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Standardization of Geographical Names**

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

**Report of Denmark**

Submitted by Denmark \*\*

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# **REPORT FROM DENMARK ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE TENTH CONFERENCE**

## **1. GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES STANDARDIZATION BOARDS**

The Commonwealth of the Danish Realm consists of Denmark and the self-governed autonomous regions of the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Denmark, the Faroe Islands and Greenland have all Geographical Names Commissions, all with full jurisdiction in their respective areas. The job of the commissions is to establish and maintain authorized spellings of geographical names and to guide authorities and the public about the correct spelling of geographical names in public use.

## **2. REGISTRATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES**

For the Commonwealth of the Danish Realm, Greenland and the Faroe Islands have now taken over the registration and administration of geographical names over their own areas. Therefore, there are no longer National Mapping Agency geographical names registers in Denmark containing Greenlandic and Faroese geographical names. By updating the topographical maps of Greenland and the Faeroe Islands the Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency (Styrelsen for dataforsyning og effektivisering) collaborates with the local geographical names authorities on the geographical names for display on maps.

### **2.1. Introduction of e-registration of geographical names.**

New geographical names are mostly coined locally, and therefore, it is vital if National Mapping Agencies and central authorities are to gain knowledge of new geographical names to have a close cooperation with local authorities and citizens. The Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency is working hard on strengthening this cooperation and has established an online portal, *Danske Stednavne* (Danish geographical names), for registering new geographical names and cross-authority administration of existing named features. All e-registered geographical names are subsequently processed by the agency in relation to relevance, categorization and location before they are established in *Danske Stednavne*.

### **2.2. Unique registration of Danish geographical names.**

The responsibility for the registration of geographical names in Denmark is shared between the Danish Place-Name Committee and the Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency. The Place-Name Committee is responsible for deciding the spelling of Danish geographical names, as well as securing the cultural-historical values associated with geographical names. The Place-Name Committee currently maintains authorization and standardization for the spelling of more than 25,000 geographical names. The Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency is responsible for the collecting and registering of geographical names in the register *Danske Stednavne*, at the same time a classification and location of the names. There are in the region of 130,000 geographical names in *Danske Stednavne*. The agency offers its geographical names data in different web services, where users can freely retrieve these geographical names for different purposes (see links below).

## **3. THE COMMON PUBLIC BASIC DATA PROGRAM AND GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES**

In 2012, the Danish Government, Danish Regions and Local Government Denmark decided to create better coherence in data concerning citizens, businesses, real estate, buildings and addresses, etc. (Basic Data) to support efficiency and growth in the public and private sectors. Danish geographical names are included in this program. With a precise geographic location for all named places, it is possible to associate and supply geographical names with additional information such as addresses and administrative divisions. It provides new opportunities for using geographical names to search information across public records and official registers.

The Basic Data Program generally increased the focus on the use of geographical names for administrative purposes. Emergency agencies, for example, use geographical names for alerting and coordination of action in

case of accidents. Geographical names are also used when different public authorities must cooperate on features spanning more administrative units, such as watercourses. Geographical names with a fixed specified location thus provide an intuitively easy way to make provisions for first-class management by the Danish administration, citizens and private enterprises.

#### **4. GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES LEGISLATION**

A survey has been instigated with the aim of improving the coherence in registration of geographical names in Denmark with the aim of strengthening the administrative uses of geographical names. The aim is to clarify the requirements applicable for the standardization and authorization of the 130,000 geographical names in the *Danske Stednavne* register. Of particular challenges are spellings of named buildings and other privately owned localities, for example, where foreign names are used or where the name is used for marketing or is also a company name. It is a wish to have the entire body of geographical names in *Danske Stednavne* standardized, with as few exceptions as possible.

This work is expected to be followed by a departmental order or law, which specifies the requirements for the registration, standardization and management of geographical names in Denmark, as the legal basis for this has arisen with a new Law on Geographic Information in 2017.

#### **5. RESEARCH INTO GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES**

The Name Research Section at University of Copenhagen is the only official centre for organised research into geographical names in Denmark. Established in 1961 with the outset in the Danish Place-Name Committee, the section also acts as secretariat for the committee. Danish name research is first and foremost a historical linguistics discipline, involving the history of the Danish language, its grammar and semantics. Geographical names are among the best sources for research into the earliest stages of the development of the Danish language.

The focus on the history of geographical names also helps secure the foundations for standardization of geographical names according to the provisions originally set up for the Place-Name Committee. For this reason three of the members of the committee will always be appointed from among the Name Research Sections' employees.

##### **5.1. Digitization of geographical names records**

The Name Research Section has long been focused on digitizing its geographical names records, in order to make them available for research and public use and for establishing new platforms for onomastic research and administration of geographical names and personal names records. The section's research portal *Danmarks Stednavne* was launched in 2012 and has remained a state-of-the-art resource for Danish geographical names, their interpretation and historical forms (see link below). This resource currently contains 210,000 records.

Owing to departmental restructuring, provision has been made to digitize all the main paper-slip archives of the Name Research Section, in total 1.6 million records, in 2017. This material will also be made available for open use as well as be forming part of the section's digital name research portal.

##### **5.2. Unique collection of historical geographical names records of Greenland**

In connection with the initial survey of which archives were eligible for digitization, a hitherto unnoticed unique collection of historical name forms of geographical names from Greenland from the 18. century to c.1935. This collection has now been digitized with funding from the Danish Place-Name Committee. The Nunat Aqqinik Aalajangiisartut (The Greenland Place-Names Committee of the Greenland Language Council) is cooperating in the project with modern, standardized name forms and coordinate information. Plans are to make this material

available online in cooperation with our Greenland colleagues.

## 6. USEFUL LINKS

- [www.stednavneudvalget.ku.dk](http://www.stednavneudvalget.ku.dk). Homepage of the Danish Place-Name Committee (Stednavneudvalget), in Danish only.
- <http://danmarksstednavne.navneforskning.ku.dk/>. Research portal, Danmarks Stednavne, of the Name Research Section at University of Copenhagen.
- [www.sdf.dk](http://www.sdf.dk): Homepage of the Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency
- [www.stednavne.info](http://www.stednavne.info): The portal of Authorized Danish Place-Names, the full content may also be accessed in pdf and CSV-formats:
  - [http://www.stednavneudvalget.ku.dk/autoriserede\\_stednavne/AUTORISEREDE\\_STEDNAVNE\\_v.2013-05-23.pdf](http://www.stednavneudvalget.ku.dk/autoriserede_stednavne/AUTORISEREDE_STEDNAVNE_v.2013-05-23.pdf)
  - [http://www.stednavneudvalget.ku.dk/autoriserede\\_stednavne/AUTORISEREDE\\_STEDNAVNE\\_v.2013-05-23.csv](http://www.stednavneudvalget.ku.dk/autoriserede_stednavne/AUTORISEREDE_STEDNAVNE_v.2013-05-23.csv)