Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names
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Item 9 (c) of the provisional agenda*
National standardization: treatment of names in multilingual areas

Toponymic Committee of Burgenland

Submitted by Austria**

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1. Burgenland is one of Austria’s nine federal states (Länder). Until 1921 it was part of the Kingdom of Hungary. A border region for centuries, the present Burgenland has been home of Germans and Hungarians since medieval times. In the 16th century, local noblemen settled people originating from Croatia in abandoned as well as newly founded villages. During the 17th and 18th century, Jewish communities were established and Roma arrived here as well.

2. Today, Croats, Hungarians, and Roma are officially recognised national ethnic minorities of Austria. However, none of them claims an exclusive region or territory. The municipalities and villages with a considerable population made up by the Croat minority are scattered over six (of seven) administrative districts of Burgenland. Croats make up to 90% of the population in some smaller villages (500-1,500 inhabitants). Nowadays, there are only 4 settlements with a considerable portion of Hungarians who can mainly be found in the administrative district of Oberwart.

3. Burgenland has 278,600 inhabitants (census 2001). The census of 1991 (the exact data of the census 2001 will only be available in September 2002) listed 19,460 Croats and 6,763 Hungarians. There is no exact data available for the Roma. It should be noted that the number of persons belonging to an ethnic minority has been gradually diminishing since the 1930ies, mainly due to assimilation and emigration. Further more it is important to mention that in the past many people have refused to declare themselves as members of a minority group as they feared discrimination. Minority representatives estimate the Croat population at about 30,000 - 40,000 and Roma population at about 10,000 persons. Since the 1980ies more people have expressed their membership in a minority group because of increased activities of minority boards and NGOs.¹

4. In the Austrian legal system, provisions granting minority rights may be found in several statutes and international treaties. However, the implementation of these clauses has been subject to political debates over a very long time. Federal and regional governments privileged politics of assimilation and adhered to narrow and restrictive interpretation of minority rights. In particular, questions of education and bilingual topographic inscriptions have been contested. A policy

¹ Further information can be obtained in the „Volkgruppenreport“, a yearly report on the situation of national minorities edited by the Austrian „Volkgruppenzentrum“ (Center of minority groups). See also http://www.initiative.minderheiten.at
change occurred after 1988 and since then minority groups received more attention from the government. 1994 brought about a backlash because of changes in the political climate and decreasing interest in minority issues. Since that time members of minority groups often had to seize the Austrian Constitutional Court to enforce their rights.

5. Art. 7 of the State Treaty ("Staatsvertrag") that re-established Austria as a sovereign, independent, and democratic republic in 1955 contains important clauses for the protection of the Slovene and Croat minorities. Art. 7 (2) states that – in addition to German – the Slovene and Croat language shall be accepted as official languages in certain administrative and judicial districts of Carinthia, Styria and Burgenland with Slovene, Croat or mixed population. The same provision further states that topographical terminology and inscriptions in those districts shall be in the Slovene or Croat language as well as in German. In 1972 the first attempt to put up bilingual signs took place in Carinthia but it was heavily and even violently resisted by certain (nationalist) movements. In 1976 the Federal Statute on the Legal Status of National Minority Groups in Austria ("Volksgruppengesetz" [VGG], BGBl.2 1976/396) was enacted. This statute applies to all recognised national minorities. It is – in contrast to the State Treaty mentioned above – not confined to Slovones and Croats. Para. 2 Section (1) 2. VGG prescribes that dual naming shall appear on topographical signs in areas with a considerable portion (i.e. a quarter) of people belonging to a national minority. This clause has been criticised as unconstitutional on the grounds that the State Treaty refers to "mixed" but not "considerable" minority population (see also para. 7 infra).3

6. Para. 2 Section (1) 2. VGG has no direct effect. Its implementation requires a regulation enacted by the Federal Government in consultation with the Main Committee (Hauptausschuss) of the National Council (Nationalrat, the main chamber of the Austrian Parliament). In the case of Burgenland, such a regulation was not passed until June 2000. This regulation ("Topographieverordnung", BGBl. II 170/2000, 21 June 2000) singles out these municipalities and

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2 BGBl. = Bundesgesetzblatt (Federal Legal Gazette).
incorporated villages where topographical terminology and signs have to be either in the Croatian language and German or in Hungarian and German. (A copy of the regulation is attached to this document. The comprehensive list of municipalities and incorporated regions forms an integral part of this report's summary.)

7. The Austrian Constitutional Court had to review the VGG in 2001 and repealed parts of para. 2 section (1) 2. as unconstitutional (cf. VfGH⁴ 13 December 2001, G 213/01). It ruled that the phrase "considerable portion (a quarter)" did not comply with the obligations under Art. 7 State Treaty (see para. 5. supra). As a consequence of this judgement more bilingual topographic signs need to be erected in the future. The government of Burgenland has already declared that it would support the mounting of new signs. However, at the moment the situation is somewhat unclear, insofar as the decision of the Constitutional Court gave rise to a new political debate about minority rights.

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⁴ VfGH = Verfassungsgerichtshof (Austrian Constitutional Court).
170. Verordnung der Bundesregierung über die Bestimmung von Gebietsteilen, in denen topographische Bezeichnungen und Aufschriften nicht nur in deutscher sondern auch in kroatischer oder ungarischer Sprache anzubringen sind (Topographieverordnung-Burgenland)


§ 1. In folgenden Gebietsteilen sind Bezeichnungen und Aufschriften topographischer Natur, die von Gebietskörperschaften oder von sonstigen Körperschaften und Anstalten des öffentlichen Rechts angebracht werden, sowohl in deutscher als auch in kroatischer Sprache wie folgt anzubringen:

1. Im politischen Bezirk Eisenstadt-Umgebung in den Gemeinden:
   - Hornstein
   - Klingenberg
   - Osip
   - Siegendorf
   - Steinbrunn
   - Trausdorf an der Wulka
   - Wulkaprodersdorf
   - Zagersdorf
   - Zilingtal
   - Vorištan
   - Klimpuh
   - Uzlop
   - Cindrof
   - Štikapron
   - Trajštof
   - Vulkaprodrostof
   - Cogrstof
   - Celindof

2. Im politischen Bezirk Güssing in den Gemeinden:
   - Göttenbach
   - Neuberg im Burgenland
   - Stinatz
   - Pinkovac
   - Nova Gora
   - Stnjaki

3. Im politischen Bezirk Mattersburg in den Gemeinden:
   - Antau
   - Baumgarten
   - Drassburg
   - Otava
   - Pajngrt
   - Rasporak

4. Im politischen Bezirk Neusiedl am See in den Gemeinden:
   - Neudorf
   - Pama
   - Pardorf
   - Novo Selo
   - Bijelo Selo
   - Pandrof

5. Im politischen Bezirk Oberpullendorf:
   - in der Gemeinde Frankenaun-Unterpulendorf in den Ortsteilen
     - Frankenau
     - Großmutschen
     - Kleinmutschen
     - Unterpulendorf
   - in der Gemeinde Großwarasdorf in den Ortsteilen
     - Großwarasdorf
     - Kleinwarasdorf
     - Langental
     - Nebersdorf
   - in der Gemeinde Kaisersdorf
   - Veliki Borištof
   - Mali Borištof
   - Longitolj
   - Šuševu
   - Kalištrof
in der Gemeinde Nikitsch in den Ortsteilen
Kroatisch Geresdorf Gerištof
Kroatisch Minihof Mjenovo
Nikitsch Filež
in der Gemeinde Weingraben Bajngrob

6. Im politischen Bezirk Oberwart:
in der Gemeinde Markt Neuhojdí im Ortsteil
Altibodi Stari Hodas
in der Gemeinde Rotenturm an der Pinka im Ortsteil
Spitzzicken Hrvatski Ciklin
in der Gemeinde Schachendorf in den Ortsteilen
Dörnbach im Bgl Vincjet
Schachendorf Čaja
in der Gemeinde Schandorf Čemba
in der Gemeinde Weiden bei Rechnitz in den Ortsteilen
Allersdorf im Bgl Ključarevci
Allersgraben Širokani
Mönchmeierhof Marof
Oberpodgoria Podgorje
Parapatitschberg Parapatitčev Brig
Podler Poljanci
Rauhriegel Rerigljin
Rumpersdorf Rupišće
Unterpodgoria Bošnjakov Brig
Weiden bei Rechnitz Bandol
Zuberbach Sabara

§ 2. In folgenden Gebietssteilen sind Bezeichnungen und Aufschriften topographischer Natur, die von Gebietskörperschaften oder von sonstigen Körperschaften und Anstalten des öffentlichen Rechts angebracht werden, sowohl in deutscher als auch in ungarischer Sprache wie folgt anzubringen:
1. Im politischen Bezirk Oberpullendorf:
in der Gemeinde Oberpullendorf Felsőpulya
2. Im politischen Bezirk Oberwart:
in der Gemeinde Oberwart im Ortsteil
Oberwart Felsőőr
in der Gemeinde Rotenturm an der Pinka im Ortsteil
Siget in der Wart Órisziget
in der Gemeinde Unterwart im Ortsteil
Unterwart Alsőőr

Schüssel Riess-Passer Ferrero-Waldner Gehrer Grasser Strasser Böhmdorfer
Scheibner Molterer Sickl Schmid Bartenstein

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