

Multiple voices in the classroom:
Harnessing the power of regional and minority languages in secondary education

“7 (and more) proposals for valuing of regional and minority languages (RML) in Europe”

Lessons learned from Italian and EU experience



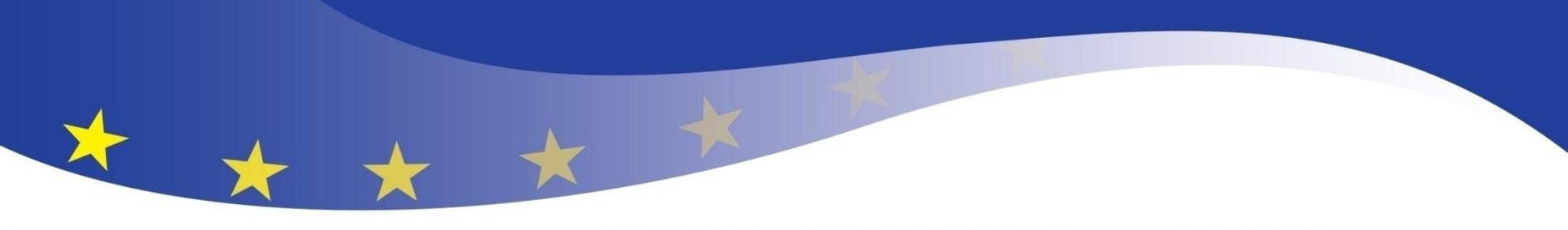
Graz, ECML
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Introduction:
what experiences determined
the proposals for valuing of RMLs?
Looking at the “Italian paradox” from
different standpoints

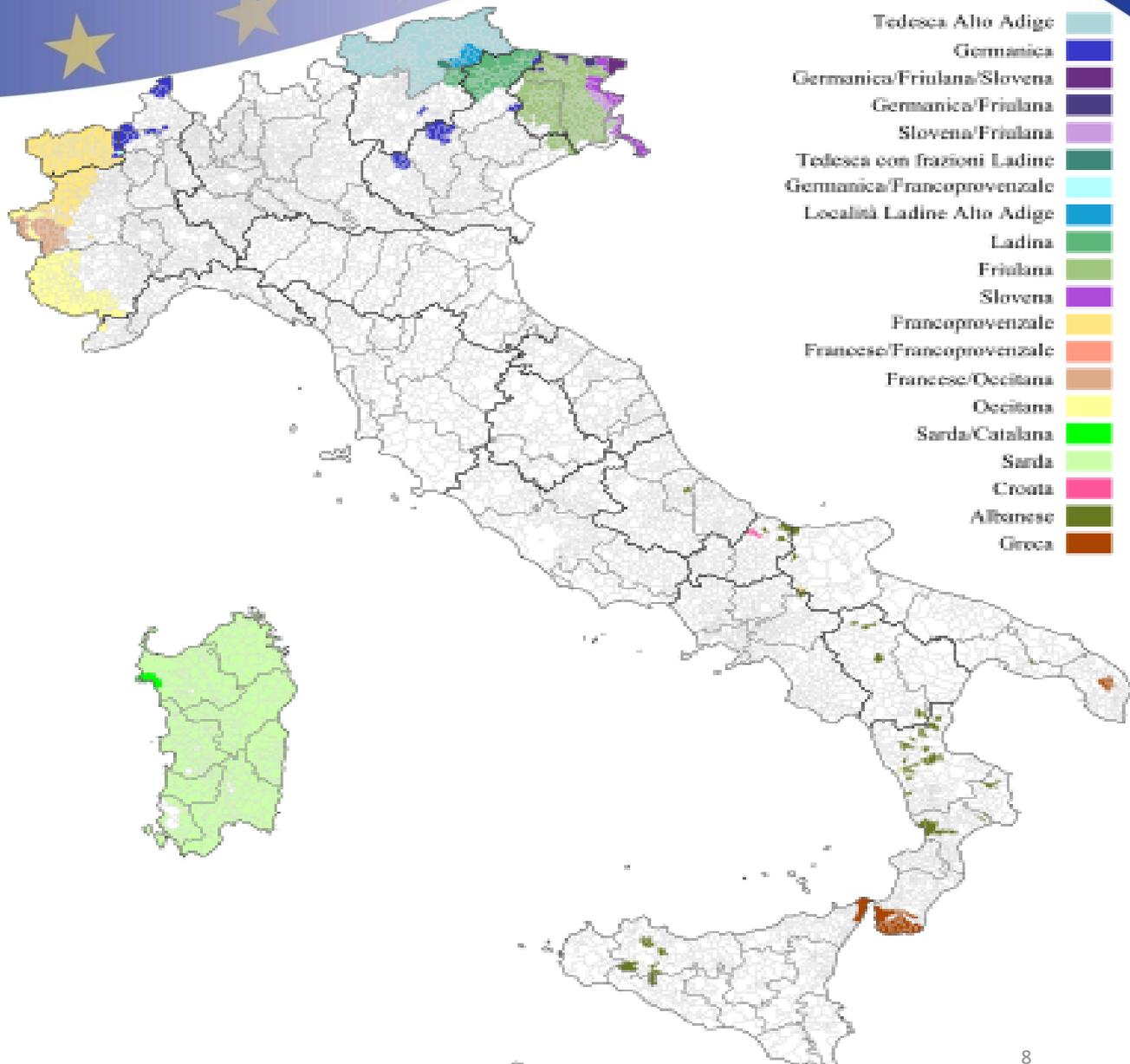








The Italian paradox...



Comunità di minoranza



Fight common prejudices against regional languages in Europe:

- *"It's just a dialect, a second-class language"*
- *"It's not elegant"*
- *"It's spoken by the lower classes"*
- *"It's a corruption of the standard language"*
- *"It's the language of crime"*
- *"People judge us negatively for our accent"*
- *"It's not worth protecting—there are more important issues!"*
- *"Better to invest energy in widely spoken languages"... Etc. etc.*



Fight prejudices

- Language is **NOT just a “communication tool”**
- Language—regardless of its reach—is the glue and **essence of a community's unique historical-cultural heritage**
- Romantically yet truly, it's a piece of our soul, a **core part of our individual and collective identity** (past and present)
- Letting our RML fade means losing an **irreplaceable cultural and identity heritage** (and not just a parallel communication tool).





**Stand up for your rights:
The European Union fully respects cultural and
linguistic diversity.**



**Treaty on European
Union**

Article 3

*“The Union respects
the richness of its
cultural and linguistic
diversity and ensures
the safeguarding and
development of
Europe’s cultural
heritage.”*



**Charter of
Fundamental Rights
of the European
Union**

Article 22

**Cultural, religious
and linguistic
diversity**

*“The Union respects
cultural, religious
and linguistic
diversity.”*



Stand up for your rights: Check your Constitutions

- **From the Italian Constitution:**

- Art. 6

- **The Republic shall protect linguistic minorities through appropriate measures.**

- Art. 9

- **The Republic shall promote the development of culture and scientific and technical research. It shall protect the Nation's landscape and historical and artistic heritage. (...)**

If RMLs are "patrimoine culturel immatériel" (Intangible Cultural Heritage)

State inaction

- Art. 2 della *Convenzione per la salvaguardia del patrimonio culturale immateriale* dell'Unesco:
- Article 2 – Definitions
For the purposes of this Convention,
 1. The "intangible cultural heritage" means the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage. This intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. For the purposes of this Convention, consideration will be given solely to such intangible cultural heritage as is compatible with existing international human rights instruments, as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development.
 2. The "intangible cultural heritage", as defined in paragraph 1 above, is manifested inter alia in the following domains:
 - (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the intangible cultural heritage;

If RMLs are "patrimoine culturel immatériel", is State inactivity acceptable?

- **Article 7(1)(a) of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages**
- "In respect of regional or minority languages, within the territories in which such languages are used and according to the situation of each language, the Parties shall base their policies, legislation and practice on the following objectives and principles:
 - a. the recognition of the regional or minority languages as an expression of cultural wealth;**"



Find the right balance RML /new minorities

- **Given limited resources, should funding prioritize “foreign” languages over native regional ones?**
- Constitutions and EU and CoE provisions focus on the European heritage
- Foreign languages are not endangered, while Europe's minority languages are (UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger lists 221 such languages in the EU).
- If States do not support native regional languages, no one else will. Whereas foreign language initiatives can instead be funded by embassies and cultural institutes.
- Promoting native local languages fosters "regional bilingualism" (national+regional)—a pattern from past generations with proven socio-cognitive benefits. Immigrant languages cannot offer these same advantages.

Find your ISO code 639-3!

- Founded in 1947, the International Organization for Standardization (ISO), based in Geneva, is the leading global body for technical standards, with 164 member countries.
- **The ISO 639-3 code is a three-letter code used to identify a language in a concise way (e.g. Italian: ita; English: eng).**
- For assigning the ISO 639-3, ISO relies largely on the work of linguists at SIL International, who also produce *the Ethnologue*.



★ Create Your Regional Languages FAQ/Glossary

- Build FAQ glossaries for your country's RML to teach linguistic diversity in schools.
- Educational Impact: **cultural awareness**, combats linguistic bias, strengthens identity,, promotes heritage preservation, and fosters multilingual awareness—adapt to your context for inclusive classrooms.



Defend "regional bilingualism" advantages

- Numerous international studies show that **children raised in "regional bilingualism" enjoy measurable linguistic, cognitive, social advantages** that persist into adulthood and old age.
 - For example, documented studies demonstrate specific benefits for:
 - Dutch-Frisian bilinguals vs. monolingual Dutch speakers
 - English-Gaelic bilinguals vs. monolingual English speakers
 - English-Welsh bilinguals vs. monolingual English speakers
 - Portuguese-Luxembourgish bilinguals vs. monolingual Portuguese speakers
 - Spanish-Catalan bilinguals vs. monolingual Spanish speakers
 - Cypriot-Greek bilinguals vs. Greek-only peers.
- **It is also an instrument to addresses myths, local traditions and old stories**

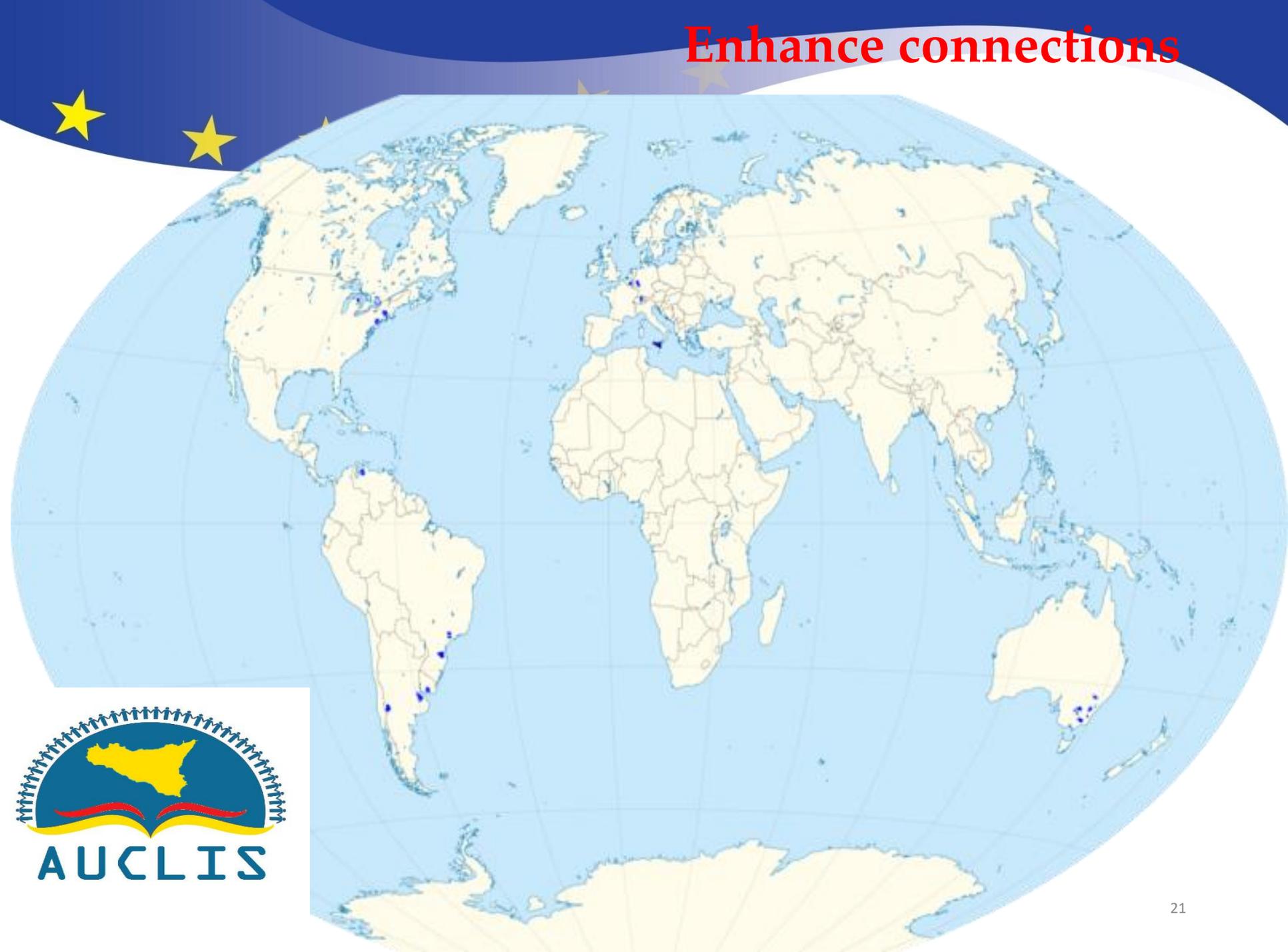
πόρος

POROS - L'Attraversamento

Il dodicesimo cunto dell'Odissea tradotto in lingua siciliana
da Rosa Gazzara Siciliano – diretto da Vincenzo Tripodo



Enhance connections





Celebrate the key dates in your schools/institutions

- 26 September (European Day of Languages)
- 21 February (International Mother Language Day)
- 21 May (World Day for Cultural Diversity)
- NN (**significant days** related to your RML);
- NN consider to establish a **week** dedicated to your RML (ex. “international week of sicilian language”)



Key Language Observances: from laboratories to press releases

- **Key Language Observances: from laboratories to press releases**
- February 21: International Mother Language Day
- March 20: French Language Day / International Francophonie Day
- April 20: Chinese Language Day
- April 23: English Language Day
- April 23: Spanish Language Day
- May 5: World Portuguese Language Day
- July 7: Kiswahili Language Day
- September 23: International Day of Sign Languages
- September 26: European Day of Languages
- November 5: World Day of Romani Language
- December 18: Arabic Language Day

Consider to draft a “Manifesto” for RMLs!

*A manifesto is a **public statement**, usually in the form of an open letter, that sets out the **principles and goals** of a movement and of those who choose to support it.*





3E2 PPT (PRESENTATION)



Proposte per
*Il Manifesto di Bruxelles
e il rilancio del patrimonio
linguistico e culturale
siciliano*

Bruxelles, 7 dicembre 2023
Aurelio La Torre





The core structure of the Manifesto

The undersigned signatories,

Having regard to the following considerations: (...)

*Hereby express their intention to take action and
cooperate for the protection and promotion of
regional and minority languages in Europe,*

in particular by promoting initiatives aimed at: (...)

Signatories



What does the Manifesto aim to achieve?

- Conscious sharing of premises and objectives
- Structured approach providing guidance towards targeted actions
- Invitation to other bodies and associations to join and support these efforts
- Effects on public opinion and debate

- In junio 2016, al culmine del debates super Brexit e del discussiones racialmente cargate super le immigration a Britannia,
- **le BBC reportava un incidentia raciste**, le qual subsequentele ganeva un large attention international.
- **Super un bus inter Cardiff e Newport, un matre musulmane, portante un niqab, parlava con su filio in un lingua altere que anglese.**
- **Un pasajero masculino anglese blanc** interveniva pro dicer a illa: “Quando tu es in UK, tu debe parlar anglese”.
- A iste puncto, **un ancian femina** in fronte del homine se girava verso ille e diceva: “Illa es in Wales. E illa parla gallese”.



Fostering respect over linguistic discrimination acts

- **Fostering respect over linguistic discrimination acts** (*Linguistic profiling, slam bans, glottofobia, accent discrimination, accentism, ethnic accent bullying, linguistic stereotyping, linguistic racism, etc*).
- **LD Individual Impacts:** these stereotypes and biases strongly affect jobs, university life, social interactions, housing searches, and more.
- **LD Collective Impacts:** negative stereotypes tied to specific linguistic communities hinder language expression and growth, **threatening long-term survival against dominant languages** ²⁹



Another proposal before conclusion

A Conference against language
discrimination?

- Possible date:
- 1 June 2026 UN “*Zero discrimination day*”



Grazie per l'attenzione!!!

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