

12 February 2021

Original: English

**United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names****2021 session**

Virtual, 3–7 May 2021

Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda*

**National and international standardization of geographical
names: names collection, office treatment, national authorities,
features beyond a single sovereignty and
international cooperation****Harmonizing names of features intersected by the national
boundary of Austria****Summary****

Austria has 2,706 km of international borders, of which 1,689 km are the land borders with Italy (430 km), Slovenia (330 km), Hungary (356 km), Slovakia (107 km), and Czechia (466 km). Along parts of those borders, languages other than German have official status. German is the official language for the whole country. Geographical features such as mountains, mountain passes, alpine pastures and rivers that are intersected by those borders have different names, depending on the language spoken on either side of the border. In 2020, the Austrian Federal Ministry of the Interior issued a decree in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) crisis in which it imposed travel restrictions and listed all border crossings down to the smallest mountain passes. The decree revealed a large number of inconsistencies in naming, especially in the spelling of names other than German and in the different names applied to one and the same feature on both sides of the border. This motivated the Austrian Board on Geographical Names to offer the Austrian Federal Office of Metrology and Surveying as the publisher of the country's official topographical maps to assist with a project on harmonizing the names applied on both sides of the border to features intersected by the border. Under the project, national names authorities and official mapping agencies in all neighbouring countries that have an official language other than German will be consulted about names applied at their side of the border. The project started with a pilot study on the Austrian-Slovenian border in cooperation with the Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names of Slovenia and the Urban Jarnik Institute in Klagenfurt, Austria, the latter with regard to Slovenian minority names along the Carinthian section of the border.

* [GEGN.2/2021/1](#).

** The full report was prepared by the Honorary Chair of the Austrian Board on Geographical Names, Peter Jordan (Austria), and the head of the Urban Jarnik Institute, Martina Piko-Rustia (Austria). It will be available under document symbol GEGN.2/2021/72/CRP.72, in the language of submission only, at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/2nd_session_2021/.

