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The fiftieth anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

Abstract. On the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the first United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, the author presents the historical background of the ongoing international cooperation on the unification of toponyms on a global scale. The 1967 conference in Geneva was extremely important in defining the objectives and tasks of the cooperation, setting out the main areas of action (national standardization, geographical terms, spelling systems, international exchange of information) and, through the resolutions adopted at the time, formulating detailed guidelines for standardization procedures. In the past half-century, the global organising of geographic nomenclature – although still incomplete – has gained a universally accepted institutional framework and has produced the expected results. The UNGEGN (United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names) plays a major role in organising the cyclical conferences, sessions, regional division and working group meetings, and toponymy courses, as well as inspiring the creation of unified databases and publications.

Keywords: toponyms, international standardization, UNGEGN

1. Introduction

This year marks fifty years since the 1st United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. The conference was held in Geneva, 4–22 September 1967, launching the process of global cooperation between most countries of the world on the unification of toponyms. The fiftieth anniversary is a good opportunity to present the Polish perspective on the objectives of this cooperation and the results already achieved, as well as the Polish contribution to this field.

The Geneva Conference of 1967 gave rise to international cooperation of a systematic, universal and planned nature, unlike previous attempts at the transnational organisation of nomenclature, which were selective and covered only a small fraction of names. For example, “...before the war, the Universal Postal Union was obliged, when issuing international postal directories, to introduce a certain amount of standardization, especially in countries where non-Latin alphabets were in official usage”

(L. Ratajski 1969). Since 1967, UN conferences devoted to the standardization of geographical names have been held every five years, with the objective of appointing near and more distant goals and discussing the reports of each member country. The second conference took place in 1972 in London, the third in 1977 in Athens, the fourth in 1982, again in Geneva, and the fifth in 1987 in Montreal. From the sixth conference in 1992, New York was the venue for the meetings (the seventh in 1998, ninth in 2007 and tenth in 2012), with the exception of the eighth conference, which was held in Berlin in 2002. This year marked the jubilee eleventh meeting of the cycle, also held in New York, 8–17 August 2017 (fig. 1).

Over the last fifty years, Poland has clearly marked its presence at both the conferences and the sessions taking place between conferences, as well as the regional division and working group meetings. Reports of these scientific events have been published in Polish specialist journals, with “Polish Cartographic Review” (till 2015 “Polski Przegląd Kartogra-



Fig. 1. Locations of United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names (after M. Zych)

ficzny”) providing the most systematically reported information (see Literature). In 1969, an article appeared from Lech Ratajski in which the author presented the issues taken on by (as he called it) the “United Nations Conference on the Unification of Geographical Names” and outlined the organisational activities preceding the meeting (L. Ratajski 1969). From a historical perspective, this is an interesting account of an active participant in the conference, who assessed and described in detail the principles and objectives of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) at that time.

2. The stage preceding the 1st United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names

After World War II, attempts to introduce a new order to the world and to international relations took on an institutional form, with the United Nations at the forefront. Within this political project, a major role was assigned from the beginning to the ordering of geographical names. The purpose of this was to foster a thorough understanding of the area of international operations and, by introducing the unification of names, to ensure effective communication and cooperation on a global scale. The technical progress made in the twentieth century, the political and social transformations around the world, and the very concept of the United Nations, have facilitated the undertaking of this

challenge. It is important to note that the United Nations member countries are required to implement the tasks set out in the resolutions adopted at UN conferences. The UN documents recommend cooperation in the implementation of these tasks at the highest possible national and international level, as well as within the UN itself.

The problem of standardization in toponymy and cartography was discussed at the United Nations Economic and Social Council as early as 1948,¹ and again five years later, at the fifteenth session of the Council in 1953. This subject came up during the 1950s at many international scientific meetings, such as the Pan American Institute of Geography and History, the International Council of Onomastic Sciences, the International Civil Aviation Organization, and at meetings of experts in topography and cartography, such as the Scientific Council for Africa South of the Sahara and the United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Far East.² The result of the discussions that took place at these scientific forums was the initiative for the United Nations to undertake the coordination of international cooperation aimed at the standardization of geographical names. In response to this universal demand, in 1956, the United Nations Economic and Social Council asked the Secretary-General to prepare a programme aimed at maximizing international unification of the spelling of geographical names. In 1958, following the necessary consultations with member countries and interested organisations, the UN Secretary-General sent a letter to all UN member countries and specialized departments. There was a widespread consensus about the underlying principles of the future project, namely: 1) the international standardization of geographical names is possible with respect to their written form, but it is not possible to unify the sound form of names; 2) for the purposes of standardization of written forms, the use of the international phonetic alphabet is impractical; 3) international standardization must be

¹ Cf. http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/grupa_eksp.php (accessed 20.04.2016).

² On the beginnings of international cooperation on the standardization of geographical names, I am writing based on L. Ratajski (1969) and D.J. Orth, *Introduction. Geographical names*. “World Cartography” Vol. 18, 1986.

based on national standardization; 4) the standardization of geographical names requires long-term and systematic international cooperation (D.J. Orth 1986). The next step was a resolution adopted at the 2nd United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Far East, which pointed to the benefits of creating a small, representative group of consultants experienced in the field and able to tackle difficult issues in geographic names on a global scale. In 1959, the United Nations Economic and Social Council adopted a resolution to establish a group of experts to develop guidelines and recommendations for the standardization of geographical names at the national and international level. The group met several times from 1960 onwards, preparing the ground for the aforementioned 1st United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, which was to be held in Geneva in 1967. The conclusions of the meetings, including suggestions regarding the scope and directions of standardization, were published in the "World Cartography" journal.

3. The 1st United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the creation of the UNGEGN

In retrospect, the work of the temporary UN experts' group should be assessed very highly. As L. Ratajski (1969, p. 10) notes: "These materials formed the basis for a broad international discussion" at the Geneva Conference. Ratajski's statement was by no means an standard formula: the conference was attended by 109 participants from 54 countries, as well as representatives of numerous international scientific organisations, such as International Cartographic Association (ICA), International Geographical Union (IGU), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG), Scientific Committee on Antarctic Research of the International Council of Scientific Unions, International Hydrographic Bureau (since 1970 International Hydrographic Organization – IHO), and Pan American Institute of Geography and History. Specialized UN departments also participated – Universal Postal Union (UPU), International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and of course the United Na-

tions Secretariat (L. Ratajski 1969, p. 10). As mentioned above, the proceedings lasted almost three weeks. The list of participating countries, institutions and organisations shows the size and diversity of the demand for a unified global nomenclature. The task of compiling this collection could not be managed by the previously appointed small group of experts, so the first resolution of the Geneva Conference of 1967 recommended that the Economic and Social Council appoint a United Nations Permanent Committee of Experts on Geographical Names. The Council appointed this body on 31 May 1968; since 1973 it has been called the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. The UNGEGN has a permanent secretariat and publishes the UNGEGN Information Bulletin on a biannual cycle.

It is clear from the perspective of the past fifty years that the areas of joint action determined at the time (national standardization, geographical terms, spelling schemes and the systematic international exchange of information) were well-defined, as were the principles and methods of standardization. On the basis of the resolutions made by the Geneva Conference (fig. 2). Lech Ratajski (1969) described the scope of activities envisaged in each of these areas. This information serves to outline the point of departure and to indicate the directions for further development of this programme, designed with extraordinary impetus from the beginning. It should be added that these activities were planned in a world that still had little sense of the significance and potential of electronic communications and space technologies.

4. UNGEGN objectives, methodological guidelines and main directions of activity

Among the objectives set out for the UNGEGN in 1967, it is important to firstly mention the testing and proposal of principles, policies and suitable methods to address the national and transnational problems of standardization. In practice, the actions were to include:

- gathering data on geographical objects;
- creating national (followed by global) databases, organised according to unified principles;
- making this data available to the international community, for example through uniform

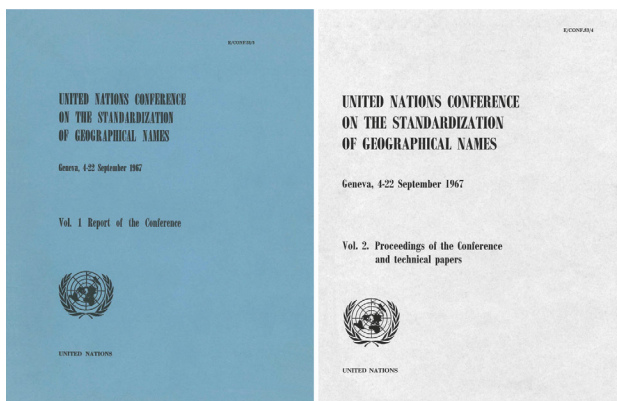


Fig. 2. Covers of the publications from the first United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names – Report of the Conference (vol. 1) and Proceedings of the Conference and technical papers (vol. 2).

recording rules (transliteration into the Latin alphabet system) and geographical identification (coordinates).

In the UN documents, co-signed by Poland, the “international standardization of geographical names” is understood as “activity aimed at reaching maximum practical uniformity in the rendering – oral and written – of all geographical names on Earth, by means of national standardization, and/or international convention, including the correspondence between different languages and writing systems”³. Meanwhile, the “standardization of geographical names” is defined as “the prescription by a names authority of one or more particular names, together with their precise written form, for application to a specific geographical feature, as well as the conditions for their use”. A “names authority” should be understood as “a body such as a person, board or commission, assigned advisory function and/or power of decision in matters of toponymy by a legally constituted entity such as a State”. The “national standardization of geographical names” refers to “the standardization of geographical names within the area of a national entity, such as a State”. These definitions, although vague, contributed to the unification of the standardization procedures,

especially where no such traditions had yet been established. Without questioning the possibility of different organisational arrangements in the various countries of the Geneva Conference, there are certain rules that should be met by each “names authority”. It should have a stable composition, a specified authority (such as a chairperson), rules and instructions of procedure, and a specific policy for the standardization of names in that country. In terms of the administrative and legal consequences, it was important that the names authority functioned within the framework of the national authorities. This was to ensure uniform nomenclature, at least in the official domain. In order to ensure international coordination, individual countries had to notify the UNGEGN secretariat of the name, address, composition and any other information relating to their names authorities.

During the standardization process, a proposal was made to utilise the experience and knowledge of topographic experts, cartographers, geographers, linguists and other professionals to ensure a high-level list of official toponyms. There was also an anticipation of the need to compile and maintain the data and to publish the official lists for rapid and widespread dissemination of the national and international standardized forms. The compiled data was to include the fixed form of notation and the (tape-recorded) pronunciation of the name, its meaning in the given language, its

³ Definitions of “standardization of geographical names”, “international” and “national standardization of geographical names”, and “names authority” according to the *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names*, New York: United Nations, 2002.

documentation on maps and in historical records, official books and so on, as well as the nature of the object and its location (here, the usefulness of aerial photographs was indicated). The astonishing level of detail of the guidelines contained in the resolutions of the first UN standardization conference resulted from the problems encountered in relation to standardization in countries with no tradition of cartography (or even literature), and in multilingual countries. It was necessary to settle the status of allonyms (two or more names for one object), as well as frequent cases of unclear relations of parts to whole objects. It was desirable to maintain the relative stabilization of the lists of standardized names (according to the principle that the name should not be changed unless it was necessary). It was also pointed out that the form of standardized names should respect the orthographic rules adopted in that country, taking into account – where justified – dialectical forms. Furthermore, the rules were to be established in all countries for the treatment of complex names and standards for formulating abbreviations in geographical names. Following the name collection stage, the official lists of toponyms (gazetteers⁴) needed to be updated on a regular basis.

After more than twenty years of UNGEGN operation, its activities were evaluated using surveys conducted in the Member Countries (J. Kondracki 1992). Attention was drawn to the large number of resolutions adopted at the standardization conferences (119 resolutions were adopted at the first four conferences alone), leading to the reduced effectiveness of these recommendations. The existing resolutions had to be aggregated, revised and potentially withdrawn due to being obsolete, and at subsequent meetings the number of resolutions was restricted to the absolutely necessary. This was to prevent information chaos and improve the efficiency of UNGEGN operations. The secretariat of the organisation carried out the preliminary work and collected, organised and published all the resolutions on its web-

site. They were translated into Polish and are available on the website of the Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland⁵.

Reading the recommendations of the first Geneva Conference today, we see their universality; most of them are still current and helpful. We are also currently guided by these recommendations in the standardization process used in both the naming committees operating in Poland: the Commission for the Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects, operating at the Ministry of the Interior and Administration, and the Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland (run by the Surveyor General of Poland). This is due, among other things, to the compatibility of these guidelines with the Polish tradition of standardization dating back to the beginning of the Second Republic (1918–1939).

5. Terminological problems

Since the first UN conference devoted to geographical names, terminological issues have been of key importance to participants' deliberations. One of the resolutions adopted at that time recommended the creation of a set of toponym terms and their glossaries⁶:

“The Conference,

Recognizing the importance of geographical terms as used in a given region,

Urges that the recommendations that follow should be given complete and due consideration by national names authorities.

RECOMMENDATION A. STUDY OF THE NATURE OF GEOGRAPHICAL ENTITIES

It is recommended that a study be made of the nature of geographical entities which in a given region have names, as well as the various meanings of the words used to designate those features. The studies may bring to light noteworthy facts which would allow a better understanding of the geographical entities named. They may also serve to bring out the deficiencies of ordinary dictionaries in this respect.

⁴ A gazetteer is a list of toponyms, usually arranged in alphabetical order, along with their location (geographic coordinates). They also include name variants (e.g. for Cape Town: *Kaapstad*, *Ekapa*, *Le Cap*, *Kapkaupunki*), designation of object types (e.g. town, highland, river), and sometimes additional descriptive information.

⁵ http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/grupa_eksp_02.php

⁶ This is a quotation of the Polish translation, cf. footnote 5 of the materials and provisions of the Geneva Conference published in New York in 1968 (*United Nations Conference 1968*).

RECOMMENDATION B. GLOSSARIES

It is recommended that national gazetteers should include a glossary, not necessarily published in the same volume.

RECOMMENDATION C. DEFINITION OF "GENERIC TERM"

The approval of the following definition of "generic term" is recommended:

Generic term: Term included in a geographical name, indicating the type of the named entity and having the same meaning in current local use.

RECOMMENDATION D. DEFINITION OF "GLOSSARY"

The approval of the following definition of "glossary" is recommended:

Glossary: Collection of generic terms with their meanings in geographical names".

(Resolution I/19, Geneva, 1967).

It is noted that, although it is difficult to achieve total uniformity in all national gazetteers or geographical glossaries, it is recommended that the following elements be included in their structure:

- 1) a comprehensive, alphabetical glossary of descriptive terms used in the gazetteer with a brief explanation of their meaning,
- 2) a comprehensive, alphabetical glossary of generic terms occurring in the gazetteer with a brief explanation of their meaning and range of occurrence, and with a reference to the descriptive term under which they are located,
- 3) a comprehensive glossary of abbreviations of descriptive terms or other applicable codes,
- 4) a comprehensive, alphabetical glossary of abbreviations used on the maps which form the basis for compiling the gazetteer.

In addition to the geographical terminology in UNGEGN publications, there has been a gradual increase in the importance placed on technical terminology – that is, operating terms – related to the very procedure for the standardization of geographical names. Vocabulary in this area occurs in all UNGEGN resolutions, in materials for UNGEGN conferences and sessions, and in the laws and regulations of particular countries – for example, 'standardization', 'exonym', 'transliteration', and so on. At the second United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (London 1972), the initial version of the English-

French-Spanish terminology glossary⁷ was presented and the need to collect and define, in the various languages, the technical terms used in standardization was highlighted⁸. In subsequent years, versions were prepared in the other UN languages: Arabic, Russian and Chinese. This work was carried out by the Working Group on Definitions, which was later transformed into the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology. In Poland, the English version of the 1986 list was translated by Jerzy Kondracki, supplementing the then-current list of 178 entries with the German equivalents (J. Kondracki 1989b). The next Polish version of the glossary, translated by the same author, appeared in 1998 (*Słownik terminów...* 1998). In its new form, the UNGEGN published the six-language terminology glossary in 2002⁹ (fig. 3). The latest, improved translation of this glossary into Polish was published in 2014 (*Słownik terminów...* 2014). It is available on the website of the Commission for the Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland.

6. Translational problems

As mentioned above, in the 1950s the unification of geographical names was considered possible with respect to their written form and the international phonetic alphabet was not regarded as suitable for these purposes. Over time, the international standardization of geographical names has been defined as an activity aimed at achieving maximum uniformity in the representation of all geographic names of objects on the Earth in both oral and written form. Initially, the focus was on the translatability

⁷ *A glossary of technical terminology for employment in the standardization of geographical names, prepared by the Working Group on Definitions of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Geographical Names*, 2nd United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, London, 10–31 May 1972. See: https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEgn/docs/2nd-uncsgn-docs/E_Conf61_L1_Rev1_en.pdf and https://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/UNGEgn/docs/2nd-uncsgn-docs/2uncsgn_econf61_L1_Rev2.pdf.

⁸ Outline of the UNGEGN's work on the glossary of technical terms for J. Kondracki (1989b).

⁹ *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names*, New York: Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, 2002.



Fig. 3. *Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names* – UNGEGN publication of 2002 in six official languages of the UN and the Polish edition of 1998

of languages and script systems, recommending the determination of the form of each name in the Latin alphabet – a procedure known as ‘romanization’ (*Glossary of terms... 2002*)¹⁰. In practice, there are two major models of romanization: transcription and transliteration. Transliteration means the use of an alphabetic writing system to render a single graphic symbol from system A using a single graphic symbol from system B; the idea of transliteration is the complete conversion of entry B into entry A. However, this model situation rarely occurs. Over the years, individual states have taken to proposing systems for transliterating their writing systems into the Latin alphabet and, following discussions at the UN (at UNGEGN conferences), other countries have tried to apply them on a voluntary basis. Transcription refers to the writing in one writing system of the speech sounds of another language; in this case, transcriptional tables are an internal matter for each country. The advantage of transcription is that it gives an idea of the

sound of the name in the original, which is why this method is often used in school textbooks. From the Polish point of view, a resolution of importance from the first Geneva Conference states that “the accents and diacritical signs which accompany the Roman alphabet letters of many languages are an integral part of the spelling of these languages should remain unmodified”. An attempt was later made to repeal this principle in relation to the Polish language, for example; however, the Polish side did not agree to this repeal.

The multiplicity of variants of single objects (allonyms) in the 1950s and 1960s, especially in (post)colonial countries, gave rise to the idea of developing an international alphabet (L. Ratajski 1969, p. 12). Over time, however, this concept was abandoned, because the usefulness of English and the Latin alphabet, which are devoid of diacritic marks, has been proven in international circulation.

7. Organisational structure of the UNGEGN: beginnings and subsequent changes

At this point, it would be useful to provide an outline of the organisational structure of the

¹⁰ At the 2nd Conference in London (1972) there was a discussion of the equivalents of the English term ‘romanization’ in the French and Spanish glossaries of standardization terms, cf. Resolution 37.

UN Group of Experts on Geographical Names, as planned at the first conference in 1967 and subsequently convening in the form of the UNGEGN. In order to accomplish its objectives, since 1972, this body has been divided into smaller Linguistic/Geographical Divisions. There were initially fourteen divisions, but this number (as well as the numbering of divisions) has changed over time. According to the UN rules, each country chooses the language/regional division it wants to participate in as a member or observer. Due to the variety of issues cultivated by different countries, as well as their needs and interests, the divisions were formed according to different criteria – for example, the Baltic Division, East Central and South-East Europe Division, French-speaking Division and Celtic Division, India Division, USA/Canada Division. The number of language/regional divisions is open; there are currently 24 groups of countries. From the beginning, Poland is a member of the East Central and South-East Europe Division (figs. 4 and 5), and a member of the Baltic Division since 2012.

‘Rome’ or ‘Germany’ in English) and are still widely used. Another problem that was not addressed at the beginning is the issue of respecting the names in minority languages. These issues led to the emergence of new working groups within the UNGEGN.

Directing the initial activity of the UNGEGN on the written documentation of toponyms created the most problems in countries with no tradition of written language, especially in the postcolonial African countries emerging in the 1960s. For these countries, the decision was made to organise toponymy courses, to help train topographers and cartographers. The success of the first course resulted in the creation of a special working group for the organisation of training. Since 2012, online toponymy courses have been available on the UNGEGN website.

Directly after the founding of the UNGEGN, the Working Group on Romanization Systems was formed to deal with the transliteration of non-Latin scripts. As for transcription, although specific transcription systems are not dis-



Fig. 4. 20th Session of the East Central and South-East Europe Division of the UNGEGN (Zagreb, 2011)

Working groups were set up to work on the individual UNGEGN tasks. Their composition and number are variable, depending on the current needs and decisions of the Member States. At the first conference in Geneva, for example, they were not yet fully aware of the problems of exonyms – the traditional names for foreign objects. These names were sometimes adopted in the distant past (such as

discussed at the international level, over time, the Working Group on Pronunciation was formed to deal with theoretical issues. The IT revolution and the emergence of new technologies have led to major changes in the activities of the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers. Above all, there has been a substantial increase in the informational resources on toponyms and the precision of localization,

and fundamental changes in the organisation of work on these issues, inasmuch as state registries of geographical names have been created in many countries based on similar principles and methods. Social and political changes on a global scale have also resulted in the emergence at the UNGEGN of the subject of minority languages as the cultural heritage of humanity. As a result, the Working Group on the Promotion of Recording and Use of Indigenous, Minority and Regional Language Group Geographical Names changed its name in 2012 to the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage. Currently, the following Working Groups are active within the UNGEGN:

- on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers
- on Exonyms
- on Country Names
- on Romanization Systems
- on Toponymic Terminology
- on Training Courses in Toponymy
- on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage
- on Publicity and Funding
- on Evaluation and Implementation
- on Pronunciation.

In addition to the conference, which is held every five years, smaller sessions on the standardization of geographical names are held every two years (29 so far). The conferences involve the adoption of resolutions, including recommendations for the Economic and Social Council and the Member States. Both the conferences and the sessions have a regular agenda, with the main section devoted to individual country reports; the conferences also include reports from the regional divisions and working groups. The reports cover updates on the activities of the names authorities, legal acts, publications, databases, and so on, related to the national and international standardization of geographical names. The experts delegated by individual countries function within two institutional frameworks: the language/regional divisions and the working groups.

8. Poland's contribution to the national and international standardization of geographical names

The plan for the global organisation of geographical names (and, consequently, the organisation of knowledge about the world), outlined



Fig. 5. 22nd Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (New York, 2004) – representatives of the East Central and South-East Europe Division: Macej Zych & Izabella Krauze-Tomczyk (Poland), Milan Orožen Adamič (Slovenia), Béla Pokoly (Hungary)

in the 1st United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, has achieved uniformity in the standardization and terminology used in these activities. In the past half-century, the world has changed greatly, and the concept of standardization has spread and gained a legal basis in many countries. UNGEGN cooperation, in the form of conferences, sessions, regional division and working group meetings, toponymic courses and content-unified publications, has played an important role in the international standardization of toponyms. The publications include a multilingual terminology glossary, national gazetteers, national exonym lists, lists of country names in national languages and national toponymic guides. The guidelines propagate the standardization methodology, terminology and concept systems adopted at the United Nations, as well as containing similar content. A model example of this is the bilingual publication entitled *Toponymic Guidelines of Poland for Map Editors and Other Users – Polski przewodnik toponimiczny dla redaktorów map innych użytkowników*, 4th revised edition, 2010 (fig. 6). The guidelines include a description of the official language used in the country (in some cases, more than one language), focusing on the alphabet, the phonological system, the rules of pronunciation and spelling, and the regional dialects of the national language. In the Polish guidelines, similar information is given

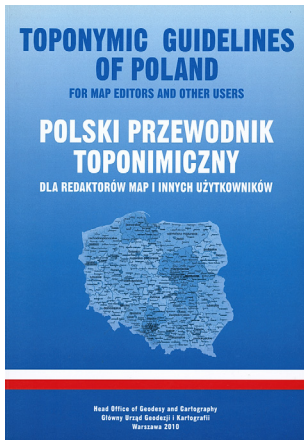


Fig. 6. Cover of *Toponymic guidelines of Poland for map editors and other users – Polski przewodnik toponimiczny dla redaktorów map i innych użytkowników*, Fourth revised edition, Warszawa 2010

for minority languages, along with a list of names in those languages. The guidelines also describe the history and organisation of the standardization of geographical names, including the legal bases and the names authorities. The glossary mentions the source materials that were important to the standardization process, and presents the current administrative division of the country. There is a glossary of the terms and abbreviations which are used on the maps and are necessary to their understanding. Many other countries, including Slovakia, Sweden, Ukraine and Estonia, also distribute the results of their standardization work to other member countries in this way.

In Poland, there are two naming committees which deal with the preparation of standardization publications: Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects and Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland. Obligations are imposed on these names authorities by parliamentary acts and departmental regulations, ordering the systematic, periodical publication of official lists of geographical names. Attempts to develop a national gazetteer were made with the publications *Nazwy*

geograficzne Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej (*Geographical Names of the Republic of Poland*) (1991) and *Polskie nazwy geograficzne świata* (*Polish geographical names of the world*) (1994–1996); the latter, however, contained no geographic coordinates. This deficiency is compensated for with the *Urzędowy wykaz polskich nazw geograficznych świata* (*Official list of Polish geographical names of the world*) (2013). *Urzędowy wykaz nazw państw i terytoriów nie-samodzielnych* (*Official list of names of countries and non-self-governing territories*) is published every two years (the latest being issue 3, updated 2015). The website of the Ministry of Interior and Administration publishes official lists of place names, as well as lists of additional minority names.

In the work of the UNGEGN, Poland clearly shows its presence through various forms of activity and work within the organisational framework described above, and through publications and activities within the country. Polish representatives have taken part in the UN standardization conferences from the very beginning (with the exception of the 1992 and 2007 conferences); Polish experts have also systematically participated in several working groups (for example, on exonyms). This participation is not limited to reports on national activity, but Poland has usually aimed to report theoretical issues at the plenary sessions (more than 20 in total). As a result, Poland is one of the most active members at the UNGEGN forum. Between 1977 and 1982, Poland was the coordinator of the East Central and South-East Europe Division¹¹, as well as organising the meeting for the Working Group on Exonyms in 2012 and the Baltic Division meeting in 2015.

Poland has also made less formal contacts through accomplishing minor standardization tasks, such as the diagnosis of differences in the naming of cross-border objects (Poland – Czech Republic – Slovakia, M. Zych 2015). The result of the UNGEGN's activities is the creation of an international forum for discussing naming problems, which are not always uniformly perceived.

¹¹ http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/grupa_eksp_03.php

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