

SLOVENIA

Slovenia is home to two ethnic minorities: Hungarian (approximately 6,000 residents) and Italian (approximately 3,000). Both minorities are guaranteed all the rights enshrined in the constitution and applicable international treaties.

The first regulation on writing geographical names in bilingual areas in Slovenia reaches back to Yugoslavia. At the end of April 1980, the Decree on Writing Geographical Names in Ethnically Mixed Areas was adopted. Article 3 provided that in ethnically mixed areas geographical names had to be written bilingually. Also relevant for understanding this issue is the provision contained under Indent 10 of Article 15 of the National Land Survey Reference System Act (2014), which stipulates that the manner of writing geographical names in ethnically mixed areas in Slovenia on maps of the country is defined by the government. In July 2014, the new Decree on Writing Geographical Names in Ethnically Mixed Areas was approved by the government.

The essential difference is that, compared to the 1980 decree, the 2014 decree requires that on maps of the country the geographical names in bilingual areas be written only in Slovenian, whereas they may be written in Italian or Hungarian only if they have been standardized in Italian or Hungarian by the Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names as a working body of the Slovenian government (except for names of settlements).

Only a few days after the decree was published, the Italian and Hungarian minority representatives responded that this was not in line with the previous legal basis. Finally, it was agreed that, due to a lack of financial resources, the commission would standardize the 1:25,000-scale names in 2015 and the 1:5,000-scale names in 2016. However, the names of settlements were already standardized before this decision.

In December 2014, a list of official geographical names was sent to both national minorities.

The Italians were the first to react. After several coordination meetings, list reviews, and comments, the commission standardized 245 Italian names (and 305 Slovenian ones at the same time) at a scale of 1:25,000 in 2020.

Efforts to standardize Hungarian names have been significantly less successful. The Hungarian community received the material and we had a meeting, but since then there has been no response.

The next stage is REZI 5, which covers 1:5,000 maps. The Italian minority received a list from the gazetteer and they started examining it.

We are convinced that the care taken by our Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names in bilingual geographical names is exemplary and in line with all applicable legal acts. At the same time, we believe that it is understandable that Slovenia would like to see similar activity with geographical names in areas in neighboring countries where Slovenians are an ethnic minority.