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Reports of the divisions

Report of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division ^{*}

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The Report includes information on the current Division composition, status of legislative and normative basis for geographical names standardization and usage in the Division countries, developments of national place-names catalogues, registers and databases, released and compiled gazetteers and references, national Romanization systems used, prepared lists of exonyms, input of the Division countries in the international cooperation in the standardization of geographical names.

Composition of Division

A decision to form the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names was taken at the Sixth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held on 25 August – 3 September 1992 in New York. Currently, the Division is composed of 10 permanent country-members: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and the Ukraine. Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Estonia participate in the activities of the Division as observers.

National standardization of geographical names in Division countries

Armenia

A legal basis for naming and renaming of geographical features in the Republic of Armenia as well as for the standardization, storage and usage of geographical names is determined by the State Law “On geographical names” passed by the Parliament of the country in November 1999.

The Decree adopted by the Government in 2001 approved the “Procedure of collecting and registering of geographical names as well as maintaining of the State Catalogue of Geographical Names in the Republic of Armenia” and the “Instruction in naming and renaming of geographical names in the Republic of Armenia”.

The Committee on Real Estate and Cadastre of the Armenian Government is a national body responsible for the standardization of geographical names in the country. The special Commission on Naming and Renaming of Geographical Features formed by the Government Decree is working on a permanent basis.

In recent years, the following have been achieved in the standardization of geographical names:

- “Gazetteer of the Armenian geographical names per marz (regions)”, “Administrative and territorial division” reference book, “Dictionary of the populated places in the Republic of Armenia” were compiled. In the nearest time, publication of two more references is planned: “Concise dictionary of historical and architectural memorials in the Republic of Armenia” and “Dictionary of the physico-geographical objects in the Republic of Armenia”.

- Basically, a development of the State Catalogue of Geographical Names of the Republic of Armenia on the base of 1: 25,000 map is completed. An operation of the Catalogue is provided by the automated system ArmGeoNames. More than 38,000 geographical names were input in the database. Now the database is being populated with data taken from the maps of larger scale (1: 10,000 and 1: 5,000).

- A full *list of exonyms* in the Armenian language was compiled. It includes more than 3,000 names per world’s states and territories.

- A development of the gazetteer of geographical names of the world has been started. The gazetteer will include approximately 200,000 names.

The *national Romanization system* is not yet developed in Armenia.

Standardized information on geographical names is used to create maps and atlases. Recently, 15 titles of school, tourist and road maps were issued. A development of the two-volume National Atlas of Armenia was completed.

Azerbaijan

In accordance with the Decree of the President of the Azerbaijan Republic, since August 1, 2001 all paper work in the country, including standardization of geographical names is carried in the Azerbaijani language in the Roman script.

Up to recent time, several state organizations were responsible for the standardization of geographical names (National Academy of Sciences, Committee of Hydrometeorology, Parliament departments, State Committee on Land and Cartography, Ministry of External Affairs, etc.) Since these organizations practiced different approaches to the geographical names standardization this often led to divergences in names of the same features.

In March 2009, the State Law on geographical names was adopted. The Law authorized the State Committee on Land and Cartography to develop the National Catalogue of Geographical Names and coordinate all the activities related to geographical names.

The following progress is recently made in the standardization of geographical names:

- A development of the State Catalogue of Geographical Names has been started. The State Committee on Land and Cartography together with the Institute for Geography of the Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences is compiling a full list of geographical names on the base of 1: 25,000 map series.

Names of geographical objects connected with economic activity of people are accumulated in different organizations. For example, names of railway stations, ports, airports and other transportation objects have been accumulated in the Ministry of Transportation; names of objects connected with mining operations – in geological agencies; names of populated places – in the Parliament, etc. It is required to bring together all these names while retaining their departmental specifics.

- The State Committee on Land and Cartography together with the Parliament of the Republic prepared a reference book “Administrative and territorial division” that includes standardized names of the populated places in Azerbaijan and is under publication now.

- The State Committee on Land and Cartography and the Ministry of External Affairs compiled a reference book of the names of the world countries and territories both in the Azerbaijani and English languages.

Belarus

In compliance with the Law of the Republic of Belarus “On geodetic and cartographic activities” passed in 2008, the standardization of geographical names is attributed to the cartographic works of state significance, their state customer being the State Committee on Property of the Republic of Belarus. In 2009, a development of the Law “On naming of geographical features” was started.

In Belarus, the standardization of geographical names is coordinated by the Toponymic Commission of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus. Decisions made by the Toponymic Commission are mandatory to all the republican governing bodies, local authorities as well as agencies, companies and organizations.

Instructions in rendering of geographical names in the Byelorussian and Russian languages are still valid. At present, drafts of three more instructions in rendering geographical names of the Ukraine, Latvia and Lithuania have been prepared.

A task to develop the State Catalogue of the Geographical Names of Belarus is being successfully pursued. The Catalogue embraces an automated retrieval system and computer database that is being constantly populated and updated from the official sources of information on geographical names. Names of geographical features are available in the database in the Byelorussian and Russian languages as well as in the Roman script. Data from the State Catalogue makes for a unified and stable use of geographical names in all spheres of social life. In 2008 the State Catalogue of geographical names of the Republic of Belarus was put into operation. At present, simultaneously with the database maintenance customers are being provided with the data from it.

The Instructions in rendering of the geographical names of the Republic of Belarus in the Roman script is used to create maps and atlases intended for international circulation. Use of this Romanization system revealed a need to make some changes and amendments in the Instruction. The updated Instruction was approved by the Decree of the State Committee on Property of the Republic of Belarus in 2007. In compliance with the Instruction a number of maps, atlases and plans containing the Romanized geographical names have been already issued in the country.

In 2006 – 2008, normative references books of the names of populated places in Minsk, Grodno and Gomel' regions were published. The names are available in the Byelorussian and Russian languages as well as in the Roman script. Compilation of the references of the kind for Mogilev and Vitebsk regions is being finalized now. In 2009, the reference for the names of Brest region shall be issued.

In 2008, the dictionary that contains about 3,000 entities on etymology of the names of Belarus populated places was published. In addition, the book includes plenty of names of rivers, lakes, creeks, marshes, fields, grasslands and forestlands as well as personal names, family names, and nicknames. The dictionary is rich in various linguistic, historic, geographic, mythological and folklore data as well as folk legends and tales. It also enlists historical and current names, dates when names were first recorded in ancient written sources.

In Belarus, maps and atlases are issued in the Russian, Byelorussian and English languages and also in the Roman script. During recent years, more than 60 maps and atlases were published, including reference and tourist maps of the world, Belarus, its regions as well as city maps and atlases. The Road Atlas of the Republic of Belarus at scale 1:200,000 was created. Every year, maps and atlases for schools and colleges are also released. The three-volume "Great Historic Atlas" became a significant achievement in the cartography of the Republic. In 2008 the first volume of the "Atlas" appeared in print.

Bulgaria

The Council on Standardization of Geographical Names of the Ministry of Regional Development and Accomplishment and the Commission on Renaming of the President Administration of Bulgaria are the national bodies for the standardization of geographical names which are entitled to rename populated places and geographical features.

Under the Law "On geodesy and cartography", the Agency of Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre is an authorized body responsible for geographical names.

The Council on Standardization of Geographical Names was formed in 2006 in pursuance of the Law "On geodesy and cartography". It is a successor of the Council on Transcription and Orthography of Geographical Names.

For the purpose of providing for a consistent use of geographical names, protecting national needs as well as needs of juridical and natural persons, the Working Group of experts was organized to develop the Law "On names of national geographic features".

Up to recent time, the Romanization system approved at the UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in Athens had been in use in Bulgaria. However its use made it clear that the system requires some modification. So, the updated Romanization system for geographical names was elaborated and adopted. The system is used for both the Bulgarian place-names and personal names. And it is being hotly discussed within the Bulgarian community.

Within the bounds of the joint European project - EuroGeographics–EuroGeoNames - a digital map was developed that includes the following information on the Bulgarian geographical names: actualized names, their Romanized rendering, former names of populated places, history of an area, geographical info, etc.

Now an administrative map of Bulgaria at scale 1: 500,000 is under production. As a supplement, the map provides some information on the Bulgarian geographical names and their transliterations.

A development of the national register of geographical names is an issue of the day.

Georgia

Legislative foundations for the geographical names standardization are determined by the State Law “On names of geographical features in Georgia” passed in 2000.

Issues pertaining to geographical names are presently under the jurisdiction of the Service of Geodesy and Cartography of the Ministry of Preservation of Environment and Natural Resources of Georgia as well as of the Government Commission on Standardization, Use and Storage of Geographical Names.

With a view to develop the State Catalogue of Geographical Names of Georgia, a database of the place-names available on the topographic map at scale 1:100,000 was prepared. The place-names were verified and standardized by the Department of Onomastics of the Tbilisi State University and by the Institute for Linguistics of the Georgian Academy of Sciences.

In Georgia, the national Romanization system is used. In 2003, the “Instruction in transliteration of the Georgian geographical names with Roman script” was developed and adopted. The Instruction was applied to prepare the geographical map of Georgia at scale 1:500,000.

Kyrgyzstan

Issues connected with geographical names were reflected in the State Law “On geographical names in the Kyrgyz Republic” that was adopted in 1997. The Government of the Kyrgyz Republic adopted some decrees to implement the Law. The decrees regulate use of geographical names and their rendering in the Roman script by means of a transliteration from the Kyrgyz language.

The Commission on the National Language established by the President of the Republic is working in Kyrgyzstan. The Commission is composed of famous scientists from the National Academy of Sciences as well as of experts from various services and agencies. The Commission deals with the issues of administrative division of the country and considers proposals on naming or renaming of geographical features in Kyrgyzstan. Final decisions of the Commission have a status of laws approved by the President of the Kyrgyz Republic. The Inter-department Commission on Geographical Names of the Kyrgyz Government was formed and is operating now. The activities of the Inter-department Commission are technically supported by the State Service of Cartography and Geodesy.

In Kyrgyzstan , maps and atlases are issued in both the national Kyrgyz and official Russian languages in accordance with the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic that lays down official use of these two languages.

The State Service of Cartography and Geodesy developed and now updates a computer database of geographical names that embraces 18,000 names. Each geographical feature is accompanied with its name in national and Russian language, generic term, geo coordinates, sheet of topographic map of 1:100,000 scale where a given object is placed, average altitude of an object above the sea level in meters.

All officially approved changes in the geographical names on the territory of the Kyrgyz Republic are tracked and reflected on the working map of the country at scale 1:100,000. This information arrives from the journal “Regulations of the Kyrgyz Republic” that is issued twice a month.

The Regional Center of Slavonic Studies was formed in the Kyrgyz-Slavic University. The Regional Center is engaged in developing rules for Russian rendering of Kyrgyz place-names and in compiling lists of exonyms in use.

Topographic maps of the Kyrgyz Republic are issued. In addition, maps in the Kyrgyz, Russian and English languages are issued for open circulation. On maps issued in English, the Kyrgyz names are transliterated in the Roman script using BGN/PCCN 1979.

Russia

Legislative foundations for naming and renaming of geographical features as well as for the standardization, usage, registration, inventory and storage of geographical names were set by the Federal Law “On names of geographical features” passed in December 1997 and also by some Government Decrees adopted to provide for the Law’s implementation.

In 2008, the Federal law was adopted “On moving amendments to the Federal Law “On names of geographical features”. The amendments introduced in the original Law were to detail its basic notions and purview as well as to bring some of its assets into line with the legislation of the Russian Federation in force.

In recent years, the Ministry of Transportation was responsible for developing of the state policy and normative and legislative regulations in terms of geographical names. The Federal Agency of Geodesy and Cartography belonged to the Ministry of Transportation. In 2008, according to the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation, these functions were delegated to the Ministry of Economic Development. In March of 2009, the Federal Agency of Geodesy and Cartography engaged in rendering of state services in the field of geographical names was abolished. The Federal Service of State Registration, Cadastre and Cartography in the Ministry of Economic Development became its successor.

Inter-industry coordination of the activities connected with geographical names was provided by the Commission on Geographical Names that worked per the plans accepted by the Ministry of Transportation.

Between 2006 and 2008 the following progress was made in the national standardization of geographical names in Russia:

1. “Instructions in naming and renaming of geographical features in the Russian Federations” and “General guidelines for recording and standardization of geographical names” were updated.

2. Proposals on naming and renaming of geographical features in the Russian Federation, continental shelf and exclusive economic zone of Russia as well as of features discovered or determined by the Russian explorers in the World Ocean and Antarctica were examined. Since the time when the Federal Law “On names of geographical objects” came in force, the name proposal examination has resulted in 93 federal normative acts passed to assign new names to 659 features and rename 348 features.

3. The State Catalogue of Geographical Names is developed and maintained in pursuance of the Federal Law “On names of geographical features” and the Government Decree “On adoption of the Regulations of registration and inventory of geographical names, publication of gazetteers and references of geographical names and development and maintenance of the State Catalogue of Geographical Names”. For January 1, 2009, geographical names of 76 subjects of the Russian Federation were input into the database, that is, more than 320,000 place-names (more than 9 million data items).

4. Geographical names in the administrative division reference-books for a number of the Russian Federation subjects were examined and agreed. Inquiries of organizations, agencies, and general public were responded by providing them with information on geographical names and recommendations for their use. Just in 2008, information on more than 140,000 names of geographical features of Russia was provided using the database of the State Catalogue.

5. An electronic version of the annually updated Bulletin of officially changed geographical names in Russia was prepared to meet the data requirements of the state authorities.

6. For maps and atlases to be published, standardized geographical names of the Russian Federation and other countries were provided. These data were used in more than 300 titles of maps and atlases of various subject matters. 80 titles were created for the first time. The most significant title is the “National Atlas of Russia”. This is a profound encyclopedic scientific and reference work that contains information on the state structure, nature, resources, population, economics, environment status, history and culture of Russia. The “Atlas” includes four volumes: Overall description of the territory (issued in 2004), Nature and Ecology (2007), Population and Economics (2008), History and Culture (under publication). In view of the aim of the “National Atlas” and a manifold circle of its users, it is released in both a hard copy and electronic form.

These cartographic products realize the state policy in the field of geographical names pursued in the Russian Federation.

7. The Romanization system for the Cyrillic alphabet approved by the Fifth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (Montreal, 1987) GOST-83 is still applied in Russia to publish maps and atlases for international circulation.

Tajikistan

Activities in the field of geographical names are regulated by the Law of the Republic of Tajikistan “On names of geographical features” adopted in 2006.

Issues related to naming and renaming of geographical features refer to the competence of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, while practical work connected with use of place-names is carried by the authorized state body. This state body is the Agency on Land Surveying, Geodesy and Cartography of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan.

The Agency registers all changes in the names of regions, cities, districts and other populated places published in the decrees of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan. It also examines proposals to name or rename mountains (peaks) on the territory of the Republic submitted by juridical and natural persons.

In recent 3-4 years, more than 27 titles of maps were issued, including administrative, tourist, city maps as well as maps and atlases for school.

Ukraine

The State Law “On activities in the field of topography, geodesy and cartography” adopted in the Ukraine in 1997 sets the basis for all works connected with geographical names.

Legislative foundations for naming and renaming of geographical objects as well as for the standardization, use, registration and storage of geographical names were laid down by the State Law “On geographical names” passed in 2005.

The State Service of Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre together with the Inter-department Research and Methodic Council on Geographical Names coordinate and carry activities in the national standardization of geographical names.

The State Service of Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre develops and approves normative documents pertaining to geographical names, provides for developing of the State Register of Geographical Names, coordinates provision of the state authorities, local administrations, institutions and organizations with standardized geographical names, supports work of the Inter-department Research and Methodic Council on Geographical Names.

In accordance with the Statute of the Inter-department Research and Methodic Council on Geographical Names (2006), the body regulates inter-department activities in the field of geographical names. Its main tasks are the following: to develop and determine basic approaches to the standardization of geographical names, to examine proposals on naming and renaming of geographical features as well as drafts of normative documents related to geographical names issues. The Council is headed by the chief of the State Service of Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre.

Instructions in Ukrainian rendering of geographical names and generic terms of other countries are used to create maps and atlases. These instructions contain name rendering rules, lists of most frequent generic terms, lists of exonyms, brief information on the Ukrainian language. In total, 22 instructions of the kind were approved.

In compliance with the recommendations of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names, a draft of the Toponymic Guidelines for cartographers and map editors was developed in 2008.

In 2008, a draft of the “Procedure for examining of proposals on naming and renaming of geographical features” was developed to be further approved by the Government.

The Regulations for the State Register of Geographical Names approved in 2006 state a procedure of its development and maintenance as well as of recording, standardization, inventory and registration of geographical names. In 2007, the basic principles of development and maintenance of the State Register of Geographical Names, its structure and content were developed. In 2008, registration forms for geographical names were elaborated.

Constantly updated references and gazetteers of the Ukraine geographical names along with other sources are used to standardize national spellings of the names.

To provide for uniform rendering of foreign geographical names in the Ukrainian language, the electronic gazetteer of the world’s geographical names issued in 2005 is used. The Gazetteer includes 82,000 geographical names in Ukrainian or in national languages (or Romanization system), generic terms and locations of geographical features.

In 2007, the reference “Names of world’s counties and territories” was updated. The reference comprises official names of countries, dependencies, territories of specific status, capitals and centers of colonial possessions in Ukrainian and national languages as well as adjectives derived from the names of countries, capitals and administrative centers.

In pursuance of the State Law “On geographical names”, the State Service of Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre develops the rules to render the Ukrainian geographical names with the Roman script. Meanwhile, the “Normative table for rendering of proper names of Ukraine with Roman script” and “Rules for rendering of the Ukrainian proper names with Roman script” are used. Both the documents were adopted by the Ukrainian Commission on Legal Nomenclature in 1996. In 2006-2008, a

number of geographical, administrative, road, tourist and city maps with the Romanized geographical names were issued.

Compilation of a unified list of *exonyms* continues. The list of Europe's exonyms that includes most frequent names was presented at a meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names (Prague, 2007). The e-gazetteer of the world's geographical names contains more than 1300 exonyms which widely circulate in the Ukraine.

The standardization of geographical names carried out in the Ukraine contributes to achievements in cartography. In 2006-2008, a large number of reference, subject and school maps and atlases were released, the "National Atlas of the Ukraine" (2007) being the most significant of them.

Uzbekistan

Legislative basis for the national standardization of geographical names in the country is formed by the State Law "On geodesy and cartography" adopted in 1997.

Practical work in the field of geographical names is carried out by the State Committee on Land Resources, Geodesy, Cartography and Cadastre.

Instructions in Uzbek rendering of geographical names of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan were developed. Similar instructions are now being developed for the geographical names of Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. A great number of regulations to determine orthographic rules applied to Uzbek geographical names, generic terms and other words available in the toponymy of the Republic of Uzbekistan were developed. Gazetteers of all the regions of the Republic of Uzbekistan based on the topographic map 1:200,000 were compiled.

Stage by stage the State Catalogue of Geographical Names is being developed. At the first stage, information was gathered and a database including geographical names taken from the maps 1:1 000,000 and 1:500,000 was developed. At the second stage the database is populated with the names taken from the topographic map at scale 1: 200,000. The database is populated per regions. Thus, the State Catalogue shall be finalized in 2010. Each name takes a standalone entry that also contains information required to register standardized names of geographical features. To be input in the Catalogue, the information is picked from various cartographic, reference and other sources and recorded in uniform registration forms. Some output documents were developed to achieve results after data processing.

Participation of Division's countries in international activities in the area of geographical names

Delegations from the countries forming the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names attended the Ninth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (New York 2007). In the course of preparing for the Conference, the Division held the Seventh Working meeting in Lvov (Ukraine) in September 2006 at which the participants communicated on the progress made in the main trends of the national standardization of geographical names in their countries. The Working meeting also focused on the tasks in preparing for the Ninth UN Conference.

Results of the Ninth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and tasks to provide for complying with the resolutions adopted at the Conference were discussed at the Eighth Working meeting of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names that was carried in Sofia (Bulgaria) in May 2008. At this meeting the regular elections of the Division Chairman and Vice-Chairman were held. Boginsky V. M. (Russia)

was once again elected the Chairman and Avramenko N. G. (Belarus) – the Vice-Chairman. The attendees discussed and adopted some recommendations concerning preparation of the report on Division's activities for the Twenty Fifth Session of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

Experts from the Baltic Division of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names attended the meetings of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division as observers. In their turn, some experts from the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division participated in the meetings of the Baltic Division (Russia as a permanent member, Belarus and the Ukraine as observers). The Ukraine as well as Bulgaria belongs to the Eastern, Central and Southern-Eastern Europe Division of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names. In 2008, the Ukrainian delegation participated in the Nineteenth Meeting of the Division held in Zagreb and in the GeoNames2008 Symposium (Vienna) as well as in the meetings of the UNGEGN Working Group on Romanization Systems (Vienna 2006, Prague 2007).

Representatives of Tajikistan and the Ukraine took the toponymy courses organized by the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names in 2006 in Vienne and representatives of the Ukraine attended the toponymy courses in 2008 in Timisoara.

Many countries forming the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names took part in the actions held by the Working Group on Geographical Names of the CIS Member-states Council on Geodesy, Cartography, Cadastre and Earth Remote Sensing. The task pursued by the Working Group is to provide a regular exchange of information on changes in the geographical names. As a result of their cooperation, the Bulletin "Changes in geographical names in CIS State-members" was compiled and published.

Delegations representing the services of geodesy and cartography from some country-members of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names participated in XXIII International Cartographic Conference held in Moscow in August 2007.

Summary

The information given in the present report is an evidence of a significant progress that has been recently made in the countries forming the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names. Most of the countries adopted or already developed the state laws that laid down legislative foundations for recording, standardization, usage and storage of the national geographical names. Government decrees were passed to provide achievement of the laws.

In the Division's countries, official bodies were formed which were authorized to make decisions in the area of geographical names. Special commissions on geographical names are working and coordinating efforts of experts from all organizations and agencies concerned.

Considerable progress was achieved in developing and maintaining of the national electronic catalogues, registers and databases of geographical names. Some of them already operate and provide state authorities, organizations, companies and general public with official information on geographical names. Volume and content of these services are growing.

Much attention is still paid to developing of instructions and guidelines for map and other editors.

In a number of countries, Romanization systems are adopted and used, while for the others this is still a pressing issue.

Lists of exonyms are compiled and published in a few countries of the Division. Most countries

did not yet get down to this work.

Much success achieved in geographical names greatly contributes to cartography. This leads to an increase in titles and volumes of cartographic products released.

The countries forming the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division of the UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names are interested in international cooperation, which is proved by their active participation in the UN conferences and sessions as well as in regional meetings devoted to geographical names issues. This is also confirmed by constancy of the composition of the Division where 10 permanent country-members and 4 country-observers have been working for more than 15 years.