

### **Activity 1.5: Assesment report on Croatian language and preschool education in italy**

Professor Patrizia Sepich emphasized the importance of language both in the family and educational contexts, considering it a medium for communicating needs, intentions, and values. The first language a child encounters is their mother tongue, which, within the family setting, serves not only as a tool for conveying instructions but also emotions. This language leaves a lasting impression on the child's mind, not just for its informational content but also for its emotional significance. However, in an increasingly multilingual society, allowing a child to engage with multiple languages provides them with the ability to build relationships, broaden their knowledge, stimulate curiosity, and embrace new opportunities.

Being immersed in a linguistically different environment from one's origin enriches individuals, offering them the chance to learn not only a new language but also another culture. While this culture may be similar to their own, it possesses unique aspects that deserve understanding and respect. Nonetheless, individuals also need to connect with their own community. Therefore, it is crucial to support parents from linguistic minorities in their efforts to pass on their language to their children, including through the education system at all levels.

New and expectant parents need support and guidance throughout their parenting journey, especially if they live in an environment different from their place of origin and lack proximity to their families. It is essential to enable them to network, helping them feel part of a minority community with whom they can share values. This connection will, in turn, allow them to transmit their culture and traditions to their children.

For minority institutions, it is important to create conditions where parents from a community can meet and support one another. Additionally, they should provide opportunities for these parents to engage with educational professionals to strengthen their parenting skills.

Acknowledging parents' fears and doubts regarding enrolling their children in various institutions allows us, as professionals, to discuss their concerns with them, supporting their decisions and guiding them through the educational process.

As our institution is a school for the national community, we possess the necessary resources to both educate children in our values, traditions, and culture and to accompany parents throughout this journey.



Having had contact with Croatian parents in Italy opens up opportunities for future collaboration.

This report will be presented to the staff of the Girasole Preschool at the beginning of the 2024/2025 pedagogical year and will remain available to staff in the years to come.

### **Activity 1.5: Assessment report on Croatian language and preschool education in Italy**

The LP organized the meeting with the Croatian minority representatives living in Italy in the Friuli Venezia Giulia region. The meeting has been organized online on 21.12.2024 through the WEBEX platform made available by Orsa with a total of 13 participants. The speaker selected to guide the focus group was Patrizia Sepich, an experienced pedagogist. The Focus group consisted of young mothers in a household speaking 2 sometimes 3 languages: Italian, Croatian and Slovenian which is common in the cross-border region of Istria and Italy where the partners are operating.

The focuses of the one-day workshop were on the development of the child in the first years of life, the importance of the community for the conservation of the mother tongue, the educational services and how they are supporting the child as well as the parents.

The main topic of discussion was how the environment, the community and the services can benefit development in positive ways. The bilingual environment is seen by studies as an asset to develop the cerebral capacity in the early stages of development. For these reasons more often than not, parents decide to enroll their children in kindergartens with the official an main language used different from the language spoken in their country. As an example, Italian kindergartens in Croatia or Slovenian for Italy. Croatian language is only available for in activities not directly provided by the institutions present on the territory. The Croatian Community in Trieste is active in promoting and organising courses in Croatian language for the interested. Even though institutions don't provide directly educational programme in a foreign language, they support the families by giving technical and logistical support. The main supporters for these actions are the families that find themselves in a minority part of a population that has the will, spontaneously, to promote their language by creating groups for joined activities supported by, as already mentioned, local institutions. The open discussion with the parents once again underlined the importance of multilingualism in a territory and



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enrolling their child to institution using their primary language according to the minority present on the territory to blend in and support the society and language spoken.

Some of the families present communicate the difficulty in following courses or events organized in the Croatian language, mainly due to their increasingly hectic lifestyle.

Therefore, the mother tongue is mainly transmitted at home by parents or in informal moments of meeting between parents who are already part of an established network.

