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THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
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REPORTS BY GOVERNMENTS ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN
THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Submitted by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany

I. General remarks

1. The spelling of place names - and only partly those of the names of natural features - is a matter of official decision in Germany.

As the Federal Republic of Germany is a federation of "Länder", each land is responsible for determination of the spelling of names in their jurisdiction. The laws of each Land define the competent authority, as well as the required procedures for the official spelling and/or changes in spelling, for all communities and places within the individual Land.

The official spellings are listed in regional and national Gemeinde- and Ortsnamenverzeichnisse.

2. Following a proposal of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Kartographie (German Society for Cartography) the Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen (SAGN = Permanent Committee on Geographical Names) was set up in 1959. Since then, it has been working together with various agencies in Austria and Switzerland. The office of the SAGN is located at the Institut für Landeskunde (Regional Geography Office), Bad Godesberg. The Ständiger Ausschuss is an independent committee of experts for Geography, Cartography of official and private agencies and Linguistics whose function is to co-ordinate and promulgate the rules for domestic standardization of names and to publish the results attained. In addition, it

represents the German-language area in questions of international standardization of geographical names. As part of the programme of domestic standardization the Ständiger Ausschuss published the "Duden, Wörterbuch geographischer Namen", Volume I: Europa ohne Sowjetunion, in 1966. Herein are the official spellings of German place names and the authorized forms for geographic entities, recommended for domestic use. Included for each reference is a short geographic description and the pronunciation according to the international phonetic system of the International Phonetic Association (IPA). This will be of particular use for foreign users. The standardized spelling of the German names have been determined by consultation with the various agencies concerned: the Landesvermessungsämter (Land Survey Offices), Deutsches Hydrographisches Institut (German Hydrographic Institute), etc. The Duden volume is the first authorized edition with standardized spelling for German names published on a broader basis; and will serve the purpose of domestic standardization on both official and private levels.

II. Particular points

1. Geographical names (except community and place names)

The names of geographical entities, hydrographic features, mountains, large forests and moors, parts of seas, etc., have for the most part not been a matter of official decision. Such names have, however, appeared in the official maps, hydrological maps and sea charts.

(a) The names of geographical entities appearing on the official topographic maps may be determined, changed or dropped by the various Landesvermessungsämter for their respective areas.

Up to now, these changes have not been published in the official memoranda. However, the Institut für Landeskunde (Regional Geography Office) has a running documentation service for geographical names, set up as the "Kartei der Landschaftsnamen" (General Catalogue of Geographical Names) and will publish an official gazetteer of geographical names. A map "Relief and Landschaftsnamen" (1:1 mill.) with the recommended geographical names has been published by the Institute, to promote the authorized spelling approved by the SAGN on a broad basis.

Names of protected nature areas and nature parks are set up by official decision; there are also proposals to fix the names of important highways.

(b) The names of larger rivers and streams appear in the serial volumes of Deutsches Gewässerkundliches Jahrbuch, the official gaging records and hydrological maps, which are published by the various local Water Boards. In the case of artificial waterways (canals, dammed lakes), the official names are published by the responsible authority for the Land (Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Agriculture). Geographical names in the Deutsche Bucht (North Sea) are co-ordinated in their spelling for the German sea-charts and topographic maps 1:25,000 by the Ständiger Ausschuss working together with the Deutsches Hydrographische Institut, the various river and shipping authorities, and the Landesvermessungsämter of Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein. The authorized spellings are published in special lists.

2. Community and place names

The official spelling of Gemeinde- and Ortsnamen (community and place names) for each of the Länder is determined by the appointed authority.

Since 1871, official gazetteers have been published by the state Bureaus of Statistics for the authorized spelling of the community and place names. Since 1925, general directories covering the then Deutsches Reich and the present Federal Republic of Germany, have been published by the National Bureau of Statistics.

Since 1952, the various state statistical bureaus notify the Institut für Landeskunde at Bad Godesberg of changes in community and place names. The information is documented and passed on to the various national agencies, e.g. Statistisches Bundesamt (Federal Statistical Office) and the Institut für angewandte Geodäsie (Institute for Applied Geodesy). The establishment of a central clearing-office has the advantage of documentation and co-ordination on a national level. Most place names in Germany are the result of a long historical development. It explains the various differences in spelling (the retention of older forms [e.g. Frankenthal with "th" and in addition the new spelling with "t" as in Wuppertal; Cochem with "C" and in addition the newer spelling with "K" as in Kassel]; writing together or separately the parts of compound names [e.g. Klein Gusborn in addition to Kleinsachsenheim and Klein-Auheim]) and the different official forms of additional geographic suffixes [e.g. Bernstein a. Wald in addition to Giengen an der Brenz]. A complete standardization of all forms

(prefixes and additional geographic suffixes) and spellings will be difficult to achieve and would be extremely costly.

(a) Gemeindennamen (community names)

Changes and additions of community names are usually proposed by the local communities themselves. In other cases, the hearing of the local community board is necessary, where a change is proposed by the State Government. In Bavaria the hearing of the township population is necessary in any case.

(b) Wohnplatznamen (place names)

In some of the Länder, changes in names of populated places are decided by the local community board and are then considered to be official. In other of the Länder, the changes must be approved by the Regierungspräsident (Office of the District Government); in Bavaria it requires a hearing of the population of the place.

(c) Flurnamen (lands and fields)

Flurnamen have in most cases not been determined by any official agency; their entry in official cadastral plans and gazetteers being based upon a study of the most-used forms in older records and maps. For the Land Baden-Württemberg a general work "Flurnamenbuch, Flurnamenschreibung in amtlichen Karten" has been published (third edition 1958). This refers to the meaning of Flurnamen, spelling according to authorized spelling rules, and listing the most important Flurnamen. For the other Länder, Flurnamen are first approved by the local Survey Offices before being included in the topographical maps.
