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REPORTS BY DIVISIONS AND GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR  
REGIONS AND COUNTRIES AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE  
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE  
SIXTH CONFERENCE

Report for the Netherlands 1992-1997

Paper submitted by the Netherlands

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## REPORT FOR THE NETHERLANDS 1992-1997

In the Netherlands, since the 6th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, the following developments in the field of toponymy and its standardization took place:

### 1. Gazetteers/topographical data files.

In 1994 the gazetteer for the topographic map series of the Netherlands at the scale 1:50 000 (M733), produced by the Topografische Dienst Nederland (TDN), which existed in an analogue version since 1988, was made available by TDN as an **ASCII** file. It contains 44 000 names. At the same time the gazetteer for the topographic map series of the Netherlands at the scale 1:250 000 was made available digitally. TDN is currently working on the digital gazetteer of the topographical map series of the Netherlands at the scale 1:25 000; this will be for sale in 1998.

For the time being the names from the 1:25 000 map series are available from the analogue topographical atlas series "Grote topografische provincie-atlas", co-published by TDN and Wolters-Noordhoff Atlas Productions, a commercial atlas producer. Part of the names from the 1:25 000 topographical map series are also contained in the CD-ROM digital topographical atlas of the Netherlands ("Digitale Atlas van Nederland") published by Nilsson&Lamm, Amsterdam 1997.

Apart from these products in which TDN is engaged, 2 commercial companies have built databanks with all the placenames and streetnames of the country.

### 2. List of Country Names

The "Nederlandse Taalunie" (Dutch Language Union), a body empowered by the governments of both Belgium and the Netherlands to decide on matters regarding the Dutch language, had instituted in 1988 an ad-hoc Commission on Foreign Geographical Names (Werkgroep Buitenlandse Aardrijkskundige Namen), chaired by Prof.dr.D.P.Blok and, since 1992, by Prof.dr.R.Rentenaar (Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences) to prepare a list of country names. This list was completed, and officially endorsed by the Nederlandse Taalunie in 1992 and published in 1993: *Lijst van landnumen. Namen van landen nlsmede opgave vnn de daarbij behorende bijvoeglijke naamwoorden en inwoneraanduidingen en van de namen der hoofdsteden* (Voorzeten no 41. 's-Gravenhage: Stichting Bibliographia Neerlandica, ISBN 90-71313-49-2)

### 3. List of Exonyms

In 1993 it was decided upon that the commission mentioned in 2) was to standardize all other (i.e. non-country name) exonyms in the Dutch language. This led to the publication in 1996 of *Buitenlandse aardrijkskundige namen in het Nederlands* (The rendering of foreign geographical names in dutch), ISBN 90 1202840 4, which lists dutch exonyms (including country names and their derivatives) in their official standardized Dutch orthography.

At the presentation of this list of exonyms to the Press, the work of the UN in supporting standardization of geographical names worldwide was highlighted. In the publication, the officially UN-recommended conversion systems into the Roman alphabet were mentioned, and their use advocated.

### 4. Ad Hoc Commission on Foreign Geographical Names/Standing Advisory Commission on Foreign Geographical Names

In view of the spelling reform mentioned under 6) an update of these 2 documents is envisaged for the 7th conference

### **8. Courses in Applied Toponymy**

Experts from the Netherlands have contributed to UN toponymy courses (Pretoria 1993) and have assisted UNGEGN divisions (Asia Southeast and Pacific) in the planning of such courses. A representative of the Netherlands has acted as convenor of the UNGEGN Working Group on Toponymy Courses.

On the completion of its *publication Buitenlandse aardrijkskundige namen in het Nederlands*, the ad-hoc Commission on Foreign Geographical Names was disbanded by the Dutch Language Union. As it was realized that names changes are a continuing phenomenon, a similar, but permanent commission has been installed by the Dutch Language Union in 1997, named “Adviescommissie inzake buitenlandse aardrijkskundige namen” (Standing Advisory Commission on Foreign Geographical Names). The Commission can be reached at the Dutch Language Union (Nederlandse Taalunie), PO Box 10595, 2501 HN The Hague, the Netherlands. The commission is chaired by Prof.Dr.R.Rentenaar (P.J.Meertens Institute, Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences), with Prof.Dr.M.Devos (Ghent University, Belgium) and Prof.dr.F.J.Ormeling (Utrecht University, Netherlands) in its executive committee. The commission will publish an updated version of its publication on Dutch exonyms in 1999, and meanwhile will establish a website informing on current changes in exonyms in the Dutch language.

As the list of exonyms is intended primarily for official use, for use in education and in the media, this intention is reflected in the composition of the commission, which, apart from onomastic and cartographic experts is composed of representatives of news agencies, foreign affairs ministries from both Belgium and the Netherlands, and of the interpreter’s department of the European Union.

## **5. Minority Names**

In the province of Frisia (Dutch: Friesland), where speakers of the Frisian language form a regional majority, an increasing number of municipalities is using legal procedures in order to re-establish the Frisian name versions of geographical objects as the official ones, instead of their Dutch name versions. These Frisian name versions now also find their way to the new editions of the topographical maps of the province produced by TDN. By law, the official name of the province was changed from Friesland into Fryslân in 1996.

## **6. Spelling Reform**

The Orthographic reform law (Spellingwet), passed in both Belgium and the Netherlands in 1996 influences place name orthography, as it changes current practice in hyphenation and compositions of names. When e.g. in composite names (geographical) adjectives are joined to specific name parts, hyphenation is now obligatory.

## **7. Toponymic Guidelines**

At the 6th UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1992 the third edition of the Toponymic Guidelines for maps and other editors for international use for the Netherlands was presented. At the 18th session of the UNGEGN in Geneva the Toponymic Guidelines for the Dutch-speaking part of Belgium (Flanders) , produced by Prof.dr.M.Devos of Ghent University, was presented by Belgium.

As the standard language in Flanders is the same as in the Netherlands (i.e. Dutch), part of the Toponymic Guidelines of the Netherlands also applies to Flanders. However, in Flanders geographical names are spelled according to the rules of present-day standard Dutch, contrary to the situation in the Netherlands where geographical names are considered to some degree as exempt from spelling reforms (and where consequently many archaic spelling forms are still used). Therefore, orthographic practice in Flanders does not entirely comply with the spelling conventions outlined in the Toponymic Guidelines for the Netherlands, and it is these differences that are highlighted in the Toponymic Guidelines for Flanders