

Some stray thoughts about developing a base for cooperation between UNGEGN and ICOS

Helsinki, November 8, 1991. - Eeva Maria Närhi

1. The onomasticians participating in the activities of ICOS do not know UNGEGN at all or know only slightly. Therefore it would be useful that for the following ICOS meeting in 1993 a short account of the composition, method of operation, and, most importantly, the goals to which UNGEGN aspires, should be drawn up. Additionally, the question of what the cooperation is hoped to achieved should be considered, and a clear proposal on this should be made.

2. On the other hand, even though many members of UNGEGN also participate in the ICOS congresses - at the 17th ICOS Congress in Helsinki, for example, 14 members of UNGEGN were present - both the organization and the functioning of ICOS might be unknown to many experts. For this reason there is evidently necessary to clarify at least the following about ICOS for the members of UNGEGN:

The International Committee of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS) has been constituted to encourage the establishment and maintenance of contact among specialists in the field of onomastics, especially by means of

- international congresses;
- national and regional conferences, symposia, workshops, etc., on special topics within the field;
- the endorsement of approved onomastic projects and initiatives which have been introduced or reported by members.

The committee now has 120 permanent members from fifty different countries as well as numerous honorary members.

Membership is by election at statutory meeting, normally at the proposal of name scholars in the countries concerned.

An International Centre of Onomastics has been set up at the Onomastic Institute ("Instituut voor Naamkunde") at the University of Leuven (Belgium) as the official headquarters of ICOS.

In practice, the committee only convenes in conjunction with a congress. Congresses are held every third year. The committee decides on the venue and date of the congress. A four-member executive committee elected at the ICOS meeting functions between congresses. It and the representatives of the country where the next conference is to be held assume responsibility for the scientific planning of the congress: the representatives of the country where the congress is to be held assume responsibility for the practical arrangements and financing.

Onoma, the journal of onomastics, is published by the International Centre of Onomastics in Belgium. It appears every second year and contains articles of international interest on onomastics, information concerning international and national onomastics-related projects and meetings, as well as, most impor-

tantly, a high-quality international onomastics bibliography arranged by linguistic areas. The collection and preparation for publication of the bibliographical information is the responsibility of specific ICOS members. The editing and publication of Onoma is the responsibility of the International Centre of Onomastics which is maintained by the Belgian state. As far as I know, ICOS does not regularly receive financial support from any international foundations.

3. The present light organization and economic position in ICOS mean that its achievements are, to a very significant extent, dependent on the activity and altruism of individual members for the further development of onomastics. The information and skills which UNGEGN might require in order to resolve some special problem might be most quickly and flexibly obtained by turning directly to members of ICOS. It would undoubtedly be useful if UNGEGN could use Onoma as a medium for publicizing its activities, with ICOS correspondingly providing information concerning its conferences and publications to the members of UNGEGN through a medium such as the Newsletter.