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National standardization:

- (d) Administrative structure of
national names authorities

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF NATIONAL NAMES AUTHORITIES
IN THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

Paper presented by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany

Abstract

According to the federal structure of the Federal Republic of Germany the Länder (Federal States) administrations of the Interior, in partial consultation with the communes, are responsible for the spelling of geographical names.

The Survey Offices of the Länder - reporting to the Land Ministry of the Interior, and in certain Länder to the Land Ministry of Finances - use on the topographical maps the geographical names as officially determined where such a form exists. Failing this, they make the best possible use of the traditionally most current names in conformity with the general rules on the application of geographical names.

The spelling of place or commune names is determined by decrees issued by the administrations of the Interior.

The spelling of parcel names is determined by the cadastral administration; it is recorded on the cadastral plan or on the German Basic Map 1:5,000. Wherever names of the small-scale cadastral plan or of the German Basic Map are used on the official topographical map series, these names are authoritative.

Only in a few cases is the spelling of the names of waters and lakes determined by a decree of the administration of the Interior. In general, it is adapted to the spelling used in the decrees issued by the Land Ministries of Agriculture. In the case of very extensive or supra-regional waters, the spelling is determined by federal regulation.

On official topographical map series, the Survey Offices of the Länder use for the names of mountains and mountainous regions the names of the traditional high language according to the general rules on the application of geographical names.

In addition to the Survey Offices of the Länder, the Deutsches Hydrographisches Institut (German Hydrographic Institute) in Hamburg - reporting to the Federal Ministry of Transport - is competent to determine the spelling of geographical names in coastal regions.

The spelling of names of the high seas and oceans comes under the scope of the Deutsches Hydrographisches Institut.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is responsible for the spelling of State names and their derivations. It periodically publishes, in co-operation with the Ministry of the Interior, lists of State names for official use in a common ministerial gazette.

As an independent committee for the spelling of geographical names in the German-speaking area, the Ständiger Ausschuss für Geographische Namen/StAGN (Permanent Commission for Geographical Names) was established in 1959 by mutual agreement of the Governments of the Federal Republic of Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. This Commission consists of well-known personalities of the scientific world in the three countries. Its objective is to elaborate recommendations and guidelines for the standardization of the official and private use of geographical names and to publish the results of these efforts.

Until 1970, the office of StAGN was part of the Institut für Landeskunde (Institute for Regional Geography) at Bonn-Bad Godesberg. Since then, it has been affiliated to the Institut für Angewandte Geodäsie (Institute for Applied Geodesy) in Frankfurt-am-Main. The office is financed by the Federal Ministry of the Interior.
