

**Group of Experts on
Geographical Names**

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REPORT ON THE PUBLICATION OF GENERAL DIRECTIONS
FOR THE SPELLING OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES OF
INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES IN THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC

(Submitted by E. Haack, German Democratic Republic)

In the German Democratic Republic the efforts taken by the United Nations Organization, within the meaning of its Charter, for the standardization of geographical names as a means for a better international understanding and a peaceful cooperation of countries have been supported from the very outset. This refers both to the standardization of geographical names on the national territory of the German Democratic Republic and to geographical names of other countries.

In the following we would like to explain some results and experience gathered during the publication of "General Directions for the Spelling of Geographical Names of Individual Countries" (hereinafter referred to as "Directions").

Directions of individual countries of Europe were first published in 1967. In the German Democratic Republic such Directions exist for almost each and every European country¹⁾. They are published by the Ministry of the Interior, Administration for Surveying and Cartography, in agreement with the Ministry of Culture, Administration for Publishing Houses and Book Trade.

The Directions are drawn up for the special purpose of producing cartographical products. However, they are applied as well in government authorities and institutions, publishing houses, the press, radio and television.

The Directions reflect the materialization of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names for practical purposes.

In the "General Directions for the Spelling of Geographical Names in the People's Republic of Bulgaria", first edition, Berlin, 1979, for instance, the transcription system for Bulgarian (resolution 10) adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (Athens, 1977) was used for the first time.

For the structure and the contents of the Directions, the following general disposition has proved its worth:

1. General principles and remarks
2. Documents for stipulating the spelling of names on maps
3. General rules for the spelling of geographical names
4. Use of exonyms
5. Generic terms and other frequently appearing parts of geographical names
 - 5.1 Generic terms and frequent parts of names
 - 5.2 Frequent abbreviations
6. List of the geographical names
 - 6.1 Names of the administrative units
 - 6.2 Names of the settlements
 - 6.3 Other geographical names.

The "General principles and remarks" contain all the data necessary for the use of the Direction, the selection of the geographical names, the application of rules, exceptions, etc.

In stipulating the documents for the spelling of geographical names, priority is given to cartographical products and lists of names of the respective country in order to consider the national interests of the respective country from the very beginning.

The "General rules for the spelling of geographical names" record the respective alphabets and the required spelling rules, e.g. particularities of the articles put in front and additions to names, additions to the siting in case of names of settlements, capitalization and use of small initial letters, use of punctuation, etc.

The implementation of the resolutions of the United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names for the reduction in the number of exonyms (resolutions 28 and 29 of the Second Conference, London, 1972; resolutions 18 and 19 of the Third Conference, Athens, 1977; resolution 20 of the

Fourth Conference, Geneva, 1982) is realized in item 4 of the disposition by establishing concrete provisions on the selection and spelling of these names. The exonyms are listed individually.

For cartographical purposes, the special composition of generic terms and frequent parts of names as well as their translation into the German language have proved its worth. Such terms as forest, channel, pass, mine, etc. appear frequently in the legends of maps, too, for the purpose of explaining the conventional signs and are therefore of importance for the utilization of the respective national materials. It is as well necessary to list separately the respective common abbreviations and to include into the Directions their correct translation into the German language.

At composing the list of selected geographical names, the names are sub-divided into three groups as shown in items 6.1 to 6.3 of the disposition. A quicker and more reliable utilization for cartographical purposes is, above all, the advantage of this list in comparison with others that do not sub-divide geographical names. An additional indication on whether the matter in concern is the name of a river, lake, hill, pass, mountain range, landscape, etc. is given to "Other geographical names". In order to facilitate the finding the names and features in the cartographical products, geographical coordinates referring to the siting of the feature to be marked are added.

All things considered, it can be said that the Directions are necessary for practical cartographical purposes in the German Democratic Republic and that they prove to be an efficient means for the national standardization of geographical names. There is an interest that the member states of the United Nations may issue such Directions for their national territories, as recommended, for instance, in resolution 4 of the Fourth Conference (Geneva, 1982). It would be of great help for the drawing-up of further Directions and the updating of existing ones, in order to improve further in the

German Democratic Republic the spelling of geographical names of places located in other countries to take better into account the national interests of other countries, to reduce gradually the number of exonyms, and to publish the Directions in accordance with resolution 2 of the Third Conference (Athens, 1977).

The "General Direction for the Spelling of Geographical Names in the German Democratic Republic" was already published in its third revised edition and is available for international use, too.²⁾

1) Directions exist from the following countries: Kingdom of Belgium, Kingdom of the Netherlands, Kingdom of Denmark, Italian Republic, French Republic, Kingdom of Spain, Portuguese Republic, Republic of Iceland, Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, People's Socialist Republic of Albania, Kingdom of Norway, Kingdom of Sweden, Polish People's Republic, small states of Europe (Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Republic of Malta, Principality of Liechtenstein, Principality of Andorra, Republic of San Marino, Holy See, Principality of Monaco), Hellenic Republic, Republic of Finland, Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Republic of Ireland, People's Republic of Bulgaria, Socialist Republic of Romania, Swiss Confederation, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Hungarian People's Republic. (The countries have been listed in accordance with the chronological sequence in which the General Directions were published.)

The Directions for the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the Polish People's Republic, the Kingdom of Belgium and the Kingdom of the Netherlands were published in their second revised edition.

2) The Directions are obtainable at the firm: Buchexport, Volkseigener Außenhandelsbetrieb der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, DDR, 7010 Leipzig, Leninstraße 16.