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Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda*

**Technical expertise: names collection, office treatment, features
beyond a single sovereignty and international cooperation**

**Documentary evidence in geographical names management:
pitfalls of circular reference and institutional
self-documentation****Summary****

The report shows that the Norwegian legal and administrative framework for geographical names standardization faces significant challenges in implementation, despite having a comprehensive legal and regulatory structure. Analyses of standardization practices reveal concerning examples of discrepancies between legal requirements and practical application, particularly in terms of documentation standards and institutional processes.

A detailed case study of two municipalities in eastern Norway demonstrates how current standardization practices can deviate from legal requirements. The report shows that documentation procedures and law implementation vary. In one of the cases outlined, despite the existence of clear historical documentation and recorded local, inherited pronunciation supporting one form, the national geographical names database maintains another standardized form, contradicting both historical evidence and current cadastral usage.

As a result, that inconsistency extends to derived street names, highlighting challenges in coordinating standardization across administrative levels. The situation reveals significant gaps in both municipal and State-level names management competencies, suggesting insufficient understanding of historical documentation and standardization principles, and/or resource allocation.

* GEGN.2/2025/1.

** The full report was prepared by Peder Gammeltoft (Norway), Norwegian Language Collections, University of Bergen. The report will be available at https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/4th_session_2025/, in the language of submission only, as document GEGN.2/2025/60/CRP.60.



A key finding is the prevalence of institutional (self-)documentation, whereby standardization decisions rely heavily on internal map sources and cadastral entries. That practice risks creating circular reference patterns, perpetuating potential errors through internal review processes. Similar patterns are found also in municipalities, suggesting a systemic issue rather than mere isolated cases.

A suggestion is made to establish systematic external monitoring and review processes through formalized relationships with research institutions possessing relevant expertise in onomastics and historical linguistics. A proposed two-tiered system would combine regular expert panel audits with a standing advisory committee for complex cases.

The findings indicate an urgent need to address these challenges in order to maintain the credibility of the Norwegian Place Names Act. The situation calls for enhanced professional expertise, improved documentation procedures and better coordination between administrative levels. The implementation of external monitoring mechanisms appears crucial to ensuring that standardization decisions align with both legal requirements and scientific principles of toponymy.
