

# **BETWEEN THE NATION-STATE AND THE LOCAL CULTURE: A PROPOSAL FOR LANGUAGE POLICY IN SOUTH TYROL AND IN THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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Nowadays we are witnessing the final spread of globalization, the process leading, on the one hand, to cultural exchanges, but, on the other hand, to cultural levelling. Thus, it emerges the necessity to strengthen the sense of belonging to a well defined territory together with its culture, based first of all on the local language. Within Italian borders, we can find a particular situation characterized by the necessity to preserve the local identity and to maintain the cultural heritage in a place where a great importance is given to the cultural roots (as testified for example by the phenomenon of the 'Schützen'): this is the case of South Tyrol (the autonomous province in the North of Italy), which is a part of Tyrol, a territory traditionally influenced by the German culture. In the South Tyrolean schools, German is taught as an official language, but South Tyrolean dialects, which belong to Austro-Bavarian languages, are mostly disregarded. One of the EU's future challenges should be the will to preserve the territorial identities respecting local traditions, especially through the conservation of the linguistic and cultural heritage developed over the centuries. A valid solution with regard to the South Tyrolean situation could be teaching the local dialects alongside with the German language; such a proposal could fit for other European situations, where a common and/or national language alongside with the local dialects could be taught, according to the founding principle of the EU: unity in diversity.