

## **Creating a national toponymic database**

### **Pier-Giorgio Zaccheddu**

After the name information has been gathered in the field, this information has to be stored and prepared for dissemination. Several methods exist for storing the data, from the paper cards being an old-fashioned but proved media, to the advanced digital techniques using databases.

Within the module “Creating a national toponymic database” the technical aspects of a names database, its layout, structure and content will be explained. Furthermore it will be demonstrated how names from field collection or card records/printed maps are taken to create a names database.

For storage of names information in a digital format, one has three options: Text file such as Microsoft Word, spreadsheet such as Microsoft Excel, or database such as Microsoft Access. Text files and spreadsheets are easy to handle, but the methods have very limited capabilities in digital processing. Databases are more complicated, but the data can be connected with other databases such as Geographic Information System (GIS) repositories, and it can be processed in many ways.

When creating a database, one has to consider very carefully the layout and the structure of the database tables. Usually, the core table will hold one row for each geographical name. The definition of columns (fields) may vary considerably from country to country, but there are general rules that apply to most databases of geographical names. Typical fields associated with a geographical name are feature type, coordinates, variant names, textual description, source of the name information and status of the name.

After the database tables have been defined and data from the field collection has been typed in, there are many options to process the data. If technical infrastructure allows, the exercise will demonstrate by example how to perform queries, how to print a gazetteer from the database and how to display names from the database in a GIS or on a satellite image.