



FSO standpoint

Revision of the statistical language regions and Surses and Muntogna da Schons, the communes concerned in Graubünden: the revision has no impact on official languages or those used in education

Various media, including the RTR, the Engadiner Post, La Quotidiana, Südostschweiz, the Blick and the SRF regional news for Eastern Switzerland, have reported on the above-mentioned topic in the past few days. The FSO would like to clarify the situation with this standpoint and react to the misinterpretations that have been made.

On 27 December 2022, the FSO published the revision of the statistical language regions in Switzerland. These language regions are neither institutional nor political in nature and are purely for statistical purposes. They enable the assessment and description of differences in behaviour on either side of the language borders with regard to various socially relevant subjects. The language regions are some of the most frequently used spatial units at the level of major regions. They were first created in 1860 and are regularly adapted to reflect changes in Switzerland's linguistic landscape. Based on the latest recalculations, the two Romansh-speaking communes Surses and Muntogna da Schons are now included in the German-speaking region for analysis.

The media were quick to pick up on the news, but in part misinterpreted it. For example, they spoke of an "official allocation". SRF for example writes in its [online presence](#): "Because more than 60 percent of the population said in a survey that German was their main language, the federal government is requiring the communes to change their official language from Romansh to German". The communes, however, wish to remain Romansh". This statement is incorrect.

The article on languages in the Federal Constitution stipulates that the cantons determine their own official languages (Art. 70 para. 2). As a result, the multilingual cantons in particular have developed various language policy concepts. Some define intra cantonal language areas, others leave language policy to the communes.

In the trilingual canton of Graubünden, the [Graubünden Language Law](#), which came into force in 2008, governs the use of the official cantonal languages and the allocation of the communes and regions to the language areas. With its language law, the canton also wishes to preserve and promote Italian and Romansh. Communes with at least 40 percent of members of an ancestral language community are counted as monolingual. The ancestral language is the official language of the commune. Communes with at least 20 percent of members of an ancestral language are counted as multilingual and the ancestral language is one of the commune's official languages.

Furthermore, because there is no legally binding definition of language areas at federal level and there is a wide variety of cantonal concepts, the FSO has based its determination of statistical language areas since 1860 on the majority situation in the communes based on census results at communal level.

Switzerland's statistical language regions as defined and recently published by the FSO have no influence on the official and educational language(s) defined by communes in Graubünden, including those of Surses and Muntogna da Schons.

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