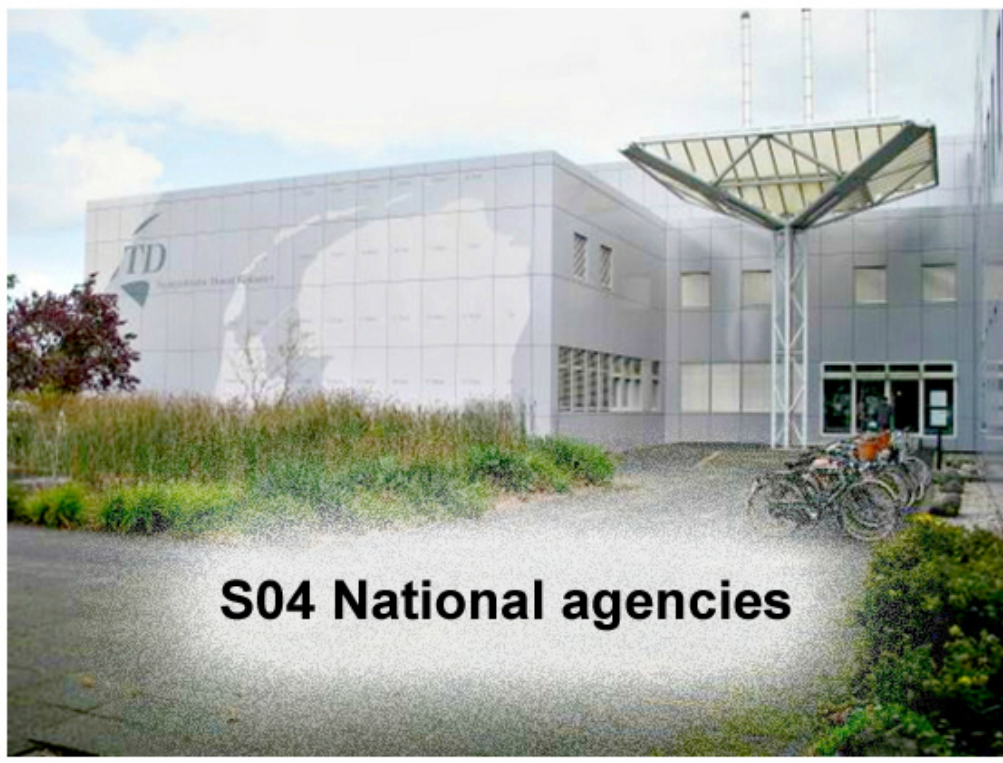


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The content of this module is based on teaching materials by Helen Kerfoot and Ferjan Ormeling. These teaching materials are made available in the "[documents](#)" section.

The module contains the following chapters:

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[Chapter 1](#): What is **standardization**?

[Chapter 2](#): Some **benefits** of **standardization**

[Chapter 3](#): National names **authorities**

[Chapter 4](#): **Policies** and **principles** of the **National Board** on geographical names

[Chapter 5](#): Established **Principles** and **procedures** ...

[Chapter 6](#): Names authorities come in different **shape and size**

[Chapter 7](#): About a **board**

[Chapter 8](#): Some **Secretariat tasks**

[Chapter 9](#): **Names authorities** ...

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[Chapter 11](#): **Conclusions**

When reading through the following pages, you will come across some uncommon terms. These terms are hyperlinked to the UNGEGN [Glossary of Terminology](#) (pdf). Behind each term a number (#) is given that corresponds to the numbering applied in this glossary, e.g. [toponymy](#) (#344).

For exercises and documents (and literature) on this topic see respectively the "[Exercises](#)" and/or the "[Documents](#)" section of this module.

The complete module can be downloaded [here](#).

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INTRODUCTION

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How do we communicate with geographical names?

- Geographical names are used in our everyday life
- Oral and written forms of names are used
- Communication can be made or marred by using correct or wrong names
- Formal written names are needed for a common communication framework

Please also visit the [UNGEKN web site](#), the [UNGEKN Glossary](#) (see [next](#) page) and the [UN resolutions](#) ([pdf](#)) (see [Chapter 3](#) on "National names authorities").



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1. WHAT IS STANDARDIZATION?

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Main elements are:

- There should be a clear relationship between names and the places they designate
- Look at "Standardization" in the [UNGEGN Glossary](#) (or click [here](#) for pdf)
- Nationally standardized names are the basis of international standards
- Univocity? The ideal is that **every** topographic feature or object **has its own** specific **name** which only applies to that object.

One object — one name.

Standardization is the establishment by an appropriate authority, of a specific set of standards or norms, e.g. for the uniform rendering of toponyms.

Geographical names standardization is the prescription by a names authority of one or more particular names, together with their precise written form for application to a particular geographical feature, as well as the conditions for their use.

National geographical names standardization is the standardization of geographical names within the area of national entity such as a state.

International geographical names standardization is the activity aimed at reaching maximum practical uniformity in the rendering – oral and written – of all geographical names on Earth by means of national standardization and/or international convention, including the correspondence between different languages and writing systems.



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2. SOME BENEFITS OF STANDARDIZATION

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Social and economic benefits:

- identifying reference points in laws, regulations, tourist information
- making easier government administration; industry and commerce; education and science
- providing a clear, unambiguous reference framework for linking to GIS world
- helping search and rescue, postal and transportation services

Technical and cultural benefits:

- history, heritage and oral tradition all benefit by name standardization as it removes ambiguities which names refer to which objects

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3. NATIONAL NAMES AUTHORITIES

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**There is need for an authority because:**

- It is needed to take geographical names decisions and so: eliminate ambiguity and confusion in spelling and application of names.
- Consistent information is required (if no national agency does, others will).
- A knowledgeable body should maintain reference lists.

Tasks of National names authorities:

1. Act as authority on names standardization issues (decide which names have to be standardized)
2. They should establish principles and procedures for geographical naming regarding:
 - collection of names
 - selection criteria
 - rules for writing
 - officialization procedures (how to make the names official)
3. They should develop policies and procedures to support names approval or rejection
4. They should maintain records, assuring minutes on decisions of names are generally available

Support from the United Nations

- [UN resolutions \(pdf\)](#) I/4a 1967 to establish national agencies
- Recent support of UN Regional Cartographic Conferences for framework layer
- National names authorities select names for formal/official use
- Justifying a names programme: existing overlaps; consolidation savings

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4. POLICIES AND PRINCIPLES OF THE NATIONAL BOARD ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

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Develop policies and principles according to country's needs, regarding:

- current and long-standing local usage
- written forms in different languages
- one name - one place principle / multilingual areas
- duplication of names within small area
- variations in spelling in associated features?
- derogatory and pejorative names
- generic terminology
- statutory names
- commercial names
- personal names and commemoration
- preferred types of names where no local use
- use of council resolutions
- areas of restricted naming
- changing names

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5. ESTABLISHED PRINCIPLES AND PROCEDURES ...

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... **should:**

- recognize names that are well established in current local usage
- allow for Consistency in the spelling of names
- define authority for naming objects maintained by provincial/national establishments
- deal with personal names and commemoration
- deal with derogatory or pejorative names
- stimulate the *one name - one place principle* (univocity)
- allow for establishing written forms in different languages
- not allow for duplication within small areas
- deal with variations in spelling in associated features
- establish generic terminology

... **should deal with:**

- statutory names
- commercial names
- use of council resolutions
- areas of restricted naming
- changing names

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6. NAMES AUTHORITIES COME IN DIFFERENT SHAPE AND SIZE

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- It can be a board, a council ...
- Centralized national names board:
 - all decisions under one roof
 - by sub-committees: feature types, language ...
- Decentralized to regional names boards
- with central umbrella coordinating authority
- Default if no names board: mostly taken care by national mapping agency
- UN preference: independent board

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7. ABOUT A BOARD

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**Legal aspects**

- A board should be established by law, act, etc.
- A board should have terms of reference, mandate, responsibilities, members, Chair, Secretariat
- Keep the documentation up to date
- Is board advisory or has it ultimate decision-making role?
- Are names legally binding?

Who should sit on the board?

- Representatives of leading government department involved in names
- Other government departments - users
- Regional representation
- Non-government ... from interest group, qualified individuals
- Individual experts (local history, archives, linguistics, cartography)
- How long should they sit there?
- How many members? Financial factors? Frequency of meetings?

Secretariat support

- Technical/professional support
- Focal point for national toponymic activity
- Leadership; organization; communication
- How many people?
 - It depends on whether other staff is available for creating the data base, for establishing media contacts, and for preparing committee meetings

More...

- Other principles?
- Board looked to for unbiased judgement
- Decisions are important to future generations
- Integrity and effectiveness of board at stake
- Slow and sure!
- Try to refrain from political interference

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8. SOME SECRETARIAT TASKS

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- Liaison with board members, government, public
- Organize board meetings
- Prepare board documents
- Recording and archiving minutes/decisions
- Signatures, posting ... distribute decisions
- Enter name decisions into records
- Answer enquiries
- Develop forms and info sheets for proposals
- Provide support for Board appointments
- Take responsibility for Board budget
- Provide leadership in activities associated with the Board ... workshops, gazetteers ...
- Be aware of international activities



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9. NAMES AUTHORITIES ...

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... may deal with:

- Only topographical names, or also:
- Names within municipalities (street names)
- Names of routes, ports, airports
- Names of administrative divisions
- etc

... can have committees on:

- Names of administrative divisions
- Topographic names
- Names of man-made topographic features
- etc

... have powers to:

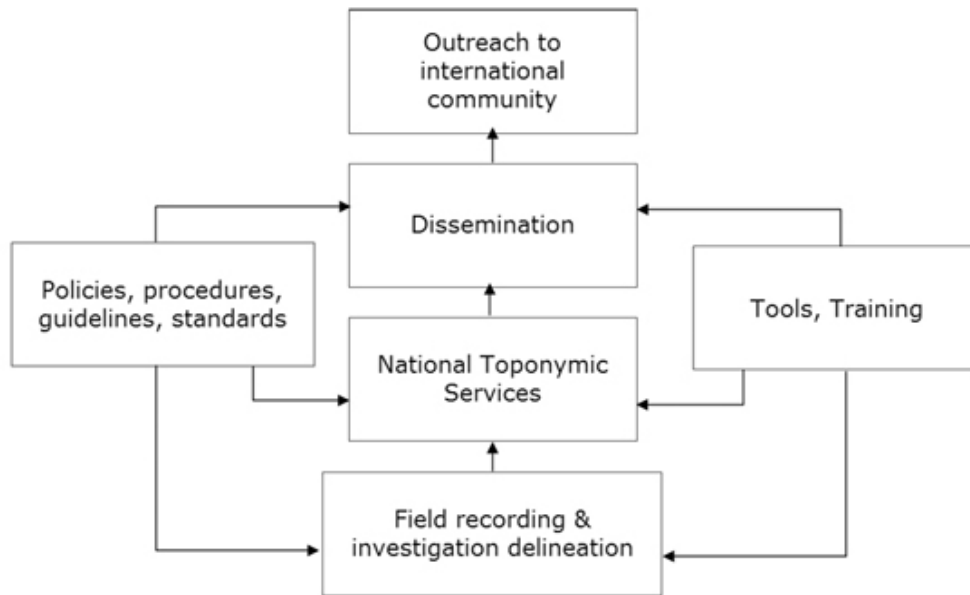
- Advise relevant minister
- Decision making powers, decentralised or nationally

But: legal recognition is needed for the names standardization process.

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10. CORE ACTIVITIES

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11. CONCLUSIONS

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- We have seen the authorities behind standardization (national<international):
 - establishment; status; members; responsibilities
 - policies and principles
 - secretariat functions
- Different approaches for different conditions
- Various models available: consult
 - UNGEGN: *Manual for the national standardization of geographical names*, 2006

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AVAILABLE EXERCISES

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Exercise 1: Organizational structure



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EXERCISE 1: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

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What different options are there for the organizational structure of a national names bureau?

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EXERCISE 1: ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE- ANSWERS

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It can be independant or attached to a ministry or to the national mapping agency or the national statistical agency. It may be independant in its decision making or may be just an advisory board, leaving it to the relevant minister to decide.



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DOCUMENTS AND LITERATURE



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Available documents:

- [D04-01](#): Kerfoot, H. (2003). *National agencies, models and procedures*. Pp 39-46 in: F.J. Ormeling e.a. Training Course on Toponymy Enschede, Frankfurt am Main, Berlin 2002. Mitteilungen des BKG Band 28, Frankfurt am Main 2003.

Online resources:

- [U.S.Board on Geographic names](#)
- UNGEGN: [Manual for the national standardization of geographical names](#), 2006

The United Nations sell the following publications which also can be downloaded from the [UNGEGN](#) website:

- [Glossary](#) of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names (New York 2002) / [pdf](#)
- [Manual](#) for the national standardization of geographical names (UN - Ecosoc, New York, 2006 ST/ESA/STAT/SERM/88 Sales No. E.06.XVII.7 ISBN 92-1-161490-2, available in the 6 UN languages) / [pdf](#)
- [Technical reference manual](#) for the standardization of geographical names (New York, 2007) / [pdf](#)
- [Resolutions](#) adopted at the nine UN Conferences on the standardization of geographical names ([English \(pdf\)](#) / [French \(pdf\)](#))