

## Slovenia

The maturity of democracy and respect for international law are also reflected in the care for the geographical names of ethnic minorities. Slovenia can serve as quite an exemplary model in this respect. I spoke about this at our previous session.

But what is the situation with geographical names in ethnically Slovenian cross-border regions in Austria, Hungary, and Italy?

Austria has done a lot in this area. The credit for this primarily goes to highly dedicated ethnic Slovenian individuals and organizations, but Article 7 of the Austrian State Treaty from May 1955 has still not been fully enforced. Sporadic acts of vandalism still occur.

In Hungary, bilingual road signs are placed at the entrance to all seven officially bilingual or multilingual villages, and we conducted research on microtoponyms together with our esteemed colleagues from the Hungarian Committee. We identified approximately 350 microtoponyms and presented them in a research monograph, on a map, and in an online app, which makes it possible to add other names that may not have been identified yet. Users can mark their locations on the online map, enter their names, and record their pronunciation, so that dialectologists can prepare standardized written forms.

Cultivation of Slovenian geographical names in Italy is provided for by the Protection Act for Slovenians in Italy, adopted in 2001. There are over 50,000 ethnic Slovenians living in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, spread across the administrative units of Gorizia, Trieste, and Udine. The annex to this law includes a list of municipalities and their parts where the use of Slovenian is envisaged. The legal basis thus exists on paper, but many challenges nonetheless remain in practice.

Slovenian geographical names are not included in the official Italian database, and so it is unrealistic to expect that companies responsible for road infrastructure and other areas where signage is used will use the appropriate names. Therefore, the Slovenian community in Italy has proposed the establishment of a minority committee for the standardization of geographical names that would create uniform proposals for names to be entered in the database. Representatives of the Slovenian committee also take part in this committee.

The greatest linguistic challenge is how to standardize these names because the differences between the provinces are so apparent that, in some cases, there is still a lack of consensus. In addition, there is also inconsistency in the written forms used, which can be seen from the photos.

We hope that, after the committee's work is completed, Slovenian geographical names in areas specified by law will obtain official status and that the awareness of the

majority Italian population will also change to the point that acts of vandalism, such as that seen in the photo, will become less frequent.