

# 13<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms

## August 6<sup>th</sup> 2012

The Working Group on Exonyms (WGE) met on August 6th 2012 during the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in Conference Room "D" of the North Lawn Building of the UN Headquarters in New York (US). The Working Group's acting Co-Convenor, Mr. Peter Jordan, chaired the meeting and led the WG members through the agenda.

### Provisional Agenda

- 1) Opening
- 2) Adoption of the Agenda
- 3) Report on activities since the 11th Meeting in Vienna, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2011
- 4) Election of officers
- 5) Future activities
- 6) Date, place and thematic focus of the next meeting
- 7) Other matters
- 8) Closure

### ad 1) Opening, 2) Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Jordan opened the meeting at 08.30 a.m., welcoming the WGE members (see list of participants in the addendum). The meeting approved the draft agenda.

### ad 3) Report on activities since the 11th Meeting in Vienna, May 4<sup>th</sup> 2011

Mr. Jordan gave an overview on activities of the Working Group since the last UNGEGN Session in Vienna (AT) in 2011, especially on the 12<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the WGE, held in Gdańsk (PL) from May 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> 2012. He expressed his gratitude to the host of this meeting, the Polish Main Office of Geodesy and Cartography, and to Katarzyna Przyszewska, the responsible organizer in place. The meeting had been organized as a joint meeting together with the UNGEGN WG on Romanization Systems (Convenor: Peeter Päll). The meeting consisted of three sessions: the first session was dedicated to the endonym/exonym divide and saw papers presented by Peter Jordan (AT), Paul Woodman (UK), Phil Matthews (NZ), Ojārs Bušs (LV), Maciej Zych (PL), Herman Bell (UK) and Małgorzata Mandola (FR/PL). Most papers showed dissatisfaction with the current definitions of the endonym and the exonym, pointed out that they do not serve standardization and presented partly new proposals. The second session focused on trends in exonym use. Papers were presented by Béla Pokoly (HU), Sungjae Choo (KR), Paul Woodman (UK), Maria del Mar Battle (ES), Bogusław R. Zagórski (PL), Ivana Crljenko (HR) and Pavel Boháč (CZ). The third session referred to names in minority languages and saw papers by Zsombor Bartos-Elekes (RO), Ewa Wolnicz-Pawłowska (PL) and András Dutkó together with Mónika Mándoki (both HU).

Thus, the main themes discussed at this Gdańsk meeting, at an earlier business meeting during the 26<sup>th</sup> UNGEGN Session in Vienna and through e-mail contacts were:

- a) Endonym/exonym divide, definitions of the endonym and the exonym;
- b) Criteria for a politically sensitive use of exonyms;
- c) Question whether a third term for international waters is needed.

ad a) The current definitions were regarded not applicable, because they do not focus on essential criteria. The discussion on this issue was in Gdańsk characterized by a remarkable convergence between the positions of Mr. Jordan and Mr. Woodman, who had earlier rather different views. They convened that neither language nor official use can be regarded as essential criteria for the endonym/exonym divide.

ad b) Discussions on this topic had been very controversial at the 10<sup>th</sup> WG meeting in Tainach (AT) in 2010. So it seemed to be appropriate to insert some chill-out phase and to re-assume discussions only later. A respective paper submitted by Peter Jordan to the 26<sup>th</sup> UNGEGN Session in Vienna was just meant as basis for further discussions and not as the opinion of the WG.

ad c) Regarding the status of names for international waters related to the endonym/exonym divide three opinions are on the table: (i) A name of a coastal dweller community has endonym status all over a sea and names used by other communities have exonym status; (ii) A name of a coastal dweller community has endonym status only in coastal waters, but a name from outside can anyway be classified as an exonym, also in international waters, since an exonym does not necessarily need an endonym as a counterpart; (iii) A name of a coastal dweller community has endonym status only in coastal waters, but a name from outside can only be classified as an exonym, where an endonym exists. Thus for international waters a third term is needed.

It was stated that this question was not as urgent as the need for new definitions of endonym and the exonym.

The WG website is still hosted by the Slovenian Academy of Sciences and Arts, but is currently under construction and therefore not accessible. The person who is responsible for the website is currently abroad, works will continue after summer.

#### **ad 4) Election of officers**

Mr. Jordan explained that Mr. Milan Orožen Adamič was the first convenor of the WG, the person who had made the engine run. He had convinced Jordan in 2005 to become his co-convenor, but in 2006 Mr. Orožen Adamič was appointed ambassador of Slovenia in Zagreb and from that moment on Mr. Jordan actually acted as convenor of the WG and was confirmed in this function in Nairobi (2009). According to him the WG has – in spite of quite a number of activities like the organization of workshops and the publication of proceedings – not reached its goals yet (e.g., viable definitions of the endonym and exonym, guidelines for the use of exonyms etc.). So he announced that he would be willing to run for another term as convenor in order to accomplish at least parts of its mission. Mr. Orožen Adamič apologized for not having acted as convenor for several years and announced, that he wanted to step back, also because he had been elected chair of his division. He proposed that Jordan should become the one and only convenor of the WG. Jordan asked if a secret vote was demanded. This being refused by the WG members present Mr. Jordan was elected unanimously convenor of the WG on Exonyms. Jordan announced to establish a sort of steering committee for the WG.

#### **ad 5) Future activities**

Mr. Jordan proposed to focus in the next meetings on the following agenda items: (a) Thorough discussion of new definitions; (b) Criteria for a politically sensitive use of exonyms; (c) Categorisation of exonyms.

As a starting point for agenda item (a) Mr. Jordan presented the following definitions for the terms endonym and exonym:

*Endonym* = the name applied by the local community for a geographical feature conceived to be part of the area, where this community lives, if there is not a smaller community in place that uses a different name.

*Exonym* = the name applied by a community for a geographical feature outside the area, where this community lives and differing in its written form from the respective endonym.

He pointed out that neither language nor official use (as highlighted as criteria by the current definitions) were decisive criteria, while the relation between local community and geographical feature was in fact the essential criterion. He illustrated this by the examples of the river *Mureş* [RO], which is named by the local German community *Mieresch*, while the usual German exonym is *Marosch*, and of the Polish city Łódź, which under German occupation in World War II was officially named *Litzmannstadt*, although even at that time no local German community existed. These examples proved that the endonym/exonym divide may exist also within a language (example 1) and an official name must not necessarily be an endonym in the sense of a name “from within” (example 2).

Mr. Páll stated that the term *well-established* would have to be part of the definition, otherwise a lot of conflicts would arise and standardized names would then become exonyms. Mr. Jordan agreed and made clear that he conceives standardization as a bottom-up process. Mr. Zaccheddu expressed the opinion that the old definition would have the advantage to make lists of names comparable. According to him the proposed new definition would open up the floor for many new conflicts. Mr. Stavropoulos pointed out that changing definitions too frequently would have a negative impact on the work of UNGEGN. In addition the term *community* would be rather difficult to define, because it might implicate something different in Africa for example than in Europe. The focus of the WG would also noticeably shift towards a WG on minorities. Mr. Jordan argued that the term *community* was applicable to all kinds and sizes of human identity groups and that with geographical names in general, but even more with the endonym/exonym divide it was impossible to avoid political aspects. As to the change of definitions he remarked that other UNGEGN definitions had also already been changed a number of times. Mrs. Mandola pointed out that by the new definition the framework would change completely from a linguistic to a sociological one, and that by this process completely new spheres would be touched. Mr. Jordan commented on that by stating that language was anyway also a sociological phenomenon and that the endonym/exonym divide was in the first line a reflection of what is conceived by a community as its own and the property of others (the divide between “place” and “space”). So it was the sociological aspect that counts in this context. Mr. Alniței proposed to avoid the term *smaller* in the proposal for new definitions. According to him it would be better to use *another (community)* instead. Mr. Zych drew the attention to the fact that current activities of standardizing exonyms would result in a growth of the number of exonyms. Mr. Zaccheddu stated that the term *endonym* would not necessarily need a counterpart and proposes to operate with something like (*name*) *differing from endonym*. Mrs. Paikkala proposes to use the term *alternative name*.

Due to a lack of time items (b) and (c) could not be addressed in detail anymore. But the

meeting agreed that they also should be on the agenda of the next meetings – first and foremost, however, the question of the new definitions.

**ad 6) Date, place and thematic focus of the next meeting**

Mr. Jordan explained that he had received three proposals as to the location of the next WG meeting, planned for 2013: Corfu (GR), Timișoara or Cluj-Napoca (RO), Bucharest (RO). He asked the WG members for their preference, but received no clear response. He then proposed to choose Corfu, for the main reason that Romania had already been the venue of a WGE meeting. He also mentioned that this next meeting will have the character of a workshop according to the models of Timișoara, Tainach and Gdańsk and will last for three days including an excursion (very likely to the opposite Albanian coast). This workshop is to focus thematically on the new definitions, but other topics will not be excluded.

**ad 7) Other matters**

No other matters were brought forward.

**ad 8) Closure**

The Convenor closed the meeting at 09.45 a.m.

Hubert Bergmann  
AT  
October 2nd 2012