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### **Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names**

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

**Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries  
and on the progress made in the standardization of  
geographical names since the Ninth Conference  
(for distribution only).**

### **Report of Sweden**

Submitted by Sweden \*\*

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## Summary

The national report of Sweden has seven headings: *National standardization* is an account of current legislation and of the main authorities involved in the standardization of geographical names. *Registers, gazetteers and toponymic data files* deals with the situation as regards Maps and databases on one hand and Addresses and place-names on the other. *Names in multilingual areas* accounts for the measures taken concerning the Saami, Meänkieli and Finnish place-names of Sweden. *Toponymic education and practice* informs on support given from the central name authorities to the local authorities. *Field collection* reports on crowd sourcing as a new method of collecting names. *Evaluation* is a follow-up report of a questionnaire on how the place-name paragraph has been received by the local authorities. *Publications* is a list of articles and books on place-name standardization published in Sweden between 2007 and 2012.

### National standardization

The Heritage Conservation Act (Sw. *Kulturminneslagen, lagen 1988:950 om kulturminnen m.m.*) was revised in 2000. It now includes a paragraph dealing with "good place-name practice" in central and local governmental activities. The emphasis is put upon the importance of preserving the place-names as a part of the nation's cultural heritage. Place-names shall be spelt in accordance with adopted linguistic rules, but established names shall not be changed without strong grounds. Names that are approved for public map production shall also be used in other contexts in their approved form.

The supervision of the Act is the responsibility of the National Heritage Board (Sw. *Riksantikvarieämbetet, RAÄ*). However, the role as national place-name authority is performed by the National Land Survey (NLS, Sw. *Lantmäteriet*). The third main part involved in Swedish place-name standardization is the Institute for Language and Folklore (Sw., formerly *Språk- och folkminnesinstitutet, SOFI*. In 2006 the institute was reorganized and its name was changed to *Institutet för språk och folkminnen*). The institute is the official language authority of Sweden, now including the Language Council (Sw. *Språkrådet*, formerly known as *Svenska språknämnden*).

Furthermore, the local governments of Sweden (290 in all) are responsible for urban and rural addresses containing a large amount of place-names.

The Place-Name Advisory Board of Sweden (PNAB, Sw. *Ortnamnsrådet*) has an overall consultative responsibility, and the authorities mentioned above are represented in the PNAB.

### Registers, gazetteers and toponymic data files

#### *Maps and databases*

A particularly important responsibility of the Land Survey of Sweden is to make place-names on the national maps and in its place-name database available for other creators of place-names and other persons who are engaged in place-name care and preservation activities in Sweden. There are about 1,2 million place-names on the sheets of the Swedish national map series, and the place-name database

contains almost all of these names. The Land Survey's place-name database will function as a national place-name dictionary.

To meet the demand for easier access to place-name information the NLS has on its homepage an Internet service called Map search and place-names ([www.lantmateriet.se](http://www.lantmateriet.se)), which gives authorities, organisations and the general public access to officially approved place-name data. Map search enables free of charge place-name search in the database. The current new version also features information regarding county, municipality and type of feature referring to the given place-name. The web map is new and can be seen in an enlarged image. Saami in its different varieties (North, Lule, Ume and South Saami) is shown in agreement with the approved orthographies and language coding.

A map extract on which the position of the place-name is highlighted is displayed together with the results of the search. The NLS is further developing this place-name register, for instance by connecting every place-name to parish as well as to the administrative belonging (municipality). Another hope is to be able to link this register to that of the Institute for Language and Folklore. In that way we would acquire basic geographical information about an established place-name supplemented with historical and linguistic material, which could then help us obtain deepened knowledge about the place-name in question.

The place-name collections at the Institute for Language and Folklore now exist in a computer-based version containing almost four million records. Most of it is available on the Internet ([www.sofi.se](http://www.sofi.se)).

#### *Addresses and place-names*

Due to the Swedish Dwellings Register Act (2006) the responsibility to establish location addresses has to a great extent been regulated by law, stating that for every entrance in residential buildings the municipality shall establish a location address. In the Swedish Dwellings Register Ordinance it is regulated how, within each location address, unique designations for dwelling units shall be composed. To help the local officials responsible, the Swedish Standards Institute has produced a national standard for location addresses (revised in 2007). The location addresses always contain place-names. It is with the help from place-names that a location address becomes unique and unambiguous. In order to use a place-name in an address it must be known in a larger circle of place-name users.

When establishing the names in location addresses, one shall observe “good practice for place-names” in accordance with section 1 § 4 in the Swedish Heritage Conservation Act. This means that place-names shall be written in compliance with established rules for linguistic correctness and that established place-names may not be changed without compelling reasons. This is supported by the standard. The standard is supplemented by a handbook published in 2010, which in an informative manner describes and exemplifies how the standard may be used in practice.

#### **Names in multilingual areas**

The place-names of the national minority languages have been adjusted to the valid spelling in accordance with the UN recommendation of 1972. Investigating and revising place-names is a continuous process, including vivid cooperation between the Swedish Saami Parliament, the National Land Survey and the Institute for Language and Folklore. The aim is to create uniform rules and best practice by accounting for Saami place-names in Sweden, Norway and Finland.

Good place-name practice applied to minority languages means that Swedish, Finnish and Saami, as far as possible, are used simultaneously in maps and on sign posts and for other purposes in multilingual areas. There is an ongoing process aiming to include Meänkieli in the Act. Meänkieli (formerly known as Tornedal Finnish) is an officially recognized minority language in Sweden with the same legal status as Saami and Finnish. The Swedish Government – as part of a political strategy to strengthen the minorities in Sweden – considers this a useful way to enhance the awareness and protection of minority language place-names.

The Institute for Language and Folklore administers a government grant scheme whose aim is to put individuals in a better position to acquire and use their national minority language including all varieties of Finnish, Meänkieli and Saami.

Grants are awarded for programs that will enhance reading and writing skills in minority languages, such as educational activities in the language to be learnt, language projects aimed at children and their parents, and reading initiatives. In addition, funding is available for projects to promote a better understanding of multilingualism, language as a vehicle of culture, or language transmission between generations. Particular support is given to activities with a focus on children and young people.

Grants can be sought by non-governmental organizations or foundations operating on a not-for-profit basis in Sweden. Applications can also be made with other organizations, foundations or local authorities as co-applicants. In 2012 three place-name projects were awarded grants.

Since January 2010, the County Administrative Board in Stockholm and the Saami Parliament are primarily responsible for the co-ordination and the follow-up of how Sweden's minority policy is implemented in the country and how it is implemented by state authorities.

The Council of Europe's committee of experts held a hearing in Stockholm in March 2011 to follow-up Sweden's activities regarding the national minorities. The authorities responsible for language and place-names were approved of. The National Land Survey (Lantmäteriet), The Institute of Language and Folklore and The Swedish Transport Administration work strongly to promote the minority languages on maps and road signs.

### **Toponymic education and practice**

Within the NLS there are in-house training programs to meet the need from its staff, both those concerned with cartography and those occupied by real estate information and registration. The central name authorities also – in various ways – support the local authorities in their work with the new addressing system. The support is very much appreciated. The need for even more guidance and help from the national experts is often pointed out; more practical training, more onomastic education and more cooperation on a regional basis.

In 2010 and 2011 the Institute for Language and Folklore arranged seminars in Kiruna in order to inform interested speakers of Saami, Finnish and Meänkieli of onomastics and place-name standardization. The aim was also to give some basic knowledge of field collection of place-names.

### **Field collection**

As the national place-name authority in Sweden the NLS/Lantmäteriet is responsible for the presentation of place-names in general maps and databases. Throughout the 20th century, field work

made it possible to observe changes in the use of names, the creation of new names and also to observe how certain names were considered to be temporary. In recent years the traditional field collection of place-names has come to an end. Today there are no regular field inspections before the production of general maps and databases.

During this period, society's needs for a condensation of names, mainly in urban areas, have become stronger and it is most desirable that we can contribute with new names and considerable more names. Being able to quickly find the right location is vital for large parts of our social and rescue services, and for this purpose place-names are an obvious starting point.

Last year the NLS/Lantmäteriet conducted a study of a new method of collecting names, crowd sourcing, using the new cell phone-technology. An application for cell phones will enable the collection of names. By choosing this form of technology assistance, it may be possible to reach a new audience of young people in the city. Another purpose of this new collection method is that it can be an alternative method, particularly in countries with few resources for this purpose.

## **Evaluation**

Since July 2000 there is, as mentioned, a paragraph on “good place-name practice” included in the Swedish Heritage Conservation Act. In 2006 a first evaluation tried to find out how the paragraph had been received so far. A questionnaire was distributed to the 290 municipalities in Sweden and the results from this inquiry were presented in a printed report. In 2011 – another five years after the introduction of the place-name paragraph – a second and almost identical questionnaire was distributed to the municipalities in Sweden. The evaluations show that the paragraph on good place-name practice is gradually getting known, accepted and understood in the parts of society that handles most of the local place-name affairs in Sweden today. The awareness has increased when it comes to considering names as part of the cultural heritage as well as when dealing with their linguistic form and spelling. Constantly remaining, though, are the strong demands from the municipalities for more support, more training, available experts to call, more fora for discussion and more digitally accessible websites, databases etc.

## **Publications**

In the series on geographical names and the preservation of names (*Ortnamn och namnvård*) published by the NLS one new issue, Nr 8 (Toponymic Guidelines), has been published. For further details see the list, which accounts for the publications on Swedish place-name standardization during the period 2007-2012.

Dehlin, Lennart. 2008. Redovisningen av samiska ortnamn på svenska kartor under 100 år. [The presentation of Saami place-names on Swedish maps during 100 years.] Guðrún Kvaran, Hallgrímur J. Ámundason, Jónína Hafsteinsdóttir & Svavar Sigmundsson (red.) *Norræn nöfn – Nöfn á Norðurlöndum. Hefðir og endurnýjun. Nordiska namn – Namn i Norden. Tradition och förnyelse. Handlingar från Den fjortonde nordiska namnforskarkongressen i Borgarnes 11–14 augusti 2007.* (NORNA-rapporter 84.) 101–112. Uppsala: NORNA-förlaget.

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Nilsson, Leif, Staffan Nyström & Annette Torensjö. 2008. *Toponymic guidelines. Riktlinjer för läsning av kartornas ortnamn – Sverige.* (Ortnamn och ortnamnsvård 8. LMV-rapport 2007:6.) Gävle: Lantmäteriverket.

Nilsson, Leif, Staffan Nyström & Annette Torensjö. 2009. Swedish place-name legislation and its emphasis on the preservation of geographical names as a part of the nation's cultural heritage. Peter Jordan, Hubert Bergmann, Catherine Cheetham & Isolde Hausner (ed.), *Geographical names as a part of the cultural heritage.* (Wiener Schriften zur Geographie und Kartographie 18.) 59–63. Wien.

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