



# UNITED NATIONS GROUP OF EXPERTS ON GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Advancing geographical names standardization through inclusive, culturally-informed and evidence-based solutions to support sustainable development

2025 Session | 28 April – 2 May 2025 | @UNSD\_GEGN, #2025UNGEGN



## United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

2025 session

Item 9b of the provisional agenda\*

***Promotion and capacity-building: 9b. Toponymic training and education***

### Concept Note

## Toponymic Training 2030: Building Capacity for Tomorrow's Geographical Names Challenges

**Date:** Wednesday, 30 April 2025

**Timeslot:** 3:00-6:00 pm

### Background and Context

The Working Group on Funding and Training Courses in Toponymy, established in 2023, has identified a significant educational gap in geographical names management. A recent survey conducted between December 2024 and March 2025 revealed that the majority of professionals working in the field lack formal training, despite the technical complexity of toponymic standardization. This training deficit spans across all continents and represents a critical challenge to UNGEGN's mission of building capacity in geographical names standardization worldwide.

Current efforts to provide training face substantial funding challenges, which has limited the organization's capacity to support experts from developing countries and constrained the Working Group's ability to organize comprehensive training courses. These constraints have created a growing gap between UNGEGN's educational objectives and its implementation capacity, particularly affecting developing nations where toponymic expertise is crucial for sustainable development and cultural heritage preservation.

### Objectives

1. To identify innovative approaches for delivering toponymic training that address the educational gap while working within existing resource constraints
2. To establish a strategic framework for the development of targeted training programs focusing on priority needs, such as database management, sustainable practices, standardization principles and minority rights.

## **Format Description**

The session will comprise two interconnected components on two separate days. In the afternoon of 30 April, a:

### ***Panel Discussion (45 minutes)***

- Moderated discussion with 4 panelists from different regions and representing diverse training expertise perspectives
- Exploration of practical implementation strategies for training framework
- Interactive Q&A with moderator and session participants

The panel discussion is followed up thematically the next day, 1 May by a:

### ***Special Presentation (45 minutes)***

- Ingvil Brugger Budal: The e-learning course on the Norwegian Place Name Act and work on the standardization of geographical names.
- A presentation of a bespoke toponymic management training course developed by the Norwegian Language Council
- Duration: 30 minutes + 15 minutes discussion.

## **Thematic Focus**

The session will address the following key themes:

### **1. Digital Transformation in Toponymic Training**

- a. Leveraging online platforms and webinars to extend the reach of training programs
- b. Creating downloadable resources to accommodate for local training programs
- c. Developing certification systems to recognize skills development

### **2. Hybrid Learning Approaches**

- a. Balancing preference for in-person training with financial constraints
- b. Strategic coordination of regional training hubs to maximize impact
- c. Integrating digital and face-to-face instruction methodologies

## **Participants**

- Special presentation
  - Ingvil Brugger Budal, Norway
- Panel discussion

- Marie Thériault, Canada (expert, educational sciences and theories)
- Peter Jordan, Austria (Toponymic expert)
- TBA (have previous toponymic training)
- TBA (no previous toponymic training)
- Peder Gammeltoft, Norway (Moderator)

### **Target Audience:**

- UNGEGN delegates (in-person and online)
- Representatives from national names authorities (online).
- International organizations involved in geographical names management (in-person and online).
- Academic institutions engaged in toponymic research and training (online).

### **Relevance to UNGEGN Work**

This session directly addresses core elements of UNGEGN's mandate:

1. It responds to the training gap identified in the recent assessment survey, where two-thirds of toponymic professionals reported no formal training despite working in this specialized field.
2. It aligns with UNGEGN's mission of building capacity in geographical names standardization across all regions, with particular attention to developing countries where expertise is crucial for sustainable development and cultural heritage preservation.
3. It provides a strategic framework for addressing the educational objectives outlined in the Working Group's mandate while acknowledging the financial constraints that currently limit traditional training approaches.
4. It supports the Working Group's call for establishing a Trust Fund that could enhance digital training frameworks while selectively supporting in-person training where most beneficial.

### **Expected Outcomes**

1. Consensus on priority training areas for immediate development, with particular focus on database management, sustainable practices, and standardization principles.
2. Agreement on implementation steps for an integrated training approach combining online resources, webinars, and selective in-person components.
3. Recommendations regarding the establishment of a Trust Fund to support training initiatives, including potential funding sources and governance mechanisms.

4. Commitment from participating nations and organizations to contribute expertise and resources to the development of training modules in their areas of specialization.