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## Slovene as a “minoritised language” in Austria, Italy, Hungary, and Croatia: genealogical linguistic and sociolinguistic aspects

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### 1. Introduction

The Slovene (or Slovenian) *language* (i.e. a geolect or a geographical, spatial linguistic phenomenon) is historically, traditionally present, i.e. autochthonous in the Slovene *linguistic area* (Slov. *slovenski jezikovni prostor*) or the Slovene *dialect continuum*.<sup>2</sup> For centuries, Slovene has cohabited with the geographical dialects of its neighbouring languages Friulian and Istriot, Bavarian High German, Hungarian, Venetian Italian, and the Kajkavian, Čakavian, and Štokavian dialects of Central South Slavic, and has enjoyed spontaneous osmotic interrelationship with them.<sup>3</sup> However, after the establishment of the so-called nation states, beginning in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the pressure of the dominant official standard languages, i.e. German, Italian, and Hungarian, on Slovene — at the time a language of a “non-historical nation”, became increasingly more tangible. In the present day, such unequal relationship between languages is typical of languages in minority contexts.

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<sup>2</sup> The term *jezikovni prostor* ‘linguistic area’ (cf. the German term *Sprachraum*, e.g. *deutscher Sprachraum* ‘German linguistic area’), also *govorno območje* ‘speech territory’, etc., refers to the historical presence of a language in a given geographical area (as an objective fact) and — in contrast to terms such as *etnično/narodnostno/narodno ozemlje* ‘ethnic/national, etc. territory’ — does not imply any ethnic, national etc. self-definition of its speakers (which represents a subjective element).

<sup>3</sup> For the contact languages of Slovene, see the volume *Slovenski jezik in njegovi sosedje* ‘Slovene language and its neighbours’ (Šekli and Rezončnik 2019).

The article offers an overview of Slovene, present in its historical linguistic area alongside the national border in the neighbouring countries of present-day Slovenia (an independent state since 25 June 1991), i.e. in Austria, Italy, Hungary, and Croatia, from two different linguistic points of view, viz. the genealogical linguistic and the sociolinguistic perspective. From the viewpoint of linguistic genealogy, Slovene dialects in the enumerated four countries unambiguously form part of the Slovene *dialect continuum*. From a sociolinguistic point of view, Slovene enjoys a *de iure* legal protection as a minority language in all the neighbouring countries of Slovenia. However, not in all the regions under protection the legislation in question is also being applied *de facto*. In such contexts, Slovene has gradually become a *minoritised language* in relatively recent times, with accelerated linguistic assimilation in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In addition, the sociolinguistic situation which typically arises in those regions of the Slovene speech area outside Slovenia that have no public schooling in Slovene and are consequently characterised by scarce or nil presence of Standard Slovene in formal usage, is *bilingualism* or even *multilingualism* combined with *diglossia*. It is under such circumstances that the phenomenon of modern Slovene *written dialects* can be observed.

In the ensuing paragraphs, the modern written dialects of Slovene that have developed in specific minority contexts outside Slovenia will be presented. First, the individual geographical dialects will be put into the context of spatial and social varieties of Slovene, i.e. its *geolects* and *sociolects*. Second, Slovene as a minority language will be presented from the viewpoint of both its spatial diffusion and legal protection. Lastly, the individual written dialects will be described, taking into consideration their *genesis, status, and corpus*.

## 2. The spatial and social varieties of Slovene

One of the salient characteristic features of present-day Slovene is the high degree of spatial and social variation as mirrored in the numerous *geolects* and *sociolects*, i.e. the *diatopic* and *diastratic varieties*.<sup>4</sup> However, it has to be

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<sup>4</sup> In terms of linguistic variation, I distinguish between a *geolect* or a *diatopic variety* (i.e. a geographical, spatial linguistic phenomenon, which is, however, not to be equated with the term “geographical/spatial dialect”, the latter being just one of the *geolects*) and a *sociolect* or a *diastratic variety* (i.e. a social linguistic phenomenon), as well as a *chronolect* or a *diachronic variety* (i.e. a chronological, temporal linguistic phenomenon), since both

emphasised that the linguistic varieties of Slovene other than the standard language reflect to a great extent the features of the individual geolects.<sup>5</sup> In fact, within the linguistic varieties of Slovene, two of them can be defined as systemic, namely the *standard language* (Slov. *knjižni jezik*), i.e. the only standardised variety (occurring in its “ideal” standardised format predominantly in written form) on the one hand, and the local varieties of the *geographical dialects* (Slov. *zemljepisna narečja*), i.e. the non-standardised varieties (usually encountered in their spoken variety), on the other. Between these two rather well-defined linguistic varieties there is a wide range of non-standardised and non-systemic linguistic variants usually labelled as *colloquial language* (Slov. *pogovorni jezik*), which, depending on the formality of the situation, can either be rather close to the standard language or to the geographical dialects themselves.<sup>6</sup> The colloquial variety of Slovene closest to the standard language is the so-called *knjižni pogovorni jezik* ‘the colloquial standard language’. Other colloquial varieties of Slovene reflecting features of the individual geographical dialects are called *pokrajinski pogovorni jeziki* ‘the regional colloquial languages’ and are typical of bigger urban centres. Because of the particular importance of the geographical dialects in the understanding of other non-standardised linguistic varieties of Slovene, these will now be briefly presented.

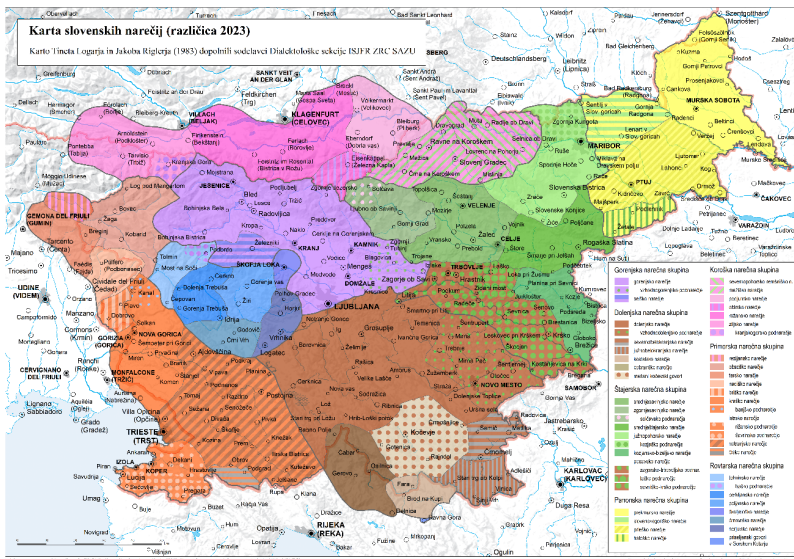
The Slovene geographical dialects are most comprehensively presented on the *Karta slovenskih narečij* ‘The Map of Slovene dialects’ (Ramovš 1935a, Logar and Rigler 1983) and in the *Slovenski lingvistični atlas* (SLA) ‘The Slovene Linguistic Atlas’.<sup>7</sup> They are subdivided into seven dialect groups, viz. the Carinthian dialect group (Slov. *koroška narečna skupina*), the Littoral dialect group (Slov. *primorska narečna skupina*), the Rovte geolects and sociolects display their respective subset of various chronolects. For the term *lect* cf. Trudgill 2003: 78, for the terms *diatopic*, *diastratic* and *diachronic variety* (Italian *varietà diatopica*, *diastratica*, and *diacronica*) cf. Berruto, Cerruti 2019: 150–156.

<sup>5</sup> For the linguistic varieties of Slovene, see Toporišič 2000: 13–27, SP 2001: 125–128, Smole 2004: 323–324, and the article *Jezikovne zvrsti* ‘Linguistic varieties’ available on the [www.franček.si](http://www.franček.si) website of the Fran Ramovš Institute for the Slovenian language at the Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

<sup>6</sup> For the Slovene colloquial language of Trieste, see Gruden 1976 and for that of Maribor see Zorko 1995.

<sup>7</sup> The original *Karta slovenskih narečij* (1983) by Tine Logar (1916–2002) and Jakob Rigler (1929–1985) has been enhanced by subsequent research resting on fieldwork and has been published in the *Slovenski lingvistični atlas* (SLA).

dialect group (Slov. *rovtarska narečna skupina*), the Upper Carniolan dialect group (Slov. *gorenjska narečna skupina*), the Lower Carniolan dialect group (Slov. *dolenjska narečna skupina*), the Styrian dialect group (Slov. *štajerska narečna skupina*), and the Pannonian dialect group (Slov. *panonska narečna skupina*). Within these seven dialect groups, 37 dialects and 12 subdialects can be distinguished. In addition to that, a migrational dialect has been documented in Ravna Gora (imported from the Rovte dialect area in the 18<sup>th</sup> century) in the region of Gorski Kotar. To complete the picture, the so-called *mešani kočevski govori* ‘mixed varieties of Kočevje’ must be added as well, which can be classified as Lower Carniolan varieties of Slovene that spread to the once German-speaking linguistic island of Kočevje/Gottschee after 1942.<sup>8</sup>



Map of Slovene geographical dialects in the *Slovenski lingvistični atlas* ‘Slovene Linguistic Atlas’ (SLA 2023: 11, [www.fran.si](http://www.fran.si))

<sup>8</sup> For the relocation of the German-speaking population of Kočevje/Gottschee region from the Slovene lands occupied by Italy during the Second World War into the Slovene territory occupied by Germany (following the agreement between the two occupier states dated 31 August 1941) see Ferenc 2018.

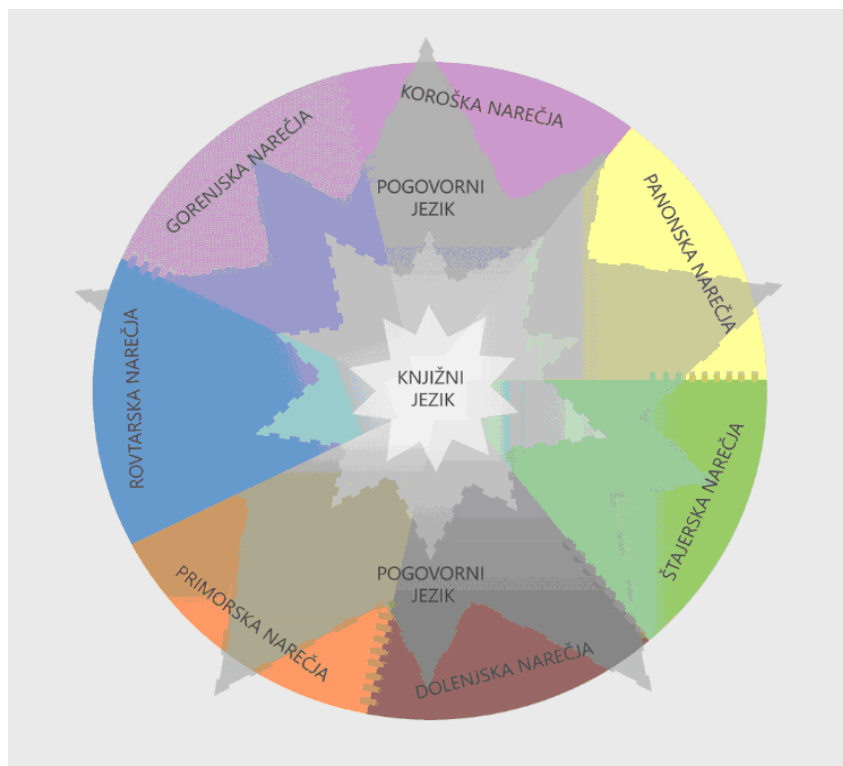


Chart of Slovene linguistic varieties (*Jezikovne zvrsti*, [www.franček.si](http://www.franček.si))

### 3. Slovene as a “minority language”

From the perspective of present-day political administrative division (national and other administrative borders), the Slovene linguistic area/dialect continuum encompasses the Republic of Slovenia and the so-called *slovensko zamejstvo* (literally ‘the area behind the border’), which represents (not only, but also) the Slovene-speaking zones along the national borders in the neighbouring countries, i.e. in Austria, Italy, Hungary, and Croatia.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Contemporary definition of the concept of *slovensko zamejstvo* rests upon the political administrative division of the Slovene linguistic area / dialect continuum as it was shaped towards the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. following Slovenia’s independence, proclaimed on 25 June 1991. For “practical” reasons, and so as to avoid any ambiguity, the starting point for the presentation of the Slovene dialect continuum in the neighbouring countries of Slovenia will be the actual administrative organisation of the latter (country,

The following two subsections will present the spatial diffusion of Slovene outside Slovenia as well as its language protection legislation within Slovenia and in its neighbouring countries.

### 3.1. Spatial diffusion of Slovene in the neighbouring countries of Slovenia

In the neighbouring countries of Slovenia, the Slovene dialect continuum comprises the following regions:<sup>10</sup>

**Austria:** 1) state of Carinthia (Germ. Kärnten, Slov. Koroška): the lower part of the Gail/Zilja Valley (Germ. Gailtal, Slov. Ziljska dolina): the Gail/Zilja dialect (Slov. *ziljsko narečje*); Rosental/Rož and Klagenfurter Feld/Celovško polje: the Rosental/Rož dialect (Slov. *rožansko narečje*); the Vellach/Bela Valley under the Obir/Obir Mountain: the Obir/Obir dialect (Slov. *obirsko narečje*); Jauntal/Podjuna: the Jauntal/Podjuna dialect (Slov. *podjunsko narečje*); 2) state of Styria (Germ. Steiermark, Slov. Štajerska): the area to the south of the locality Soboth/Sobote (for example in Laaken/Mlake, Rothwein/Radvanje): the North Pohorje-Remšnik dialect (Slov. *severnopohorsko-remšniško narečje*); the area to the south of the locality Leutschach/Lučane (for example in Glanz/Klanci, Schloßberg/Gradišče): the Kozjak subdialect (Slov. *kozjaško podnarečje*) of the North Pohorje-Remšnik dialect; the five villages to the east of Bad Radkersburg/Radgona and to the west of the Kutschenitza/Kučnica Brook, the so-called Radkerburger Winkel / Radgonski kot where the five traditionally Slovene-speaking villages are Goritz/Gorica (until 1924 known as Windisch Goritz / Slovenska Gorica), Zelting/Zenkovci, Laafeld/Potrna, Dedenitz/Dedonci, Sieldorf/Žetinci (Haberl–Zemljčič 2004/2012): the Prekmurje dialect (Slov. *prekmursko narečje*);

**Italy:** the autonomous region with special statute Friuli-Venezia Giulia (Ital. Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Slov. Furlanija – Julijska krajina, Friul. state/region/county etc.), followed by the denomination of the geographical-cultural regions and the specific Slovene dialect present in that zone. From a purely linguistic point of view, however, the order should, of course, be reversed.

<sup>10</sup> In this section, cross-linguistic variants of geographical names are given in the following order: the denomination in the dominant official language of the country in which the geographical object is situated, Slovene denomination, historical denominations in other languages present in the region in question. In the ensuing sections, the order will be reversed with the Slovene variant followed by the denomination in the dominant official language.

Friül-Vignesie Julie, Germ. Friaul-Julisch Venetien): 1) the area to the east and northeast of Udine (Ital. Udine, Slov. Videm, dial. Viden, Friul. Udin, Germ. Udine, arch. Weiden): Val Canale / Kanalska dolina (Germ. Kanaltal, Friul. Val Cjanâl): the Gail/Zilja dialect (Slov. *ziljsko narečje*); the Resia/Rezija Valley: the Resia/Rezija dialect (Slov. *rezijansko narečje*); Slavia Friulana / Beneška Slovenija ‘Friulian Slavia’ (Slov. also (Slovenska) Benečija) which comprises two entities, viz. the Torre/Ter Valleys (Ital. Valli del Torre, Slov. Terske doline, Friul. Valadis dal Tor): the Torre/Ter dialect (Slov. *tersko narečje*) and the Natisone/Nadiža Valleys (Ital. Valli del Natisone, Slov. Nadiške doline, dial. Nediške doline, Friul. Valadis dal Nadison): the Natisone/Nadiža dialect (Slov. *nadiško narečje*); 2) Gorizia/Gorica and its surroundings: the town of Gorizia/Gorica (Friul. Gurize, dial. Guriza, Germ. Görz) with the margins of the (Goriška) Brda/Collio (Goriziano) and Karst Plateau (Slov. Kras, Ital. Carso): the Brda/Collio dialect (Slov. *briško narečje*) and the Kras/Carso dialect (Slov. *kraško narečje*); 3) Trieste/Trst and its surroundings: the town of Trieste/Trst (Friul. Triest, Germ. Triest) and the margins of Karst Plateau and Istria: the Kras/Carso dialect (Slov. *kraško narečje*), the Inner Carniolan dialect (Slov. *notranjsko narečje*), and the Istra/Istria dialect (Slov. *istrsko narečje*);

**Hungary:** Vas County (Hung. Vas vármegye, Slov. Železna županija, Germ. Komitat Vas, arch. Komitat Eisenburg, Croat. Željezna županija): the traditionally Slovene-speaking area along the Rába River (Slov. Raba, Hung. Rába, Germ. Raab), the so-called Slov. Slovensko Porabje / Hung. Szlovén Rábavidék (arch. Vendvidék) in the vicinity of the town of Szentgotthárd/Monošter (Germ. St. Gotthard);

**Croatia:** 1) the northern margins of Istria (for example in Brest, Slum): the Šavrinija subdialect (Slov. *šavrinsko podnarečje*) of the Istra/Istria dialect (Slov. *istrsko narečje*); 2) the western part of Gorski Kotar: the area along the Čabranka/Čebranka River and the upper flow of the Kupa/Kolpa River: the Čabranka/Čebranka dialect (Slov. *čebransko narečje*) and the Kostel dialect (Slov. *kostelsko narečje*); Ravna Gora (a dialect imported from the Rovte dialect area in the 18<sup>th</sup> century); 3) the zone along the Sutla/Sotla River: the Kozjansko-Bizeljsko dialect (Slov. *kozjansko-bizeljsko narečje*) (for example in Kumrovec, Dubravica, Kraljevec na Sutli/Sotli, Pristava) and the Middle Styrian dialect (Slov. *srednještajersko narečje*) (for example in Hum na Sutli/Sotli, Plavič); 4) the Međimurje/Medmurje

region: transitional varieties between the Prlekija dialect (Slov. *prleško narečje*) and the Prekmurje dialect (Slov. *prekmursko narečje*), for example in Štrigova, Banfi.

### 3.2. Legal protection of Slovene in Slovenia and its neighbouring countries<sup>11</sup>

Within the Slovene linguistic area, Standard Slovene holds the role of a roofing language and, as a consequence, represents the default means of communication in formal situations for speakers of Slovene. This is true above all for the territory of the Republic of Slovenia, where Slovene has the status of a national and official language (alongside with Italian in the Slovene-Italian-speaking part of Istra/Istria, and alongside Hungarian in the Slovene-Hungarian-speaking municipalities of Prekmurje/Muravidék), as well as for those regions of the *slovensko zamejstvo* where Slovene is functionally protected by language protection legislation and actually used (alongside with the respective national languages) in formal contexts. However, in those parts of the traditional Slovene linguistic area outside Slovenia where Standard Slovene is — due to historical or political reasons — just partly diffused or even altogether absent, it is the national languages that dominate the official sphere of language use.

Slovene is the national language (Slov. *državni jezik*) and the official language (Slov. *uradni jezik*) in the Republic of Slovenia (Slov. *Republika Slovenija*) (after the declaration of independence on 25 June 1991) and one of the 24 official and working languages of the European Union (following the accession on 1 May 2004). In the following paragraphs the legal status of Slovene in Slovenia and the individual neighbouring nation states will be presented.

**Slovenia:** 1a) *Ustava Republike Slovenije* ‘The Constitution of the Republic of Slovenia’ dated 23 December 1991 (Uradni list Republike Slovenije, št. 33/92-I, 28. 12. 1991) defines the use of official languages in its Article 11: “Uradni jezik v Sloveniji je slovenščina. Na območju občin, v katerih živita italijanska ali madžarska narodna skupnost, je uradni jezik tudi italijanščina in madžarščina” ‘The official language in Slovenia is Slovene. In the territory of the municipalities inhabited by the Italian/Hungarian

<sup>11</sup> For a more detailed discussion of language legislation concerning Slovene within the Republic of Slovenia and in the neighbouring countries, see Gliha Komac and Kovač 2018.



national community the official language is also Italian/Hungarian. 1b) The Constitution also determines the special rights of the (national) communities in Slovenia, that is the rights of the *avtohtona italijanska in madžarska narodna skupnost* ‘the autochthonous Italian and Hungarian national communities’ in Articles 5 and 64, as well as those pertaining to the *romska skupnost* ‘the Romani community’ in Article 65. 2) The official use of Slovene within national borders of Slovenia is regulated by *Zakon o javni rabi slovenščine* ‘The Act of public use of Slovene’ dated 15 July 2004 (Uradni list Republike Slovenije, št. 86/04, 5. 8. 2004).

**Italy:** 1) *Costituzione della Repubblica Italiana* ‘The Constitution of the Italian Republic’ dated 22 December 1947 (Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana Serie Generale n. 298 del 27-12-1947), which, in Article 6, ensures the protection of linguistic minorities: “La Repubblica tutela con apposite norme le minoranze linguistiche” ‘The Republic protects with relative regulations the linguistic minorities’; 2) National law n. 482 dated 15 December 1999 *Norme in materia di tutela delle minoranze linguistiche storiche* ‘Regulations on the protection of historical linguistic minorities’ (Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana Serie Generale n. 297 del 20-12-1999) which protects 12 historical linguistic minorities in Italy; 3) National law n. 38 dated 23 February 2001 *Norme per la tutela della minoranza linguistica slovena della regione Friuli-Venezia Giulia* ‘Regulations for the protection of the Slovene linguistic minority in the Friuli-Venezia Giulia region’ (Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana Serie Generale n. 56 del 08-03-2001); 4) Regional law n. 26 dated 26 November 2007 *Norme regionali per la tutela della minoranza linguistica slovena* ‘Regional regulations for the protection of the Slovene linguistic minority’. The latter act explicitly guarantees not only the protection of Standard Slovene but also that of Resian and the Slovene dialect variants of the Torre/Ter and Natisone/Nadiža Valleys and the Val Canale / Kanalska dolina.

**Austria:** 1) *Staatsvertrag betreffend die Wiederherstellung eines unabhängigen und demokratischen Österreich* ‘State Treaty concerning the Restoration of an Independent and Democratic Austria’, also known as the *Österreichischer Staatsvertrag* ‘The Austrian State Treaty’, dated 15 May 1955 (Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich Nr. 152/1955), which in its Article 7 *Rechte der slowenischen und kroatischen Minderheiten* ‘Rights of the Slovene and Croat minorities’ provides for Slovenes in Carinthia and

Styria as well as Croats in Burgenland/Gradišće; 2) *Bundesgesetz über die Rechtsstellung der Volksgruppen in Österreich* ‘Federal Act on the Legal Status of Ethnic Groups in Austria’, or the *Volksgruppengesetz* ‘Ethnic Groups Act’ in short, dated 7 July 1976 (Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich Nr. 396/1976), which provides for the protection of (Carinthian and Styrian) Slovenes, (Burgenland) Croats, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, and the Romani people in Austria; 3) *Bundesgesetz, mit dem das Volksgruppengesetz geändert wird* ‘Federal Act amending the Ethnic Group Act’, also known as the *Änderung des Volksgruppengesetzes* ‘Amendment of the Ethnic Groups Act’, dated 26 July 2011 (Bundesgesetzblatt für die Republik Österreich Nr. 46/2011).

**Hungary:** 1) *Magyarország Alaptörvénye 2011. április 25.* ‘Fundamental Law dated 15 April 2011’, i.e. the Constitution of Hungary, which in the paragraph *Szabadság és felelőség* ‘Freedom and responsibility’ of Article 29 refers to minorities as *nemzetiségek* ‘nationalities’; 2) *2011. évi CLXXIX. törvény a nemzetiségek jogairól* ‘Law CLXXIX on the Rights of Nationalities from 2011’, which provides for the protection of 13 nationalities in Hungary.

**Croatia:** *Ustav Republike Hrvatske* ‘Constitution of the Republic of Croatia’ dated 22 December 1990 (»Narodne novine« br. 59/90): in the paragraph *I. Izvorišne osnove* ‘I. Baselines’ 22 national minorities in Croatia are enumerated, while in Article 15 the following statement is inserted: “U Republici Hrvatskoj jamči se ravnopravnost pripadnicima svih narodnih manjina” ‘In the Republic of Croatia equality between members of all national minorities is guaranteed’.

As can be seen from the above review of the five protection legislations, respective countries refer to minority communities by different denominations. Leaving aside the distinction between the concepts of *community* and *minority*, there are in essence two types of references: a *language-based* one (cf. *minoranza linguistica storica* ‘historical linguistic minority’ in Italy) and a *national-identity-based* denomination (cf. *narodna skupnost* ‘national community’ in Slovenia, *Volksgruppe* ‘national group’ in Austria, *nemzetiség* ‘nationality’ in Hungary, and *narodna manjina* ‘national minority’ in Croatia). There are also differences in the application of the two principles, namely that of autochthonousness and that of allochthonousness respectively: Slovenia, Italy, Austria, and Hungary

observe the principle of autochthonousness, i.e. the historical presence of a language in the territory of the respective country, while Croatia “jamči ravnopravnost” ‘guarantees the equality’ of both autochthonous and allochthonous languages, i.e. including recent immigrant languages.

The prerequisite for the maintenance and the development of a language in a minority condition is the availability of public education in the mother tongue and its use in all spheres of public life. In spite of its historical presence in border areas of the neighbouring countries of Slovenia and the existing legal protection, Slovene language is not present to the same extent in the above-mentioned bilingual or multilingual areas. On the basis of the presence of a minority language in public school, several degrees of functional language protection in minority contexts can be identified: 1) the minority language is used in teaching in a monolingual school: Slovene is the language of education in primary schools (Ital. *scuola primaria*, 5 years of education) as well as in lower secondary school (Ital. *scuola secondaria di primo grado*, 3 years) and upper secondary school (Ital. *scuola secondaria di secondo grado*, 5 years) in Trieste/Trst and Gorizia/Gorica and their surroundings (Italy);<sup>12</sup> Slovene is the language of education in only one grammar school (Germ. *Gymnasium*, 8 years) in Klagenfurt/Celovec in Carinthia (Austria);<sup>13</sup> 2) the minority language is used in teaching in a bilingual school:<sup>14</sup> Slovene is used in education in the German-Slovene bilingual primary school (Germ. *Volksschule*, 4 years of education) and two upper secondary schools (4/5 years) in Carinthia Austria),<sup>15</sup> lower secondary education (4/5 years) being only available

<sup>12</sup> The same degree of protection is characteristic of Italian in Slovenia. Namely, Italian is the language of education in primary (9 years) and secondary (4 years) schools in the Slovene part of Istra/Istria.

<sup>13</sup> I.e. Bundesgymnasium und Bundesrealgymnasium für Slowenen in Klagenfurt / Zvezna gimnazija in zvezna realna gimnazija za Slovence v Celovcu ‘Federal grammar school and federal real grammar school for Slovenes in Klagenfurt/Celovec’.

<sup>14</sup> This type of protection is characteristic of Hungarian in Slovenia. Slovene and Hungarian are the languages of education in the Slovene-Hungarian bilingual primary (9 years) and secondary (4 years) schools in the Slovene-Hungarian-speaking parts of Prekmurje/Muravidék.

<sup>15</sup> I.e. Zweisprachige Bundeshandelsakademie / Dvojezična zvezna trgovska akademija ‘Bilingual Federal Commercial College’ and Höhere Lehranstalt für wirtschaftliche Berufe St. Peter / Višja šola za gospodarske poklice Št. Peter ‘St. Peter Secondary School for Business Professions’.

through German and thus representing a gap in education in Slovene in this region; 3) the minority language is used in teaching in bilingual primary and lower secondary schools: Slovene is the language of education in the two existing Hungarian-Slovene bilingual elementary schools (*Hung. altalános iskola*, 8 years of education) in Felsőszölnök/Gornji Senik and Apátistvánfalva/Števanovci in the Szlovén Rábadvidék / Slovensko Porabje (Hungary); Slovene is used in education in the Italian-Slovene bilingual primary school (5 years) and lower secondary school (3 years) in San Pietro al Natisone/Špeter in the Natisone/Nadiža Valleys (Italy); 4) the minority language is not used in education in public schools: this is the situation in the Torre/Ter Valleys, Resia/Rezija Valley, and Val Canale / Kanalska dolina (Italy), in the region of Styria (Austria), as well as in Gorski Kotar and other parts of Slovene-speaking zones in Croatia.

#### 4. Slovene written dialects in minority contexts

Regardless of how democratic a society is, national borders and national linguistic policies tend to influence the diffusion of national and official languages as well as determine the way legal protection of the so-called minority and regional languages is organised. The ideal situation for a minority language would be a continuous availability of the roofing language that genetically belongs to the same stock as the autochthonous dialect. The prerequisite for that is, of course, the availability of public education in the mother tongue and its use in all spheres of public life. Nevertheless, in cases where no schooling in the minority language exists, situations in which the indigenous dialect coexists with the roofing language are not, in fact, the norm. Such circumstances then typically give rise to *bilingualism* with *diglossia* (cf. Ferguson 1959, Fishman 1967, Berruto and Cerruti 2019: 84–85), characterised by code-switching between the dialect variety of the mother tongue of the speakers of a minority language for communicative situations that allow for low language register and the dominant official language, which is then routinely used in situations that require higher register.

Such is the case with speakers of what are the autochthonous Slovene dialects in the Rezija/Resia Valley, the Ter/Torre Valleys, the Austrian part of Styria, and Gorski Kotar, including other parts of Slovene speaking zones in Croatia. To a certain extent this also holds true for the individual zones

of Carinthia, e.g. the Zilja/Gail Valley, the Kanalska dolina / Val Canale, the Nadiža/Natisone Valleys and the Slovensko Porabje / Szlovén Rábavidék. The speakers of those indigenous Slovene dialects in the enumerated regions normally use Standard Italian, German, Hungarian, and Croatian as the roofing language, as they do not have the opportunity to fully acquire Standard Slovene within the compulsory public education system and use it in formal situations. The presence of Standard Slovene in public life in these zones is more of an exception than the rule. It goes without saying that the language of education not only conditions the (non-)diffusion of the roofing language used by a linguistic minority but also determines the ethnic, national etc. identity of its users. Thus, the speakers of Slovene dialects in the adduced situations were unable to develop full awareness of their dialect actually being part of a larger Slovene dialect continuum. With the knowledge of their own dialect only and no knowledge of Standard Slovene, they often retain a regional or even local linguistic identity, such as was characteristic of the Central Slovene territory before the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century when the process of unification of written Slovene and its re-standardisation began. Strongly associated with this regional “Slovene” identity is the speakers’ strong consciousness of the fact that they are part of the national state in which they live.

The described situation is partly due to the historical experience of these territories, mostly the administrative separation from the central Slovene lands throughout history. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the “Central” Slovene area was “unified” within the borders of Austria, the Slovene-speaking lands encompassing the erstwhile duchies of Carniola, Carinthia and Styria, as well as the Austrian Littoral, i.e. the county of Gorizia and Gradisca, the city of Trieste, and Istria. This fact became crucial in the era which saw the decline of regional Slovene literary traditions and the unification of the Slovene literary language, one which became the roofing language of Slovene dialect speakers within the borders of former Austria. The literary language unification reached its peak in the period between 1848 and 1851, when the so-called *nove oblike* ‘new forms’ were introduced into the written language, bridging the gap between the different regional literary traditions via an etymological compromise (e.g. instr. sg. m/n *z bratam* → *z bratom* ‘with the brother’, etc.). After the so-called *črkarska pravda* ‘war for the letters’, which took place in the period

1824–43, a new spelling, which remains in use today, was also adopted to represent the sibilant consonants: digraphs introduced in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century were replaced by diacritics (e.g. *ſin* → *sin* ‘son’, *ſima* → *zima* ‘winter’, *zeſta* → *ceſta* ‘road’; *ſhivati* → *ſhivati* ‘to sew’, *ſhiv* → *živ* ‘alive’, *zhakati* → *čakati* ‘to wait’). The geographically marginal regions of the Slovene linguistic area remained *de facto* excluded from this cultural movement that saw the gradual diffusion of the *nova knjižna slovenščina* ‘New Literary Slovene’. This explains the very limited presence or even almost complete absence of Standard Slovene in these territories.

A factor significantly more decisive than the administrative separation of these regions from the Central Slovene area in the past, was (and in some zones still is) the lack of functional or even symbolic linguistic protection of Slovene in its autochthonous speech territory, which set in following the formation of the so-called nation states or their predecessors, i.e. Italy (1861), Hungary (1867, 1920), “new” Austria (1919), and even Croatia (after 1991). The consequence of this process was namely the linguistic homogenisation of national territories through the respective national languages. In spite of international agreements regulating the protection of “minority languages” and their consequent legal protection, the Slovene-speaking population was subjected to covert and overt assimilation policies in some areas.<sup>16</sup> The pressure on the “alloglot” population reached its peak in the period after the First World War which saw the rise of Fascism (1922–43) in Italy and National Socialism (1933–45) in Germany and Austria, and *de facto* continued in the post-World War II period.<sup>17</sup> Because of assimilation pressures and the gradual interruption of the intergenerational transmission of the mother tongue, Slovene

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<sup>16</sup> After the so-called *plebiscito del Veneto / beneškoslovenski plebiscit* ‘Plebiscite of Veneto’ which took place on 21 and 22 April 1866, the *Giornale di Udine* (the predecessor of the present-day *Il Messaggero Veneto*, a daily newspaper published in Udine) wrote the following on 22 November 1866, referring to the Slovene-speaking population historically present in the Rezija/Resia, Ter/Torre and Nadiža/Natisone Valleys: “Questi slavi bisogna eliminarli!” ‘These Slavs must be eliminated!’ (see Anonymous 1866). Cf. Salvi 1975, too. The presence of the Slovene-speaking population of this area was officially recognised by the Italian Republic only in 1999 and 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. the decimation of the Slovene-speaking population after the so-called *Kärntner Volksabstimmung / koroški plebiscit* ‘Carinthian Plebiscite’, which took place on 20 October 1920 (cf. Mračnikar 2022). Also consider the formation of the paramilitary formations operating in Beneška Slovenija / Slavia Friulana during the Cold War in Italy (see Qualizza, Zuanella 1996).

language continued to become “minoritised” in the historically compact Slovene-speaking regions in relatively recent times.

Due to very limited diffusion or even total absence of Standard Slovene in the public sphere, Slovene dialects appear to be the most important linguistic and cultural identity carrier in the areas adduced. In fact, they play the role, to a certain extent, of written dialects in public contexts and cover a very basic set of text genres. The Slovene written dialects in the minority condition are present in the Slovensko Porabje / Szlovén Rábavidék in Hungary, the Beneška Slovenija / Slavia Friulana, i.e. the Nadiža/Natisone and Ter/Torre Valleys, and the Rezija/Resia Valley in Italy, as well as in the western part of Gorski Kotar in Croatia.<sup>18</sup> The precise sociolinguistic situations in which these written dialects exist differ in many aspects and depend on different factors, the most important being the presence or absence of Standard Slovene in public schooling and in different organisations of the Slovene-speaking population. The linguistic policy of the latter is mirrored in the varieties used in the territory in question, as well as in the corpus of the written dialects in question. In the following subsections the *genesis*, *status*, and *corpus* of Slovene in the above mentioned five micro-realities will be briefly presented. Special focus will be paid to the following aspects: dialect classification, political and cultural activity, linguistic varieties used in formal situations, public schooling, official town and village signs, authorial literature in Slovene (beside folk literature which is normally transmitted in a dialect form), mass media in Slovene.

#### 4.1 Slovensko Porabje / Szlovén Rábavidék (Hungary)<sup>19</sup>

*Dialect classification.* In Slovensko Porabje / Szlovén Rábavidék ‘Slovene Rába Region’ (Porabje/Rábavidék in short) in Hungary, the Prekmurje dialect (Slov. *prekmursko narečje*) of Pannonian dialect group of Slovene is historically present (Ramovš 1935b: 183–193, Logar and Rigler 1983, Logar 1981a, Zorko 1998, Mukič 2005, Bajzek Lukač 2009, SLA 2023: 11). The Prekmurje dialect of Slovene is subdivided into three groups of local dialects, representing the three zones of Prekmurje, viz. Goričko,

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<sup>18</sup> For critical assessment of Duličenko’s concept of the so-called *literaturnyj mikro-jazyk* ‘literary micro-language’ (Duličenko 1981, 2003–2004) and the formation of Slovene written dialects, see Šekli 2015a.

<sup>19</sup> For a comprehensive presentation of the Slovene-speaking population in the Slovensko Porabje / Szlovén Rábavidék region, their language and culture, see Mukič and Kozar–Mukič 1982, Just 2001, as well as Kozar–Mukič 2021.

Ravénsko, and Dólinško. The dialect varieties of Porabje represent the northern margins of the Prekmurje dialect area and are the natural continuation of those present in Goričko.

*Linguistic varieties used in public situations.* Alongside the dominant official language, Hungarian, Standard Slovene, and the Porabje/Rábavidek variety of the Prekmurje dialect of Slovene are used in public situations. The use of the three linguistic varieties is also reflected in the *Porabsko–knjižnoslovensko–madžarski slovar* ‘The Porabje Slovene–Standard Slovene–Hungarian dictionary’ authored by Francek Mukič (Mukič 2005).

*Public schooling.* Alongside with Hungarian, Standard Slovene is used in education in the two existing Hungarian–Slovene bilingual elementary schools (Hung. *altalános iskola*, 8 years of education) in Gornji Senik/Felsőszölnök and Števanovci/Apátistvánfalva. It needs to be stressed, however, that not all subjects are taught in Slovene. Secondary education is only available through Hungarian.

*Official town and village signs.* Entry and exit town and village signs are bilingual (in Alsószölnök/Dolnji Senik/Unterzemming trilingual), providing the name of the locality in Hungarian and Slovene (and German) (e.g. *Szentgotthárd/Monošter, Rábatótfalu/Slovenska ves, Alsószölnök/Dolnji Senik/Unterzemming*). Whenever the local dialect form differs from the standard one, the former is preferred (e.g. *Slovenska ves* and not *Slovenska vas*).

*Literature in Slovene.* Authors writing in the Porabje dialect as well as in Standard Slovene were/are Irena Barber / Barbér Irén (1939–2006), Francek Mukič / Mukics Ferenc (1952), Karel (Karči) Holec / Holecz Károly (1969), Dušan Mukič / Mukics Dusán (1981). Francek Mukič penned two novels in the Porabje dialect and Standard Slovene, viz. *Garaboncijaš: porabska legenda* (2005) / *Črnošolec: porabska legenda* (2007) ‘Sorcerer’s Apprentice: a legend from Porabje’ and *Vtrgnjene korenje* (2010) / *Strgane korenine* (2011) ‘Broken Roots’. Akoš Anton Dončec / Doncsecz Ákos Antal (1988) translated *The Little Prince* into the dialect (*Mali Kralič*, 2018). There is also a book series *Med Muro in Rabo* ‘Between Mura and Rába Rivers’ (1998–), specialising in literature produced in the Prekmurje dialect (including authors from Porabje) and Standard Slovene.

*Mass media in Slovene.* The newspaper *Porabje* (1991–) is published twice a month and includes articles in the Porabje dialect and Standard Slovene. The same linguistic varieties are characteristic of the yearly



publication *Porabski koledar* ‘The Porabje/Rábavidék Calendar’. The Hungarian National Television (MTVA) broadcasts a half-hourlong programme *Slovenski utrinki* ‘Slovene Sparks’ (1992–) twice a month. Radio Monošter (2000–) broadcasts four hours of programme daily.

#### 4.2 Nadiške doline / Valli del Natisone (Italy)<sup>20</sup>

*Dialect classification.* The Nadiža/Natisone dialect (Slov. *nadiško narčje*) of the Littoral dialect group of Slovene is traditionally present in the Nadiža/Natisone Valleys in Italy (Ramovš 1935b: 56–58, Logar 1981b, Logar and Rigler 1983, SLA 2023: 11).

*Linguistic varieties used in public situations.* Side by side with the dominant official language, Italian, Standard Slovene, and the Nadiža/Natisone dialect of Slovene are used in public situations.

*Public schooling.* Alongside Italian, Standard Slovene is used in education in one existing Italian–Slovene bilingual primary school (5 years) and lower secondary school (3 years) in Špeter/San Pietro al Natisone. Higher secondary education is only available through Italian.

*Official town and village signs.* Entry and exit town and village signs are bilingual (in Ponte San Quirino/Most/Puint trilingual), providing the name of the locality in Italian and Slovene (as well as Friulian) (e.g. *San Pietro al Natisone/Špietar, Pulfero/Podboniesac, Montefosca/Čarni Varh, Grimacco/Garmak, Savogna/Sauodnje, Ponte San Quirino/Muost/Puint*). Whenever the local dialect form differs from the standard one, the former is preferred (the Standard Slovene forms of the enumerated toponyms are *Špeter, Podbonesec, Črni Vrh, Grmek, Sovodnje, Most*).

*Literature in Slovene.* There are quite a number of literary authors writing in the Nadiža/Natisone dialect (predominantly poetry), for example Aldo Clodig [Klodič], Marina Cernetig [Černetič], Bruna Dorbolò, Loredana Drecogna [Drekonja], Andreina Trusgnach [Trušnjak], Lusja Battistig [Batistič], Miha Obit / Michele Obit. In Beneška Slovenija/Slavia Friulana, a festival of Slovene poetry and songs *Senjam benieške piesmi* (1971–) ‘The Fair of Venetian Slovene song’ is organised.

*Mass media in Slovene.* The newspaper (*Novi Matajur*) (1950–1974 *Matajur*, 1974– *Novi Matajur*) is published weekly and the newspaper *Dom* (1966–) is issued twice a month. They both include articles in the Nadiža/

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<sup>20</sup> For a brief presentation of Slovene in the Nadiža/Natisone Valleys, see Zuljan Kumar 2018.

Natisone, Ter/Torre, and Rezija/Resia dialects, Standard Slovene, and Italian. The yearly publication *Trinkov koledar* (1953–) ‘The Ivan Trinko Calendar’ brings together contributions in all the three dialects and Standard Slovene. Radio Trst A, i.e. the Slovene radio channel operating within the framework of the Regional Centre of the Italian National Radio and Television (Rai) in Trieste, broadcasts a weekly half-hourlong programme *Nediški zvon* ‘The Nadiža Bell’.

#### 4.3 Terske doline / Valli del Torre (Italy)<sup>21</sup>

*Dialect classification.* The Ter/Torre dialect (Slov. *tersko narečje*) of the Littoral dialect group of Slovene is historically present in the Ter/Torre Valleys in Italy (Ramovš 1935b: 53–55, Logar and Rigler 1983, Del Medico 2006, Spinozzi Monai 2009, Ježovnik 2022, SLA 2023: 11).

*Linguistic varieties used in public situations.* Alongside the dominant official language, Italian, Standard Slovene, and the Ter/Torre dialect of Slovene are occasionally used in public situations.

*Public schooling.* Slovene is not used in education in public school in any form.

*Official town and village signs.* Entry and exit town and village signs are bilingual, providing the name of the locality in Italian and Slovene (e.g. *Lusevera/Bardo*, *Villanova delle Grotte/Zavarh*, *Canebola/Čeniebola*). Whenever the local dialect form differs from the standard one, the former is preferred (the Standard Slovene forms of the enumerated toponyms are *Brdo*, *Zavrh*, *Čeniebola*).

*Literature in Slovene.* There were/are some authors writing in the Ter/Torre dialect (and Standard Slovene), viz. Peter Negro / Pietro Negro (1885–1971), Viljem Černo / Guglielmo Cerno (1937–2017), Bruna Balloch, Luigi Moderiano.

*Mass media in Slovene.* Articles in the Ter/Torre dialect are occasionally published in the newspapers *Novi Matajur* and *Dom*.

#### 4.4 Rezija / Resia (Italy)<sup>22</sup>

*Dialect classification.* The Rezija/Resia dialect (Slov. *rezijansko narečje*) of Littoral dialect group of Slovene is traditionally present in the Rezija/

<sup>21</sup> For a brief presentation of Slovene in the Ter/Torre Valleys, see Ježovnik 2018.

<sup>22</sup> For a more detailed discussion on the Rezija/Resia Valley and its language, see Šekli 2015b, 2018 and 2023.

Resia Valley in Italy (Ramovš 1928, 1935b: 30–41, Logar 1981c, Logar and Rigler 1983, Steenwijk 1992, Dapit 1995, 1998, 2008, SLA 2023: 11).

*Linguistic varieties used in public situations.* Side by side with the dominant official language, Italian, Rezija/Resia dialect of Slovene is used in public situations. The Resian dialect was standardised in the 1990s by the Dutch linguist Han Steenwijk (see Steenwijk 1994, 1999, 2005, 2023) and functions as the standard micro-language. The use of Standard Slovene is limited to the activities of local cultural associations operating within the Slovene minority organisations in Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

*Public schooling.* Slovene is not used in public schooling in any form.

*Official town and village signs.* Entry and exit town and village signs are bilingual, providing the name of the locality in Italian and Resian (e.g. *San Giorgio/Bila*, *Lipovaz/Lipavac*, *Gniva/Njiva*, *Oseacco/Osoanë*, *Coritis/Korito* etc.; the Standard Slovene forms are *Bela*, *Lipovec*, *Njiva*, *Osojane*, *Korito*).

*Literature in Slovene.* There are some authors writing in the Rezija/Resia dialect (predominantly poetry), viz. Renato Quaglia (1941), Silvana Paletti (1947), Rino Chinese (1953). Silvana Paletti recently translated *The Little Prince* into the Rezija/Resia dialect (*Te Mali Princip*, 2021).

*Mass media in Slovene.* The publication *Náš kolindrin* (1989–) ‘Our Calendar’ and the newspaper *Náš glas / La nostra voce* ‘Our Voice’ (2005–) are published once a year. The linguistic variants used therein are Resian and Italian. Articles in the Rezija/Resia dialect are occasionally published in the newspapers *Novi Matajur* and *Dom* as well. Radio Trst A broadcasts a weekly half-hourlong programme *Te rozajanski glas* (1979–) ‘The Voice of Rezija’.

#### 4.5 Gorski Kotar (Croatia)

*Dialect classification.* The Čebranka/Čabranka dialect (Slov. *čebriansko narečje*) and the Kostel dialect (Slov. *kostelsko narečje*) of the Lower Carniolan dialect group of Slovene as well as a migrational dialect from the Rovte dialect area in Ravna Gora are historically present in Gorski Kotar in Croatia (Gostenčnik 2018 and 2023, SLA 2023: 11).

*Linguistic varieties used in public situations.* Alongside the dominant official language, Croatian, the Čebranka/Čabranka dialect of Slovene (more than any other), and Standard Slovene are occasionally used in public situations.

*Public schooling.* Slovene is not used in public schooling in any form.

*Official town and village signs.* Entry and exit town and village signs are monolingual and in Croatian, more precisely in their Štokavised forms (e.g. *Čabar, Tršće, Brod na Kupi*; the dialect and Standard Slovene forms are *Čeber, Trstje, Brod na Kolpi*).

*Literature in Slovene.* There are some authors writing in the Čebranka/Čabranka dialect, viz. Slavko Malnar, Zlatko Pochobradsky, Matija Turk, Damir Pršle.

*Mass media in Slovene.* No mass media are available through Slovene.

## 5. Conclusion

Slovene is historically present in all of the four neighbouring countries of present-day Slovenia, i.e. in Austria, Italy, Hungary, and Croatia, where it is officially recognised as a *minority language*. However, the actual level of legal protection and the “health” of Slovene in minority contexts differs not only from country to country, but also from one historical region to another. The actual state of affairs depends predominantly on the availability of public education in Slovene and, consequently, its official use in formal contexts. In the Provinces of Trieste/Trst and Gorizia/Gorica (Italy), Slovene is used as the language of education in primary school (5 years), as well as in lower secondary school (3 years) and higher secondary school (5 years). In these two regions, intergenerational transmission of Slovene as the mother tongue can be observed, with a balanced use of different linguistic varieties: the use of dialect in informal contexts and Standard Slovene (alongside Italian) in formal contexts. Standard Slovene (alongside German) is used in Carinthia (Austria) to a normal extent in the public sphere, although the intergenerational transmission of Slovene is endangered in some areas. On the contrary, in other parts of the so-called *slovensko zamejstvo* (literally ‘the area behind the border’), the situation is much more complex. It is precisely in these contexts that the so-called Slovene *written dialects* take form, performing different functions in different regions. In the territories where elementary bilingual education (8 years) exists in Standard Slovene (alongside with the dominant official language), the written dialects function as a bridge connecting the local dialect with the standard language. Such is the case of the Szlovén Rábavidék (arch. Vendvidék) / Slovensko Porabje region in Hungary and the Natisone/Nadiža Valleys in Italy. In regions where Standard Slovene is not present in the educational system, Slovene

dialects and Standard Slovene are represented by more or less occasional use. Such is the situation in the Torre/Ter Valleys in Italy and Gorski Kotar in Croatia. A special case is represented by the Resia/Rezija Valley: there the local Slovene dialect has been standardised and functions as a *standard micro-language*, although the corpus of available texts is rather limited.

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## Abstract

The article offers an overview of Slovene, present in its historical (also traditional or autochthonous) linguistic area alongside the national border in the neighbouring countries of present-day Slovenia (an independent state since 25 June 1991), i.e. in Austria, Italy, Hungary, and Croatia, from two different linguistic points of view, viz. the genealogical linguistic and the sociolinguistic perspective. From the viewpoint of linguistic genealogy, Slovene dialects in the enumerated four countries unambiguously form part of the Slovene *dialect continuum*. From a sociolinguistic point of view, Slovene enjoys a *de iure* legal protection as a minority language in all the neighbouring countries of Slovenia. However, not in all the regions under protection the legislation in question is also being applied *de facto*. In such contexts, Slovene has gradually become a “minoritised language” in relatively recent times, with accelerated linguistic assimilation in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is under such circumstances that the phenomenon of modern Slovene *written dialects* can be observed.

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