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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 Germany

Submitted by Germany**

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National report of Germany for the period 2007 – 2012

(a) Summary

The main activities for the standardization of geographical names on a national level in Germany in the period 2007 – 2012 were carried by the Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen (StAGN, Permanent committee on geographical names) and the Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie (BKG, Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy).

According to resolution VIII-6 of the Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) priority was firstly put on the development of a geographical names database of Germany (GN-DE) serving as an integral part of the Digital Landscape Models (DLM) maintained at BKG (DLM250 and DLM1000), by that abolishing various former secondary stand-alone geographical names databases: GN-DE, DLM250 and DLM1000 are becoming constituents of the national German spatial data infrastructure (GDI-DE) the components of which will be compliant to the European Spatial Data Infrastructure (ESDI) which has to be established through European Union legislation. (INSPIRE directive 2007/2/EG)

With respect to the rapidly increasing importance of European solutions evolving according to spatial information, priority was secondly put on the realization of the project EuroGeoNames (EGN), a programme for developing a European geographical names data infrastructure and services. EGN was developed by a consortium of nine members from five countries, supported extensively by National Mapping and Cadastral Agencies (NMCAs) from 15 European countries. Since 2009 the EGN project coordination was transferred to EuroGeographics, the European association of NMCAs.

Thirdly a major contribution was provided to the activities of UNGEGN regarding the organization and conducting of toponymic training courses.

(b) Background information

- *Historical sketch*

The „Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen“ (StAGN) was established in 1959. StAGN is an independent scientific organization without sovereign functions. Within the German linguistic area it is the competent body responsible for elaborating on recommendations on the standardization of geographical names. To StAGN are affiliated in particular scientists and experts in practice from Austria, Germany, Switzerland and other German-speaking regions. They represent the technical fields of topography, cartography, geography and linguistics coming from institutions and administrations concerned with geographical names. At its 126th meeting in Leipzig in autumn 2009 the StAGN celebrated its 50th anniversary. On this occasion a colloquium about geographical names issues was held.

- *StAGN Secretariat*

The secretariat of StAGN is located at the Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy (Bundesamt für Kartographie und Geodäsie, BKG).

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(c) Goals and national programmes

- *Participation in meetings and conferences*

- Representatives of Germany participated in the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names held in New York in 2007 as well as in the 25th UNGEGN Session held in Nairobi in 2009 and in the 26th UNGEGN Session held in Vienna 2011.
- Representatives of Germany attended meetings of the Dutch- and German-speaking Division (DGSD) of UNGEGN held in New York 2007, Vienna (AT) in 2008, Nairobi (KE) in 2009, Tainach (AT) in 2010 and Vienna in 2011.
- StAGN was conducting regular meetings twice a year and held ten meetings since the Ninth UNCSGN. Each meeting was attended by some 25 members and guests.
- Joint meetings of parties involved in the EuroGeoNames project and of the UNGEGN WG on Toponymic data files and gazetteers were held in Freising (DE) in 2008, in Brussels (BE) in 2009 and in Zagreb (HR) in 2011.
- A joint meeting of the UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms together with the 127th StAGN meeting took place in Tainach (AT) in 2010.
- Members of StAGN participated in meetings of the UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms in Timișoara (RO) in 2008 and in Gdańsk (PL) in 2012.

- *National standardization - Treatment of names in multilingual areas*

In Germany five languages have been officially recognized as minority languages: Danish, Frisian, Romanes (the language of the Sinti and Roma) and Upper and Lower Sorbian. The database

"Geographical Names of Germany" (GN-DE) contains about 600 approved names entries in the Sorbian language and about 70 names entries in Frisian.

- *Exonyms*

Within the EuroGeoNames project, the Exonyms and Other Variant Names Database (EVN-DB) for European geographical names has been developed. Exonyms and variant names of 23 languages spoken in Europe in 18 countries were integrated in the database. These countries are: Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, The Netherlands and Turkey. At the moment the database contains 7500 entries. All names are classified according to their status. The EVN-DB is maintained by BKG. Negotiations with respective organisations of further European countries are ongoing.

- *Toponymic data files - Compatibility and structure of systems*

EuroGeoNames (EGN) continues to be supported and extended by EuroGeographics together with BKG and the Finnish Geodetic Institute (FGI). The service provides access to and link the official multilingual geographic names data held at the national level (www.eurogeonames.eu). 15 countries are already connected to EGN. Further plans comprise the improvement of the interfaces to meet user requirements and to continue with a phased approach to other offerings.

The German dataset connected to EGN is a single database called Geographical Names of Germany (GN-DE). The GN-DE dataset is currently used for the geographical names data provision within the German Spatial Data Infrastructure (GDI-DE) and is therefore also the rationale for the INSPIRE data provision for European purposes. Considering that the data content for GN-DE is based on a map scale 1 : 250.000 only, a cooperation of the Federal Government with the German Federal States (Länder), the latter are responsible for data based on large scales, is envisaged in order to provide a unique source for geographical names data in Germany with a richer content based on larger scale data.

- *Toponymic data files - National gazetteers*

A (Gazetteer-) web service was developed by the Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy (BKG) in co-operation with the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (StAGN). This (Gazetteer-) web service is based on a Web Feature Service (WFS) and thus compliant to the respective Open Geospatial Consortium (OGC) specification. In order to fulfil the requirement of an unambiguous data maintenance at BKG, all geographical names information of several (topographic) vector data products – amongst others, the Digital Landscape Model 1:250 000 / 1:1 000 000 (DLM 250/1000), Administrative Units 1:250 000 (VG250) and Geographical Names 1:250 000 (GN250) – were amalgamated. According to a new data model developed for geographical names information, the respective data was converted to a single database called Geographical Names of Germany (GN-DE). Through unique identifiers the names entries of the GN-DE are linked unambiguously to all data bases and products mentioned above. By that GN-DE provides the unique geographical names source for all BKG products and naturally for the (Gazetteer-) web service. At present the data base contains about 120 000 entries including about 700 names in the minority languages Sorbian and Frisian. The administration and maintenance tasks of the GN-DE are conducted in Frankfurt am Main, whereas the (Gazetteer-) web service is facilitated through the National Geodata Centre at BKG in Leipzig (www.geodatenzentrum.de). (see also below: Toponymic Websites). The new application "Geoportal.DE" is a common project of the German federation. It was launched in March 2012 and provides insight into the spatial data infrastructure of

Germany (GDI-DE). It comprises a search utility for places and addresses in the context of the GDI-DE and several thematic maps covering Germany.

- *Toponymic data files - Other publications*

A fifth edition of the map “Federal Republic of Germany at 1:1 million scale, Geographical regions – their names and margins” was jointly published by the BKG and StAGN in 2008. For the first time this edition shows the names of geographical regions in Upper and Lower Sorbian and Frisian languages in those regions where the minority language is spoken.

- *Toponymic Guidelines*

The Toponymic Guidelines for Germany have been comprehensively revised and were published as 5th edition in 2010. This new edition is extended by some required amendments regarding to contents as well as to editorial updates. Particularly a chapter has been added dealing with the principles of the approval of geographical names by the states (Länder) of the Federal Republic of Germany. The new edition can be downloaded at http://141.74.33.52/stagn/Portals/0/101125_TopR5.pdf.

- *Toponymic websites*

The BKG is providing a web application based on the web gazetteer service for geographical names of Germany. At the moment about 120 000 names are available. (<http://www.geodatenzentrum.de>, Click: Suche geographischer Namen)

- *Terminology in the standardization of geographical names*

A third edition of the German Glossary of Toponymic Terminology has been published in 2010. The re-edition has been prepared by StAGN and follows closely the English original versions, the latest of which (Version 5.0) was adopted by UNGEGN in 2002. This UNGEGN version has 375 entries. In addition, these new terms and modifications of terms have been regarded, which were ratified and approved by the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in New York in 2007 and published 16 November 2007 as an Addendum to the UNGEGN Glossary. The new edition can be downloaded at http://141.74.33.52/stagn/Portals/0/100419_Glossar_3.pdf

- *Training courses in toponymy*

BKG promotes the use of modern databases and GIS technologies for data modelling and capture comprising Open Source Software. These components are very useful as parts of toponymic training courses. Staff members of the BKG contributed to the following training courses as lecturers:

2008 Timișoara (RO)
2009 Nairobi (KE)
2010 Yaoundé (CM)

Upcoming:

2012 Yogyakarta (ID)

- *Country names*

An updated list of country names in German language was published by StAGN as 12th edition as of March 2012. The list, collated by StAGN is a synopsis of country names taken from officially issued publications of the Foreign Ministries of the three countries Austria, Germany and

Switzerland. The StAGN list is commented and with additional information. The new edition can be downloaded at http://141.74.33.52/stagn/Portals/0/120403_STAATENNAMEN_12.pdf