

# Emna da la lingua rumantscha 2021-2025



**Multilingualism  
at the FDFA**



# A brief history of Emna rumantscha

The idea of a Romansh Language Week was born in Zuoz in 2019, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the Lia Rumantscha, an organisation promoting Romansh language and culture. Initiated by Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, the project was realised in cooperation with the Canton of Graubünden and the Lia Rumantscha. Since 2021, Romansh Language Week in Switzerland and around the world has taken place each year, always around 20 February. A date to remember, as it was on 20 February 1938 that Romansh officially became a national language – alongside German, French and Italian – voted through by 91.6% of the population.

- 2019** 100 years of the Lia Rumantscha in Zuoz – an idea is born!
- 2021** Rumantsch in ferm toc Svizra – online event broadcast from Bern
- 2022** Valisch rumantscha at the Federal Palace – visit of pupils from Savognin and Scuol to the Federal Palace, Bern
- 2023** In ferm toc mund! – cooking workshop with Swiss ambassadors, Bern
- 2024** From words to ideas: six Swiss and Italian regions in dialogue – central Switzerland, Milan
- 2025** Switzerland–Romania: the music of languages – Dimitrie Gusti Village Museum, Bucharest

L'idea da l'«Emna da la lingua rumantscha» nascha a Zuoz il 2019, a chaschun dals 100 onns da la Lia Rumantscha (organisaziun che promova la lingua e cultura rumantscha). Vulì dal cusseglier federal Ignazio Cassis, daventa il project realitad grazia a la collavuraziun cun il Chantun Grischun e la Lia Rumantscha. A partir dal 2021 nascha la Emna da la lingua rumantscha en Svizra ed en il mund, che ha lieu mintga onn enturn il 20 da favrer. Ina data impurtanta: ils 20 da favrer 1938 daventa il rumantsch uffizialmain ina lingua naziunala, sin il medem stgalim sco tudestg, franzos e talian, cun l'approvaziun da 91,6% da la populaziun.

- 2019** 100 onns da la Lia Rumantscha a Zuoz – in'idea nascha!
- 2021** Rumantsch in ferm toc Svizra – occurrenza online tramessa da Berna
- 2022** Valischa rumantscha a la Chasa federala – visita dals scolars e da las scolaras da Savognin e Scuol a la Chasa federala, Berna
- 2023** In ferm toc mund! – Ateliers da cuschinar cun ambassaduras ed ambassadurs svizzers, Berna
- 2024** Dals plets a las ideas: sis regiuns svizras e talianas en il dialog – Center svizzer, Milaun
- 2025** Svizra–Rumenia: la musica da las linguas – Museum dals vitgs Dimitrie Gusti, Bucarest

# Five years of Emna da la lingua rumantscha

Tgi che sa rumantsch, sa daplì!

The Romansh Language Week initiative, now in its fifth year, certainly lives up to this motto. Born of a desire to showcase the smallest, oldest Swiss language – also the only language unique to Switzerland – Romansh Language Week has become, year on year, a valuable instrument to tell the story of our multilingual nation, our political system built on compromise and the integration of different ideas. It represents the quintessence of Swiss society.

The road taken so far has been a veritable journey: conceived in Zuoz, developed in Bern and then taken abroad by our representations around the world. From the first edition, launched at the height of the pandemic, to the stops in Milan, Bucharest and beyond, Romansh Language Week has become a cultural bridge connecting regions, countries and communities by their common linguistic roots. We have shared with other countries our experience of living with multiple cultures. We have emphasised the importance of giving minorities a voice as a means of promoting dialogue and peace, which is becoming increasingly key in today's world.

Thanks to cooperation with the Canton of Graubünden and the Lia Rumantscha, Romansh Language Week has grown rapidly: today, it is a young, dynamic initiative aimed at reaching all of Switzerland's linguistic regions and making its mark around the world.

The story of our languages is an extraordinary one. And every good story deserves to be passed on in words and pictures. This review is an invitation to look back over the journey and to map out together the next stages of a Romansh Language Week that will continue to grow over the years, supported by the commitment of the institutions and the enthusiasm of those who believe in the value of multilingualism.

Happy birthday, Romansh Language Week!



Ignazio Cassis  
Federal Councillor

# First edition 2021

## Rumantsch: in ferm toc Svizra



Why is Romansh 'in ferm toc Svizra', i.e. an essential part of Switzerland? The online event held on 19 February 2021 to launch the first Romansh Language Week, in the midst of the pandemic, centred on this question. In Bern, Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis and the president of the Graubünden government, Mario Cavigelli, met virtually with a group of pupils from the secondary school in Ilanz. Other Romansh-speaking personalities from various fields also joined in to express their views in an online panel discussion, which was streamed by Radiotelevisiun Svizra Rumantscha (RTR) on its website and social channels and moderated by journalist Fabia Caduff. Among the speakers were member of Graubünden Cantonal Council, Jon Domenic Parolini, Ambassador Chasper Sarott and diplomat desk officer Aita Pult, Gianna Olinda Cadonau from the Lia Rumantscha, Rico Valär from the University of Zurich and musician Gino Clavuot. Martina Linn's arias set the richness of the smallest Swiss national language to music.

This meeting resulted in an invitation from the young people of Ilanz to Mr Cassis, who gladly accepted the idea of joining them for a 'pintga marena' and a short course in the Sursilvan dialect. Mr Cassis's immersion in the local language continued in Scuol, where he participated in a course in the Vallader dialect with the Lia Rumantscha in the summer of 2021.

***“Switzerland is made up of a multiplicity of identities and cultures that coexist peacefully. Romansh is a fundamental part of that. Multilingualism and diversity are both a challenge and an asset: they teach us to resolve conflicts through dialogue, a Swiss quality that is in great demand around the world.”***

*Ignazio Cassis  
Federal Councillor*

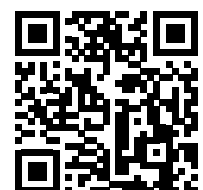
#### **And elsewhere in the (digital) world?**

From 2021, Presence Switzerland has produced an 'Emna rumantscha toolkit' for Swiss representations abroad, which includes digital content on the subject of Swiss multilingualism and, in particular, the specific features of the Romansh language and culture. Video readings by Schellen Ursli and music clips with Romansh artists are just a few examples. The motto: Let's speak Swiss, let's speak rumantsch!

**The event can be viewed here:**



**Video Let's speak Swiss**



Second edition 2022

# Valisch rumantscha at the Federal Palace



Twelve boys and girls, aged between 14 and 16, are speakers of Surmiran and Vallader – two of the five varieties of Romansh. They received a special invitation to meet the Swiss president, Ignazio Cassis, in Bern to inaugurate with him the second edition of Romansh Language Week. The delegation of young ambassadors of the Romansh language arrived in Bern on 20 February 2022 with a suitcase full of ideas for promoting the Romansh language and cultural heritage in Switzerland (the ‘valisch rumantscha’). And to spread awareness in the rest of the world as well. Ignazio Cassis, the president of the Swiss Confederation at the time, and Jon Domenic Parolini, member of the Graubünden Cantonal Council, listened to them. Among the ideas featured an international cooking workshop.

**«The young people of Savognin and Scuol demonstrate clearly that our multilingualism gives rise to all sorts of innovative ideas.»**

*Ignazio Cassis  
Federal Councillor*

**And elsewhere in the (not only digital) world?**

A network of consulates and embassies have been taking steps to promote knowledge of the Romansh language and culture in their respective countries within the confines of the conditions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic, in particular by means of online meetings and digital content. From a music playlist entitled ‘Emna rumantscha’ and the sharing of a documentary on Not Vital in New York, to recipe videos and interviews with representatives of language and culture from Vancouver to Frankfurt. Last October in Addis Ababa, for instance, Romansh took centre stage along with 21 other languages at the Dante Marathon Reading, thanks to an initiative by the Swiss embassy in Ethiopia. The Swiss representation in Milan, in collaboration with the Lia Rumantscha, the union of South Tyrolean authors, the RECIT network of European literary translation centres and the Province of Bolzano, organised the symposium ‘Leteratura sucrèta? Letteratura in codice segreto? Literatur in Geheimschrift?’ (‘Literature in secret code’) with a focus on the linguistic and cultural proximity between Ladin and Romansh.

**Playlist Emna  
rumantscha**



# Third edition 2023

## Rumantsch: in ferm toc mund



Capuns, bizochels and maluns: the cuisine of the canton of Graubünden was the focus of the 2023 edition. Following the idea put forward by the Graubünden pupils during the second edition, a cooking workshop was organised under the leadership of Graubünden chef Andreas Baselgia together with Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, then president of the National Council Martin Candinas and Jon Domenic Parolini, member of the Graubünden Cantonal Council.

Representatives from the Swiss embassies in Italy, France, Belgium and the UK, as well as from the embassies of Spain and Austria in Switzerland, also attended to find out more about Romansh culture and then took the knowledge they had acquired back to their own representations.

The Swiss embassy in the UK put what was learnt in this workshop into practice at a 'Romansh evening' organised in London for Wales Weeks, with the Swiss embassy taking the opportunity to highlight the FDFA's commitment to Romansh in parallel with the UK government's efforts to preserve the cultural heritage of Wales.

***“La promoziun dal rumantsch  
è la promoziun da la pluralitad svizra,  
da la multiculturalitad dal Grischun.  
Promover il rumantsch vul dir respectar  
autras valurs, valurs differentas  
da las mias. Il rumantsch è ina part  
da nossa identitad naziunala.”***

*Jon Domenic Parolini,  
member of the Graubünden Cantonal Council*

#### **And elsewhere in the world?**

The Swiss consulate general in New York organised the first Romansh course in the city's history. The course with Chasper Pult took place in Brooklyn, where residents and interested people learnt more about the language and tasted specialities from Switzerland. The consulate also reran a series of 'crash-course in Romansh' videos made in iconic New York locations, including the subway, Times Square, Wall Street and the UN Security Council headquarters.

A series of posters to publicise some particularities of the Romansh language and culture – taken from a travelling exhibition entitled 'Rumantsch è' promoted by the Canton of Graubünden and the Lia Rumantscha – was presented and exhibited in numerous Swiss representations around the world.

**Romansh in  
New York**



Fourth edition 2024  
**From words to ideas: six Swiss and  
Italian regions in dialogue**



In 2024, the official launch of Romansh Week took place for the first time abroad, in Italy, a country with which Switzerland shares not only two major European languages (Italian and German), but also three Rhaeto-Romanic languages (Romansh, Ladin and Friulian).

Entitled 'From words to ideas: six Swiss and Italian regions in dialogue,' alongside the head of the FDFA, the event brought together a number of prominent figures: the mayor of Milan, Giuseppe Sala, regional councillor of Lombardy, Massimo Sertori, the vice-president of the autonomous province of Bolzano, Daniel Alfreider, the vice-president of the Trentino Alto Adige regional council, Luca Guglielmi, the regional councillor for the Veneto region, Silvia Cestaro, and the president of the regional agency for the Friulian language, Eros Cisilino. The Canton of Graubünden was represented by the president of the Graubünden cantonal government, Jon Domenic Parolini.

A participatory artwork, 'La grande pagina bianca' (the big blank page), was also created for the occasion, with the Italian-speaking artist Ivan Tresoldi, in collaboration with the Romansh-speaking rapper Gino Clavuot (aka SNOOK), pupils of the Swiss school in Milan and young Ladin and Friulian speakers. The young participants were invited to reflect on the concept of identity and use colours and drawings to express thoughts on a large white canvas. A final brushstroke was added by the Swiss and Italian authorities present, as a symbol of cross-border cooperation and shared commitment to promoting each language's unique attributes.

***“Romansh Language Week is an opportunity to share with other countries the experience of living with several cultures and a great diversity of opinions every day.”***

*Ignazio Cassis, Federal Councillor*

#### **And elsewhere in the world?**

In Finland, for example, the Swiss embassy worked with the romance and classical languages section of the University of Jyväskylä to offer a beginners' course in Romansh to master's students in spring 2024 under the supervision of Professor Chasper Pult.

**Video Milano**



Fifth edition 2025  
**Switzerland-Romania:  
the music of language**



After Milan, the fifth edition of the Emna rumantscha came to the Romanian capital Bucharest on 20 February 2025. Switzerland and Romania are multicultural and multilingual in similar ways, with two languages in common: German and Italian. Moreover, Romansh and Romanian share a number of similarities. Federal Councillor Ignazio Cassis, Jon Domenic Parolini, member of the Graubünden Cantonal Council, Alberto Palaia, Graubünden's delegate for multilingualism, and representatives from the Romanian authorities attended a cultural event organised by the Swiss embassy in Bucharest and the Dimitrie Gusti Village Museum to celebrate the multilingualism and minorities of the two countries. Also present was Romanian linguist Magdalena Popescu, who is fluent in Romansh, particularly the Sursilvan dialect, and has translated several books from Romanian into Romansh. The story of the 91-year-old Romanian linguist symbolised a unique link between the two cultures. The evening also brought together Graubünden musician Mario Pacchioli, Romanian singer Luiza Zan and pianist Albert Tajti, who performed together for the first time, with a mix of melodies from Switzerland and Romania. The Canton of Graubünden also donated a traditional Engadine costume to the Dimitrie Gusti Village Museum which has become part of the museum's collection, showcasing the traditional costumes of the country's various ethnic groups and international communities.

From Bucharest, the 25 edition of Romansh Language Week also made a stop in Constanța, in eastern Romania, where a panel discussion was held on the importance of minority languages for local development.

Why Romania? Romansh Language Week was part of a working visit by the head of the FDFA to Romania. Like Switzerland, Romania is a country where many minorities coexist. There are currently 20 minorities recognised and represented, including Hungarians, Roma, Germans, Italians, Ukrainians and Russians. The Romanian parliament explicitly supports and protects the identity of each of them by reserving one seat for each recognised group. Romansh, Romanian, Italian and German influences all fed into the discussions, enriching the debate by opening up new areas of knowledge and contact.

***“Igl è in privilegi spezial da festival  
il rumantsch qua a Bucarest.  
Jau mez sun in da var 50 000 Rumantschs  
e represchentant da la pli pitschna  
lingua naziunala en Svizra.”***

*Jon Domenic Parolini, member of the Graubünden Cantonal Council*

**Il mund  
romontsch  
en mia veta  
– Magdalena  
Popescu  
Marin**



#### **And in Switzerland?**

For the first time, the Canton of Graubünden organised an event dedicated to Romansh and, in particular, to the Romansh diaspora in Switzerland immediately following the trip to Romania. The meeting at the Volkshaus in Zurich – attended by Zurich's mayor Corine Mauch and the president of Zurich Cantonal Council, Natalie Rickli – made it possible to continue the narrative within Switzerland too, demonstrating the two sides of Romansh Language Week: on the one hand, the FDFA, with its representations, focusing on promotion abroad, and on the other hand, the Canton of Graubünden, focusing on domestic promotion. In addition to the event in Zurich, Romansh also made it onto Swiss trains: with the cooperation of the SBB, during Romansh Language Week announcements on the trains were also made in Romansh.

# A glimpse into the future of Romansh Language Week

In its first five years, Romansh Language Week has established itself as a permanent fixture in the FDFA's calendar. Today, it stands right alongside the other thematic weeks and initiatives dedicated to the national languages – Italian, French and German. This is a significant achievement: the smallest, the oldest and the only exclusively Swiss language now finds a dedicated space for promotion both in Switzerland and abroad.

The growth of the initiative was made possible by the joint efforts of the FDFA with its representations around the world, the Canton of Graubünden and the Lia Rumantscha.

## Lessons learnt

### **Romansh Language Week as a political and diplomatic tool**

The 2024 edition in Milan – which brought together Ladin, Friulian and Italian-speaking authorities for the first time for a joint initiative – and the Romanian edition in 2025 have shown how Romansh Language Week can be used to explore with other countries the importance of peaceful coexistence between different cultures and the valuing of minorities. For Switzerland, it has become an instrument of diplomacy and cooperation with other countries. Attention to minorities and their rights is also a relevant topic from a geopolitical point of view, as it is also a field of action of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), which Switzerland will chair in 2026. Also in 2026, Romansh Language Week will come to Slovenia, again as part of a working visit by the head of the FDFA. The Canton of Graubünden will also launch an initiative in some schools in French-speaking Switzerland.

### **Romansh Language Week in Switzerland and abroad**

Since 2025, the Canton of Graubünden has started to move Romansh Language Week around Switzerland's different language regions, while the FDFA continues to focus on an international audience. This joint action is essential to foster dialogue both nationally and internationally. Having a representative of the Graubünden government on trips abroad related to Romansh Language Week is an added bonus: brief speeches in Romansh and explanations about the trilingual nature of the canton of Graubünden have enabled our foreign counterparts to experience first-hand the diversity of our country and our federalism.

### **The role of Swiss representations**

Switzerland's embassies and consulates have turned Romansh Language Week into an international laboratory of cultural diplomacy. The production of digital content, participation in festivals, and mounting of exhibitions – such as the 'Let's speak Rumantsch' exhibition at the Museum of Slovenian Language and Books – are concrete examples of how the FDFA's action abroad can bring Swiss language diversity to life.

### **Involving local realities and young ambassadors**

Collaboration with museums, universities and cultural institutions raises the quality of the events and embeds the initiative locally, thereby reaching a wider audience. The Bucharest experience is a case in point. Moreover, in Switzerland and abroad, it is worth working together with young Romansh-speakers: schoolchildren, students, artists and young families are keen ambassadors of their culture.

## **Imprint**

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