

11 February 2019

Original: English

**United Nations Group of Experts On
Geographical Names
2019 session**

New York, 29 April – 3 May 2019

Agenda item 5(b) of the provisional agenda *

Reports: Divisions of the Group of Experts

Report of the Baltic Division

Submitted by the Baltic Division**

Summary**

The report covers the period since the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

There are five member countries of the Baltic Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and the Russian Federation. Latvia is coordinating the activities of the Division for the four-year period starting in 2017. The Chair of the Division is Vita Strautniece (Latvia) and the Vice-Chair is Maciej Zych (Poland).

The nineteenth meeting of the Baltic Division was held in Lithuania in May 2018. The Division was represented at the Eleventh United Nations Conference and at the thirtieth session of the Group of Experts. Experts from the States members of the Baltic Division participated in the continuous work of the working groups of the Group of Experts: the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers, the Working Group on Romanization Systems, the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology, the Working Group on Country Names and the Working Group on Exonyms, as well as in other international events related to geographical names.

Records of all meetings of the Baltic Division since 1992 can be found on the website of the Division (<http://eki.ee/knn/ungegn>).

The Report includes detailed information on the nineteenth meeting of the Baltic Division, the twenty-first meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms, hosted by Latvia, and participation in working groups of the Group of Experts and other geographical names-related international events.

*GEGN.2/2019/1

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The report covers the two year period (2017-2018) since the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

1. Composition of the Division

The Baltic Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) formed in 1992, comprises five member states now: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russian Federation and Poland (joined in 2012). The chairs or Representatives of the division have been elected for a period between United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names. Latvia acts as coordinator of the Baltic Division since the 11th UNCSGN (2017). Divisional Chairperson is Ms. Vita Strautniece (Latvia), divisional Vice-chair – Mr. Maciej Zych (Poland).

2. Divisional meetings

One divisional meeting – the 19th meeting of the Baltic Division was held during the reporting period. It was hosted by the National Land Service under the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Lithuania and took place in Vilnius (May 21–24, 2018). Participants of the meeting have been introduced with the goals of the 11th UNCSGN (New York, 2017) and reorganization of UNGEGN. They exchanged information on the current status of the geographical names standardization in all participating countries and such directions and aspects of geographical names standardization as: impact of local government reform and amelioration on geographical names; status and development of national toponymic databases cadastres and registers; implementation of UNGEGN resolutions; dictionaries of place names; geographical names in geospatial data and on maps; geographical names research work; forthcoming Exonym WG meeting in Riga (Latvia) etc. Particular discussion was devoted to the problems on naming of artificially modified (ameliorated) watercourses. Following the good tradition of the Baltic division an improvised exhibition of cartographic production, toponymic glossaries, dictionaries and geographical names related literature published in the participating countries was organized.

Experts from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Russian Federation as well as observers from Belarus and Ukraine took part in the meeting. Number of participants reached 25. 19 papers have been presented and discussed.

The decision was taken to hold **the 20th meeting** during the 1st UNGEN in New York, UN Headquarters (in case if participants from all member states will be there) or, accordingly with the rotation principle – in Latvia in 2019.

3. Cooperation between Divisions of the UNGEGN and other cooperation

Experts of the Baltic Division member states (except Lithuania) participated in the **11th UNCSGN** and the **30th Session of UNGEGN** (New York, USA, 2017). Besides that experts from Latvia, Estonia and Poland have took part in the continuous work of UNGEGN Working groups: the **WG of the Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers** (Latvia), the **WG on Romanization Systems** (Estonia, Poland), the **WG of Toponymic Terminology** (Poland), the **WG on Country Names** (Estonia, Poland) and the **WG on Exonyms** (Estonia, Latvia, Poland).

The 21th meeting of the UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms was held in the capital of Latvia – Rīga (September 24–26, 2018). It was hosted by the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency in collaboration with the Latvian Language Institute, University of Latvia. The meeting was carried out

as a workshop focused on categorizing of exonyms. Experts from three of the Baltic division member states – Latvia, Estonia and Poland – were among the 36 participants from 16 countries, chairperson of the Baltic division was one of the organizers of this event.

Some experts from the Baltic Division member states took part in particular UNGEGN working group meetings and other geographical names related events held in 2017-2018:

- 1) The 19th Meeting of the UNGEGN WG on Exonyms (Prague, Czechia, April 6-8, 2017), in conjunction with the UNGEGN Working Group on Romanization Systems
- 2) The 26th International Council of Onomastic Sciences (Debrecen, Hungaria, August 27 – September 1, 2017);
- 3) International conference “History of administrative-territorial division of Võrumaa, Estonia and Latvia“, (Karilatsi, Estonia, December 26, 2017)
- 4) UNGEGN Scientific Symposium on the role and importance of expert knowledge in the standardization of geographical names in conjunction with its Joint Divisions and Working Group Meetings of UNGEGN (Brussels, Belgium, October 2018).
- 5) The 5th Czech-Polish-Slovak Meeting on Terminology of Standardization of Geographical Names (Warsaw, Poland, April 11, 2018);
- 6) Toponymic sessions of the Joint International Geographical Union/International Cartographic Association Commission on Toponymy during the 28th International Cartographic Conference (Washington D.C, USA, July, 5-6, 2017);
- 7) Meeting of the Standing Committee on Antarctic Geographical Information (SCAGI) of the Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research (SCAR) (Davos, Switzerland, June 18, 2018).
- 8) Meetings of the UNGEGN WG on Country Names and WG on Romanization Systems (Paris, France, March 19–20, 2018).

4. The website

Website of the Baltic Division <http://eki.ee/knn/ungegn> is maintained by Estonia. It contains records of all meetings of the Baltic Division since 1992 (minutes, agenda, list of participants, reports, photos).

Conclusion

The Baltic Division of UNGEGN has held one meeting during the reporting period. Experts from the member states have participated actively in UNGEGN and geographical names related other activities. The active exchange of information inside the division, with other divisions and parties outside UNGEGN surely has contributed significantly to the national standardization of geographical names in each member country and helped to promote awareness about the importance of the geographical names standardization.