Toponymic Guidelines for Map and other Editors for International Use

Origins of Toponymic Guidelines

In 1977, Josef Breu, Chairman of UNGEGN, initiated the production of systematic national toponymic guidelines to assist those editing maps and documents. The first guidelines, produced for Austria, presented data on national maps; the linguistic substrata, minority languages, responsibilities for names standardization, and important map and gazetteer sources. A map of provincial names authorities in Austria was published in 1979. - here the map is shown as of 2011.

Toponymic guidelines are seen as a tool for advancing the common understanding of toponymy and the need for standardization. Guidelines have been published in World Cartography, in UN Conference and UNGEGN papers, as independent books, and on the web.

Content of Toponymic Guidelines

1. Languages
   1.1 General remarks
   1.2 National language(s)
      1.2.1 Legal situation and practical application in administration and official cartography
      1.2.2 Alphabet(s) and transcription(s)
      1.2.3 General spelling rules for geographical names
      1.2.4 Pronunciation
      1.2.5 Grammatical peculiarities that are essential for the treatment and understanding of geographical names
      1.2.6 Distribution of main dialects and their characteristics; how far are vernacular name forms adapted to the spelling of the official language?
   1.3 Minority languages
      1.3.1 - 1.3.6, as under 1.2

2. Names authorities and names standardization
   2.1 National names authority. Aims, functions, rules, addresses
   2.2 Provincial names authorities. Aims, functions, rules, addresses
   2.3 Names standardization. Legal aspects, procedures, progress

3. Source material
   3.1 Maps: map series containing standardized names. Which sheets of a series contain already standardized names?
   3.2 Gazetteers containing standardized names

4. Glossary of appellatives, adjectives and other words necessary for the understanding of maps. (As such glossaries will serve the needs of foreign users they must contain also - and above all - words of the general vocabulary.)

5. Abbreviations used on official maps; the decoding and meanings

6. Methods of differentiating toponyms from other text on national maps

Annex Administrative maps

Toponymic Guidelines produced

Algeria; Australia; Austria; Belgium; Canada; Chile; China; Cyprus; Czech Republic; Denmark; Estonia; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Hungary; Iceland; Iran, Islamic Republic of; Ireland; Italy; Japan; Netherlands; Norway; Poland; Republic of Korea; Romania; Russia (as USSR); Slovakia; Slovenia; South Africa; Spain; Suriname; Sweden; Switzerland; Thailand; Turkey; Ukraine; United Kingdom; United States of America.

Example of published guidelines

Spain 2005

Toponymic: Normas para el M1N25
Conceptos básicos y terminología

Publication Técnica núm. 42

United Nations resolutions

IV/4 (1982); V/11&14 (1987); VI/7 (1992); also VII/9 (1998)

- Countries encouraged to compile guidelines and keep them updated
- Contents recommended
- Toponymic Guidelines coordinator appointed
- Need to explain distinction between toponyms and other text on maps
- Publication of collections of Guidelines recommended - for instance, in World Cartography
- Encouraged countries to put Guidelines on the web

Toponymic Guidelines on the web

Austria www.oeaw.ac.at/dinamlex/AKO/Top.Guidelines.20090427.pdf
Estonia www.eki.ee/knn/ungegn/un7_gdl.htm
Finland www.kobus.fi/index.php?nr=510
Germany 141.74.33.62/Portals/0/101125_TopGR.pdf
Norway www.statkart.no/IPS/?module=Articles;action=Article.
publicShow;ID=439
Poland ksng.gug.k.pl/english/tgpl.php
Slovenia www.gu.gov.si/si/delovnapodrocja_gu/projekti_gu/registr/ksni/publications/

See UNGEGN website for links to toponymic guidelines presented as Conference and Session documents (unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/toponymic.html)