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English

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

2023 session

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Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda *

Reports: Divisions of the Group of Experts

Report of the Baltic Division

Submitted by the Baltic Division **

Summary

The report covers the two-year period (2021–2022) since the second session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names.

There are five member countries of the Baltic Division of the Group of Experts: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and the Russian Federation. On the basis of the principle of rotation, Poland is the coordinating country for a period of four years, from 2021. The Chair of the Division is Maciej Zych (Poland) and the Vice-Chair is Rita Viliuvienė (Lithuania).

The Division has planned two meetings during the four-year period: the twenty-first meeting of the Division, which was held virtually in Tallinn on 23 and 24 September 2021, and the twenty-second meeting, which will be held in person in Warsaw from 15 to 17 March 2023. Experts from the member countries of the Division have participated in the continuous work of the Group of Experts working groups on geographical names data management, romanization systems, toponymic terminology, country names and exonyms, as well as in international events related to geographical names, some of which were organized by the Group of Experts.

Information on the Division and all of its meetings since 1992 can be found on the Division website (<http://eki.ee/knn/ungegn>).

* GEGN.2/2023/1

** Prepared by Maciej Zych, Chair of the Baltic Division in collaboration with divisional members

Report of the Baltic Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN)

The report covers the two year period (2021–2023) since the 2nd UNGEGN Session.

1. Composition of the Division

The Baltic Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), formed in 1992, is one of 24 linguistic/geographical divisions of the UNGEGN. The division comprises five member states: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Russia. Accordingly with the principle of rotation, Poland is coordinating country for a period of 4 years from 2021. Divisional Chairperson is Mr. Maciej Zych (Poland) and divisional Vice-Chair is Ms. Rita Viliuviene (Lithuania).

2. Divisional meetings

Two divisional meetings were held during the reporting period. The 21st Meeting of the Baltic Division was held virtually on 23–24 September, 2021, at the invitation of Estonian Ministry of Finance, Land Board and the Institute of the Estonian Language. 42 experts from all the member states of the Baltic Division and from three observer countries (Belarus, Slovakia and Ukraine) participated in it.

12 reports were presented and discussed during the meeting. They discussed such issues as: information and experience on national standardization of geographical names including issues concerning national authorities on the standardization of geographical names, legislation in the field of naming of geographical objects, the status and development of gazetteers, toponymic databases, address data and other registers, including open data; advantages of geographical name spatial data; developments in collecting and using of indigenous place names; street name changes over the last 30 years; reduplication and other linguistic issues in the standardization of geographical names; updating of toponymic data. The proposal to establish the Rules of the Baltic Division of UNGEGN was also discussed.

The 22nd Meeting of the Baltic Division was held in Warsaw (Poland) on 15–17 March, 2023, at the invitation of the Surveyor General of Poland, the Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography and the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland. 24 experts from four member states of the Baltic Division (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) and observers from two countries (Czechia and Slovakia) participated in it.

17 reports were presented and discussed during the meeting. They discussed such issues as: information and experience on the status of work on national standardization of geographical names carried out in their countries including issues concerning national authorities on the standardization of geographical names and legislation in the field of naming of geographical objects, the status and development perspectives of national toponymic databases, cadastres, registers etc., the naming of urban objects, farms and natural features, place names collecting, revision and updating of geographical names, using foreign geographical names (e.g. Ukrainian), the use of Arabic names for geographical features from the Baltic states, linguistic aspects related to geographical names standardization, preserving obsolete geographical names.

It was also unanimously decided at the 22nd Meeting of the Baltic Division that the only working language of the division would remain English; Russian would no longer be the working language of the Baltic Division.

Minutes, presentations and other documents of the 21st and 22nd Meetings of the Baltic Division of UNGEGN are published on the divisional website (<http://eki.ee/knn/ungegn/>).

3. Statement by experts from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland

Experts of four member states of the Baltic Division (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland) have adopted a statement in response to Russian aggression against Ukraine. In this statements, the experts of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland strongly condemned the extremely dangerous, wholly incomprehensible and completely unfounded aggression by the Russian Federation against independent Ukraine. Moreover, the experts of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland decided to cease all official contact with representatives of the Russian Federation within the Baltic Division and the UNGEGN, and called on all experts from all democratic states to do the same.

During the 22nd Meeting of the Baltic Division (15–17 March, 2023), representatives of participating countries supported this statement. The full text of the statement has been published on the divisional website (http://www.eki.ee/knn/ungegn/joint_statement_on_ukraine_2022_03.pdf).

4. Cooperation between Divisions of the UNGEGN and other cooperation

Experts of the Baltic Division member states (except Lithuania) participated in the 2nd Session of UNGEGN (2021).

Besides that experts from Latvia, Estonia and Poland have taken part in the continuous work of UNGEGN Working groups: the WG on Geographical Names Data Management (Latvia), the WG on Romanization Systems (Estonia, Poland), the WG of Toponymic Terminology (Poland), the WG on Country Names (Estonia, Poland) and the WG on Exonyms (Estonia, Latvia, Poland).

Experts from the Baltic Division member states took part also in particular UNGEGN working group meetings and other geographical names related events held in 2021-2023:

- 27th International Congress of Onomastic Sciences, August 22–27, 2021 (Kraków, Poland – in an online format);
- 25th Session of the East Central and South-East Europe Division of UNGEGN, November 9, 2021 (Bratislava, Slovakia – in an online format);
- Toponymic sessions of the Joint International Geographical Union/International Cartographic Association Commission on Toponymy during the 30th International Cartographic Conference of the International Cartographic Association, December 17, 2019 (Florence, Italy);
- 26th Session of the East Central and South-East Europe Division of UNGEGN, May 18, 2022 (Prague, Czechia);
- 6th Joint Tripartite Meeting of Geographical Names Commissions of the Czechia, Poland and Slovakia, June 14, 2022 (Bratislava, Slovakia);
- Joint 23rd Meeting of the UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms and Meeting of the UNGEGN Working Group on Terminology, August 31 – September 3, 2022 (Ljubljana, Slovenia).

5. The website

Website of the Baltic Division <http://eki.ee/knn/ungegn/> is maintained by Estonia. It provides short information on the Division and contains records of all meetings of the Baltic Division since 1992 (minutes, agenda, list of participants, reports, photos).

Conclusion

The Baltic Division of UNGEGN held two meetings during the reporting period (in 2021 and 2023). Experts from the member states have participated actively in UNGEGN and geographical names related other activities. The exchange of information inside the Division, with other divisions and interested parties outside UNGEGN has certainly contributed significantly to the national standardization of geographical names in member states and helped to promote awareness of the importance of geographical names standardization.

Points for discussion

The Group of Experts is invited to:

- (1) Take note of the present report and the progress made by the Baltic Division.
- (2) Comment and provide input on similar work being carried out in other divisions.