
**United Nations Group of Experts On
Geographical Names**

2019 session

New York, 29 April – 3 May 2019

Item 13 of the agenda *

Geographical names as culture, heritage and identity, including indigenous, minority and regional languages and multilingual issues

(Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage)

Report of the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage

Submitted by the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage**

Summary:

The full report provides information on the activities undertaken by the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage since August 2017, including updates made to the Working Group's web page.

The report also contains information on current work and forthcoming events.

*GEGN.2/2019/1

** Prepared by Annette Torensjö and Leila Mattfolk , Sweden

The Working Group

The Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage was established to address Resolution 1 of the Eight Conference (Berlin, 2002) as Working Group on the Promotion of Indigenous and Minority Group Place Names, with the aim to oversee the activities related to the promotion of indigenous and minority geographical names as means of cultural retention/revitalization. The name of the WG was changed at a side meeting at the 27th Session in New York 2012.

The aim for the Working Group is to oversee the activities related to the promotion of indigenous and minority geographical names, as well as to stress the scope of names as cultural heritage. Among the most important topics for the WG are geographical names used by minorities, legislation and policies regarding geographical names as cultural heritage and the promotion of fieldwork and the registration of names.

Organization

Convenor: Ms Annette Torensjö

Rapporteur: Ms Leila Mattfolk

Organization of work

The work within the WG is organized through meetings in connection with the sessions and on other occasions, preferably as joint meetings with other working groups or divisions or groups of interest.

Because of the wide range of aspects, the work within the working group is preferably organized through different focus groups.

Working Group activities since 2017

WG meeting at the 30th UNGEGN session in New York on August 14, 2017. (The Minutes for the meeting are published on the website: <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegn/wg10.html>.)

Further activities of relevance for the Working Group since 2017

The Swedish handbook *God ortamnssed – Ortnamnsrådets handledning för namnvård* has been translated into English and will be made available online on the website of the Swedish Mapping, Cadastral and Land Registration Authority, Lantmäteriet, www.lantmateriet.se. The handbook is aimed for local authorities in Sweden working with naming and standardization of geographical names, and consists of onomastic information and advices for persons dealing with names and naming. The handbook is based on Swedish legislation, but can serve as an example of good naming practice also for others.

A planned WG meeting at the joint meeting of the Norden Division and the Dutch-and German-speaking Division, held in Brussels, Belgium from 11 to 13 October was cancelled. The participants of the meeting had, however, the opportunity to listen to Professor Kaisa Rautio Helander's talk on

Place name policy, standardization and official use of Sámi toponymy, as a well suited example of questions relevant for the Working Group.

Planned activities of relevance for the Working Group

The Conference *Names in the Economy 6* is to be held in Uppsala, Sweden, June 3-5, 2019. Information: www.sprakochfolkminnen.se/nite6.

The WG Topics and related documentation, including presentations of good practices

1. Geographical names used by minorities/Indigenous geographical names
2. Geographical names as cultural heritage
3. Legislation and policies
 - The handbook *Good place-name practice* (an English online version of a handbook published in Swedish in 2001 and revised in 2016)
 - Web address forthcoming
4. Fieldwork and the registration of names
 - the *Guide to the field collection of native geographical names (Provisional Edition)*, 1992, by the Canadian Permanent Committee on Geographical Names
 - http://publications.gc.ca/collections/collection_2011/rncan-nrcan/M86-29-1992-eng.pdf
 - The inclusion of urban names
 - e.g. the project ‘The Onomastic landscapes of Uppsala’ by the Institute for Language and Folklore, that studies the names visible on signs etc. in the city of Uppsala, Sweden. (For more information, see the Report of Sweden.)
 - The importance of a common feature classification
5. Research on geographical names as cultural heritage
6. Commemorative names
7. The commercialization of geographical names
 - The contemporary research on commercialized names are in focus for the conference serie *Names in the economy*. The 6th meeting is organized in Uppsala, June 3-5, 2019.
 - www.sprakochfolkminnen.se/nite6

The topics are country specific, i.e. participating members of the working group should prioritize topics that suite the needs of their country, while the starting point are very different.

Work plan

- The Working Group will set up focus groups in order to be able to allocate tasks to the different experts within the WG.
- The WG:s website (<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/ungegn/wg10.html>) contains documents prepared by the WG, as well as examples of good naming practices. The website will also make guidelines available (e.g., regarding commemorative naming). The convenor of the WG invite experts to contribute good examples.
- The chair of UNGEGN, Bill Watt will update the maps made during the initial years of the working group, as long as he is provided data. It would be important to get names used in endangered languages notes on the maps.

- The Working Group will promote and support the national work to consolidate good practice for Geographical Names.
- The Working Group will organize workshops, focusing on topics of special interest for the members of the Working Group, and arrange joint meetings with other Working Groups within the UNGEGN in order to strengthen the work with Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage.