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Activities relating to the Working Group on Exonyms

**Recommendations for the Use of Names for Places Outside
the German Speaking Area on Road Signposts
in Austria, Germany and Switzerland ***

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Introduction

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 Germans or Hungarians call Prague [Praha] or how Hungarians call Vienna [Wien]. Road signposts are therefore in the first line to apply endonyms in the sense of names in the local language of the place indicated and only eventually and additionally names in the language, where the signpost is located (exonyms).

Legislation at least in German-speaking countries corresponds roughly to these principles, but practice varies.

A much wider variation can be observed, when a larger number of Central European countries is taken into consideration. In some countries indeed only endonyms are shown on road signposts, in other countries also the exonym is given, even in the first position, in exceptional cases even without being accompanied by the endonym. Within some countries practice is not uniform.

The Permanent Committee on Geographical Names [Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen, StAGN], the German national names board with coordinative functions for the group of German-speaking countries has discussed this topic extensively and has passed recommendations for Austria, Germany and Switzerland.

It is also the intention of these recommendations to affect legislation and practice in other European countries.

Recommendations for the rendering of place names on road signposts (in Austria, Germany and Switzerland)

1.

Road signposts address the international and multilingual community of drivers. Destinations abroad are therefore to be indicated in the first position by the local official name as it can be found on the signpost in the destination, on road maps and in navigation systems, i.e. the endonym. Examples (for Germany): *Wrocław* instead of *Breslau*, *Praha* instead of *Prag*.

2.

If a foreign or domestic destination has more than one official name, all names are to be represented, since all these names are officially recognized and equal in rank. For graphic separation and as expression of equality the slash is most appropriate. Examples (for Germany): *Bautzen/Budyšin*, *Bruxelles/Brussel*, *Brenner/Brennero*.

3.

If with destinations abroad non-official German names (exonyms) are added in the second position, it should be clear by graphic design and arrangement that this is another, secondary name of the same destination and not a part of the first name or a name equal in rank. The

exonym may graphically be indicated by brackets. Examples (for Germany): *Praha (Prag)*, *Wrocław (Breslau)*.