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English

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**United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names**

**2025 session**

New York, 28 April – 2 May 2025

Item 8 (c) of the provisional agenda \*

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

## **Report of the Working Group on Exonyms**

Submitted by the Working Group on Exonyms\*\*

### **Summary**

The report provides a description of the activities of the Working Group on Exonyms since the 2023 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, held in New York from 1 to 5 May 2023. The twenty-fifth meeting of the Working Group, a business meeting, was held on 1 May 2023 as a side event of the 2023 session.

The twenty-sixth meeting of the Working Group was held in the form of a workshop on 14, 15 and 18 May 2024 in Prague. The meeting was hosted by the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Czech Office for Surveying, Mapping and Cadastre. It was held back to back with the twenty-eighth meeting of the East Central and South-East Europe Division.

The two main themes of the twenty-sixth meeting were the draft resolution on the use and safeguarding of exonyms and the remaining ambiguities of the endonym/exonym divide. The meeting was attended in person by 25 experts from 14 countries and was live-streamed. Twelve papers on various aspects of exonyms were presented and discussed. The discussion led to a general agreement on a new draft text that contained a call for the reconsideration of past resolutions of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names in which a blanket reduction of exonym use had been requested. Two online meetings were subsequently held to consolidate the draft text.

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\* GEGN.2/2025/1

\*\* Prepared by Kohei Watanabe, Convenor of the Working Group on Exonyms

## Report of the Working Group on Exonyms

### 1. Organizational Aspects

The Working Group on Exonyms was established in 2002 by the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in Berlin. Resolution VIII/4 specifies its tasks with taking measures for “the categorization of exonym use, the publication of pronunciation guides for endonyms and the formulation of guidelines ensuring a politically sensitive use of exonyms”.

#### 1.1 Working Group meetings held

- 1st Meeting: Berlin, 6 September 2002, in the framework of the 8th UNCSGN
- 2nd Meeting: Prague, 24-26 September 2003, hosted by the Czech Office for Surveying, Mapping and Cadastre
- 3rd Meeting: New York, 2004, in the framework of the 22nd UNGEGN session
- 4th Meeting: Ljubljana, 19-20 May 2005, hosted by the Anton Melik Geographical Institute of the Scientific Research Centre of the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts
- 5th Meeting: Vienna, 2006, in the framework of the 23rd UNGEGN session
- 6th Meeting: Prague, 17-18 May 2007, hosted by the Czech Office for Surveying, Mapping and Cadastre.
- 7th Meeting: New York, 29 August 2007, in the framework of the 24th UNGEGN session
- 8th Meeting: Timișoara, 9-11 September 2008, hosted by the West University of Timișoara, the Romanian Academy of Sciences, the Romanian Military Institute of Cartography and the Adam Mueller-Guttenbrunn House
- 9th Meeting: Nairobi, 11 May 2009, in the framework of the 25th UNGEGN session
- 10th Meeting: Tainach (Austria), 28-30 April 2010, hosted by the Austrian Board on Geographical Names and the Catholic Educational Centre “Sodalitas”
- 11th Meeting: Vienna, 4 May 2011, in the framework of the 26th UNGEGN session, but outside UN facilities, hosted by the Austrian Board on Geographical Names
- 12th Meeting: Gdańsk, 16-18 May 2012, hosted by the Polish Main Office of Geodesy and Cartography
- 13th Meeting: New York, 6 August 2012, in the framework of the 10th UN Conference
- 14th Meeting: Corfu, 23-25 May 2013, hosted by the Greek UNGEGN delegation, the Greek Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the City of Corfu
- 15th Meeting: New York, 29 April 2014, in the framework of the 28th UNGEGN session
- 16th Meeting: Hermagor (Austria), 5-7 June 2014, hosted by the Austrian Board on Geographical Names
- 17th Meeting: Zagreb, 14-16 May 2015, hosted by the Miroslav Krleža Institute of Lexicography, Zagreb
- 18th Meeting: Bangkok, 26 April 2016, in the framework of the 29th UNGEGN session
- 19th Meeting: Prague, 4-6 April 2017, hosted by the Czech Geodetical Office and Land Survey Office
- 20th Meeting: New York, 9 August 2017, in the framework of the 30th UNGEGN session
- 21st Meeting: Riga, 24-26 September 2018, hosted by the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency, in collaboration with the Latvian Language Institute of the University of Latvia
- 22nd Meeting: New York, 2 May 2019, in the framework of the 2019 UNGEGN session
- 23rd Meeting: Online, 4 May 2021, in the framework of the 2021 UNGEGN session
- 24th Meeting: Ljubljana, 31 August - 3 September 2022, hosted by the Anton Melik Geographical Institute
- 25th Meeting: New York, 1 May 2023, in the framework of the 2023 UNGEGN session

- 26th Meeting: Prague 14 to 15 May 2024, hosted by the Institute of Ethnology, Czech Academy of Sciences, and the Czech Office for Surveying, Mapping, and Cadastre

## 1.2 Working Group proceedings published

JORDAN Peter, OROŽEN ADAMIČ Milan, WOODMAN Paul (eds.) (2007), *Exonyms and the International Standardisation of Geographical Names. Approaches towards the Resolution of an Apparent Contradiction* (Wiener Osteuropa Studien, 24). Wien – Berlin: LIT Verlag, 240p., ISBN 978-3-8258-0035-2, ISSN 0946-7246.

JORDAN Peter, BERGMANN Hubert, BURGESS Caroline, CHEETHAM Catherine (eds.) (2011), *Trends in Exonym Use. Proceedings of the 10th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting*, Tainach, 28-30 April 2010 (Name & Place, 1). Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 328p., ISBN 978-3-8300-5656-0.

WOODMAN Paul (ed.) (2012), *The Great Toponymic Divide. Reflections on the definition and usage of endonyms and exonyms*. Warszawa: Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography, 302p. ISBN 978-83-254-1967-7.

JORDAN Peter, WOODMAN Paul (eds.) (2014), *The Quest for Definitions. Proceedings of the 14th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting*, Corfu, 23-25 May 2013 (Name & Place, 3) Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 295p., ISBN 978-3-8300-7747-3.

JORDAN Peter, WOODMAN Paul (eds.) (2015), *Confirmation of the Definitions. Proceedings of the 16th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting*, Hermagor, 5-7 June 2014 (Name & Place, 4). Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 244p., ISBN 978-3-8300-8422-8.

JORDAN Peter, WOODMAN Paul (eds.) (2016), *Criteria for the Use of Exonyms. Proceedings of the 17th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting*, Zagreb, 14-16 May 2015 (Name & Place, 6). Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 170p., ISBN 978-3-8300-8946-9.

JORDAN Peter, ŠVEHLOVÁ Irena, WOODMAN Paul (eds.) (2018), *A Survey of Exonym Use. Proceedings of the 19th UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting*, Prague, 6-8 April 2017 (Name & Place, 7). Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 191p., ISBN 978-3-8300-9997-0.

DOLLIMORE Allison, WATANABE Kohei (eds.) (2019), *The Classification of Exonyms, Proceedings of the 21st UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms Meeting*, Riga, 24-26 September 2018 (Name & Place, 8), Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač, 204p., ISBN 978-3-339-11122-7

## 1.3 Members, Convenors

The Working Group is open to all those interested in the topic. The group keeps contact with roughly 100 experts from more than 30 countries. Meetings are usually attended by more than 30 experts. Those who wish to attend or be informed about the Working Group's activities should please contact the Working Group Convenor.

Convenors:

- 2002-2004: Milan OROŽEN ADAMIČ (Slovenia)
- 2004-2006: co-convenors Peter JORDAN (Austria), Milan OROŽEN ADAMIČ
- 2006-2012: convenor in charge Peter JORDAN, co-convenor Milan OROŽEN ADAMIČ
- 2012-2017: Peter JORDAN
- 2017-: Kohei WATANABE

## 1.4 Working Group website

The Working Group maintains a website accessible at <http://ungegn.zrc-sazu.si>. It is hosted by the ZRC SAZU, Anton Melik Geographical Institute, and updated by Matjaž Geršič. It contains detailed reports of all Working Group meetings, links to all Working Group publications, and files contributed by members on the outcome of their activities on exonyms, such as lists of exonyms used in their languages.

## 2. Activities since the last UNGEGN session in 2023

Since the 2023 UNGEGN session in New York on 1-5 May 2023, the Working Group held one business meeting (25th) and a workshop meeting (26th), as well as two major online meetings.

### 2.1 Meetings

#### 2.1.1 25th Meeting: New York, 1 May 2023

The Working Group met on 1 May 2023 during the 2023 session of UNGEGN at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Working Group convenor Kohei Watanabe chaired the meeting, which lasted for about 1 hour 45 minutes.

The meeting focused on the proposed resolution. The convenor explained the development since decision 2/2021/12 (c), which requested the Working Group to conduct further discussions on finding guidelines that reconcile the current resolutions of UNGEGN on exonyms and its acknowledgement of exonyms as part of the cultural heritage. This included the contents of the intensive discussions that took place at the 24th meeting of the exonyms working group, held in Ljubljana. The draft resolution agreed as a result of the Ljubljana meeting was presented. Some participants raised concerns and disagreements on the draft. In the end, it was decided that the draft would be reported to item 13 (exonyms) in the plenary session only as the current status of work on the topic and not be put forward for adoption as a resolution.

Following the discussion in item 13 of the 2023 session, Decision 3/2023/16 (b) stated the need to issue a recommendation that reconciles the resolutions of the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names on exonyms and its acknowledgement of exonyms as part of cultural heritage for consideration at the 2025 session.

#### 2.1.2 26th Meeting: Prague 14 to 15 May 2024

The 26th meeting of the Working Group was held in the form of a workshop on 14, 15, and 18 May 2024, in Prague, Czech Republic. The event was hosted by the Institute of Ethnology of the Czech Academy of Sciences and the Czech Office for Surveying, Mapping, and Cadastre. This meeting was held back to back with the 28th meeting of the East Central and South-East Europe Division. The fieldwork on 18 May took place as a joint fieldwork of the Working Group and the East Central and South-East Europe Division.

There were two main themes for the 26th meeting: discussion on the draft resolution on “the use and safeguarding of exonyms” and “remaining ambiguities of the endonym/ exonym divide”. The meeting was attended in person by 25 experts from 14 countries and was streamed live online. Twelve papers on various aspects of exonyms were presented and discussed. The discussion led to a general agreement on a new draft text of the resolution that called for a reconsideration of past UNGEGN resolutions that requested a blanket reduction of exonym use.

The papers presented and discussed at the meeting are as follows:

- Andrea Bölcskei and Gábor Mikešy: *Hungarian names of European regions and administrative units*

- Sungjae Choo and Jihwan Yoon: *Reducing the use of exonyms in Korean.*
- Ivana Crljenko: *Ukrainian place names in the Croatian language*
- Matjaž Geršič: *Challenges in transliterating European geographical names into Arabic*
- Pierre Jaillard: *UNGEEN and exonyms: what have we already done? what remains to be done? how can we do it?*
- Peter Jordan: *The endonym/exonym divide related to transboundary features*
- Mária Kubicová: *Slovak exonyms*
- Vladimír Liščák: *Toponymy of Macau (history and today), with field examples*
- David Michalec: *About the Czech gazetteer “Jména Evropy (Names of Europe)”*
- Bogusław Zagórski: *Some modern renderings of toponyms in Mauritania – difficult question of standardization, exonymisation and popularization*
- Maciej Zych: *Streets of Warsaw named after foreign geographical features. An example of the use of exonyms in the city space*

### 2.1.3 First Virtual Meeting - 17 October 2024

The first virtual meeting to confirm the agreed draft resolution from the Prague meeting took place on 17 October 2024. About 30 experts joined the meeting. The basic concept of the draft resolution was understood, but it was felt that the draft was too long and contained superfluous parts.

### 2.1.4 Second Virtual Meeting - 27 January 2025

The second virtual meeting took place on 27 January 2025. Here, the text for a revised draft resolution significantly shorter than the previous draft resolution was presented. After incorporating a few points raised by the participants, a final agreed draft resolution was achieved. This draft is presented in GEGN.2/2025/72/CRP.72 of this present session.

## 3. Points for discussion

The Group of Experts is invited to:

- (a) Participate further in the activities of the Working Group;
- (b) Comment and provide input on issues they currently face regarding exonyms;
- (c) Suggest future directions and activities of the Working Group; and,
- (d) Consider ways to deal with current issues, as well as suggest new topics and fields on exonyms to be addressed as future projects of the Working Group.