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**MEETING OF THE WORKING GROUP ON TOPONYMIC
DATA FILES AND GAZETTEERS**

**EuroGeoNames (EGN)-
A Project on a
European Geographical Names GIS Network***

**Submitted by: Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen (StAGN)
(Permanent committee on geographical names)**

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EuroGeoNames (EGN) - A project on a European geographical names GIS network

The United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names and the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) have recognized, that developing and maintaining of geographical names data stocks, and standardizing of geographical names, nationally and internationally are in a considerable need for improvement.

Therefore, the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (2002) passed Resolution VI, "Integration of Geographical Names Data into National and Regional Spatial Data Infrastructures", emphasizing that standardized geographical names information is a crucial component for an efficient development of national economies in all countries; noting that geographical names serve as a common access to geo-information and spatial data infrastructures; recalling that the 15th UN Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia & the Pacific (2000) recognized the promotion of national and regional geographical names standardization programmes; recalling further that the 7th UN Regional Cartographic Conference for the Americas (2001) recognized the importance of standardized and consistent geographical names as a fundamental data set of national and regional spatial data infrastructures; and recommends that standardized geographical names data should be considered in the establishment of national and regional spatial data infrastructures and included in their design, development and implementation.

In pursuance of that resolution the Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy (BKG), Frankfurt am Main, under the umbrella of EuroGeographics, an association of European national mapping agencies, and together with other European project partners of the public and private sector, is studying a project for setting up a Europe-wide geographical names GIS network.

In the European countries the various feature categories of geographical names (e.g. hydrography, transportation, land cover, administrative units) are often not (yet) accessible through one single data base or data stock. A major reason is due to distributed administrative responsibilities for specific names categories (e.g. statistical offices are often responsible for administrative units, hydrographic offices for hydrographic features). Another reason is that, on a different level of officiality, some geographical names data stocks have been created to satisfy linguistic and other purposes.

Therefore, the set up of a distributedly organized multi-lingual GIS network for Europe is suggested to cover the specific needs of the European living space and economic area/domain, in which the currently available national stocks of geographical names can be amalgamated in their officially approved, standardized endonymic (native) forms.

Access to the geographical names data stocks (maintained at the source level by the responsible organisations) shall be provided by the Internet and entitled equally for all languages officially spoken in the European countries, including the officially recognized minority languages.

The EuroGeoNames project shall result in a European geographical names GIS network by

- Amalgamating national data stocks of geographical names of the EU member countries officially approved by the respective countries;
- Providing geographical names variants of minority languages in the EU member countries officially approved by the respective countries;
- Providing selected exonyms used in the official languages of the EU member countries;
- Providing topographic data elements such as: co-ordinates, feature types, administrative hierarchy;
- Providing additional toponymic data elements, e.g. pronunciation, language, original script, gender, feature description;
- Attributing unique object identifiers by which all data elements can be tied together and geo-referenced.

As a first step, a detailed border-crossing European survey/inventory shall be carried out in 2004/2005 investigating the availability, accessibility and responsibility for national official geographical names data stocks and similar sources in the countries concerned. The survey shall include an investigation of sources held by organisations providing European geographical names data as collated and harmonized data sets.