



Center for Autonomy Experience



2024
AUTONOMY
POLICY BRIEF

The autonomy of South Tyrol in 2024

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The Autonomy Policy Brief 2024 analyses the latest autonomy developments in South Tyrol. The topics covered include the formation of the new Provincial Government, the autonomy reform, new enactment decrees, the language group census, developments in the area of bilingualism and trilingualism, school policy debates and new financial regulations.

Current statistics on South Tyrol, its autonomy and minority protection can be found in the new [Autonomy Dashboard South Tyrol \(https://www.autonomy-dashboard.info\)](https://www.autonomy-dashboard.info).

In the print version of the policy brief, the links to the sources underlined in the text are unfortunately not directly accessible. The online version or the PDF with the functioning links can be found here:



POLITICS AND ELECTIONS

New Provincial Government

After the 2023 provincial elections, the Südtiroler Volkspartei (SVP) announced negotiations with Fratelli d'Italia, Uniti per l'Alto Adige - Lega Alto Adige Südtirol, La Civica and Die Freiheitlichen. The coalition talks were successfully concluded in January, after which [Arno Kompatscher \(SVP\)](#) was confirmed as [President of the Province](#) and the [new Provincial Government](#) was sworn in. It consists of eleven members: Eight members belong to the German language group, two to the Italian language group and one to the Ladin language group. Following the [resignation of Andreas Leiter Reber](#) (Die Freiheitlichen) from the governing coalition in February, the Government now only has a small majority in the Provincial Council (18 out of 35 members). The [coalition's government programme](#) focuses not least on the autonomy reform (see next chapter).

Elections

The [European Parliament](#) was also newly elected in 2024. The SVP achieved 46.96 per cent of the vote in South Tyrol – an increase of 0.42 per cent compared to 2019 – and thus won the election. Herbert Dorfmann (SVP) was elected to the European Parliament as the only South Tyrolean representative of the North-East constituency. Voter turnout reached a historic low of 49.55 per cent.

Table 1: Results of the 2024 European Parliament elections in South Tyrol (source: civis.bz.it)

Parties	Votes	%
Südtiroler Volkspartei	91,849	46.96
Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra	30,866	15.78
Fratelli d'Italia	24,273	12.41
Azione – Siamo Europei	13,392	6.85
Partito Democratico	11,738	6.00
Lega Salvini Premier	6,462	3.30
Movimento 5 Stelle	4,181	2.14
Forza Italia – Noi Moderati – PPE	3,769	1.93
Pace Terra Dignità	2,975	1.52
Stati Uniti d'Europa	2,780	1.42
Libertà	2,262	1.16
Alternativa Popolare	1,044	0.53

Early elections were held in the municipalities of Lana, La Val/Wengen/La Valle, Leifers/Laives and St. Martin in Passeier/S. Martino in Passiria. Worth mentioning is the result in Leifers/Laives, where Giovanni Seppi (SVP), a member of the German language group, was elected mayor. According to the 2024 language group census, 74.5 per cent of the population in Leifers/Laives belong to the Italian language group. Elections will be held in the other municipalities in 2025.

LAW

Autonomy reform process

Particularly in the course of the Italian constitutional reform of 2001, but even before that, the jurisdiction of the Constitutional Court has led to an increasing restriction of South Tyrol's autonomous legislative powers. In the course of a comprehensive autonomy reform process, the standards that led to the 1992 declaration of dispute settlement before the United Nations are now to be restored. The starting point for the negotiations was a corresponding statement by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni in 2022. The autonomy reform will include all Italian regions with a special statute. Arno Kompatscher presented the reform proposal for the Autonomous Region of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol to the Provincial Council of South Tyrol in May.

In summary, the autonomy reform aims to achieve the following modifications:

- Only the Italian constitution, EU regulations and international obligations should apply as limits to primary legislative powers. The 'principle of national interest of the Republic' and the 'fundamental legal norms of economic-social reforms' will be removed as limits. These have repeatedly led to unclear interpretations by the Constitutional Court.
- Existing responsibilities (e.g. organisation of public offices and personnel) are to be defined more clearly and new exclusive responsibilities (e.g. environmental protection) are to be

added. A simplified procedure is envisaged for amending, for example, the financial provisions or transferring further competences to the Province or Region.

- The protection of local linguistic minorities should no longer be defined merely as a national interest, but as a requirement arising from the EU legal order and international obligations. This must then be taken into account in legislation. However, according to the proposal, specific regulations regarding minority protection remain unaffected by the reform (e.g. language use, ethnic quota system, schools).
- The Provincial Government and not the Provincial Council should decide on challenges to state laws.
- A future amendment to the Autonomy Statute can only be passed by the Italian parliament if the Regional Council and the Provincial Councils of South Tyrol and Trentino approve it with an absolute majority (principle of consent).
- The Commission of Six and the Commission of Twelve, the so-called joint commissions, are to be upgraded in the relationship between the State and the Province.

Following delays in the negotiations on the final draft constitutional law, the originally planned procedure was changed in October. The Italian Government is now no longer aiming for a single draft constitutional law for all five regions with a special statute, but rather separate negotiations with each of these regions. Negotiations on the Autonomy Statute for the Autonomous Region of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol were anticipated and the corresponding working group began its work in October and finalised it in December. The result was forwarded to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers for further discussion. The remaining open questions will be clarified in direct dialogue between the Italian Government and the representatives of the autonomous provinces.

Subsequently, the opinions of the Region and the Provincial Councils are planned, Austria must be informed of the amendments and the opinion of the so-called Commission of 137 of the Provincial Council must also be obtained. The adoption of the constitutional law by the Italian parliament – expected in 2026 – will take place after two rounds of voting in both chambers, with a referendum not being possible due to the provisions of the Autonomy Statute.

In addition to the autonomy reform of the autonomous regions and provinces, there is a national discussion about the so-called differentiated autonomy. In June, the Italian parliament passed a law allowing regions with a normal statute to apply to the State for the transfer of competences in order to manage certain areas autonomously. However, parts of the law were declared unconstitutional by the Constitutional Court.

Commission of Six and Commission of Twelve

The 2023 provincial elections made it necessary to reappoint the South Tyrolean representatives on the Commission of Six and the Commission of Twelve. The Provincial Council elected Meinhard Durnwalder (German language group) and Angelo Gennacaro (Italian language group). The Regional Council nominated Dieter Steger (German language group). The Italian State is currently represented on the Commission of Six by Eleonora Maines, Alessandro Urzì and Anton von Walther. Alessandro Urzì was elected President.

In 2024, the Italian Government – with the involvement of the joint commissions – issued two enactment decrees. The enactment decrees on volunteer work allow South Tyrol to introduce its own provincial register for volunteer work by provincial law. This is intended to free smaller associations from the bureaucratic requirements associated with registration in the national register.

Table 2: Enactment decrees adopted in 2024 (source: LexBrowser)

Enactment decree	Subject area
Legislative Decree of 22 February 2024, no. 261	Volunteer work and corresponding legislative powers of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano/Bozen
Legislative Decree of 19 April 2024, no. 64	Volunteer work

The Commission of Six has already approved an enactment decree that allows a more flexible application of the ethnic quota system – the distribution of public jobs according to the size of the language groups – and the requirement for proof of bilingualism for state jobs in South Tyrol. The regulation will only apply to temporary positions and only in the area of so-called essential services. The draft of the enactment decree emphasises the fundamental right to be able to address the public administration in the two/three official languages in South Tyrol. However, the enactment decree is intended to allow public services to be maintained in cases of understaffing.

In addition, the Commission of Twelve has already approved an enactment decree that provides for the abolition of the term limit for mayors of municipalities with over 15,000 inhabitants. According to state regulations, there is a term limit of two legislative periods for these mayors. The enactment decree would enable a separate regulation for the Autonomous Region of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol. However, according to the decision of the Regional Council, for the 2025 municipal elections, the state regulations are to be adopted.

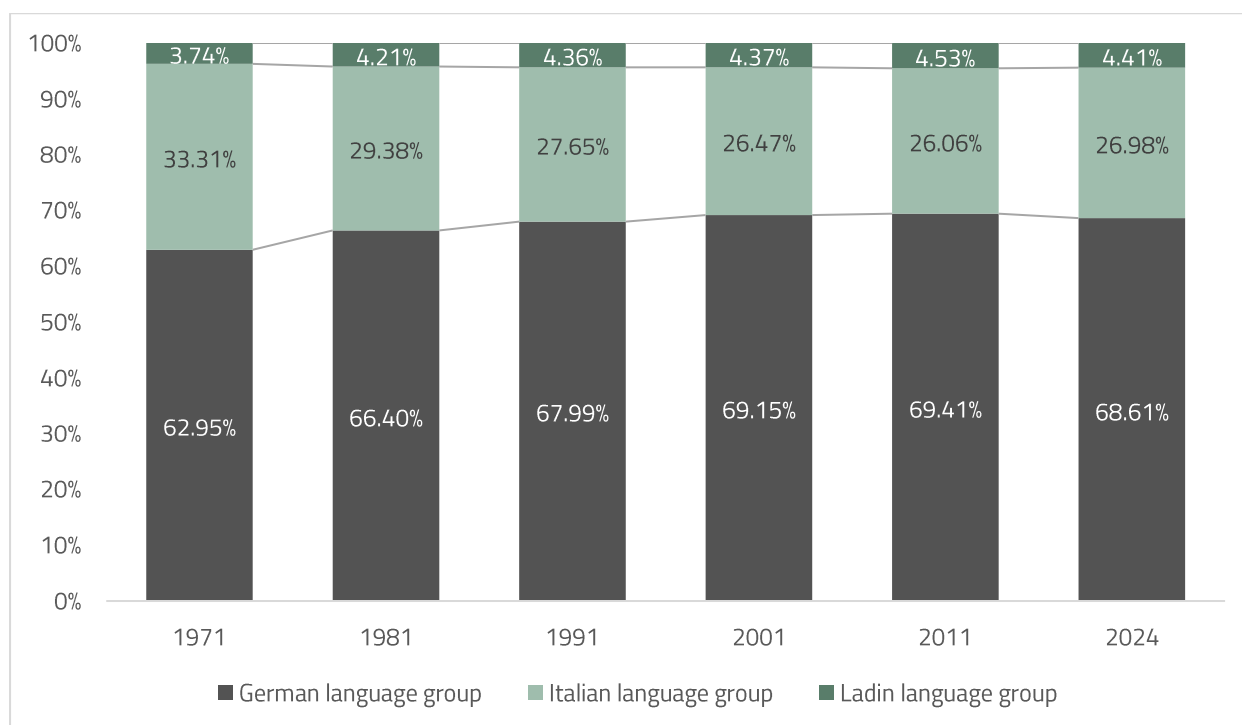
LANGUAGE, LANGUAGE GROUPS AND SOCIETY

Language group census

Of particular importance was the language group census, which began in December last year and was completed in June this year. The language group census determines the size of the German, Italian and Ladin language groups in South Tyrol. On the basis of these figures, jobs in the public administration or public funds in certain areas (e.g. culture) are allocated to the three language groups.

Around 93 per cent of the 483,981 people eligible to participate took part in the census. As only Italian citizens are allowed to take part, it should be noted that the figures only allow limited conclusions about the overall resident population. The proportion of the German (-0.8%) and Ladin language groups (-0.12%) has decreased compared to 2011. The Italian language group, on the other hand, increased (+0.92%). The decline of the German language group and the increase of the Italian language group is a province-wide trend. Although the Ladin language group has only recorded slight losses at provincial level, it is a noticeable fact that it has fallen by 2.58 per cent in the Ladin valleys. Further infographics can be found in the Autonomy Dashboard South Tyrol.

Infographic 1: Results of the language group censuses since 1971 (source: ASTAT)



Bi- and trilingualism

The re-establishment of the joint terminology commission can be seen as a contribution to the functioning of the bilingual and trilingual administration. Its task is to define legal, administrative and technical terms and to keep the relevant terminology for South Tyrol up to date.

In order to better monitor and enforce the right to use the official languages in the public administration, the Provincial Government has decided to further strengthen the office for official languages and civil rights. The office is responsible, among other things, for complaints from citizens regarding possible violations of their linguistic rights by the public administration. Two additional full-time positions will be created to support complaints management and provide proactive advice to the public administration. The Provincial Government is also planning a public campaign to raise awareness of multilingualism in South Tyrol.

As part of the supplementary budget, the Regional Council has decided to reimburse the retirement homes and social services of the Ladin municipalities for the additional costs of the trilingualism allowance for employees. This decision also aims to improve the use of the Ladin language in communication with Ladin-speaking citizens.

As digitalisation progresses, the lack of bilingualism of state portals is also increasingly coming into focus. Since 2024, the CIE-ID app and the website of the Ministry of the Interior for managing your own electronic identity card (CIE) account have also been made partially available in German – a result of the collaboration between the Government Commissariat and the South Tyrolean provincial administration. The CIE is one of the ways to identify oneself for the use of digital public administration services. Other minority languages are currently not available.

The establishment of a medical studies programme at the University Center for Health Professions 'Claudiana' can be seen as a possible contribution to ensuring the bilingualism or trilingualism of the South Tyrolean healthcare system through the local training of doctors. Students with proof of German-Italian bilingualism at level B2 can apply for provincial funding if, in return, they commit to working in the South Tyrolean health service for four years within ten years of completing their specialist training or their training in general medicine. The project is offered in collaboration with the Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. In September, 60 students started the first semester.

School

In 2024, the topic of schools was very much in the media spotlight, particularly the German-language primary school 'Johann Wolfgang von Goethe', also known as the 'Goethe School'. The school's aim was to create a class for first-graders with a migrant background and insufficient knowledge of German for the 2024/2025 school year. In this class, the focus should then have been on language support, i.e. learning German. However, the project was stopped by the provincial school authorities and the school was asked to rearrange the classes according to the so-called balanced principle. Opinions differed at a political level. Some politicians see the principle of mother-tongue teaching as being jeopardised by new linguistic diversity in schools. In response to the debate, the education directorate for the German school system decided on a package of

measures, including more jobs for language support teachers. The example of the Goethe School shows that the question of how to deal with linguistic diversity in schools and society has not yet been answered. Similar debates were already referred to in the Autonomy Policy Brief 2023.

In contrast, various projects launched this year show that the school system is able to adapt and is subject to constant change. Language promotion is at the centre of the learning mobility project 'LISE'. Young people who attend German-speaking high schools in South Tyrol can complete their third or fourth school year or a semester at an Italian school outside South Tyrol as part of 'LISE'. Conversely, pupils from Italian high schools are given the opportunity to attend a school in Germany. Both options are open to Ladin high school pupils.

At a high school in Bozen/Bolzano, the idea of an international class was implemented at the start of the 2024/2025 school year. In future, around 20 pupils will be taught in English, German and Italian, with the majority of subjects being taught in English.

Ladin flag

Of symbolic importance for the Ladin communities of the Autonomous Region of Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol was the resolution adopted by the Regional Council calling on the Regional Government to officially authorise the use and display of the Ladin flag (blue, white, green) on the public buildings of the Ladin municipalities.

Security

The Province's agreement with the Ministry of the Interior, which was signed at the end of 2024, can be seen against the background of the intensified security debate in South Tyrol. Among other things, the agreement stipulates that the Province of South Tyrol can temporarily provide the police headquarters in Bozen/Bolzano with personnel for administrative activities if required. The Province can also procure equipment for the police headquarters in Bozen/Bolzano and the provincial headquarters of the Carabinieri. The costs of these security measures are taken into account as part of the Province's contribution to the recovery of state finances in accordance with Article 79 of the Autonomy Statute.

FINANCES

Budget

With the supplementary budget for 2024, the Province had a record budget of around 8.3 billion euros at its disposal. The budget for 2025 will have a total volume of around 8 billion euros. By comparison, the initial volume of the previous budget was 6.79 billion euros. One innovation in the budget is the tax reform. The regional tax on productive activities IRAP will be reduced from 3.9 per cent to 2.68 per cent for companies that pay higher wages. In addition, the income tax IRPEF will be reorganised so that higher incomes are taxed more heavily and the additional revenue is targeted at families with children.

Financial agreement

In October, an agreement on financial relations was concluded with the State, which stipulates that South Tyrol will repay 103 million euros in excess compensation payments to the State. As part of the so-called equalisation pact, the State had compensated South Tyrol in 2020 for the shortfall in revenue caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, the shortfall in revenue was less than expected, i.e. by 103 million euros. It was also agreed that the Province of South Tyrol can set aside funds that will be used for investments in the following years. This involves 19 million euros for 2025, 53 million euros for each of the years 2026 to 2028 and 85 million euros for 2029. In line with the latest reform of the European Stability Pact, this reserve will serve to cover budget deficits ahead of time. The agreement also clarifies that in the event of national tax reduction initiatives that lead to a loss of revenue for South Tyrol and Trentino, an agreement must be reached on possible compensatory measures.

Financing of municipalities

An important financial policy change was also made this year in the area of municipal financing. The law passed by the Provincial Council standardised the relevant provisions and repealed outdated legal regulations. Previously, the provincial law stipulated that 13.5 per cent of provincial revenue must go to the municipalities. However, as the municipalities have been receiving a higher share for years anyway, this quota has been abolished. According to Article 1 of the provincial law, the Province 'allocates appropriate financial resources to the municipalities in order to enable them financially to fulfil the objectives and exercise the powers defined by law'. These allocations are determined annually in negotiations.

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