

Use of exonyms on road signposts

Examples of practice in Central Europe

Signposts at major roads and motorways hinting at places abroad address drivers from different countries speaking different languages. It cannot be expected that, e.g., a French driver knows how German or Hungarian speakers call Prague [Praha]. Road signposts are therefore in the first line to apply endonyms (the names in the local language of the place indicated) and not exonyms (the names used in another language). But practice varies. In some countries indeed only endonyms are shown on road signposts, in other countries also the exonym is given. In several countries practice is not uniform.

Only endonyms

Czech Republic

The signpost is located in Břeclav in Southern Moravia, 3 km from the Austrian border, and uses the German endonym Wien for Vienna. The Czech exonym would be Vídeň.



Slovakia

The signpost is located at the motorway in Bratislava and uses the German endonym Wien for Vienna. The Slovak exonym would be Viedeň.



Italy

The signpost is located at the motorway nearby Tarvisio, 1 km from the Austrian border, and uses the German endonym Villach. The Italian exonym would be Villaco.



Exonym plus endonym

Hungary

The signpost is located near Sopron, 5 km from the Austrian border, and uses in the first position the Hungarian exonym and in the second the German endonym.



Slovenia

The signpost is located at the motorway near Maribor, 8 km from the Austrian border, and uses the Slovene exonym Gradec as well as the German endonym Graz.



Not uniform practice

Austria

The signpost is located near Arnoldstein, 1 km from the Italian border, and uses the Italian endonym Tarvisio. The German exonym would be Tarvis. Using only the endonym is by far the dominant practice in Austria.



The signpost is located at the motorway near Graz, 30 km from the Slovenian border, and uses both the German exonym Marburg and the Slovene endonym Maribor. This practice is very exceptional in Austria.



The signpost is located near Buje/Buia on Istria [Istra], 15 km from the Slovenian border, and uses the Italian endonym Trieste as well as the Slovene endonym Koper. The Croatian exonyms would be Trst and Kopar, respectively. Using only the endonym is by far the dominant practice in Croatia.



Croatia

The signpost is located in Buzet on Istria [Istra], 5 km from the Slovenian border, and uses the Croatian exonym Kopar for Koper/Capodistria without giving the endonym. Using only the exonym is very exceptional in Croatia.

