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Lithostratigraphy of the Pre-Variscan sequence of the Carnic Alps (Austria-Italy)

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The pre-Variscan sequence of the Carnic Alps is one of the most complete and better known in the world. Several workers investigated the area since the XIX century and produced a huge amount of papers dealing with different topics in geological sciences (geology, palaeontology, stratigraphy, structural geology, etc.).

However, the different parts of this sequence were mainly denominated with informal names, that derivate either from facies or historical terms. Furthermore, being the region across the state border between Italy and Austria, different terminologies have been adopted on both sides of the mountain chain, which result in different subdivisions of the sequence and a high number of names indicating similar -if not the same- lithological units. Also, in a few cases, the same name was used to indicate different units. Moreover, almost none of these units was formalized according to the ICS rules.

A joint research project was carried on the last seven years: more than forty researchers from various European countries, mainly from Austria and Italy, were involved in four business meetings, three field workshops, and the (re)study of a huge amount of old and new data, in order to achieve a common but unified terminology.

As result the pre-Variscan sequence of the Carnic Alps is now subdivided in 36 formations, lithologically well characterized, with well-defined boundaries and designated stratotypes.

A volume on the revised lithostratigraphy will be published by the Geological Survey of Austria. It includes a rough characterization of each formation with illustrations of the type section, formation boundaries and typical macrofacies.