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MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON PUBLICITY AND FUNDING

Information from Ireland

(Submitted by Ireland)

**United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names
The Working Group on Publicity and Funding**

Information from Ireland (Art Ó Maolfabhail, member of Group)

The European Heritage Days was launched in 1991, at the initiative of the Council of Europe and with the support of the European Union. The aim is to offer everyone the opportunity to explore, free of charge during weekends in the month of September, historical monuments and sites, especially those which are not usually accessible to the general public. Most European countries now participate in *The European Heritage Days*. In September 1995 over 13,000,000 visitors took part in the various activities. In 1996 a total of 40 European countries are participating.

In Ireland the event is organised by the Office of Public Works, a Government agency which, among other activities, implements policy and conducts day-to-day operations in the heritage area under the direction and supervision of the Minister for the Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht (traditional Irish-speaking regions). For the 1996 *Heritage Day* in Ireland the Office of Public Works chose as a special theme an examination of local placenames. An invitation to organise local activities concerned with the many aspects of placename heritage was extended to the usual list of state institutions, local authorities, committees and interested individuals. As usual, the Office of Public Works undertook to organise publicity in both national and local media.

In recognition of this event the Irish Placenames Commission with the support of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland produced a brochure for distribution by the organisers. This brochure, bearing messages from the Chairman of the Placenames Commission and from the Director of the Ordnance Survey, gave a suitable opportunity to publicize nationally the concern of the United Nations Organisation for geographical names. Attention was drawn to the work of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) and in particular to publications concerning the standardization of geographical names resulting from Sessions of the Experts and from the five-yearly Conferences. The brochure was distributed through the Heritage Day organisation in Ireland and also through other channels, for example, all local branches of the library service.

Those UNGEGN experts who maintain that cultural and heritage aspects of geographical names are not the business of UNGEGN may be correct in the strict sense but these fundamental aspects should not be ignored. If UNGEGN is genuinely anxious to obtain increased publicity and funding it should consider that it is these very aspects of culture and heritage which would attract the widest interest among people in general.

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30 July 1996