
**United Nations Group of Experts
on Geographical Names
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Item 14 of the provisional agenda*

Exonyms (Working Group on Exonyms)

Foreign names in Swedish

Submitted by Sweden**

Summary:

A new handbook on foreign names in Swedish, which serves as a guide to transliteration and alternative geographical name forms, was published both in print and online in 2018. The focus of the book is a comparison between methods and results in Swedish, English, French and German, but the author covers overall transliteration problems and provides recommendations on how foreign geographical names and personal names should be written and spelled in Swedish. The two main parts of the book address transliteration from different writing systems and alternative geographical name forms; the latter part includes exonyms. Spelling examples are provided from all the countries and territories of the world, as well as some 50 different languages and writing systems. A comprehensive table of contents and an index make the book easy to use for translators, writers, editors and geographers. The book was compiled by Swedish translators from several of the European Union institutions, and it is available only in Swedish.

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**Prepared by Staffan Nyström, Sweden

Foreign names in Swedish

An extended and thoroughly revised handbook called “Foreign names in Swedish: A handbook on transliteration and alternative geographical name forms” (Sw. Utländska namn på svenska: Handbok om translitterering och alternativa geografiska namnformer) was published both in print and on-line (pdf) in 2018 (an earlier version was printed in 2009). The book’s focus is on a comparison between methods and results in Swedish, English, German, and French, but it deals with overall transliteration problems and provides recommendations on how “foreign” geographical names and personal names should be written and spelt in Swedish.

The book's introduction (pp. 26–28) explains, with many good examples, the terms *transliteration* and *transcription* as well as what is meant by “alternative names”, namely a) the change of names for different places from the 1970s onwards, and b) exonyms. A general comment on diacritics and additional signs is given here to, as well as a user manual for the remaining parts of the book.

Then the two main parts follow. In Part I, called “Transliteration from different writing systems” (pp. 29–72), the Latin, the Cyrillic, and the Greek alphabet (for modern Greek) are treated, and Arabic script as well as a number of other writing systems, such as Ethiopian, Tibetan, Korean and Japanese writing, are addressed. Illustrative tables show the differences between the English, French, German, and Swedish ways of transliterating.

In Part II, under the heading “Alternative geographical name forms” (pp. 73–147), the geographical areas of the world are treated, country-by-country, from the Scandinavian countries to The British Antarctic Territory. Firstly, some name changes are mentioned, like Ukrainian *Charkov* > *Charkiv* and *Lvov* > *Lviv*, and secondly the relevant exonyms are presented. A typical “country item” begins with some information about the official language(s) of the country followed by a general recommendation on how to use the country’s geographical names in a Swedish context and how to deal with “unknown” or specific writing characters in the language(s) involved. Normally, the use of endonyms is recommended, but in most cases there are at least some established Swedish exonyms mentioned here along with the corresponding exonyms in English, German, and French.

Spelling examples are provided from all the countries and territories of the world, as well as some fifty different languages and writing systems. A comprehensive table of contents and an index make the book easy to use for translators, writers, editors, and geographers. The book is compiled by Swedish translators from several of the EU institutions. It is only available in Swedish.

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