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UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE  
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL  
NAMES

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REPORTS BY GOVERNMENTS OF THE PROGRESS MADE IN  
THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

Submitted by the Government of Austria

The Austrian authorities concerned with cartographic and statistical matters have striven for a long time for a standardization of geographical names and attained the results mentioned below:

I

As the present conference is interested in the problem of standardization of geographical names on national level mainly from the standpoint of the usability of the results for international cartographic work, this report will be based on that publication which is the only one to represent all classes of geographical names together, i.e. the

Austrian Map (Österreichische Karte) 1:50,000

published and revised in short intervals by the Department of Surveying (Gruppe Landesaufnahme) of the Federal Office of Gauging and Surveying (Bundesamt für Eich- und Vermessungswesen).

II

There does not exist in all instances a conformity in the writing of geographical names between the Austrian Map 1:50,000 on the one hand and the other map series of the Department of Surveying on the other hand.

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The Austrian Map 1:25,000 has been published only for part of Austria and is not kept up to date. The "alte österreichische Landesaufnahme" 1:25,000 has become obsolete and is not kept up to date. Work on the Austrian Map 1:200,000 has just begun. This map will be - as regards geographical names - in full accord with the Austrian Map 1:50,000. The General Map of Central Europe (Generalkarte von Mitteleuropa) 1:200,000, which will be replaced for Austrian territory by the Austrian Map (Österreichische Karte) 1:200,000 often contains names of an older period. It is intended to reach at full conformity of the writing of names on the Map of the Republic of Austria (Karte der Republik Österreich) 1:500,000 and on the basic Austrian Map 1:50,000. The "Übersichtskarten von Mitteleuropa" 1:750,000 are obsolete and not kept up to date.

Besides the Department of Surveying of the Federal Office of Gauging and Surveying the following offices concerned with the writing of geographical names are to be mentioned:

- (1) Austrian Statistical Central Office (Österreichisches Statistisches Zentralamt) which publishes after every census (intervals of about ten years) the Gazetteer of Austria (Ortsverzeichnis von Österreich).
- (2) Department of Cadastre and Geodetic Fundamentals (Gruppe Grundkataster und Grundlagen des Vermessungswesens) of the Federal Office of Gauging and Surveying. This department elaborates the Cadastre (Grundkataster), formerly Land Tax Cadastre (Grundsteuer-Kataster), which contains on the Cadastral Map (Katastralmappe) and in the Roll of Estates (Grundstückverzeichnis) all names of fields, meadows, pastures, woods etc., in Austria collectively called "Riednamen", and furthermore the names of isolated homesteads ("Hausnamen").
- (3) Land Register (Grundbuch), together with the Land Register Map (Grundbuchsmappe), a collection of public documents under the administration of justice, which contains in full accordance with the Cadastral Map all "Riednamen" for the purpose of orientation.
- (4) Hydrographic Central Bureau within the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Hydrographisches Zentralbüro im Bundesministerium für Land- und Forstwirtschaft), which publishes together with a map 1:200,000 the List of the Areas of the Austrian River-Basins (Flächenverzeichnis der österreichischen Flubgebiete) containing the names of all hydrographic entities.

- (5) Hydrographic Register (Wasserbuch). It is administered by the provincial governments and the district offices, and contains the names of all usable rivulets, rivers, canals, and lakes.
- (6) Toponomastic Committee of Vorarlberg at the Provincial Government of Vorarlberg (Vorarlberger Nomenklaturkommission beim Amt der Vorarlberger Landesregierung). The result of the activity of this committee is a list of all geographical names of Vorarlberg published in the Gazette of the Province of Vorarlberg (Amtsblatt für das Land Vorarlberg). The writing of names in this list is compulsory for all offices in Vorarlberg.

### III

For the purposes of this report the geographical names of the Austrian Map 1:50,000 may be divided into the following classes:

- (1) Names of communes (Gemeinden), inhabited places (Ortschaften), and parts of inhabited places (Ortschaftsbestandteile). These names are officially fixed, and can be altered only by laws or decrees. Their official writing is registered in the Gazetteer of Austria, the usage of which is accepted by the Department of Surveying (Austrian Map 1:50,000).  
**Alterations** of the writing of names taking place between two censuses and consequently between two subsequent editions of the Gazetteer, are announced by the Austrian Statistical Central Office to the Department of Surveying, which prints these altered names on its maps.
- (2) Names of uninhabited buildings or ruins of any kind: bridges, chapels, statues, barns, etc. These names are ascertained on the spot by the Department of Surveying. Only the names of ruins of castles are taken from the Gazetteer of Austria, where they are represented in square brackets. As regards Vorarlberg the usage of the Toponomastic Committee of Vorarlberg is compulsory. Besides Vorarlberg the names of this class are official only as far as they are part of an official publication (Austrian Map 1:50,000).
- (3) Names of mountains, passes, glaciers, valleys, and areas (the latter without the names of fields, meadows, pastures, and woods, the so-called "Riednamen"). These names are investigated on the spot by the

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Department of Surveying. As regards Vorarlberg the results of the Toponomastic Committee of Vorarlberg are binding. As there does not always exist a sharp distinction between names of mountains on the one hand and "Riednamen" on the other hand, also the Cadastral Map has to be used comparatively. For that see item (4). As regards the official status of these names the facts stated in item (2) are valid.

- (4) Names of fields, meadows, pastures, and woods ("Riednamen"). These names are registered in the Cadastre and are legally fixed by being taken over from it into the Land Register. An alteration in the Cadastre is possible only by a decree of the council of the commune. Although the Department of Surveying uses the Cadastral Map for comparative purposes, it follows on principle modern local usage. This is justified by the fact that the names of the Cadastre often are obsolete; the purpose of the map as a practical means of orientation, however, is to ascertain the living usage.

It is not intended by ~~the~~ administration of the Cadastre and Land Register to take into account the divergent results of the field investigation done by the Department of Surveying. Considering the small amount of the names of this class occurring on topographical maps the great effort involved in the complicated procedure of correcting would not be justified.

In Vorarlberg the Department of Surveying follows the usage of the Toponomastic Committee of Vorarlberg.

Besides Vorarlberg and besides those instances in which the Austrian Map 1:50,000 is in concordance with the Cadastre and Land Register, the names of fields, meadows, pastures, and woods of the Austrian Map 1:50,000 are official only as far as they are part of an official publication (map).

- (5) Hydrographic names. With this class of names the Department of Surveying follows to a great extent the usage of the Hydrographic Central Bureau of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. In dubious cases, however, the local usage has prevalence. On the other hand the ~~Hydrographic Central Bureau checks any suggestion for~~ alteration. A complete conformity between the Austrian Map 1:50,000 and Register of the Areas of the Austrian River-Basins does not exist at present, but will be striven for and attained in the future in consequence to the constant exchange of facts. The Register of the Areas of the Austrian River-Basins has great authority regarding the naming of the hydrographic entities. It is partly based on the Hydrographic Register (Wasserbuch), partly on intensive field investigation. As regards Vorarlberg the Department of Surveying as well as the Hydrographic Central Bureau follow the usage of the Toponomastic Committee of Vorarlberg.

Besides Vorarlberg and besides those instances in which the naming of the Austrian Map 1:50,000 is identical with that of the Hydrographic Register (Wasserbuch) the hydrographic names of the Department of Surveying are official only in so far as they are part of an official map.

In the same way those hydrographic names of the Hydrographic Central Bureau that have not been taken over unaltered from the Hydrographic Register are official only in so far as they form part of an official publication.

#### IV

A report on the standardization of geographical names shall not only deal with the efforts for co-operation in the field by the different official authorities, but also has to deal with the question, to what extent the naming is done in accordance with uniform rules. In this context two classes of names are to be distinguished.

- (1) Names of communes (Gemeinden), inhabited places (Ortschaften), and parts of inhabited places (Ortschaftsbestandteilen) that are fixed by official action long since. Their spelling only seldom will be altered, and then again by official action only.
- (2) Other geographical names, with which the Department of Surveying is not restricted by such fixations, but is free to decide on own principles (besides Vorarlberg). To this group also belong those names, with which the Toponomastic Committee of Vorarlberg in its original work, the results of which are now fixed by official action, had to decide on own principles.

Austria belongs to two German dialectical areas, to the Alemannic (Vorarlberg) and the Bavarian (other parts of the country) one. Within the Bavarian dialectical area exists several subdialects. As in Vorarlberg the dialect is much more used as colloquial language than in the other provinces of Austria, the Toponomastic Committee of Vorarlberg has paid special regard to dialectical forms. In this province less adaptation to the literary language was attained. A standardization was achieved by unifying the spelling of the generic parts of geographical names, for instance Schrofen "rocks", Mähder "mountain meadows", Tobel "valley" etc.

The principles for naming of features, areas, and hydrographic entities employed by the Department of Surveying are fixed partly by instructions, partly by usage. They are as follows.

The surveying personnel hears the names of features, areas, and hydrographic entities mostly in a dialectical form. These dialectical names have to be written by means of the letters of the German alphabet. Special letters, accents or diacritical marks as used by dialectologists are not employed. The guiding rule for spelling is: the map user must be understood in asking his way with the local population. As regards the generic elements in names, the following rules are observed: if dialect and literary language use for one term the same word, the literary spelling not a dialectical one will be used. Not Beag or Beri, but Berg "mountain", not Roan, but Rain ("ridge between two fields"), not Doi, but Tal "valley" (examples for Lower Austria). If a word only exists in dialect, the writing has to be adapted to the dialectical phonetic form, whereby however

established dialectical writings - if there are ones - are to be regarded: for Moab and Boaz are the spellings Maib "clearing in a forest, young forest" and Parz "mound" so widely used that no other form can be recommended. Within an area of a uniform subdialect standardization is to be reached: for dialectical Greit "clearance in a wood" in Lower Austria there can be found in older maps irregularly mixed the spellings Greut, G'reut, Kraut, Kreit(h), Kräut etc. In this case the form Greud has uniformly to be used, which is understandable by the peasant folk and etymologically correct as well. Translations are not permissible: Hübel "hill" and Hügel "hill" are etymologically different words. Where the peasant used Hübel, the topographer is not allowed to write Hügel, although this word is more commonly used in literary German.

But even with etymologically identical words the literary form has to be disregarded if there exists a commonly used dialectical spelling, or if understanding would be endangered. Thus dialectical Gupf "mountain-top" cannot be replaced by Kuppe (of low-German origin; only since recent times in literary usage), nor Arbes "pea" (e.g. in Arbesbach, -tal) by the literary Erbse.

The spelling often is a compromise in which cautiously has to be regarded: dialectical pronunciation, meaning, etymology, existing and accepted dialectical spellings, and literary language. Anyway, misguiding spellings like Kräuter "herbs" for correctly Greute "clearances in the wood", Zwergäcker "fields of dwarfs" for correctly Zwerchäcker "fields with transversally arranged lots" must be avoided as well as arbitrary spellings like Werd, Werdt, Wert, Werth, Wört, Wörth, Wirt, Wirth in a small area side by side for the same term (Wert i.e. "river island").

V

Remarks on minority languages

In Austria there exist three minority languages of cartographical importance: Slovene, Croatian, and Hungarian.

The Hungarian language is spoken today by the local majority only in two communes of Burgenland. The official cartography has to deal only with some Hungarian names of fields, pastures and woods, which are spelled according to the rules of the Hungarian language.

Slovene is spoken in the southernmost parts of Carinthia, and Croatian in many isolated areas of Burgenland (twenty-seven communes with a Croatian-speaking majority). Article 7 of the Austrian State Treaty of 1955 provides for official bilinguality of "topographical terminology and inscriptions" in the administrative and judicial districts "where there are Slovene, Croat or mixed populations". The necessary Austrian executing regulations however have not been exacted. In the meantime, the names of communes, inhabited places and parts of inhabited places are officially written in German only, those rare instances excepted where no German name or spelling (see also below) exist, e.g. Tihoja (inhabited place) and Drazja vas (part of an inhabited place).

As regards the spelling of the names of mountains, areas, and hydrographic entities, the Department of Surveying is free to fix the correct forms. The non-German names are written according to the same principles as the German ones. Guiding rule is here too the local usage. In the Croat settlements of Burgenland the Croat spelling is used, whereas the Slovene names in southern Carinthia are spelt mostly without the diacritical marks of the Slovene alphabet; the Slovene sounds are approximately represented by means of the German writing system. This practice is connected with the fact that southern Carinthia is since a long time an ethnically mixed area in which Slovene geographical names (and, what is more, often the same) occur in Slovene-speaking communes as well as in mixed or German-speaking ones. Furthermore: if the names of mountains, areas, and hydrographic entities in Slovene-speaking or mixed communes were written according to official Slovene spelling, there would arise an irritating discrepancy to the spelling of the names of inhabited places and parts of inhabited places (according to the Gazetteer of Austrian) as well as of isolated farmsteads (mostly according to the Cadastre), which in the mentioned sources is done almost exclusively according to the rules of German spelling.

Only if a name of mountain, area, or hydrographic entity consists of two separately written Slovene names, the one of which being an adjective, the second one a generic term, Slovene spelling is applied without exception (Tolsti vrh "big mountain", Mrzli vog "cold grove", Goli vrh "bare mountain", Mrzla gora "cold mountain", Dolga njiva "long field" etc.), for in these instances there are involved not names petrified to proper names, the meaning of which remaining often obscure even to the Slovene-speaking populations, but easily understandable syntactical constructions of the Slovene language.



## VI

All authorities concerned are very much interested in a further standardization, and the Federal Office of Gauging and Surveying thinks that a definite solution will be best attained by creating toponymic committees in all provinces (Länder) on the model of the Toponomastic Committee of Vorarlberg.

## VII

Besides these efforts made by official authorities may be mentioned the work of the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen) at Bad Godesberg, Germany, in which Austria and Switzerland are represented by two members each. The aim of this committee is to further standardization of geographical names within the German-speaking countries.

The results of its works cannot be considered as being official or semi-official; they are nevertheless of scientific and practical importance.

With reference to the standardization of geographical names in Austria the book "Duden, Wörterbuch geographischer Namen", volume Europe, Mannheim 1966, is to be mentioned.

This undertaking was financially supported by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education (Bundesministerium für Unterricht) and scientifically aided by the Austrian Academy of Sciences (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften).

The contribution of this book, containing about 2,500 geographical names (1,500 place names) of Austria, to the standardization of geographical names of this country may be stated as follows:

- (1) Comprehensive orthographic rules for German geographical names have been elaborated and strictly obeyed.
- (2) The writing of place names is in full accordance with the **Gazetteer** of Austria.
- (3) In Vorarlberg the usage of the Toponomastic Committee of Vorarlberg was strictly observed.
- (4) The names not mentioned in items (2) and (3) were written according to the latest editions of the Austrian Map 1:50,000.

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- (5) A thorough study of the best cartographical and geographical sources was done in those areas for which the Austrian Map 1:50,000 has not yet been published. Similar studies were necessary to find the correct denomination of large areas and mountain ranges which are in consequence to its large scale not to be found on the Austrian Map 1:50,000. In some dubious cases local investigation had to be done.

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