

7 March 2025

English

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**United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names  
2025 session**

New York, 28 April to 2 May 2025

Item 8 (b) of the provisional agenda\*

**Culture, heritage and language recognition: Indigenous,  
minority and regional languages and multilingual issues****Notation and standardization of Slovenian geographical  
names in Carinthia and Styria**

Submitted by Austria\*\*

**Summary**

The Urban Jarnik Institute in Klagenfurt am Wörthersee has been receiving an increasing number of requests to check geographical names in projects with reference to bilingualism in the Austrian provinces of Carinthia and Styria. This affects mainly non-official names, i.e. names not reflected by official town signs or official topographical maps. But they are nevertheless used widely in the public, i.e. in print media, radio and television, in publications, in private cartography, on information boards, etc. So, it seemed advisable to subject them to a standardization process.

To this end, on the initiative of the Urban Jarnik Institute and individuals, in a kind of bottom-up process, informal working groups have been constituted that deal expertly with the standardization of Slovenian geographical names in Carinthia and Styria. These groups include experts (geographers, linguists, historians), university institutes of Slavistics, the local population, local Slovenian cultural associations and initiatives (cultural portal FLU-LED, [www.flurnamen.at](http://www.flurnamen.at), [www.ledinskaimena.si](http://www.ledinskaimena.si)) and the central Slovenian cultural associations in Carinthia, bilingual municipalities in Carinthia, Ethnic Groups Bureau of the Province Carinthia [Volksgruppenbüro des Landes Kärnten], alpine associations, a Slovenian minority association in Styria and the Styrian Provincial Archive as well as the Urban Jarnik Institute which is in permanent contact with the Austrian Board on Geographical Names (AKO) since 2012. First results are uniform methods for the standardization of Slovenian geographical names published in 2012 as part of the EU project FLU-LED.

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\* GEGN.2/2025/1

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## **Notation and standardization of Slovenian geographical names in Carinthia and Styria – methods and informal expert groups engaging themselves**

### **Starting point**

The Urban Jarnik Institute in Klagenfurt am Wörthersee was receiving a growing number of requests to check geographical names in projects that took bilingualism in the Austrian provinces of Carinthia [Kärnten] and Styria [Steiermark] into account. Even though this mainly involved non-official names, it seemed advisable to subject them to a standardization process because also these names are used widely in the public: in the media (print media, radio and television), in scientific and other publications, in advertising material, in private cartography, in (EU) cultural projects, in the marking of hiking trails, on signposts and information boards, on inns, graves, etc. Also non-official geographical names of the Slovenian minority have thus a strong impact. This is why informal working groups have been constituted in a kind of a bottom-up process to deal with these names in an expert manner.

### **Methods developed**

These working groups developed uniform methods for the notation of orally transmitted Slovenian geographical names in a simplified phonetic version and their standardization in the standard language. They were published by the Urban Jarnik Institute in Klagenfurt am Wörthersee and the Institute for the Slovenian Language at the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts [Inštitut za slovenski jezik Frana Ramovša ZRC SAZU] in Ljubljana, Slovenia, as part of the cross-border European Union (EU) project FLU-LED (Klinar et al. 2012). They have ever since been applied in areas settled by Slovenian ethnic groups in Italy, Austria (Carinthia and Styria) and Hungary, as well as in Slovenia. These methods for the collection and standardization of Slovenian geographical names were published in 2024 in the anthology "Onomastics – inventories and future perspectives" [Onomastik – Bestandsaufnahmen und Zukunftsperspektiven] also in German and thus put up for discussion (Piko-Rustia 2024).

It must be mentioned in this context that the basic work for the standardization of Slovenian settlement names in Carinthia is the bilingual book "The Slovenian settlement names in Carinthia" [Die slowenischen Ortsnamen in Kärnten/Slovenska imena na Koroškem] by Pavel Zdovc (1993, 2008, 2010). Since 2011, this book is the source for Slovenian names on town signs in Carinthia. There is no such source for Slovenian settlement names in Styria, which explains why the Slovene department of the Austrian Broadcasting Company's regional branch in Klagenfurt that also produces Slovene broadcasts for Styria, has drafted a preliminary list of geographical names based on literature research, which is being reviewed by the Urban Jarnik Institute.

In Carinthia and Styria, the methods for the phonetic notation and standardization of geographical names mentioned above are also applied to names of mountains and other relief features, alpine pastures, and water bodies, since also these names have partly been transmitted only orally and not yet been recorded. They are in their minority-language version also not represented on official maps. For standardization both the use by the local population and in the media are regarded as relevant. Heinz-Dieter Pohl (2011/12) compiled a list of German and Slovenian names of mountains and water bodies in Carinthia on behalf of the Ethnic Groups Office of the Province of Carinthia. In doing so, he also laid the foundation for their standardization (see also Pohl 2000, 2010).

### **Formation of informal expert groups**

Informal expert groups with the above-mentioned aims have in recent years been formed in Carinthia and Styria.

In Carinthia, the Urban Jarnik Institute cooperates in the recording of geographical names with the institutes of Slavistics at the University of Klagenfurt and the University of Graz, with members of

the Austrian Board on Geographical Names (AKO), i.e. Peter Jordan and Heinz-Dieter Pohl, with the local Slovenian cultural associations, initiatives and individuals (cultural portal FLU-LED, [www.flurnamen.at](http://www.flurnamen.at), [www.ledinskaimena.si](http://www.ledinskaimena.si)), with the central Slovenian cultural associations, as well as with the bilingual municipalities in Carinthia and the Ethnic Groups Bureau of the Province Carinthia [Volksgruppenbüro des Landes Kärnten], to promote standardization based on comprehensive discussion. Other experts like historians, are also involved. Cooperation with the Slovenian Alpine Association in Carinthia and the Alpine associations in Austria and Slovenia is important, too.

In Styria, the Article VII Cultural Association for Styria [Artikel-VII-Kulturverein für die Steiermark / Kulturno društvo člen 7 za avstrijsko Štajersko] and the Styrian Provincial Archive with its director Gernot Peter Obersteiner, also a member of the AKO, were included in the discussion, accompanied by Peter Jordan (another member of the AKO).

A focal point for all these activities is certainly the Urban Jarnik Institute in Klagenfurt am Wörthersee. Since 2012, it is in close contact with the Austrian Board on Geographical Names (AKO). It also cooperates with the Federal Office of Metrology and Surveying (BEV) and the Geodetic Office of Slovenia [Geodetska uprava Republike Slovenije], as well as with the Government Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names of the Republic of Slovenia [Komisija za standardizacijo zemljepisnih imen RS] and the Institute for the Slovenian Language at the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts in Ljubljana [Inštitut za slovenski jezik Frana Ramovša ZRC SAZU].

In November 2024, a Working Group for the Standardization of Slovenian Geographical Names in Italy was established, convened by the Slovenian Scientific Institute in Trieste (Slovenski raziskovalni inštitut SLORI) on the initiative of the Central Office for the Slovenian Language of the Autonomous Region of Friuli-Venezia Giulia [Centralni urad za slovenski jezik FJK]. Martina Piko-Rustia, head of the Urban Jarnik Institute, is a member of this Working Group and, in cooperation with Peter Jordan, will be actively involved in the standardization of geographical names in the Val Canale, a valley at the border between Italy, Austria and Slovenia.

Since standardization is a lengthy process, it is important to involve experts and local actors as well as all relevant authorities to create a broad basis for discussion and ultimately a list of standardized names that is accepted by everybody concerned.

## Dissemination

Since 2010, the element "Slovenian field and farm names in Carinthia" has been regarded as an intangible cultural heritage by the Austrian UNESCO Commission (ÖUK, [www.unesco.at](http://www.unesco.at)). The scientific processing of geographical names in Carinthia is also part of the catalogue of measures of the Carinthia/Koroška 2030 Art and Culture Strategy.

The FLU-LED cultural portal is also published on the website of the Carinthian Geographical Information System KAGIS (KAGIS, <https://kagis.ktn.gv.at>).

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## Websites

- FLU-LED, Kulturni portal ledinskih in hišnih imen / Kulturportal der Flur- und Hausnamen: [www.flurnamen.at](http://www.flurnamen.at); [www.ledinskaimena.si](http://www.ledinskaimena.si)
- KAGIS, Geoinformation Kärnten: <https://gis.ktn.gv.at/webgisviewer/atlas-mobile/map/KAGIS-Projekte/Slowenische%20Flurnamen>
- ÖUK, Österreichische UNESCO-Kommission: [www.unesco.at](http://www.unesco.at); <https://www.unesco.at/kultur/immaterielles-kulturerbe/oesterreichisches-verzeichnis/detail/article/slowenische-flur-und-hofnamen-in-kaernten>; <https://www.unesco.at/kultur/immaterielles-kulturerbe/umsetzung-in-oesterreich/good-practice-beispiele/namenslandschaft-lebendig-erhalten>

## Points for Discussion

The Group of Experts is requested to:

- (1) Take note of efforts for the standardization of non-official Slovene minority names in the Austrian federal provinces of Carinthia and Styria by informal expert groups.
- (2) Compare these efforts with efforts in other countries.
- (3) Arrive at recommendations for minority place-name standardization also in the range of non-official geographical names taking into account the various historical, cultural, political and economic backgrounds.