offered. Parts of study programmes may be taught in other languages when foreign teachers or a large number of foreign students are involved. Foreign languages may be used as the medium of instruction in study programmes that are simultaneously taught in Slovene as well. Foreign students and Slovene students without citizenship are offered Slovene language courses free of charge.

## ***teacher training***

Teacher training is offered by public and private universities. In line with European mobility policies, teachers may also be graduates of other (European) universities, provided that agreements on the equivalence of study titles have been signed between states or some other administrative procedure of diploma recognition is available.

### ■ ***pre-school training***

Pre-school teacher training is implemented as a 3-year professional undergraduate bachelor's study programme worth 180 ECTS credits. Graduates are awarded a diploma that allows them to work as pre-school teachers. Assistant pre-school teachers have completed upper secondary education, mainly upper secondary vocational schools for pre-school education.

Pre-school teachers employed in Italian minority nursery schools are offered training in Italian by the Faculty of Education (UP) in cooperation with the Department of Italian Studies at the Faculty of Humanities (UP). As a rule, teaching staff in Italian minority nursery schools have completed their studies in Italian, at least from primary to upper secondary school. Teachers who did not complete their studies in Italian take a language test, as requested by the Rules on national community language testing for education

in ethnically mixed areas (Pravilnik o preizkusu znanja jezika narodne skupnosti za področje vzgoje in izobraževanja na narodno mešanih območjih, 2023).

Pre-school teachers employed in nursery schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction in bilingual Slovene-Italian areas were offered, as part of their pre-service training, an elective subject in teaching and learning Italian at early stages of learning and acquisition.

### ■ *primary training*

Primary school teacher training is implemented as a 4-year undergraduate (240 ECTS credits) and a 1-year master's study programme (60 ECTS credits), worth 300 ECTS credits in total. Graduates with a master's degree in class teaching (Slovene: *profesor razrednega pouka* – class teacher) work as primary school teachers in classes 1 to 5 of the 9-year basic school. Graduates of the 4-year undergraduate study programme can work as out-of-school activity teachers, or morning and afternoon care teachers.

Pre-service primary teacher training in Italian is offered by the Faculty of Education (UP) in cooperation with the Department of Italian Studies at the Faculty of Humanities (UP). As a rule, teachers in minority Italian primary schools in the Slovene Littoral have completed their studies in Italian, at least from primary to upper secondary school. If no such teacher is available, another teacher can be hired on a fixed-term contract. To be given a permanent employment contract, they must pass an exam in Italian as L1.

Slovene students enrolled in the primary teacher training programme are offered a module on early teaching and learning languages. The Italian language module is offered by the Faculty of Education (UP) in cooperation with the Department of Italian Studies at the Faculty of Humanities (UP).

### ■ *secondary training*

Pre-service training of teachers in lower secondary education (classes 6 to 9 in the basic school) and upper secondary education (gimnazija and upper secondary vocational and technical school) is implemented as a 5-year undergraduate study programme worth 300 ECTS credits. Graduates possess a master's degree in a subject area and a teaching qualification (Slovene: *pedagoško-andragoško izobraževanje*) that may be obtained either as a part of pre-service or in-service teacher training. Subject teachers may teach subjects, such as physical education or languages, throughout the 9-year primary school cycle.

As a rule, Italian language teachers in minority Italian schools in the Slovene Littoral have completed their studies in Italian, from primary school to university.

In Slovenia, Italian as a study programme at the tertiary level is offered at the Department of Romance Languages (UL) and at the Department of Italian Studies (UP).

## ■ *in-service training*

A catalogue of continuous in-service professional training for teachers and professional workers in education and instruction is drafted and issued yearly by the MIZŠ. Proposals of in-service programmes are submitted by various institutions that operate in the field of learning and teaching. After the selection is made by the MIZŠ, the catalogue is published on the homepage of the MIZŠ (GOV.SI, [n.d.-h](#)). Programmes are financed either by the Government or by programme organisers, or are paid for by schools or teachers themselves. Teachers and professional workers at all levels of education and instruction, in agreement with headteachers or institution managers, apply to participate in chosen in-service programmes. Participation in in-service programmes is evaluated by points teachers need for career advancement. In-service training is offered to both teachers at Italian minority schools, and Italian L2 teachers from Slovene schools. The courses may be conducted together or separately, depending on the content and teachers' needs.

## *statistics*

In the academic year 2021/22, 88 students studied Italian at the Department of Romance Languages (UL) and at the Department of Italian Studies (UP). Five of these students (all were students at the Department of Italian Studies at the UP) attended the Master's of Didactics of the Italian language as a pre-service teacher training programme. The number of students may vary significantly; for example, the Master's of Didactics of the Italian language was attended by 15 students in the academic year 2019/20 and by six students in 2020/21 (Visoko šolstvo v Sloveniji, [n.d.](#)). In any case, the number of students enrolled is low and it has been decreasing in the last decades, in line with the general trend in the proficiency in Italian nationwide and in the Slovene Littoral in particular (see *Prospects*). University courses in translation to and from Italian were attended by a total of 42 students.

At the Faculty of Education in cooperation with the Department of Italian Studies (UP), 17 students of pre-school education and four students of primary education received instruction in Italian. These students were trained specifically to be employed in Italian minority schools in Slovenia. Moreover, two students, enrolled in the Faculty of Education (UP), attended the module for early teaching of Italian in primary schools (personal communication, UP, August 18–28, 2022).

At the UP, 82 students chose Italian as an elective subject at the Faculty of Humanities and the Faculty of Education (personal communication, UP, August 18–28, 2022). Italian language courses are offered at the Faculty of Arts by the Department of Romance Studies (UL) as well. The number of students enrolled was not available at the time of writing this Regional Dossier (2023).

Italian is also taught at higher education institutions in other fields, such as tourism and economics. The overall number of students enrolled was not available at the time of writing this Regional Dossier.

## 7 Adult education

### *structure and language courses*

In Slovenia, adult education is organised as follows: (1) officially accredited and recognised educational programmes for adults (primary education, i.e. for those who did not receive or complete this level of education); (2) officially accredited certificate educational programmes for adults (e.g. language courses or a boat driver course), at the end of which participants are awarded a certificate of attendance (e.g. in language courses) or a licence (e.g. a boat driver licence), but not a formally recognised level of education; and (3) informal educational programmes for adults. The main objective is to enable adults to acquire, update, expand, and deepen their knowledge. Adult education is carried out by adult education institutions, schools or their units, other public or private institutions, company training centres, and private individuals who have the status of a private teacher.

A catalogue of formal and informal adult education is published yearly by the Slovenian Institute for Adult Education (Andragoški center Republike Slovenije), a state-founded institution.

Courses in Italian are organised by language schools and other institutions responsible for adult education. Teaching materials for adults learning Italian are developed and published in Italy. All participants receive a certificate of attendance. Individuals, not necessarily course participants, who wish to receive a formal certificate must take an exam at the National Examinations Centre (Državni izpitni center), which is the only Slovene institution authorised to issue formal certificates of knowledge at individual levels in line with the CEFR (CoE, 2001).

Adult education is regulated by the Adult Education Act (Zakon o izobraževanju odraslih, 2018) and the Resolution on the National Programme of Adult Education in the Republic of Slovenia 2013–2020 (Resolucija o Nacionalnem programu izobraževanja odraslih v Republiki Sloveniji za obdobje 2013–2020, 2013).

### *language use*

In adult education in Slovenia, Slovene is used as the medium of instruction. Formal and informal adult education in Italian as the medium of instruction is organised and held by Italian institutions in Slovenia (Comunità degli italiani Giuseppe Tartini Pirano, Comunità degli italiani Besenghi e Comunità Dante Alighieri Isola, Comunità Santotio Capodistria, Comunità Bertocchi, Comunità Crevatini, and Comunità Ancarano) and by the Italian Cultural Institute in Ljubljana, an office held and financed by the Italian Government.

## *statistics*

Data on language learning in Slovenia are collected by the SURS. Data on languages learned were collected only in the years 2013, 2014, and 2015. In 2015, there were 544 adult learners of Italian. The last available data on language proficiency are from 2016, when 174,915 adults declared to be speakers of Italian (SURS).

## 8 Educational research

Research on education in Italian as a minority language, both as a medium of instruction and as a subject, is carried out by research institutes and centres that are either autonomous public research institutions (Institute for Ethnic Studies in Ljubljana, and the Science and Research Centre Koper) or they operate within faculties such as the Institute for Intercultural Studies of the Faculty of Humanities (UP), and the Institute for Educational Sciences of the Faculty of Education (UP). The self-managed Coastal Community of the Italian Minority is also partly engaged in research activity, often in collaboration with other research institutions. The Coastal Community and the Italian Union (Unione Italiana) finance or co-finance research on Italian as a minority language in Slovenia.

The research conducted is mainly conceptual, based on observation and aiming at the analysis of present information, and applied, aiming at finding a solution to a specific problem in education in Italian as a minority language and innovative solutions to issues affecting an individual, a group, or society. Some research projects are also analytical, which involve testing hypotheses and conducting pedagogical experimentation.

Objectives of educational research on Italian as a minority language aim at the preservation and development of Italian as a minority language, and at the increase of communicative competence in Italian L1 and L2 and in intercultural communication.

The European TEMPUS SEP-3767 Project *Teaching second and foreign languages in pre-primary and primary level* (1992–1995) provided the framework for the introduction of early FL teaching, didactic strategies, and the production of didactic materials. The international cooperation that took place within the project gave ground to long-lasting scientific and professional exchange with experts worldwide (Université Stendhal in Grenoble, Università degli Studi di Udine, Pädagogische Akademie in Klagenfurt, followed by University Ca' Foscari in Venice, Durham University, the University of Helsinki, and others). The follow-up TEMPUS S\_JEP-11187 Respect Project *Restructuring Primary Teacher's Study Programmes* (1996–1999) provided the framework for pre-service FL teacher training programmes and pre-service class teachers' training for early teaching L2 and FLs. Within the two projects, teacher training modules were designed and implemented, didactic materials were produced, and expert conferences were organised.

Following the CoE pilot project *European Language Portfolio* (1998–2000) and two evaluations of the pilot project (2002, 2003), accredited and registered European Language Portfolios as an internationally comparable tool for the evaluation and self-evaluation of learning achievements of pupils, students, and adult participants in language education were published for learners aged 6–10 and 11–15, for upper-secondary school learners aged 15–19, and for adult learners.

Two 2.1 Comenius research projects, namely *Promocija manjšinskih jezikov v večjezičnih območjih s poudarkom na izobraževanju učiteljev in učiteljic / Promotion of minority languages in plurilingual areas with a focus on teacher training* (2003–2006), which was awarded a national prize in 2006, conferred by the Ministry of Education and Sport, and *INFO – opredelitev modela za usposabljanja učiteljev v večjezičnih okoljih / INFO – definition of a model for in-service teacher training for teachers in plurilingual areas* (2004–2007) were dedicated to the analysis of in-service teacher training practices at the time, to a comparative analysis with other bilingual areas involved in the research project (Alto Adige, Carinthia, Over Mura region and Over Raba region, Wales, Sardinia, and Friuli-Venezia Giulia), and to the selection of good practices. The main result was a design of a model for the training of teachers of minority languages as L1 and L2 in bilingual areas, based on needs that had emerged in the process of the analyses.

Research projects *LABICUM – Jezik kot kulturna kohezija in človeški kapital / Language as cultural cohesion and human capital* (2004–2006) and *Jeziki kot most k medkulturnemu sporazumevanju in razumevanju / Language as a bridge to intercultural communication and comprehension* (2004–2007), financed by the National Research Agency (Agencija Republike Slovenije za raziskovanje) and co-financed by commercial institutions in the region (Istrabenz, Bank of Koper, and Port of Koper) focused on intercultural communication and education. Intercultural linguistic modules were designed, following the behavioural and communicative models in individual professional areas. Prototypes for interdisciplinary university modules, such as Slovene for foreign students, Italian as L2, and English as a lingua franca, were developed. On the basis of the research results, the Centre for Languages of the University of Primorska was founded (Center za jezike UP), which is open to students of all faculties. The Centre offers courses in Italian, French, German, English, Portuguese, Spanish, and Chinese at different levels of communicative competence.

The research project *Učinkovitost dvojezičnih modelov izobraževanja na narodno mešanih območjih, izziv in prednost za Evropo jezikov in kultur / Efficiency of bilingual educational models in ethnically mixed areas, a challenge and advantage for a Europe of languages and cultures* (2006–2008) studied the levels of proficiency of ninth-grade primary school pupils in minority languages in Slovenia. The comparison with proficiency in English as a FL, which was also measured within the project, showed that proficiency in Italian L2 in particular decreased dramatically compared to the past, both in comparison to levels of communicative competence expected at the age of the participants (15-year-old ninth-grade pupils) and to their English proficiency. The decrease in Italian communicative competence was due to the change in the social context: young people now have more contact with English than with Italian. Thirty years ago, and more, people regularly watched Italian television and developed a rather good fluency in Italian. Today, the contact with Italian is mostly limited to school, which cannot replace the role Italian media had in the development of communicative competence in Italian L2.

In-service teacher training was also the subject of the *Dvig jezikovnih kompetenc pedagoških delavcev pri jezikih manjšin v italijanskih šolah v Sloveniji in slovenskih oz. dvojezičnih šolah v Italiji / Increasing the linguistic competences in minority languages of teachers in Italian schools*

in Slovenia and in Slovene and bilingual schools in Italy project, partly financed by the European Union (EU) from the European Social Fund and by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport (2007–2013). The project was applied as the results of the training, which had been measured and evaluated with questionnaires administered to participants, were used to draft the follow-up research project *Dvig kakovosti narodnostnega šolstva za italijansko narodno skupnost v Sloveniji ter slovensko narodno skupnost v Italiji / Increasing the quality of minority education for the Italian minority in Slovenia and for the Slovene minority in Italy* (2014–2020). The project aimed to select methodologies and practices that foster a favourable learning environment for minority language learning on both sides of the Slovene-Italian border.

The research project *Jezik – Lingua: Večjezičnost kot bogastvo in vrednota čezmejnega slovensko-italijanskega območja / Plurilingualism as wealth and value of the Slovene-Italian transborder area* (2007–2013) acted upon the promotion and dissemination of the Slovene and Italian languages, cultures, and traditions through national minorities as a valuable resource for the enhancement of the appeal of the cross-border area. Within the project, numerous resources were created and activities in the field of education were conducted ([www.zrakogled.com/projekti/](http://www.zrakogled.com/projekti/); [www.euroservis.eu/en/projects/jeziklingua/](http://www.euroservis.eu/en/projects/jeziklingua/)).

The PERMIT – *Promote education and reciprocal understanding through multicultural integrated teaching* project (2008–2009) aimed to promote a dialogue of civil society between the EU and Turkey, in particular mediating and gaining a better knowledge and understanding of Turkey within the EU. To foster the process, experts on areas with historic minorities, such as the Slovene Littoral, were invited to share their experiences in researching and developing intercultural communication (Raffaghelli & Minello, 2015).

The MERIDIUM – *Multilingualism in Europe as a Resource for Immigration – Dialogue Initiative among the Universities of Mediterranean* project (2008–2011) supplied to bilingual areas, involved in the project, concrete support tools for the promotion of European policies related to plurilingualism and the linguistic integration of immigrants in the Mediterranean part of Europe.

On the scientific and professional bases of the EUNoM – *European University Network of Multilingualism* project (2009–2011), a network of universities was created to connect plurilingual areas and to promote plurilingualism and interculturality through various activities. Participating universities and institutes were Universitat oberta de Catalunya, Università degli Studi di Udine, Università del Litorale, the Mercator European Research Centre on Multilingualism and Language Learning/Fryske Akademy, Erasmushogeschool Brussel, Queen’s University Belfast, and the British Centre for European Research.

The INOVUP – *Inovativno učenje in poučevanje v visokem šolstvu / Innovative learning and teaching in higher education* (2009–2011) – project developed a framework for the in-service training of teachers and other members of staff in higher education for innovative and flexible work with students at the tertiary level, including Italian L1 and L2 and FL teaching.

In the *EDUKA* research project (*Vzgajati k različnosti / Educare alla diversità / Educate to diversity*, 2011–2014), linguistic and cultural diversity were studied in schools in Slovene and Italian bilingual areas. In particular, data on concept comprehension, pupils', parents', and teachers' opinions, teachers' response, and school activities were collected. The most important findings, which gave insight into the state of intercultural dialogue in schools and consequently identified areas of intervention required, were teachers' limited response to cultural and linguistic diversity in school, and their participation in in-service training and research projects on intercultural education and communication. A large divergency in frequency, number, and affiliation of interlocutors in teachers' dialogue on intercultural education was observed. Schools also differed significantly in terms of organising activities that aimed to raise the intercultural sensitivity of pupils. Within the project, a scientific book and didactic materials were published ([www.eduka-itaslo.eu](http://www.eduka-itaslo.eu)).

The project *Institucionalna dvojezičnost na narodno mešanih območjih v Sloveniji: evalvacija dodatka za dvojezičnost / Institutional Bilingualism in the Ethnically Mixed Areas in Slovenia: Bilingualism Bonus Programme Evaluation* (2018–2022) aimed to study the effects of the bilingualism bonus programme, effective in the public sector in the ethnically mixed areas in Slovenia, on the actual use of minority languages by public employees in the communication with ethnic minority members. From the research results, a need for a more structured linguistic policy in terms of the evaluation of communicative competence of public employees emerged, both at the moment of their employment and while they are employed in posts that involve contact with ethnic minority members, and in terms of support to maintain and further communicative competence in a minority language. Action to ensure that existing measures, such as the Decree on the Public Realisation of Bilingualism in the Ethnically Mixed Area (Odlok o javnem izvajanju dvojezičnosti na narodnostno mešanem območju, 1998), are actually carried out is needed as well (Institute for Ethnic Studies, n.d.).

## 9 Prospects

With its accession to the EU, Slovenia accepted the challenges posed by the integration processes to new democracies by introducing reforms to align its political system and various sub-systems with European standards. Since 1996, the country has been changing its education system, with reforms involving not only all educational levels (from pre-school to higher education), 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 CoE by embarking on the preparation of the *Language Education Policy Profiles* (CoE, n.d.). In 2003, the *Country Report* (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia, 2003) and in 2006 the *Language Education Policy Profile* (Ministry of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Slovenia, 2006) for Slovenia were published.

The preservation and further development of languages spoken by minorities depend not only on the quality of the bilingual education, but also on factors outside the school setting. It is thus critical to train teachers in the ethnically mixed region of the Slovene Littoral to adapt to a continually changing social context, by preparing them to face new tasks and challenges the social context poses.

Ten years after the first edition of the Regional Dossier on Italian as a minority language in Slovenia was published, a reflection on the current situation is due in light of the continually changing social context of education. Based on the research conducted so far (see *Educational research*), it can be concluded that schools in the Slovene Littoral, both schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction and minority schools with Italian as the medium of instruction, face similar problems.

The current discourse on intercultural education in Slovenia focuses on (1) the integration of foreign students, giving very little or no attention to autochthonous ethnic minorities (i.e. Italian and Hungarian), (2) the participation of students and teachers in international exchange programmes at all levels of education, rather than working on promoting mutual understanding among students and teachers, and (3) adopting foreign models of the development of intercultural communication and intercultural awareness, rather than continuing and refining the well-established model of intercultural relations historically present in the ethnically mixed areas of Slovenia (Zorman & Zudič Antonič, 2019, p. 248).

Besides moving away from historic reality and disregarding decades-long experience developed in the area, in favour of the new migrations and new forms and models of education, it was observed in research (*Učinkovitost dvojezičnih modelov izobraževanja na narodno mešanih območjih-izziv in prednost za Evropo jezikov in kultur / Efficiency of bilingual educational models in ethnically mixed areas, a challenge and advantage for a Europe of languages*

*and cultures* [2006–2008]; *Jezik – Lingua: Večjezičnost kot bogastvo in vrednota čezmejnega slovensko-italijanskega območja / Plurilingualism as wealth and value of the Slovene-Italian trans-border area* [2007–2013]; *EDUKA – Vzgajati k različnosti / Educare alla diversità / Educate to diversity* [2011–2014]) that the management and administration at all levels of intervention, including the area of education, is not always organic, but fragmented. As such, it is not an optimal strategic support to local cultural specificities that should be systemic and directed by the state. Regarding the teaching of minority languages, a possibility transpired to make use of the tools of school autonomy to enhance cultural and territorial diversity within a nationally defined framework.

To increase the level of communicative competence in Italian L1 and L2, it is of primary importance to weave a targeted support network throughout the area involved, to ensure learners are exposed to the language in an out-of-school environment; this gives meaning to the study of the language and accelerates learning. Probably the most important factor for the continually decreasing communicative competence in Italian, in particular L2, observed in the Slovene Littoral over the last 30 years, is insufficient contact with Italian, either in the environment or through the media. As research has shown (e.g. Bourhis & Landry, 2012; Dörnyei, 2003, 2010; Ehala, 2009; Gardner & Smythe, 2018; Gardner et al., 2004; Gardner, 2001), the possibility to put into practice knowledge acquired in school or any other educational institution is the single most important driver to refine the knowledge already acquired and to acquire new knowledge.

The role of schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction in the Slovene-Italian bilingual area has thus changed over time. In the past, it gave learners some linguistic input and it obligated them to use the language in speaking and writing activities. At the lower secondary education level, it then started to guide learners to organise the massive input most of them received from the media, mainly the national and private Italian television networks. Today, most of the time and energy in schools should be directed towards creating opportunities to use Italian outside the school setting. Recent research has shown that learners in upper secondary education are motivated to better their competence in Italian and that they understand the meaning the language has for their learning milieu and, consequently, for their future (Zorman, 2021). The educational bilingual model for Italian L2 should therefore be adapted to the new circumstances, rather than continue to chase the illusion of a perfect learner. At the time of writing this Regional Dossier (2023), this task was left to the initiative of individual teachers or individual schools. A more systematic solution is required, a solution that is territory-oriented, in terms of both the bilingual Slovene Littoral and the vicinity of Italy. Structured and constant communicative exchange with the environment is the prerequisite for learners to find meaning in Italian L2 learning.

A need to consolidate a form of linguistic continuum that encourages exposure to Italian outside the school setting is, however, present with learners attending schools with Italian as the medium of instruction as well. Specific activities are already underway in the cultural sphere, organised by Italian community institutions (Zudič Antonič, 2009), but it would be worth considering other areas of intervention.

In this logic, the contribution of the MIZŠ – and of the regional sections of the ZRSŠ that are its peripheral branches – and that of the institutions of the Italian Union in Slovenia should aim to support the specific school curricula, also by revising the way school projects are financed and by ensuring additional funding is available for extracurricular projects to be carried out in the Italian language in cooperation between schools and Italian minority institutions.

Specific opportunities for total immersion in an Italian-speaking environment, such as semester- or year-long scholarships to be used in Italy, cultural exchanges, and visits with Italian schools of all levels, should also be created by competent institutions (the MIZŠ, ZRSŠ, Italian minority institutions in Slovenia in cooperation with the Italian Cultural Institute in Ljubljana, the Italian Consulate and Italian Embassy in Slovenia, and other Italian Government offices and departments). Thus far, these activities have been organised by individual schools or even individual teachers; however, a more systemic solution is required to ensure that these opportunities are accessible to every learner.

Moreover, pre-service and in-service teacher training in both didactic and linguistic competences ought to continue to be upgraded. To achieve this, meetings and the sharing of experiences and teaching paths between teachers, an ongoing discussion on didactic, methodological, assessment, and organisational issues, analyses of the teaching practices implemented in schools, carried out in cooperation with universities, and similar activities must be fostered and promoted.

Overall, radical changes to the bilingual model in the Slovene Littoral are not necessary. However, given the social changes in Slovenia and worldwide, constant monitoring of how these changes affect the bilingual education model is needed. This ongoing monitoring is necessary to determine what changes and adjustments are necessary so that the schools in the ethnically mixed area of the Slovene Littoral continue to maintain their mission and achieve the goals enshrined in the Constitution and legislation. Since the Italian minority has been legally granted possibilities to preserve, protect, and develop their ethnicity and language, a constant adjustment to changes in the social context will consolidate the role schools play as an important factor of the added value of bilingualism in the ethnically mixed area of the Slovene Littoral.

## 10 Summary of statistics

**Table 1** Number of schools, teachers, and students by educational level and school type in the academic year 2021/22.

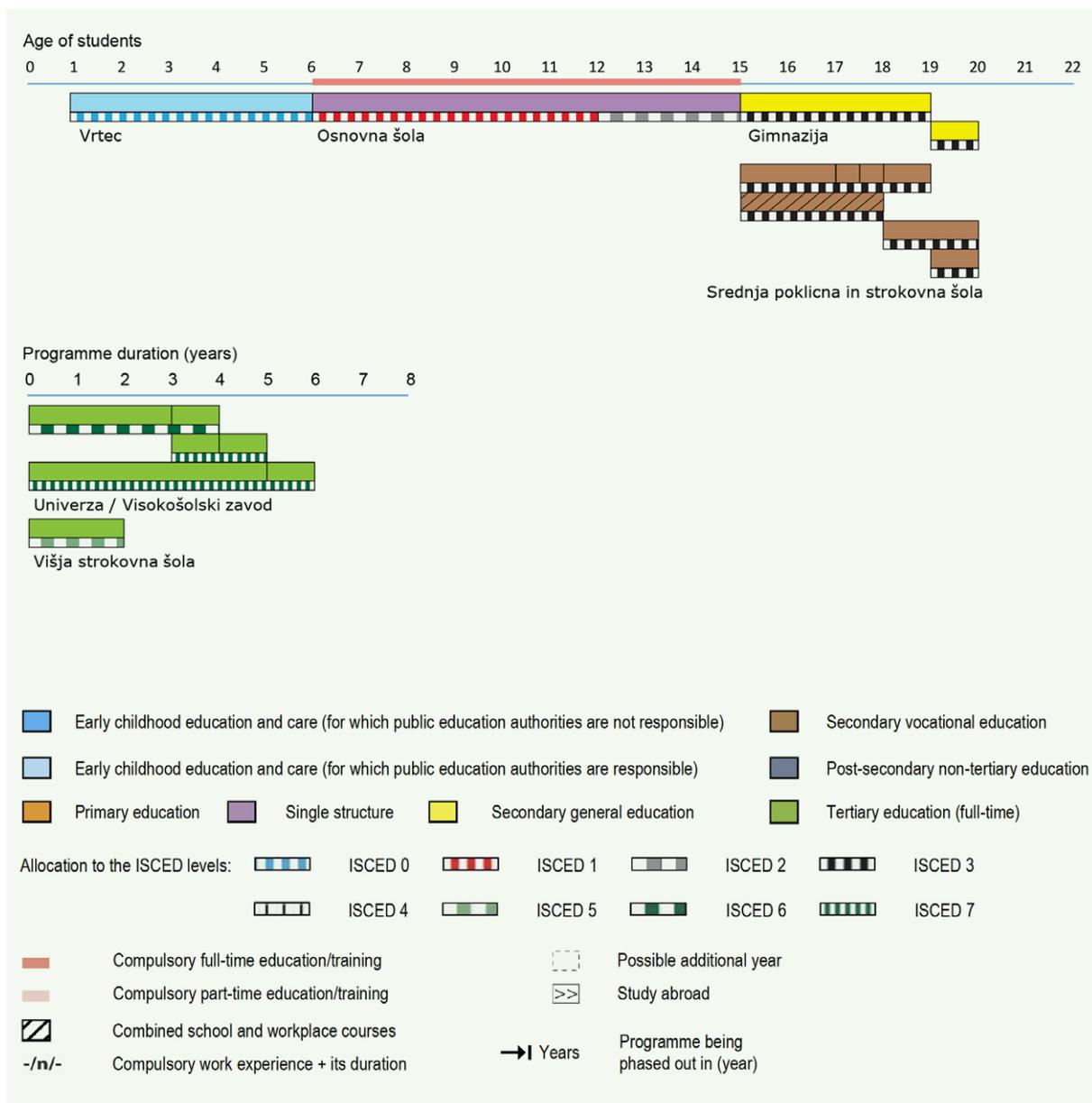
Educational level		Schools	Teachers	Students
Pre-school education	Italian L1	3	73	530
	Italian L2	8	32	6,212
Primary education	Italian L1	3	136	663
	Italian L2	8	32	6,212
Secondary education	Italian L1	2	39	98
	Italian L2	4	16*	2,745**
Vocational education	Italian L1	1	20	73
	Italian L2	4	15*	2,745**
	Pre-school in Italian	1	10	17
Higher education	Primary school teacher education (classes 1 to 5) in Italian	1	10	4
	Primary school teacher education (classes 1 to 5) in Slovene with Italian module)	1	10	2
	Italian studies	2	19	88

*Note.* Data from B. Straus (personal communication, MIZŠ – Department of Educational Development and Quality, August 19, 2022).

\* Three upper secondary schools with Slovene as the medium of instruction (Upper Secondary Technical School, Upper Secondary Economical and Business School and Gimnazija, Electronics and Nautical School) carry out general upper secondary programmes and upper secondary vocational programmes. Teachers are involved in both; thus, the number of teachers in the individual type of programme is duplicated. The overall number of Italian as L2 at the upper secondary level of education is 20.

\*\* Data on the number of students involved in the upper secondary level of education are collected and analysed annually by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport. From the academic year 2013/14 onwards, data on students attending individual schools are no longer available for individual programmes carried out by the school. Only the overall number of students is indicated.

# Education system in Slovenia



Note. From European Commission, European Education and Culture Executive Agency, and Eurydice (2022, p. 27).

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### **Center Republike Slovenije za poklicno izobraževanje**

National Institute for Vocational Education and Training  
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### **Center za šolske in obšolske dejavnosti**

Centre for School and Outdoor Education  
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### **Center Republike Slovenije za mobilnost in evropske programe izobraževanja in usposabljanja**

Centre of the Republic of Slovenia for Mobility and European Educational and Training Programmes  
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### **Centro Italiano di Promozione, Cultura, Formazione e Sviluppo "Carlo Combi" Promocijsko, kulturno, izobraževalno in razvojno italijansko središče "Carlo Combi"**

Italian Centre for Promotion, Culture, Training, and Development "Carlo Combi"  
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Coastal self-governed community of Italian nationality

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### **CAN Pirano**

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### **Comunità degli italiani di Ancarano**

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### **Comunità degli italiani di Bertocchi**

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### **Comunità degli italiani di Crevatini**

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### **Državni izpitni center**

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### **Inštitut za narodnostna vprašanja**

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### **Ministero degli Affari Esteri**

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## About this Regional Dossier

### *author biographies*

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### *referees*

The first edition (2012) of this Regional Dossier was reviewed by Professor Emeritus Albina Nečak Lük, and the second edition (2023) by Professor Rita Scotti Jurić and Professor Sonja Novak Lukanovič.

### *previous editions*

The first edition (2012) of this Regional Dossier was written by Professor Lucija Čok and Professor Nives Zudič Antonič.

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### *contact*

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)).



## Other websites on minority languages

### **Mercator European 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 Regional Dossier series, a database of experts, a bibliography, information on current activities, and many links to relevant websites.

### **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.

### **European Commission**

[www.ec.europa.eu/languages](http://www.ec.europa.eu/languages)

The website of the European Commission gives information about the EU's support for language diversity.

### **Council of Europe**

[www.conventions.coe.int](http://www.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**

[www.eacea.ec.europa.eu/education/eurydice](http://www.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.

### **European Parliament Committee – supporting analyses database**

[www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/home](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/home)

In this database, you will find research papers produced by the European Parliament's research service. A study for the CULT Committee, conducted by the Mercator European Research Centre, was published in 2017: *Minority Languages and Education: Best Practices and Pitfalls*.

### **NPLD**

[www.npld.eu](http://www.npld.eu)

The Network to Promote Linguistic Diversity (NPLD) is a European-wide network working in the field of language policy & planning for Constitutional, Regional and Small-State Languages (CRSS) across Europe.

**FUEN**

[www.fuen.org](http://www.fuen.org)

The Federal Union of European Nationalities is the umbrella organisation of the autochthonous, national minorities/ethnic groups in Europe and represents the interests of European minorities at the regional, national, and European levels.

**ELEN**

[www.elen.ngo](http://www.elen.ngo)

The European Language Equality Network (ELEN) is a non-governmental organisation that has as its goal the promotion and protection of European lesser-used (i.e. regional, minority, endangered, indigenous, co-official, and smaller national) languages, to work towards linguistic equality for these languages, and multilingualism, under the broader framework of human rights, and to be a voice for the speakers of these languages at all levels.



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The Mercator European Research Centre is the leading partner of the European Mercator Network, which was initiated by the European Commission in 1987. The Mercator Network partners are the following: Mercator Media, hosted at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David; Mercator Legislation, hosted at the CIEMEN Foundation; the University of Barcelona; Stockholm University in Sweden; and the Research Institute for Linguistics of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences in Hungary. The Mercator European Research Centre also works closely with a large number of research organisations and universities. This cooperation includes partners in the province of Fryslân and other parts of the Netherlands, as well as partners across Europe and beyond. The main funding body of the Mercator European Research Centre is the provincial government of Fryslân. The EU and regional authorities in Europe also regularly fund projects and activities.

### *research*

The research activities of the Mercator European Research Centre focus on various aspects of bilingual and trilingual education such as language proficiency in different languages, interaction in the multilingual classroom, and teacher qualifications for working in a multilingual classroom. Latest developments look at how educational models for minority languages can also cater for pupils with a migrant background. Whenever possible, research is carried out in a comparative perspective. Results are disseminated through publications and conferences, often in collaboration with the Mercator European Research Centre's partners.

## ***conferences***

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

## ***contact***

For general enquiries, please contact us at [mercator@fryske-akademy.nl](mailto:mercator@fryske-akademy.nl).

For enquiries about our Regional Dossier series, please contact the editors at [mercator-regionaldossiers@fryske-akademy.nl](mailto:mercator-regionaldossiers@fryske-akademy.nl).



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