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Eighth United Nations Conference on the
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Item 4 & 9 of the provisional agenda*

REPORTS BY GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR COUNTRIES
AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE SEVENTH CONFERENCE
NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

Report of Hungary on the activity of the standardization of geographical names in
the period 1998-2002

(Submitted by Hungary)**

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EIGHTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
Berlin, 27 August – 5 September 2002

Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda
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**REPORT OF HUNGARY ON THE ACTIVITY OF THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES IN THE PERIOD
1998-2002**

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Summary

The function of the Hungarian Committee on Geographical Names remains unchanged. Attached to the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development, as is national mapping, it is a decision-making and advisory body primarily responsible for official geographical names in Hungary. Types of rulings that have taken place during the 12 sessions between 1998 and 2002 are given with examples. The importance of orthography in writing geographical names is given high priority and attention is raised to the new edition of the Toponymic guidelines of Hungary. The efforts of Slovenia in representing the East Central and SE Europe Division in UNGEGN during 1998-2002 are acknowledged.

1. The Hungarian Committee on Geographical Names functions as an interdepartmental decision-making and advisory board operating in the Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development (address: Committee on Geographical Names, Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development, Budapest 55, P.P. Box 1, HU-1860 Hungary, e-mail addresses: bela.pokoly@fvm.hu and erfoldi@hotmail.com). Gov. Decree No. 71/1989 amended by Gov. Decree No. 19/1992 on the official geographical names in Hungary continues to form the legal basis for the Committee. The reason why this body is housed in this ministry is explained by the fact that national civilian mapping is supervised by this department.

In order to reflect the views of all possible interested actors of public and private life the Committee has representatives from over a dozen Hungarian institutions and organisations. Apart from representatives of national mapping, experts of linguistics, local authorities, the departments of both domestic and foreign affairs, transport, geographic science, education and higher learning, minorities as well as the national press agency are taking part as members in the work of the Committee.

Essentially the body decides on the names of physical features and of transport, while in the case of administrative names it gives expert advice following public or even private requests. While names of physical features stay fairly stable over the times, much of the Committee's work falls in the second group.

12 meetings of the Committee has been held since the 7th Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

2. The *rulings* of the Committee may be grouped into certain types as follows.

- Request for changing the name of a feature.

These may come either from individuals or from a group of people. The Committee in these cases always tries to consider all available historical evidence, as changes should only take place on the basis of the soundest possible source materials. Historical development in the language must also be considered and cannot be neglected. An example for this may be the village name *Szentbékáll*. It contains the personal name *Benedek* (in English Benedict) in the abridged form of *Bék*. The village wished to revert to the original form of *Szentbenedekáll*. However, written evidence shows that the present name had already been in use in 1773, therefore, it was not agreed. It may happen, that an old, established name becomes strange-sounding and may be an object of derision for uneducated people. On these grounds several requests for change were turned down, e. g. to change the settlement name *Ondód*, which is identical to a person's name dated back to the 15th century. The name itself, meaning 'seed', refers to virility.

A petition to rename a hill (Meszes-hegy or 'Chalky Hill') overlooking the county seat Salgótarján to Szent Imre-hegy (Saint Emmerich Hill) on the grounds that stations of the cross lead up to the peak. As there are several small peaks on the hill the Committee decided to support the request with the other name surviving as the name of another peak.

- Naming of new independent communes. In some cases formerly independent communes, joined at a later stage with other communes into a larger unit, now wish to regain their independence. The original name is usually given back without a problem

(e.g. *Szarvaskő* near the town of Eger). In other cases a part of the commune wishes to secede, without ever having been an independent settlement (e.g. *Daruszentmiklós* from parts of the village of Előszállás). Although we had more such cases in the early 90s, there were about a dozen such requests in the past period.

- In a few cases the local national minority required the establishment of the name in the minority language (e.g. in the case of the village of *Szigetújfalu*, whose German name is now the locally used *Ujfluch* instead of the previous *Inselneudorf*). The Committee also decided to approach the Office for National and Ethnic Minorities to revise the status of minority language names in these settlements.

- Some communes (villages, towns) begin to see the importance of naming parts of their settlements. A recent suggestion came from the town of Debrecen. The Committee only gives advice in these cases, as the municipality has the right to give the name.

- There was an urgent request to name a newly reconstructed bridge on the Danube near the town of Baja. As the Committee could not hold a formal meeting, voting by telephone resulted in the acceptance of the new name (Türr István Bridge, named after a celebrated army engineer of the 19th century).

3. The rules for writing the names of localities originate from the beginning of the 20th century. The most important ones are the following:

- no homonyms might be given, i.e. identical name for two or more localities is not possible,
- all names of localities should be written in one word without hyphens,
- as far as possible the present orthography should be reflected.

These rules differ from those of many other countries, especially the one excluding the use of homonyms.

4. The review of geographical names appearing on the most detailed topographic and cadastral maps is continuing. This is not only a listing of names from the maps. All names are checked and verified with the help of local governments at the spot in order to reflect the most up-to-date local usage.

5. The quoted legal measure also allows the Committee to take a stand on the use of geographical names outside Hungarian territory. An example of this type occurred early this year, when the agreement of the UN-supported Trans-European Railway projects of the East and Central European Countries, with its many names of cities and towns, had to be announced in the official journal in Hungary. Apart from the obvious case when no Hungarian exonyms existed and the single name corresponded with the standardized endonym (e.g. Vilnius, Brno, Innsbruck), double names with local official names at first place and Hungarian exonyms at the second place were given if this latter helped better identification for the Hungarian users (e.g. Kraków/Krakkó, Nové Zámky/Érsekújvár, București/Bukarest).

The Committee is also regularly updating its list of country names. The last time it occurred was in 1998.

6. Orthography of geographical names for Hungarians

An important contribution to national standardization, the Orthography of Geographical Names, with ample examples of geographical names of all kinds as to the correct spelling, was published in October, 1998 (A földrajzi nevek helyesírása, Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest, 1998). Its authors are Ervin Földi (Chairman of the Committee), Pál Fábrián and Ede Hőnyi (both of them members of the Committee).

7. Toponymic Guidelines

A new edition has been prepared for this Conference (3rd edition) as a separate document. It supersedes the 2nd edition, which was presented at the 17th Session of UNGEGN (June 1994, New York), and was handed over in diskette form to the Chairman of the 7th UN Conference in January, 1998.

Participation in the meetings of UNGEGN and the East Central and Southeast Europe Division

Hungary was represented both on the 20th Session of UNGEGN on 17-28 January, 2000 in New York, and on the two meetings of the Division in Ljubljana, Slovenia (19-21 April 1999 and 18-20 April 2001). The second meeting, held jointly with the Working Group On Gazetteers and Toponymic Data Files, with presentations by outstanding expert members of the Working Group and the Division on databases and gazetteers, relevant websites and the latest developments in UNGEGN. The Division was headed and represented in a very professional way by Slovenia during the period 1998-2002.

Cooperation with other organizations and experts

The Committee has a long-standing contact with the Austrian Committee on Geographical Names, with occasional exchanges of minutes of meetings and other materials. It had also received in earlier occasions both the 1st and 2nd editions of the Gazetteer of Hungary prepared by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, as well as other datasets of foreign areas on CD. The Committee was therefore pleased to hand over a dataset on CD of the Database Gazetteer of Hungary to the Executive Secretary of BGN for Foreign Names in Slovenia last year, for further study and possible cooperation in the field of exchange materials.

Undersea features

On a recent meeting of the Hungarian Committee on Geographical Names Mr Márton Mátyás, member of the Committee reported on its work on the glossary of Hungarian equivalents of English generic terms for undersea features. His activity, in cooperation with the International Hydrographic Bureau, and with the International Cartographic Associations' Commission on Marine Cartography, is expected to result in a joint publication by the IHB. The presented list of 94 Hungarian equivalent terms is still subject to further approval by Hungarian experts.