

UNITED NATIONS

---

Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names

Working Paper No. 9

Seventeenth Session  
New York, 13-24 June, 1994

June 1994

-----  
Agenda Item 11

MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON ROMANIZATION SYSTEMS

Information presented by the East Central and Southeast  
European Division\*

Prepared by Béla Pokoly, Chairman of the Division

Most of the countries represented apply the UN-recommended romanization systems to different extents.

Albania, a notable exception in this respect, phonetically transcribes all foreign names, even those written in the Roman alphabet, into the Roman alphabet used in Albania. This practice is alien from UN recommendations.

Cyprus claims that it effectively applies the ELOT 743 romanization system on all its cartographic products through the help of computerized conversion.

The Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic use the systems most consequently.

Hungary has a mixed usage, with some publications for the international public using the UN-recommended systems, while domestic products apply Hungarian phonetic transcriptions.

Maps for domestic use in Poland generally apply phonetically-based transcriptions, but official (international) publications use UN-recommended systems.

The suggested romanization system put forward by Ukraine for the geographical names of Ukraine was received with great interest. The system, as the delegate of Ukraine said, should be considered as a temporary one.

In this connection the following suggestions were advised to Ukraine for consideration (based on UN resolutions No I/9, IV/15 and IV/16):

- the donor-suggested romanization system should be based on sound national standardization,
- the suggested system should be a simple one, and not biased to either existing script using the Roman alphabet,
- the system, once accepted by all responsible official bodies of Ukraine, should stay as the single romanization system for the Ukrainian script; all attempts of subsequent revisions must be avoided by all means,
- strong evidence of domestic, especially cartographic implementation of the suggested system is a precondition of its international acceptance.

A major difficulty (also mentioned in the Division's report to Item 5) facing cartographers of the Division (but also of others) is the romanization of toponyms of the former Soviet Union. Pending UN-recommended (and locally supported as well as consequently implemented) single romanization systems for the new republics, a valuable source of information remains the US Board of Geographical Names Foreign Names Information Bulletin sent along the UNGEGN Newsletter.