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**United Nations Group of Experts on**

**Geographical Names**

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**Item 4(a) of the provisional agenda \***

**Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names**

## **Report of Slovenia**

Submitted by Slovenia \*\*

Summary:

After the first session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, held in 2019, the commission for the standardization of geographical names of Slovenia has continued to standardize the geographical names within and outside the country. The commission held 26 meetings: 2 in-person meetings, 2 virtual meetings and 22 meetings conducted by email. Information on the commission and its activities are posted on the government website.<sup>1</sup>

The normal task of the commission is to issue opinions on whether new names of streets and settlements are correct and suitable. Its role is set out in the law on defining territories and naming settlements, streets and buildings. Opinions adopted by the commission are binding for municipalities when adopting new names or changing existing ones. During the period covered by the report, the commission decided about 32 street names and one settlement name.

Slovenia has two ethnic minorities, Hungarian and Italian. Under the Constitution, in ethnically mixed areas, Italian and Hungarian enjoy equal status with Slovenian. In July 2020, a multi-year project was completed to standardize Italian names for maps at the scale level 1:25,000. The Italian national community, the surveying and mapping authority and the commission participated in the project. The commission ultimately standardized more than 300 Italian and Slovenian geographical names in the ethnically mixed area. The project continues with the preparation of a list and the subsequent standardization of Italian geographical names for scale level 1:5,000. Activities related to the preparation of the list and the standardization of Hungarian geographical names for the 1:25,000 scale level have stalled. The initiative to complete the list belongs to the Hungarian community.

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\* GEGN.2/2021/1

\*\* Prepared by the Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names of the Republic of Slovenia

Another very important project we are working on is the cross-border harmonization of data on geographical names along the national border with Austria. In that task, Slovenian institutions are cooperating with the Austrian commission for the standardization of geographical names and with the Urban Jarnik ethnographic institute in Klagenfurt, Austria. A list of official border crossings and all geographical names has been made and further harmonization is under way. In the final phase, a unified list will be prepared and the names will be standardized by both state commissions.

The list of country names has been updated. The commission has standardized the new Slovenian names of countries and non-self-governing territories whose original names have changed. At the end of 2020, the subcommittee on country names was established to review the entire list of International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard ISO 3166:2020 (Codes for the representation of names of countries and their subdivisions) and prepare new proposals for Slovenian names.

Within the Group of Experts, Slovenia actively participates in the East Central and South-East Europe Division, the Working Group on Exonyms and the Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management.

## 1. NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

The standardization of geographical names in the Republic of Slovenia is carried out by a **Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names** (abbr. CSGN). The CSGN is represented by several administrative, scientific and academic institutions: the Anton Melik Geographical Institute and Fran Ramovš Institute of the Slovenian Language (both of the Scientific Research Center of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts), the Department of Geography and the Department of Slovene Languages and Literature (both of the Faculty of Arts), the Geodetic Institute of Slovenia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Slovenian Language Service at the Ministry of Culture and the Surveying and Mapping Authority of the Republic of Slovenia.

Representatives of the Italian and Hungarian national communities have also been participating in the Commission since this year, when deciding on geographical names in ethnically mixed areas.

The basic tasks of the CSGN determined by the decree of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia of 2021 are the following:

- to perform tasks pursuant to the Act Designating Areas and Naming and Marking Settlements, Streets and Buildings (Uradni list Republike Slovenije (Official Gazette of the Republic of Slovenia), no. 25/2008);
- to carry out international obligations of the Republic of Slovenia related to geographical names, i.e. representing Slovenia at UN meetings and within the UNGEGN;
- to perform other tasks related to UN resolutions and the recommendations of the UNGEGN, and to the preparation of standardization documents and the standardization of geographical names in the Republic of Slovenia;
- to perform other tasks determined by acts and other regulations.

After the First UNGEGN session the CSGN met on 26 occasions: 2 in person meetings, 2 virtual meetings and 22 correspondence meetings.

The main task of CSGN is to issue opinions on correctness and suitability of new names and renames of streets and settlements in Slovenia. The accepted opinion of CSGN is obligatory for municipalities that finally officially announce new or changed names.

In 2019 CSGN was deciding about 13 street names and 1 settlement name, in 2020 about 17 street names and finally in 2021 about 11 street names.

Information and activities related to the Commission are posted on the website:

<https://www.gov.si/en/registries/working-bodies/commission-for-the-standardization-of-geographical-names/>. On the website are also published procedures and recommendations of the CSGN concerning the suitability of the names of settlements and streets. A document with recommendations is also sent to all municipalities after each revision.

## 2. MULTILINGUAL AREAS

The Republic of Slovenia has two traditional national minorities - the Italian and Hungarian National Community. Both national minorities enjoy high legal protection, which extends from the international conventions ratified by Slovenia – which are constituent parts of the Slovenian legal order - to the highest state act, the Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia and numerous legal and other acts.

On ethnically mixed territories Italian and Hungarian enjoy equal status with Slovenian language. Based on the Decree on the transcription of geographical names on national maps in ethnically mixed areas in the Republic of Slovenia (Official Gazette, no. [57/14](#)) in these areas, geographical names on the maps are to be written in both languages, first Slovene and then either Italian or Hungarian.

Many of Hungarian and Italian geographical names within Slovenia are not yet standardized (except the names of settlements), so they cause considerable errors on various maps and in databases, as well as communication problems.

In 2014, the Italian and Hungarian National Communities were asked to prepare a lists of Italian and Hungarian geographical names for objects on ethnically mixed territories (firstly for the scale level 1:25,000) that are in the Register of Geographical Names (hereinafter: RGN) of Surveying and Mapping Authority (hereinafter: SMA) actually recorded only in Slovenian language (hydronyms, oronyms, landscape areas). Both National Communities were recommended to cooperate with linguists and standardization bodies in Italy and Hungary.

In July 2020 the standardization of Italian names for the scale level 1:25,000 was completed. In the project participated the Italian national community, the Surveying and Mapping Authority and the CSGN. The Commission finally standardized more than 300 Italian and Slovenian geographical names in the ethnically mixed area. All standardized names are already recorded in the RGN and other web browsers of SMA. The project continues with the preparation of a list of Italian geographical names for a scale level 1:5,000 and the subsequent standardization.

Activities related to the preparation of the list and the standardization of Hungarian geographical names for the level of 1:25,000 scale has been inactive since January 2017. The initiative to complete the list is on the side of the national community.

### **3. TOPONYMIC DATA FILES**

Surveying and Mapping Authority of the Republic of Slovenia is actively involved in the Working Group on Geographical Names Data Management of the UNGEGN and also in the United Nations Committee of Experts on Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM).

The national Register of Geographical Names is maintained by the SMA. The register contains geographical names that were captured from maps at scale 1:5,000 (approximately 140,000 names), 1:25,000 (approximately 60,000 names), 1:250,000 (approximately 8,000 names), 1:1,000,000 (approximately 1,000 names). RGN of all four scales cover the entire territory of Slovenia and also the border areas of neighbouring countries. The majority of geographical names in the register are endonyms.

From 2020, data of RGN are intensively edited by the Surveying and Mapping Authority. When the register was established at the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, it was cartographically oriented, so relatively very often the names of the same object do not match completely in different criteria (abbreviations of names, spelling mistakes, etc.) or there are different attribute data. As part of the data editing project, the unification of all data of each names and geographical features (topographic objects) is carried out, as well as the unification of identifiers between different scales. Over 25,000 errors have been identified and are currently being fixed.

### **4. EXONYMS**

Slovenia actively participates in the UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms and also otherwise is very active in the field of exonyms, especially researchers of the Anton Melik Geographical Institute. They regularly publish articles on exonyms in domestic and foreign publications.

## 5. COUNTRY NAMES

Country names are among the rare foreign geographical names that are standardized in Slovenia. The CSGN has standardized Slovenian names of 198 independent and 52 non-self-governing territories a few years ago. In October 2020, the Commission standardized Slovenian names of countries and non-self-governing territories, whose names in the ISO standard 3166 (version 2020) are different compared to the previous edition. Two names in the official short form have been added and four more official full names have been changed. CSGN standardized their Slovenian names:

Slovenian official short form	English official short form (ISO 3166)
Antarktika	Antarctica
Makav	Macao

Slovenian official full form	English official full form (ISO 3166)
Skupnost Severni Marijanski otoki	the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Zvezna republika Somalija	the Federal Republic of Somalia
Posebno upravno območje Kitajske Hongkong	the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China
Posebno upravno območje Kitajske Makav	the Macao Special Administrative Region of China

A subcommittee on Names of Countries (2 linguists, 2 geographers) has also been established, with the task of reviewing the entire list of ISO 3166 and preparing new proposals for Slovenian names.

## 6. CROSS-BORDER DATA HARMONIZATION

In 2020, started a project of the cross-border harmonization of data on geographical names along the state border between Slovenia and Austria. In the project are participating Slovenian and Austrian Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names, the Urban Jarnik Ethnographic institute in Klagenfurt am Wörthersee, Anton Melik Geographical Institute of the Scientific Research Center of the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts, and both state mapping authorities. In the final phase, a unified list will be prepared, and the names will be standardized by both commissions.

In the first phase, a list of all official border crossings was prepared. The Slovenian names from the list were confirmed and standardized by the Slovenian Commission in November 2020. The German names are expected to be adopted by the Austrian Commission at its next meeting.

In the second phase, the Commissions will harmonize a list of all geographical names at the border. The list was prepared on the base of names from the Austrian state map at scale 1:50,000 and supplemented with names from the Slovenian Register of Geographical Names.

On the Slovenian side, the names have already been reviewed by the Surveying and Mapping Authority and the Anton Melik Geographic Institute. The Commission will standardize all non-problematic geographical names. Other unclear names will require further discussion at the CSGN. Special attention will also have to be paid to different Slovenian names. Slovene names of the Slovene national community in Austria are in some cases different from those used in Slovenia.

## 7. INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Slovenia is actively involved in several international projects (cartographic, geographic or linguistic) about geographical names.

In January 2020, a meeting of representatives of the Slovenian and Croatian Commissions for the Standardization of Geographical Names took place in Ljubljana, Slovenia. The purpose of the meeting was to acquaint the Croatian representatives with the work of Slovenian Commission, competencies, standardization processes and legislation in Slovenia.

Last year, the CSGN also cooperated with the Central Office for the Slovene Language in Trieste, Italy, when the Commission prepared an opinion on Slovene geographical names in the province of Udine, Italy, that will be displayed on traffic signs on state roads.

CSGN members also participate on international meeting in the field of geographical names:

- Geographical names as intangible cultural heritage, Bleiburg, Austria, 16 September 2020.

## 8. OTHER ACTIVITIES

### **Meeting of the Orthographic Commission and the Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names, 27 June 2019**

At the meeting of the two commissions, there was a discussion mainly about the change of orthography in the field of the use of capital letters in geographical proper names. At the consultation, it was decided that due to the very different points of view, a booklet with the justifications of individual proposals and an online questionnaire for the general professional public should be prepared. The booklet was published in 2020, and the results of the poll showed, among other things, that 36% of respondents believe that changes are not necessary, while the rest believe that changes make sense.