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**Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors as promoted by the
UNGEGN – a short introduction**

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The history of Toponymic Guidelines as promoted by the UNGEGN goes back to 1977, when the Third UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names was held in Athens (Greece). After that conference the then UNGEGN Chairman, Josef Breu (Austria), initiated a practical project to make current information on toponymy and standardization issues of different countries systematically available for cartographers and other publishers. What he had in mind was to ask each country to produce Toponymic Guidelines related to its own territory, and he sent out a first proposal for such Guidelines. At the 8th UNGEGN Session, which was held in 1979 Breu presented a working paper entitled *Toponymic Guidelines for International Cartography. Austria*, which he intended to be a sample of the Guidelines he had outlined in 1977. At the 4th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in 1982, the experts drafted a resolution where a checklist on the contents of guidelines was given. Within this very resolution a recommendation pointed out that the Austrian Toponymic Guidelines submitted by Breu should serve as a sample for future guidelines. Apart from the 4th UNGEGN Conference, resolutions to support Toponymic Guidelines were also passed at the Fifth and Sixth UNGEGN Conferences (1987 and 1992).¹

The aim of Toponymic Guidelines is to assist those who deal with geographical names in a certain country on printed products, such as maps, by providing information about the following topics:²

- the languages spoken in that country
(general remarks; national and minority languages[s] [their legal situation and practical application in administration and official cartography; alphabet(s) and transcription(s) of these languages; spelling rules for geonames; pronunciation; grammatical peculiarities essential for the treatment and understanding of geonames; distribution of main dialects and their characteristics; degree of adoption of dialect name forms to the standard form of the respective language(s)]; linguistic maps)

¹ For the text of these resolutions see <<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/toponymyguidelines.htm#RTG>> (11 Nov. 2008).

² For a complete version of the suggested content of Toponymic Guidelines see <<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/toponymyguidelines.htm#SCNTG>> (11 Nov. 2008).

- names authorities and the standardization of names
(national and provincial names authorities [aims, functions, rules, addresses]; legal aspects, procedures and progress of standardization of geonames)
- source material
(map series and gazetteers containing standardized names)
- glossary of appellatives, adjectives, prepositions etc. in the language(s) of that country necessary for the understanding of maps
- abbreviations used on national maps, their decoding and meaning

A coordinator was appointed by the UNGEGN to co-ordinate the work of developing national toponymic guidelines and maintain communication with national experts involved in the development of such guidelines. Josef Breu was to be the first coordinator of the Toponymic Guidelines until the year 1991, when Peter Raper (South Africa) took over the guidance of the project. In 2004, Isolde Hausner (Austria) was nominated coordinator for the Toponymic Guidelines.³

Until now, over 30 countries have already presented their Guidelines, some of which are also available on the internet.⁴ Chairs of UNGEGN divisions are encouraged to develop guidelines for countries in their divisions unable to initiate this work themselves. First thought only to be an interim tool for standardization until all countries have published their own gazetteers, Toponymic Guidelines have in the meantime already become one of the UNGEGN's permanent programme items.

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⁴ For Toponymic Guidelines available on the internet see
<<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/guidelineslink.htm>> (11 Nov. 2008).