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Exonyms

Exonym use in Austria

Summary**

After addressing essential characteristics of endonyms and exonyms, their political and cultural sensitivity, and the ups and downs of German exonym use against the background of more recent history (since the late nineteenth century), the author of the report presents recommendations for the use of exonyms in Austria that were elaborated and published by the Austrian Board on Geographical Names (AKO) in 1994 and 2012, and are closely observed in Austrian school atlases and other educational media. The Board is recommending a rather limited set of German exonyms, that is, names known and applied by a wider range of educated people, for further use. The author notes, in general, a decline in exonym use in Austria, especially with the younger generation, which is very likely due to the fact that German exonyms had low prestige in the post-war period up to the fall of the Iron Curtain, and to exclusive endonymic traffic signage along Austrian motorways, major roads and railways. The main uses of German exonyms in Austria are contained in the conclusion of the report, as follows:

- For a domestic audience, for example, in atlases and books for schools with German as the language of tuition
- In spoken language and fully formulated written texts, and less in technical means of communication, such as tables or maps
- For features important to the receiver community for various reasons and simply because it is near
- For transboundary features, in the sense of geographical features that transgress community boundaries
- For seas and oceans

* E/CONF.105/1.

** The full report was prepared by Peter Jordan (Austria), Convenor, United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names Working Group on Exonyms, and Head, Austrian Board on Geographical Names (AKO), and is available from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnConf11.html>, in the language of submission only, as document E/CONF.105/18/CRP.18.



- For exclusively historical features without an equivalent in the present
 - For a composed endonym with a transparent generic component, which can be translated
 - For an endonym that is difficult to pronounce by a speaker of German
 - For endonyms in a language not frequently learned in Austria.
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