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Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names

Report of Cyprus

Submitted by Cyprus**

Summary:

The report refers to the activities of the Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names of Cyprus for the period 2019–2020.

The first section of the report includes background information on the establishment and operation of the Permanent Committee, the legislative and structural framework within which it operates and the main principles to which the Committee adheres. The second section offers a brief description of its main duties. In the third section, the Committee's main achievements are briefly described and explained.

The Committee regularly maintains a website (www.geoportal.gov.cy) that provides all relevant information, several editions of the gazetteer and online tools.

The Committee regularly maintains a complete gazetteer for all geographical names in Cyprus. All the geographical names and toponyms therein are gathered by authorized bodies and derived from authoritative information, official large-scale cadastral maps and the land registers of the Department of Lands and Surveys. The gazetteer is available online. The Committee continues to collect, standardize and romanize geographical names in Cyprus, according to standard 743 of the Hellenic Standardization Organization, which is based on standard 843 of the International Standardization Organization.

An edition of the gazetteer was prepared by the Committee, entitled “Gazetteer of sea geographical names of Cyprus”. The gazetteer was presented and submitted to the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, which was held in New York in August 2017. It is also available online. The gazetteer is based on a national hydrographical database that is updated regularly. The Committee distributes the gazetteer to all interested persons and organizations.

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Odonyms in Cyprus are provided and maintained by the municipal and community councils. They are approved by six district officers, who operate under the Ministry of the Interior. All official street names and updates to street names are regularly communicated to the Committee for verification and correction in order to achieve uniformity and standardization throughout the island. A complete catalogue of toponyms is maintained by the Department of Postal Services and made available online.

All geographical names and toponyms are also included in the geoportal, which is available at www.geoportal.gov.cy. Geographical names and other geospatial data are accessible online for searching, viewing, amending, downloading and printing, as well as being directly accessible through a geographic information system. The Committee continues to help citizens gain access to and use that information.

The Committee participates in the sessions and committees of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. It has also submitted a series of 10 technical papers that are included in the bulletins of the Group of Experts, which can be found at www.geonoma.gov.cy/index.php/enimerosi and at <https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/pubs/>. The Committee has also helped to design the cover pages of the previous six editions of the bulletin.

Geographical names in Cyprus are not just words on maps and signs but vital communication tools that reflect patterns of settlement, exploration, migration and the country's heritage. Consistency and accuracy are essential in referring to places in the community to prevent confusion. The Committee recognizes the great importance of geographical names, which are an inseparable part of cultural heritage and play a significant role in the sustainable development of the country.

1. Background Information

Cyprus is privileged to have most of its geographical names included in ancient texts from Homer to Herodotus, the tragic poets and Strabon, up to ancient cartographers, like Claudius Ptolemaeus, and from medieval cartographers, like Abraham Ortelius, up to lord Horatio H. Kitchener, who mapped Cyprus in the 19th Century at the beginning of the British rule of the island. The name of the island “Kypros” was mentioned by Homer 3000 years ago.

The Cyprus Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names (CPCSGN) was officially established by the decision of the Council of Ministers no.15.769 of 21.4.1979 and constitutes the only competent National Authority for the Standardization of Geographical Names in Cyprus. According to law N.66(I)/98 and the regulations ΚΔΠ 443/2001, the Committee acts under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

According to Law N.66(I)/98 and regulations ΚΔΠ 443/2001, the Minister of Education and Culture, as the Competent Authority, appoints the President and the members of the Committee every five years. The Committee consists of a President and nine members.



*Fig. 1: Cyprus Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names 2019-2024
(Photography by Andreas Hadjiraftis)*

The members of the Committee have extensive experience and background in the areas of linguistics, diplomacy, archaeology, cartography, topography, Geographical Information Systems (GIS), Information Technology (IT), literature, law, public sector management, etc.

The Committee is subdivided into five subcommittees, which deal with specific issues as follows:

1. Publications
2. Standardization and transliteration
3. Awareness
4. Development and update of website
5. Updating of Gazetteers

In the exercise of its powers, the Committee selects from the existing types of geographical names, a single type for official and international use, after examining them, based on linguistic, grammatical, aesthetic, social and historical criteria.

The Committee collects data from the fields of history, linguistics, archaeology, literature, cartography and folklore that help the etymology, spelling and standardization of toponyms and names of the municipalities and the communities of Cyprus.

Law N.71(I)/2013 criminalizes the alteration of geographical names and toponyms and the illegal issue, import, circulation, supply, distribution and trade of maps, books or other documents, in conventional or digital form, which contain geographical names and toponyms of the Republic, imprinted differently than those specified in accordance with the procedures laid down in the Law, or those contained in the official Toponymic Gazetteer.

2. CPCSGN Main Duties

The Committee mainly deals with the following duties:

1. Handles all matters related to the standardization of geographical names of the Republic of Cyprus.
2. Records the geographical names of the Republic of Cyprus, studies all related issues, and submits to the Competent Authority for approval its suggestions on standardization and coding of geographical names.
3. Represents the Republic of Cyprus in international meetings of the United Nations (UN) on issues of its competence, and cooperates with the UN and other international organizations, and the corresponding national committees of other countries, to attain the objectives provided in legislation.
4. Advises the competent local authorities for naming or renaming of streets, and the spelling of geographical names.
5. Monitors the implementation of the standardization of geographical names and the Greek to Roman alphabet transliteration system of the Greek Organization for Standardization (ELOT 743), which was accepted by the Fifth Conference of the United Nations, as a standard of the International Standardization Organization (ISO 843.3) and was adopted by the Council of Ministers.

3. Achievements

3.1 CPCSGN Website

The CPCSGN regularly maintains a website, where all relevant information is available. The address of this website is: <http://www.geonoma.gov.cy>. The website includes information regarding the historic background of CPCSGN, legislation and regulations regarding its operation, the organizational structure, announcements, activities, documents from our participation in conferences and other events, documents regarding the transliteration of geographical names in roman alphabet, several editions, maps, etc. The website also includes a complete and fully searchable national gazetteer. A very helpful tool was developed for the automatic transliteration of geographical names from greek to roman alphabet, based on ELOT 743 of the Hellenic Standardization Organization (based on ISO843 of the International Standardization Organization) which is available on-line at:

<http://www.geonoma.gov.cy/index.php/typopoiisi/metagrafi-ellnikou-alfavitou>

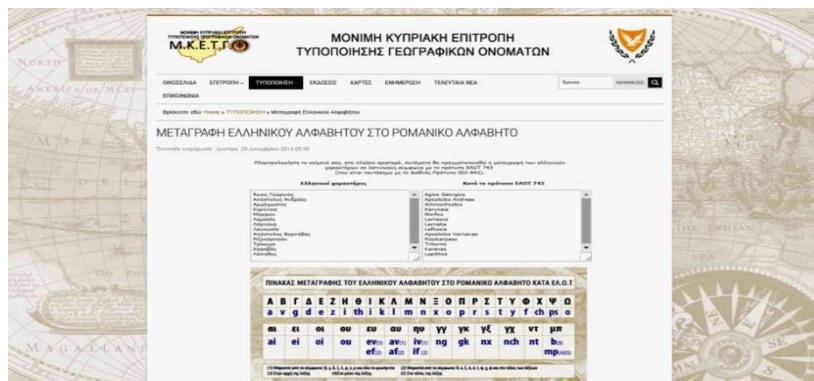


Fig. 2: Tool for automatic transliteration from greek to roman alphabet

3.2 Book – Names of Countries and Capitals

A book including a list of names of countries and capitals was submitted during the 10th UN Conference and the 27th Session of UNGEGN and was also distributed to many government departments, ministries, academic institutions, schools, and interested citizens. This book is regularly distributed to any interested persons in hardcopy form. It is also available on CPCSGN’s website for viewing and downloading:

<http://www.geonoma.gov.cy/myfiles/ekdoseis/chores-protevouses/index.html>.

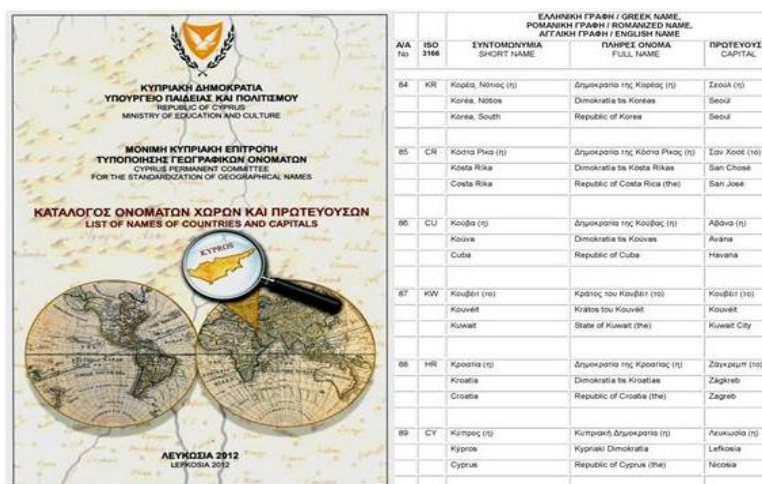


Fig. 3. Book – Names of Countries and Capitals

3.3 National Gazetteers

The existing national gazetteers prepared by the CPCSGN in 1982 and 1987 respectively are:

- (i) The “*Concise Gazetteer of Cyprus*” (about 2000 entries)
- (ii) The “*A Complete Gazetteer of Cyprus*” (about 67000 entries)

All geographical names and toponyms included in these gazetteers were derived from the official large-scale cadastral maps and the land registers of the Department of Lands and Surveys. The Complete Gazetteer of Cyprus is currently available on CPCSGN’s website at:

<http://www.geonoma.gov.cy/myfiles/ekdoseis/cygazetteer/index.html>.

All cadastral maps of Cyprus have been digitized and their information was categorized and stored in digital relational databases and Geographical Information Systems (GIS), along with many other layers of spatial information. Based on these databases, it is possible to easily identify and locate any

geographical name in Cyprus. The CPCSGN continues the tasks for the collection, the standardization and the romanization of the geographical names of the Republic of Cyprus, according to ELOT 743

4.4 Gazetteer of Sea Geographical Names

An additional edition was prepared by the CPCSGN titled: “Gazetteer of Sea Geographical Names of Cyprus”. The gazetteer was initially presented and submitted to the 11th United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names that took place in New York, in August 2017. This Gazetteer is available at:

<http://www.geonoma.gov.cy/myfiles/ekdoseis/thalassia-toponymia/index.html>

This work has been planned and worked out on the basis of the principles, the rules and the recommendations of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, and it is the result of the joined efforts of all members of the CPCSGN and the Department of Lands and Surveys.

The sea names were extracted from the Hydrographic Database of the Integrated Land Information System of Cyprus. All names are based on the official cadastral maps, registers, topographic maps, and other official evidence, in close coordination with the central government and the local authorities.

The sea names are also accessible as e-services through Cyprus Geoportal. The collection and processing methodology is fully described in the edition. A total of 47 maps on scale 1:25000 have also been prepared for this purpose. A cross reference to the maps, along with coordinates, and other useful information, are given for each name within the gazetteer.

Hard copies of the book were delivered to government ministries and departments, academic institutions, semi-government organizations, associations, and many other interested organizations and persons. Hard copies are still made available for free to any interested organization or person.

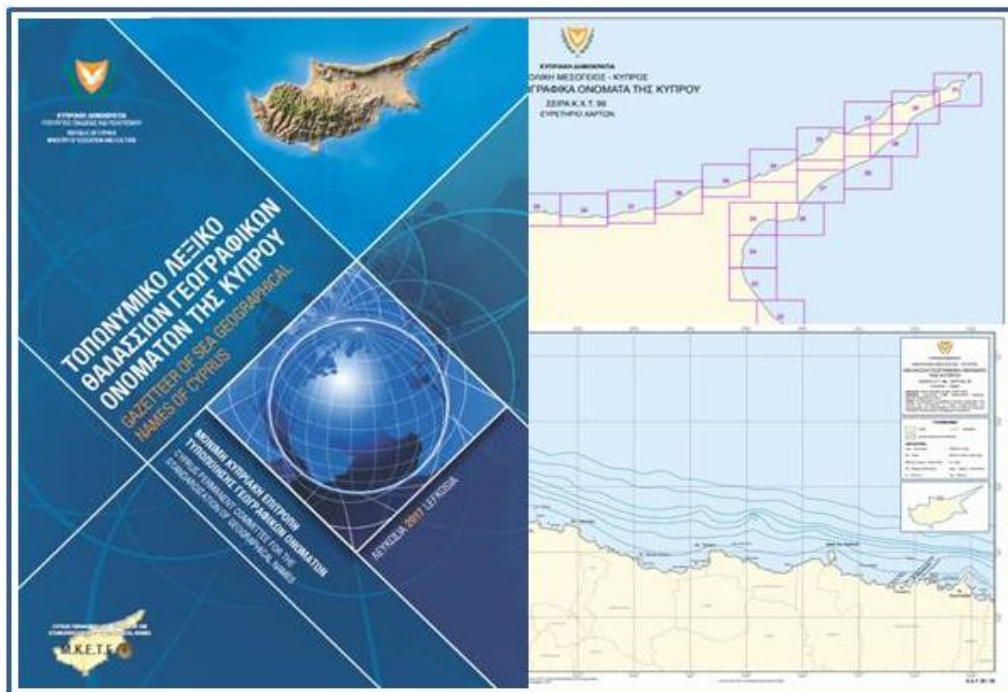


Fig. 4: Gazetteer of Sea Geographical Names of Cyprus and Maps

4.5 EuroGeographics Products

All geographical names and toponyms of Cyprus are also included in a distributed European database named “EuroGeonames” through EuroGeographics, and they are available on-line.

Major geographical names are also included in other EuroGeographics’ digital databases such as: EuroGlobal Map, EuroRegional Map, and EuroBoundary Map.

Geographical names of Cyprus will also be included in new EuroGeographics’s databases and web applications.

4.6 Odonyms

Odonyms in Cyprus are given and maintained by the Municipal and Community Councils. These odonyms, are under the approval of the respective District Officers, which operate under the Ministry of Interior. All official street names are communicated to the CPCSGN, for checking and correction, in order to achieve uniformity all over the island.

A complete catalogue of odonyms is maintained by the Department of Postal Services at: <https://www.cypruspost.post/el/ekdoseis>

In addition, the Department of Lands and Surveys maintains street names in separate layers, as a part of the Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) of the National Integrated Land Information System (NILIS), thus making them available for several uses, through geospatial databases and web e-services. A variety of standard and ad-hoc maps are produced through this system. Geographical names are extremely important, and they are always included in mapping products and applications.

4.7 Geographical Names in the National Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) of Cyprus

All geographical names and toponyms are included in the geoportal of Cyprus at: www.geoportal.gov.cy. Geographical names and other geo-spatial information are accessible from DLS-Portal on-line for searching, viewing, transformation, downloading, printing, and direct accessing via GIS.

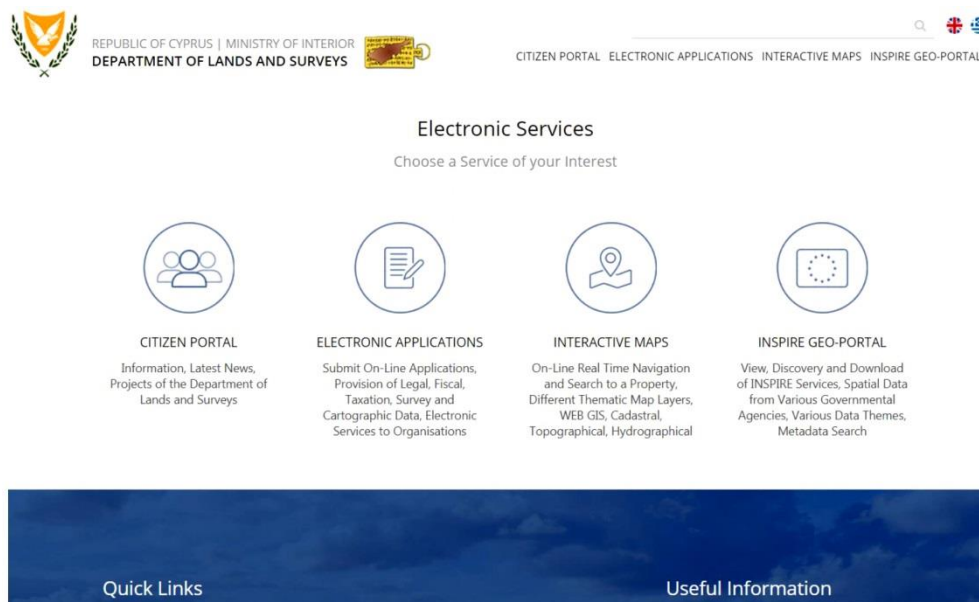


Fig. 5: DLS-Portal Components

DLS-Portal is a pioneering on-line services platform developed by the Department of Lands and Surveys (DLS), which has received one of Cyprus’ highest distinctions, and it was named best Public Sector Innovation by the Federation of Employers and Industrialists (OEB) Innovation and Research Awards.

This innovative on-line platform is based on an Integrated Land Information System which includes more than 350 ISO regularly monitored and certified procedures. It is a focal point in the history of modern cadastre and geospatial information, and the culmination of a long time effort of the Department to provide e-services to citizens and integration of geospatial information”.

DLS-Portal is the first and largest on-line electronic library of geographic and descriptive information, in Cyprus, and is considered to be one of the best European Cadastral and Geospatial information provider. It provides access to the Department’s information and enables citizens to submit online applications, export data and catalogues, direct access and download maps, subscribe to services, and more. At the same time, it is a model for the implementation of INSPIRE Directive and collects a variety of geospatial data from several Departments and Services of the State.

DLS-Portal consists of four main pillars:

- Citizen Portal: Dynamic front page providing a variety of information and services.
- Electronic Application Submission and Tracking System.
- Interactive Maps providing the ability to navigate to properties and geospatial features through a free on-line application, providing the flexibility to select any combination of information from a great variety of available GIS layers, and background maps.
- INSPIRE Geoportal, providing free access to spatial features of government departments and semi-government organizations. Geographical names are included in several categories.

The whole concept is based on a 24/7 fast and friendly service, including many benefits such as:

- Elimination of time-consuming bureaucratic procedures, saving resources and time for the Department and citizens.
- Market and economy strengthening and development.
- Improvement of public service transparency, reduction of bureaucracy, and promotion of equal treatment.
- Provision of infrastructure for fast COVID-19 pandemic monitoring, and emergency services response.
- Provision and strengthening of interoperability of data between IT applications.
- Provision and expansion of open data.

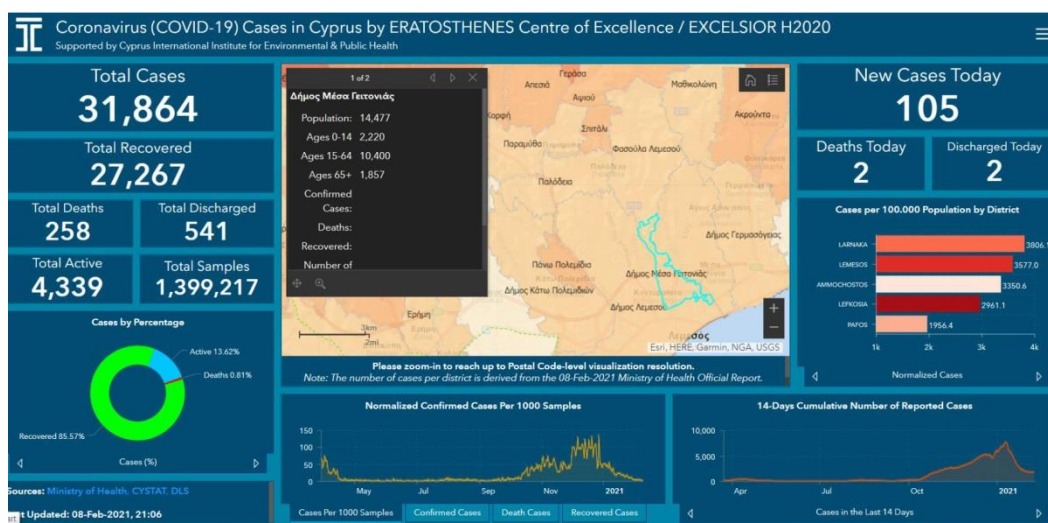


Fig. 6: Use of Authoritative Geographical Names in platforms for monitoring COVID-19 pandemic and emergency services

4.8 Collection and Standardization of Geographical Names

The CPCSGN continues the tasks for the collection, the standardization and the romanization of the Greek alphabet, according to ELOT 743, of the geographical names of the Republic of Cyprus. All geographical names were gathered by authorized bodies during the mapping of Cyprus in 1878 and later periods. During the last two years, more than 1400 geographical names, including among others odonyms, have been examined and processed, offering services to the central government, and local government authorities, for the standardization and transcription from the Greek to the Roman script according to ELOT 743.

4.9 Poster and Book Marker on the Standardization and Transliteration of Geographical Names

CPCSGN recently prepared a poster regarding the standardization and transliteration of geographical names. This poster was distributed to all high schools. The Committee also published a book marker which was distributed to all schools and government departments. The poster and the book marker include brief information regarding the tasks undertaken by the Committee and also include the transliteration rules followed. The poster is available for downloading at:

http://www.geonoma.gov.cy/myfiles/archeia/diafotisi/2015_poster_outline.pdf



Fig. 7: CPCSGN Book Marker

4.10 Participation in Meetings and Conferences

In 2019 (April 29 – May 3), the President of the Committee participated in the 1st Session of the United Nations Group of Experts for Geographical Names (UNGEGN), that took place in New York.

The President also organized monthly regular meetings of CPCSGN, to examine outstanding issues and take decisions. It's worth mentioning that the Committee was fully active during the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2020, offering its services.

4.11 Publication of Papers

In June 2019, a paper of the Committee titled: “Curiosities of Geographical Names in Cyprus”, was published in UNGEGN Bulletin no. 56. The president of the Committee designed the cover page of the bulletin.

https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/pubs/Bulletin/UNGEGN_bulletin_no.56_rev.pdf

In November 2019, a paper of the Committee titled: “Communication Strategies for encouraging the implementation of standardized geographical names in Cyprus” was published in UNGEGN Bulletin no. 57. The president of the Committee also designed the cover page of the bulletin.

(https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/pubs/Bulletin/UNGEGN_bulletin_no.57_rev.pdf)

In May 2020, a paper of the Committee titled: “Issues and experiences in the standardization of geographical names of Cyprus”, was published in UNGEGN Bulletin no. 58. The president of the Committee also designed the cover page of the bulletin.

(https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/pubs/Bulletin/UNGEGN_bulletin_no.58_May2020.pdf)

In November 2020, a paper of the Committee titled: “Geographical names and sustainable tourism in Cyprus”, was published in UNGEGN Bulletin no. 59. The president of the Committee also designed the cover page of the bulletin.

(https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/pubs/Bulletin/UNGEGN_bulletin_no.59.pdf)



Fig. 8: Publication of Papers in UNGEGN Bulletins

4. Concluding Remarks

Geographical names are a vitally important part of geospatial information, and they express tangibly the human activity on earth with meaning and memory.

Geographical names in Cyprus are not just words on maps and signs, but vital communication tools that reflect patterns of settlement, exploration, migration, and the country’s heritage that may otherwise be overlooked by residents, visitors, and future generations. Consistency and accuracy are essential in referring to places in the community to prevent confusion in everyday business and recreation.

The Cyprus Permanent Committee for the Standardization of Geographical Names recognizes the great importance of geographical names, which are an inseparable part of cultural heritage, and play a significant role on the sustainable development of the country.