



## 13 QUESTIONS ON THE REFERENDUM AND 13 ANSWERS

### 1. Why have a referendum to make Venice and Mestre two distinct Municipalities?

Venice and Mestre are two completely different cities that have very different sets of problems. They need local governments (mayor and councillors) that are focused on their specific conditions and who are answerable to the citizens who elect them. Today, the mayor of Venice and the team of deputy mayors are elected with the votes of Mestre residents (also including Zelarino and Marghera) who are far more numerous, and therefore the problems of the lagoon and islands are not addressed adequately by politicians whose electorate resides elsewhere. The situation is getting worse and worse and the population decline in Venice is a dramatic consequence.

In the 1950s Venice and the lagoon had 219,000 residents (less than 100,000 were living on the mainland). Today there are 80,000 (52,000 in Venice) and the number is falling at a rate of about 2 or 3 per day (more than 1000 per year). Half of the resident population is over 65 years old. If things continue at this rate, Venice is doomed to die. It is now time to give the residents of Venice and Mestre the possibility to elect a mayor and local government who are free to at least try to effect policies to revitalise and safeguard the two cities corresponding to the populations they specifically represent.

### 2. How long have Venice and Mestre been part of the same municipality?

Venice and Mestre were joined together in 1926 under the Fascist regime. The political, economic and social situation now is completely different, meaning the joint municipality is no longer suitable.

### 3. What are the advantages for Venice in being an autonomous municipality?

There are many, including:

A) A city administration elected directly by Venetians and answerable to Venetians. With a municipality dedicated to Venice, the neighbourhood councils (of which there are currently seven and their powers are extremely limited) would not be necessary.

B) Implementation of housing policies to repopulate Venice and attract new residents – especially young people and families – and incentives for residents and businesses wanting to establish their headquarters in Venice. Legislative tools exist to make this a possibility. There are good examples of European communities (e.g. Canary Islands) that through tax benefits met their objective of attracting new population. As long as Venice and Mestre are tied together, none of this is possible.

C) By defining Venice as a city in the medium and long term, we create enormous potential for innovative and special forms of governance to be tested and implemented, and it can be further developed as a location for the most important Italian and international cultural institutions.

D) Improved coordination on a larger scale - especially with regard to transport and services - within the context of the new Law on “Metropolitan Cities” (Legge “Delrio”).

#### **4. What are the advantages for Mestre in being an autonomous municipality?**

A) Mestre should be considered a large city in its own right, without being identified merely as Venice’s “step-sister”; this would remove the perennial tensions between people in both cities and mean that people from Mestre stop feeling like second-class citizens

B) Mestre could concentrate on its own potential development without limiting itself to being a “dormitory town,” previously for industrial workers at Marghera and more recently for tourists.

C) In the past, the main deterrent for Mestre to become autonomous was the ability to (indirectly) benefit from funding via the Special Laws for Safeguarding Venice. These funds are no longer available.

#### **5. How many referendums have there been before this? What results?**

There have been 4 referendums already. The results point to an increasing trend in participation and popular support for separating the two cities’ administrations. It is therefore important that a large share of the population votes at the next referendum.



## **6. Is there a Quorum for this vote?**

Yes. 50% + 1 of those with the right to vote must vote in order for the referendum to be valid.

## **7. How are the political parties orientated?**

The main parties in favour of the Referendum are Lega and the Five Stars Movement (M5S). The PD has historically always been against division, although certain key figures have changed their minds.

Decisions on how to vote should not be connected to political ideology or party. The advantages of separate administrations for the two cities transcend political positions.

## **8. Who is promoting this next referendum?**

The movement in favour of the referendum has been carried forwards by two Committees: Movimento Autonoma di Mestre and Mestre Venezia Due Grandi Citta, as well as a wide network of contacts and sympathisers. Together they collected 9,000 signatures (2013/2014) for a popular appeal that underwent a long approvals route through the administrative and political channels of the Veneto Region, which has the powers to decide on city-level administrations.

The Comune and the Municipality tried to block the Region from holding the referendum in 2017. A consequent appeal to the Consiglio di Stato in Rome reversed the decision in Sept. 2019.

## **9. When will the referendum be held?**

The 1st of December 2019.

## **10. Is the Referendum redundant considering the Delrio law?**

Quite the opposite. The 2014 Delrio Law makes the Referendum especially important as it provides the potential new Mestre and Venice administrations with a framework for better coordinating transport and other services that are more efficient on a larger scale. This possibility didn't exist before.



**11. Will it really be impossibly complicated to create two municipalities? What about management of the port and airport?**

There will certainly be complications; all important things require time and intelligence. The issues are nonetheless manageable as has been shown by the separation of Cavallino from Venice. Any difficulties will have to be overcome, in the way that one does the things that are right - even if there are difficulties. These choices concern the future, not the next few months. Nothing will really change regarding the port and airport since their management is not connected with the local administration. Just as the airport of Fiumicino is not managed by the municipality of Rome and Malpensa is not managed by the city of Milan.

**12. Will Venice lose the status of capital city of the Region since the population will have fallen to 80,000?**

Certainly not. Venice will continue being the capital of the Veneto even once the two municipalities have been created - as stipulated in the sentence of the High Court. Population is not the criterion for capital cities; their historic and social importance is what matters.

**13. Is a voting campaign necessary?**

Certainly. Italian citizens resident in the Comune di Venezia should exercise their constitutional right!

Considering the Referendum is "*consultative*" so a clear signal must be given to the Regional administration in terms of large participation, but also a clear majority in favour of creating two city administrations is necessary to convince the Region to use its discretionary powers.

