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Geographical Names

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Item 6 (b) of the provisional agenda *

National and international standardization of geographical names: Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use

General remarks by the Coordinator of toponymic guidelines for map and other editors, for international use

Submitted by the Coordinator of Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors for International Use

Summary **

The full report provides a review of the aims and intentions of the toponymic guidelines drawn up by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and highlights major activities undertaken since the Eleventh Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. It provides links to documents concerning toponymic guidelines. This easily accessible information should invite and encourage countries not yet having published toponymic guidelines to do so.

* GEGN2/2021/2

** The full report was prepared by Gerhard Rampl (Austria), University of Innsbruck, Department of Linguistics.

Background

In 1982, the Conference recommended that countries should be encouraged to publish and keep up-to-date Toponymic Guidelines for Map and Other Editors. The aim was to enable cartographers of other countries to correctly treat all problems of cartographic toponymy of the countries that produced such guidelines [4th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Resolution IV/4:

<https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/ungegnConf4.html>]. A sample prepared by former UNGEGN chair Josef Breu and submitted by Austria to the Eighth Session of UNGEGN in 1979 [W.P. 5:

https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/8th-gegn-docs/8th_gegn_WP5.pdf] served as basis for the guidelines. This format has been updated and enriched over the years. TG include information about official, national and minority languages, names authorities, source material for toponyms, glossaries, abbreviations used on official maps and administrative division.

Updated and new Toponymic Guidelines

At the 1st Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (New York, 29 April to 3 May 2019) updated Toponymic Guidelines were announced by the following two countries:

Finland: Version 4.11, April 2021; Language: English; online: <https://www.kotus.fi/toponymicguidelines>

Sweden: Version 4 (scheduled to get digitally published in the spring of 2019)

Availability and dissemination

The links to Toponymic Guidelines available online on the UNGEGN homepage have been monitored and updated.

In order to promote the dissemination of UNGEGN Toponymic Guidelines, Wikipedia entries have been created and linked to related topics. The Wikipedia entries also were monitored and updated. As of today English, French and German versions of the entry are available under:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNGEGN_Toponymic_Guidelines,

https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Directives_toponymiques_du_GENUNG, and

http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/UNGEGN_Toponymic_Guidelines.

Status and invitation

More than 40 countries have published Toponymic Guidelines and/or drafts or preliminary versions so far. Thus, the TG can be regarded a very successful initiative. Nevertheless, it was noted in former reports that a) more than half of the submitted TG are from European countries and b) some of the TG are outdated and would require revision. To provide information and stimulate the elaboration of new TG a list of useful links on documents was provided with the last report for the 29th Session (Appendix I in W.P.13/17

https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEGN/docs/29th-gegn-docs/WP/WP13_17_Toponymic%20Guidelines.pdf). To give easier access to the documents this list of links

will be made available online at the Toponymic Guidelines subsection of the UNGEGN homepage.

Countries not having published TG yet are invited and encouraged to do so. It has to be said at this point that drafts and preliminary works for TG are also very welcome. For any questions related to this topic please feel free to contact the coordinator.