

Item 4a: National Reports

Country: Norway

Topic: Geographical names management

Title: **Joint Norwegian-Moldovan project on geographical names management for Moldova.**

From 2020-22 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway initiated a project with the Republic of Moldova called "Maps for Sustainable Development". The project was managed from the Norwegian Mapping Agency and formed a group of experts in various toponymic fields from the Norwegian Language Collections at University of Bergen and the Norwegian Mapping Agency.

The project centered around several virtual events. Physical meetings were also planned, but since the project initiated as the Covid-19 pandemic began to rage and later war in Moldova's neighbour state, physical meetings were limited to just one in late 2022 at the University of Bergen. At these events, a number of topics relevant for establishing a system of geographical names were discussed and then later planned in series of weekly meetings with a wide range of experts from Moldova within toponymy, linguistics, GIS, database construction and law, etc.

Within these two years a full system for collecting, storing, managing and dissemination of geographical names was set up. Three main elements were identified as essential to be able to carry out a sustainable and consistent geographical names management: a legal framework, a technical framework and a management framework.

The managing institution had already been decided by the Moldovan authorities, namely Agency for Land Relations and Cadastre and work focused on setting up a board of experts for decision making on geographical names matters.

Key to consistent geographical names management is a stable legal foundation and for this reason a draft Law on Geographical Names was developed by legal experts and input from project experts. The Law is currently in the stage of coordination and approval. Also, a Geographical Names infrastructure, including a Glossary of Terms for Standardization of Geographical Names in the Romanian language, Procedures for Geographical Names Standardization, Methodological Guide for Geographical Names Standardization had been completed by the end of 2022.

Concurrently with these activities, a Geographical Names Register was developed, including an application for data collection. The development took place locally in Moldova and included database design, development, and testing. Essential for the safeguarding of geographical names as cultural heritage and for ensuring a consistent management, the geographical names register consists of two integrated databases – a spatial database and a scientific database. The latter has been populated with the aid of local geographical names experts on historical toponymy.