

English Version



AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF TRENTO AND LOCAL LINGUISTIC MINORITIES



“The language, culture, customs and traditions of the local linguistic minorities constitute an inalienable heritage of the whole Trentino provincial community”

THE PROTECTION OF HISTORICAL LINGUISTIC MINORITIES IN THE AUTONOMOUS PROVINCE OF TRENTO



Protection and promotion of the local linguistic minority communities is one of the cornerstones of the special autonomous status enjoyed by Trentino today.

Unlike the Alto Adige/South Tyrol (which has opted for a system based on a “personalised” approach, whereby the individual declares his or her ethnic group of origin), the Autonomous Province of Trento has adopted a “territorial” criterion, which is set out in its regulations on the protection and promotion of linguistic minorities. In other words, the measures to protect and promote language and culture, contained in the regulatory acts in this area, are intended to benefit the **Ladino** minority living in the municipalities of the Val di Fassa and the smaller **Mòcheno** minority (in the three German-speaking municipalities of the Val dei Mocheni) and **Cimbri** minority (in the municipality of Luserna).

In fact, in accordance with the rationale subsequently adopted by the national Parliament when drafting Law No. 482 of 15 December 1999, “Norms relating to the protection of historical linguistic minorities”, both Legislative Decree No. 592 of 16 December 1993 and Provincial Law No. 4 of 30 August 1999 indicate the exact territorial areas concerned, corresponding to the original settlements of the linguistic minorities in Trentino. Until the **2001 reform of the Autonomy Statute**, however, the protection of the Trentino minorities



was not referred to in the Statute itself (apart from a guarantee that cultural initiatives and activities for the Ladino people would be promoted and their street names respected, as previously stipulated in Article 101 of the Statute), but only in implementing acts and provincial laws. The 2001 reform of the Constitution represented a major step forwards in terms of the protection of minorities in Trentino. The new provisions added to the autonomous statute in order to protect the linguistic minorities are as follows:

- **The guarantee that the Ladino community will be represented on the Provincial Council:** a Ladino seat is to be allocated to represent the territory of the Ladino municipalities in the Val di Fassa inhabited by the Ladino-Dolomitic linguistic group of Fassa;
- **The right to challenge administrative acts before the Tar** (regional administrative tribunal) of Trento (by regional, provincial or municipal councillors, depending on the nature of the acts) adopted by public bodies or organs with head offices in the region, if they are considered detrimental to the principle of equality between citizens of Italian, Ladino, Mòcheno or Cimbri mother tongue residing in the province;
- **The extension of the existing statutory rules on the cultural protection and promotion of the Ladino people** (including respect for street names and popular traditions) to the Mòcheno and Cimbri populations; plus the guarantee that the Ladino and German languages will be taught in schools in municipalities in the province of Trento where the Ladino, Mòcheno and Cimbri languages are spoken (Art. 102 of the Statute);
- **The statutory guarantee that appropriate provincial funding** will be allocated to the promotion, protection and development of the Ladino, Mòcheno and Cimbri populations, in accordance with the size and specific needs of the populations concerned (Article 15, third paragraph, of the Statute).

Provincial Law No. 4 of 30 August 1999 defines the culture of the Trentino minorities as the “inalienable heritage of the entire provincial community” and promotes its development and protection. In order to activate the protective measures introduced under this law, a **Service for the Promotion of Local Linguistic Minorities**, responsible for public relations with the linguistic minorities in Trentino, has been set up under the Presidency of the Regional Executive, and a **Minorities Conference** established, in charge of monitoring progress in the implementation of the laws and projects in this area, and for identifying new measures as the need arises. By setting up a **specific structure** dedicated to its linguistic minorities, the Province has opened up a kind of



privileged channel of communications between the special requirements of minority groups and the public administration. By adopting an informal, direct and non-bureaucratic approach, this service has been able to respond to the needs and expectations of citizens from linguistic minority groups across a wide range of different administrative sectors. From street names to bilingualism, from schools to the cultural protection of linguistic minorities, these minorities are in fact voicing specific needs which need to be dealt with in a targeted way, with particular emphasis on the language aspect. The Service creates opportunities for more regular contact with the political representatives of the Ladino, Mòcheno and Cimbrio municipalities. Of key importance are regular and direct links with the outside world, in particular via the academic world, as a means of keeping abreast of developments beyond our borders, drawing up new proposals and taking on new challenges. These challenges are all the more complex as they call for constant attention to diversity and the capacity, particularly for the Ladino, Mòcheno and Cimbrio peoples, of measuring themselves against the “global-local” dimension, where the process of opening up to the world goes hand in hand with consolidating one’s own roots.

In this respect, **national regulations in this area (Law No. 482 of 15 December 1999**



containing norms on the protection of historical linguistic minorities) sets out additional provisions enabling public administrations to claim state funding. It sets up, within the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, a National Fund for the Protection of Linguistic Minorities, with its own annual budget. Under the terms of Article 8 of the implementing regulation (approved by Presidential Decree No. 345 of 2 May 2001), these funds are to be allocated on the basis of projects submitted by the

main local authorities with linguistic minorities qualifying for protection. On the basis of these projects, the regulation delegates control functions to the Regions and Autonomous Provinces to be conducted in accordance with specific protocols of agreement drawn up by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department for Regional Affairs – and the Region or Autonomous Province responsible for the area concerned.

The Province of Trento has, in cooperation with the Presidency of the Council of Ministers – Department for Regional Affairs – laid down procedures ensuring the requisite verification and prompt disbursement of funding for projects submitted by the local authorities of the Trentino minorities, so as to guarantee the efficient and concrete application of the legal provisions designed to introduce specific actions and projects to promote the linguistic minorities in Trentino. A joint **protocol of agreement** has been drawn up to this end, the main points of which can be summarised as follows:

- The Autonomous Province of Trento is responsible for receiving and collecting the project proposals submitted under the terms of Law No. 482 of 15 December 1999 and related implementing regulation;
- The Province conducts the controls stipulated by law and verifies the projects received;
- The Province is responsible for sending the projects, complete with its observations and assessments, to the Presidency of the Council and for informing the bodies concerned of the contents of the protocol of agreement;
- The funds available under Law No. 482 of 15 December 1999 are allocated by the Presidency of the Council of Ministers by means of a special decree drawn up in the light of the observations and assessments put forwards by the Province;
- The funds allocated to the bodies responsible for the projects are transferred from the Presidency of the Council of Ministers via the Autonomous Province of Trento.



Under **Provincial Law No. 7 of 23 July 2004**, the Mòcheno-Cimbro Institute has been separated into two distinct entities: the **Mòcheno Cultural Institute** for the promotion of the German-speaking populations of the municipalities of Palù di Fersina, Fierozzo and Frassilongo, and the **Cimbro Cultural Institute** for the Cimbro minority of Luserna. The Law also grants the cultural institutes an exclusive reference role for each linguistic minority in situations where they are assigned tasks or functions relating to language or writing, so as to promote the process of standardising local idioms. The Law stipulates that responsibility lies with the Provincial Executive for defining, in a resolution of its own, the scientific standards and the methods for carrying out such tasks. Law No. 7 of 2004 also amended

many provisions of provincial law regarding **street names**, extending to the German-speaking Mòcheno and Cimbro minorities in the territory of the Province of Trento the same rights as already applied to the Ladino linguistic minority under Provincial Law No. 16 of 27 August 1987. The three minority communities are thus covered by the same regulations in the area of street names.

Decree Law No. 178 of 4 April 2006 supplements the implementing provisions of the Special Statute contained in Legislative Decree 592/93, providing that in Ladino areas of Trentino, public acts concerning the general populations, individual public acts intended for public use and **identity cards** are to be drafted in the Italian language followed by the text in the Ladino language. This law has clarified once and for all the ambiguity arising from previous rules on the use of Ladino in public acts (Article 1, paragraph 3, of Legislative decree No. 592 of 16 December 1993), which had been very difficult to apply as a result.



In **Provincial Law No. 3 of 16 August 2006** (norms on the governance of the autonomy of Trentino), Article 19 sets out specific provisions for the territorial areas of those municipalities inhabited by Ladino, Mòcheno and Cimbri-speaking population groups, as defined under the Special Autonomous Statute. In the territory containing the Ladino municipalities, the *Comun General de Fascia* has been set up, with a statute agreed on by all the municipalities and approved by a provincial law. This law regulates the administrative tasks and functions of the *Comun General*. As regards the municipalities populated by the Mòcheno and Cimbri groups, the statutes of the communities in which they are resident contain specific provisions to guarantee the protection of these populations.

Finally, under **Provincial Law of 7 August 2006** (educational system, schools and training in Trentino), the Province has explicitly extended the principle of protection of linguistic minorities to educational institutions in the Ladino, Mòcheno and Cimbri municipalities. The law introduces special regulations on school organisation in the municipalities of the



Val di Fassa, setting up the “*Consei general per l’educazion e la formazion*” (General Council on Education and Training), responsible for identifying specific educational and training needs within the Ladino community and assisting the province in defining the structure and programme of Ladino schools. It also covers the procedures for the appointment and tasks of the superintendent of Ladino schools (“*Sorastant de la Scola Ladina*”) and the setting up of the Ladino office for educational training and research.

With regard to the Mòcheno and Cimbri populations, this law provides, in addition to the guarantee of representation on school bodies, the strengthening of knowledge about the Mòcheno, Cimbri and German cultures, to be provided in schools situated outside the designated minority areas which are attended by Mòcheno and Cimbri students.

In 2007 the Province initiated a major process of analysis, drafting and proposals for the adoption of a **Single Text on provincial laws on the protection and promotion of linguistic minorities**. The purpose of this legislative review is not only to provide a more practical compilation of the complex laws and regulations in the area, but also to make existing regulations more targeted and efficient and, where necessary, to introduce more modern and appropriate ones.



CIMBRIAN MINORITY (CIMBRI / ZIMBAR)



Lusèrn/Luserna is the last community where Cimbrian (“the oldest existing peripheral language of the Germanic linguistic domain”) is the mother tongue, although it was once also spoken on the tableland of the area known as the Sette Comuni.

The origin of this linguistic island should be sought in the migration of the original population from Bavaria and western Tyrol in the first decades of the 11th century. Indeed after 1053 groups of colonists moved from the area around Munich to the Verona area, to then settle in the area of the Lessinia mountains and on the Asiago tableland. Only towards the 13th century did they colonise the south-east of Trentino, then also founding Luserna, where the Cimbrian language has been maintained also thanks to the close relations maintained with central Europe.

At the beginning of the 20th century the town had more than one thousand inhabitants, but today the small Cimbrian community has suffered from considerable depopulation: today there are slightly less than 900 Cimbrian speakers scattered throughout Trentino, but less than 300 are resident in Luserna.

THE LADIN MINORITY (LADINS DE FASCIA)



The Ladin minority globally occupies three geographical areas, the Grigioni Canton, central Ladinia (Dolomite area) and Friuli. The three areas represent the remaining part of a more extensive Romance territory which in around 1000 AD stretched over an area between the Rhine and the Adriatic coast.

Today the Ladin minority is made up of a community of around 770,000 people, divided up as follows: 40,000 in the Grigioni Canton, 700,000 in Friuli, whereas 30,000 Ladins are to be found in the Dolomites. Ladinia is subdivided into five valleys (Gardena, Badia, Fassa, Livinallongo and Ampezzo), in which the Ladin language has distinctive local variations.

The current Ladin district of Fassa with the seven Ladin communes in the Province of Trento can be considered as the successor of the Magnificent Community of Fassa (Communitas Fasciae), first mention of which dates back to 1253. The life of the Fassa population has always been characterised by a purely subsistence economy due to difficult climatic and geographical conditions. The rearing of cattle and sheep was an important economic activity, running alongside the cultivation of crops.

The difficult living conditions drove many residents of Fassa to emigrate seasonally. Starting from the beginning of the 19th century emigration became a mass phenomenon, coinciding with the development of painting and decorating activities. Swarms of painters, especially from the more disadvantaged villages higher up the valley emigrated seasonally to work in the wealthier regions of central Europe.

Today the situations has changed radically, above all thanks to a considerable development in tourism. Important projects designed to safeguard and promote the Ladin language and culture have been realised by the Ladin cultural institute "Majon di gascegn".

There are around 8000 Ladins in the Fassa valley.

THE MÓCHENO MINORITY (BERSNTOLER)



The Mócheno settlement lies on the left-hand bank and part of the right-hand bank of the valley of the Fèrsina stream, in eastern Trentino.

From ancient times the valley, given the vicinity to the village of Pergine, was exploited for its woods, pastureland and rich mining deposits. Indeed, in several places the remains of smelting furnaces and slag deposits dating back to 1300-1100 BC can still be noted.

It was only with the systematic colonisation of the area by peasant families of German origin, a policy implemented by the Counts of Tyrol between 1300 and the beginning of the 15th century, that permanent settlements were founded. The economy of the valley experienced a period of flourishing mining activity, however already by the 17th century the rearing of animals had once again become the main activity, accompanied by widespread temporary emigration of the male population, who worked as travelling tradesmen (krumern = cromeri or pedlars).

Mócheno, which has the typical characteristics of the dialect of central-upper Bavaria, was reported from ancient times as an "Alemannic or German" dialect.

The existence of German schools, the contacts with German-speaking communities due to the large numbers of travelling tradesmen and other systems for the transmission of the culture and of family assets, led to reinforcement of the use of the dialect. Today the Mócheno population is made up of around 2,300 people.

CULTURAL INSTITUTES ESTABLISHED BY PROVINCIAL LAW

The main task of the Institutes is to safeguard, promote and gain knowledge of the Ladin, Mócheno and Cimbrian linguistic minorities. They study the history, language, culture of their populations and work together with local bodies and associations to ensure the well-being and dignity of their peoples. Constitutional laws have entrusted them with the task of establishing linguistic and spelling norms which have official value as regards the respective linguistic minorities.

They represent an essential point of reference for citizens, support linguistic help desks and educational planning and organise events and happenings to safeguard and raise awareness of the language and culture of their peoples.

They establish and administer museums in the province:

the extensive Fascia Ladin Museum with the local branches in Penia (the Venetian sawmill), Pera di Fassa (the mill), Moena (cooper workshop), the Filzerhof (old peasant farmstead) in Vlarotz/Fierozzo, the Mil (mill) in Garait/Frassilongo, the "Grua va Hardömb" mine in Berstol at Pali/Palù, the Haus von Prökk in Lusèrn/Luserna are some examples of the recovery of old buildings and traditional activities for the purposes of creating museums.

The cultural institutes of the minorities participate, together with the relevant municipalities, in the determination of place-names for locations within their area of reference.



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THE CONFERENCE OF MINORITIES



This is the most important governmental organ for Trentino minority linguistic groups. It is a joint meeting of the government of the Autonomous Province of Trento with the Mayors of the communes with minority linguistic groups, the Presidents of the respective districts and representatives of the Ladin, Mócheno and Cimbrian cultural institutes, normally held twice a year. It is used to verify progress (implementation of laws safeguarding minorities) and to plan new intervention. It is organised in rotation in one of the historic settlements of the Trentino linguistic minorities.

THE PROVINCIAL DEPARTMENT FOR THE PROMOTION OF LOCAL LINGUISTIC MINORITIES



How can one update Ladin teaching material for the next school year? What documents is it necessary to draw up in both languages? How can one implement projects with cryptic names such as 'Lem de sproch' or 'Halt bar lente ünsar zung'? What is the correct balance between the necessary economic development of the area through the creation of new opportunities and the safeguarding of such a special culture and its traditions? In other words, how can one link the identity of the Cimbrian, Mócheno and Ladin communities to the new challenges in terms of development and globalisation?

These are some of the questions which the Provincial Department for the Promotion of Local Linguistic Minorities, established according to a provincial law of 1999, is called upon to answer. The department provides a versatile structure, offering a privileged channel of communication with the provincial government, sensitive to the special needs of minority groups.

The department also deals with the needs and expectations of citizens belonging to a linguistic minority as regards different sectors of the provincial government. From place-names to bilingualism, from schools to safeguarding of the cultural heritage, the linguistic minorities indeed have special needs, requiring the adoption of a targeted approach. The department has as its users not the citizen in general, whether student, teacher, local administrator etc., but rather the "person who speaks another language", with all the consequential complexities and facets which this involves. The department pays particular attention to the linguistic aspect, commonly defined by experts and academics who have concerned themselves with models for the safeguarding and enhancement of linguistic minorities, as the "mother of all policies".



Provincia autonoma di Trento - Servizio per la Promozione delle Minoranze Linguistiche Locali

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