

Comitât – Odbor – Komitaat – Comitato 482

c/o "Informazione Friulana" soc. coop.
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To the Attention of the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso.

Dear President

We are deeply honoured to welcome you to Friuli, a small European region which has seen over the centuries the pacific cohabitation of populations belonging to the three main linguistic families of Europe: Neolatin, Slavic, and German. The name of this region is pronounced *Friûl*, *Furlanija*, *Friaul* and *Friuli* depending on the mother tongue of its inhabitants, a situation which may be seen to represent the European motto "Unity in Diversity". As Comitât / Odbor / Komitaat / Comitato 482, we contribute to the realization of this unity by grouping together over thirty organizations that are actively involved in the protection of the linguistic rights of the Friulian, Slavic and German speaking inhabitants of Friuli.

"Identity – regions as building blocks for Europe" is the topic chosen by the Assembly of European Region for its next General Assembly and General Meeting, which will take place on 7-9 November in Friuli. In his official invitation to the Assembly, the AER President Mr Riccardo Illy, who is also President of the Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, writes that "*a truly European identity would not replace or alter the regional and national identities but rather take roots in our unique diversity.*" We certainly share his thought and give credit to President Illy for supporting the promotion of our different local identities and the value of diversity as an instrument of cultural, social and economic growth.

The official invitation also includes the following questions, "*How can Regions plan and govern their territories so as to deepen their citizens' sense of belonging? How can Regions develop a 'political resilient solidarity' ?*"

As far as we are concerned we can only reply, "Certainly not doing like our Regional Authority is doing!" The Regional Assembly of Friuli-Venezia Giulia is presently discussing a new Regional law on the Friulian language, a language spoken by over 600,000 regional citizens as well as by thousands of Friulians around the world. Despite numerous appeals made by the main Friulian institutions – University, Archdiocese, Udine Provincial and Municipal Authorities, trade unions, associations and so on – not to weaken the provisions of the 1999 State Law on the protection of minority languages and of the 1996 Regional Law on the Friulian language, and to defend the proposals put forward by a specially-nominated committee of experts, the Regional Assembly has made – and is about to make – numerous changes to the original draft. The danger is that the level of protection would be reduced and, in certain cases, measures would be impossible to enforce. It should suffice to think that any reference to the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* has been deleted from the text of the law.

When we think of a Europe that is "united in diversity", this is not what we have in mind. There cannot be any unity if diversities are not respected, with deeds and not just with words. This applies to the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia, to the Italian Republic, and to the European Union. In Europe there are millions of citizens who find themselves in our situation. What future do we have ahead of us if their rights are trampled on?

President Barroso, as the highest representative of European institutions, we are asking you to speak

out in the defence of our language. Moreover, we are asking you to remind the Region Friuli-Venezia Giulia that the linguistic rights of Friulians must be respected. To speak Friulian means to speak European.

Thank you for your attention. *Mandi*.

Udine, 09/11/2007

Carlo Puppo
speaking on behalf of **Comitât / Odbor / Komitaat / Comitato 482**

representing:

Associazione “ Ad Undecimum ”;	Circolo Culturale Saurano “F. Schneider” ;
Associazione “ Beneške korenine ”;	Cooperativa di servizi linguistici “ Serling ”;
Associazione “ Don Eugenio Blanchini ”.	“ Informazion Furlane ” Societât Cooperative;
Associazione “ FaF – Fantats Furlans ”;	Istitût Ladin-Furlan “Pre Checo Placerean”;
Associazione “ Glesie Furlane ”;	Istituto “Achille Tellini” ;
Associazione “ La Grame ”;	Istituto “Pio Paschini” ;
Associazione “ La Siele ”;	Istituto di Cultura Timavese ;
Associazione “ Matajur ”;	Most piccola società cooperativa a r.l.;
Associazione “ S. Pietro ”;	Redazione “ La Comugne ”;
Associazione culturale “ Colonos ”;	Redazione “ Ladins dal Friûl ”;
Associazione culturale “ El Tomât ”;	Redazione “ Lenghe.net ”;
Associazione culturale “ Guido da Variano ”;	Redazione “ Radio Onde Furlane ”;
Associazione culturale “ Pionîrs ”;	Redazione “ Slovit – Bollettino di Informazione degli Sloveni in Italia ”;
Associazione culturale “ Rozajanski Dum ”;	Redazione taicinvriaul.org ;
Associazione culturale slovena “ Planika ”;	Stazione di Topolò – Postaja Topolove ;
Associazione e redazione “ La Patrie dal Friûl ”;	Union Scritôrs Furlans .
Associazione e redazione “ Novi Matajur ”;	
Circolo Culturale “G. Unfer” – Timau;	

and other individual citizens belonging to the language communities of Friuli – V.G.