



# Economic and Social Council

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## United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names

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Item 8 (c) of the provisional agenda\*

**Culture, heritage and language recognition: exonyms**

### Visualizing place-name qualities on maps and in texts

#### Summary\*\*

The difference between endonym and exonym is not just a marginal aspect of place names – it has consequences for space-related identity and the pragmatics of place-name use. It can also be politically sensitive. The same applies to place names of linguistic majorities and minorities and their relative legal status.

Therefore, the typographical representation of endonyms and exonyms, as well as of place names of linguistic majorities and minorities on maps and in texts, is not just a marginal aspect. Cartographic practice, however, varies widely in both respects, and standardization efforts are scarce or have not been successful thus far. The same is true for representing the endonym/exonym divide, as well as the majority/minority name dichotomy, in written texts.

When majority and minority names are legally at the same level (e.g. both are official), they would have to be represented in the same way, namely by using the same font type and size, separated by a slash. Most frequently, however, the minority name appears in brackets, in a smaller font size and/or in a different font type. That approach would also be appropriate for endonyms of the same legal status as an inseparable name compound that had to appear also in written texts invariably in the same way. With exonyms used in a written text of the context language, in contrast, consideration could be given to adding the endonym only upon first mention of the feature in an article or a book chapter, for example in square brackets (square to indicate the special quality of the divide). Subsequent mentions would not feature the corresponding endonym, only the exonym.

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\* [GEGN.2/2025/1](#).

\*\* The full report was prepared by Peter Jordan (Austria), Austrian Academy of Sciences and Honorary Chair, Austrian Board on Geographical Names. The report will be available at [https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/4th\\_session\\_2025/](https://unstats.un.org/unsd/ungegn/sessions/4th_session_2025/), in the language of submission only, as document GEGN.2/2025/19/CRP.19.

