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SECOND UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
London, 10-31 May 1972
Items 7 and 9 of the provisional agenda

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 FIRST UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE
STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

Paper submitted by the Government of Austria

I

In accordance with resolution 4, recommendation A of the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names 1/ a national and three regional committees for the standardization of geographical names have been established.

National Committee

The National Committee is the Abteilung für Kartographische Ortsnamenkunde der Österreichischen Kartographischen Kommission in der Österreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft (Department for Cartographic Place-Names Research of the Austrian Cartography Commission of the Austrian Geographical Society) which was founded in 1968. Correspondence should be addressed to this Department Attention Mr. Josef Brey, Österreichisches Ost- und Südost-europa-Institut, Josefplatz 6, A-1010, Wien.

The aims of the Committee are laid down in the Statutes parts of which are quoted below:

1/ United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Vol. I, Report of the Conference, (United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.68.I.9), p. 10.

- Section 1. It shall be the principal aim of the Department for Cartographic Place-Names Research to further the standardization of geographical names in Austria in accordance with the recommendations made by the United Nations.
- Section 2. Since, on the one hand, the federal structure of Austria precludes the establishment of a central governmental names authority whereas, on the other, it is necessary to harmonize the efforts of the various bodies concerned with the spelling of geographical names, it shall be the task of the Department for Cartographic Place-Names Research to act as a co-ordination centre for all the competent federal and provincial bodies and the respective scientific institutions.
- Section 3. The meetings of the Department for Cartographic Place-Names Research shall be conducted as discussions among experts under the chairmanship of the head of the Department who shall be elected by the Board of the Austrian Geographical Society.
- Section 4. The institutions or individuals to be invited to the meetings of the Department for Cartographic Place-Names Research shall be named from meeting to meeting with due regard to the problems under discussion.

Provincial commissions

A. Nomenklaturkommission beim Amte der Burgenländischen Landesregierung (Toponymic Committee of the Office of the Provincial Government of Burgenland), attention Mr. August Ernst, Landesarchiv - Landesbibliothek, Freiheitsplatz 1, A-7001, Eisenstadt. Founded in 1969.

Extracts from the Statutes are quoted below:

- Section 1. The Office of the Provincial Government of Burgenland, Dept. XII/2 - Provincial Archives-Provincial Library, includes a Toponymic Committee whose members shall be appointed by the Provincial Government of Burgenland. The Toponymic Committee shall be entitled to appoint additional experts for special problems. Subject to the respective legal situation it shall act as the competent authority for all questions concerning the naming of geographical features in Burgenland. This is to guarantee the correct rendering - both from the technical and the linguistic points of view - of the geographical names used in Burgenland in the official maps, books, lists etc.

Section 2. In the performance of their tasks the members of the Toponymic Committee shall act as experts and shall not in this capacity be subject to directives from the Provincial Government or from any member of that Government responsible under the existing departmental subdivision.

Section 3. It shall be the task of the Toponymic Committee to study thoroughly, and decide upon, any matters brought to its attention. If necessary expert opinions shall be given and recommendations made to the authorities and agencies of the Province and the Federation, the communes and other interested parties on the basis of these decisions.

B. Steirische Ortsnamen Kommission beim Amt der Steiermärkischen Landesregierung (Styrian Place-Names Commission of the Office of the Styrian Provincial Government), attention Mr. Fritz Posch, Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv, Bürgergasse 2A, A-8011 Graz. Founded in 1970. This is a special commission which is attached to the Styrian Provincial Archives.

C. Nomenklaturkommission beim Amt der Tiroler Landesregierung (Toponymic Committee of the Office of the Provincial Government of the Tyrol), attention Mr. Eduard Widmoser, Landesarchiv, Herrengasse 1, A-6010 Innsbruck. Founded in 1969. This is a special commission attached to the Office of the Provincial Government of the Tyrol.

D. The Nomenklaturkommission im Amte der Vorarlberger Landesregierung (Toponymic Committee of the Office of the Provincial Government of Vorarlberg) was in existence already before 1967. Montfortstrasse 12, A-6901 Bregenz. Founded in 1953.

Extracts from the Statutes are quoted below:

Section I.1 The Toponymic Committee shall review the spelling of field names and of the names of mountains, inhabited places and communes.

Section I.2 Changes in the spelling of names may be examined ex officio or at the request of the Committee. Before an opinion is given or a decision made the bearers of the respective name and, if necessary, the person or persons who requested the change should be heard.

Section I.3 To avoid misunderstandings, names which designate geographical features in a border area and whose spelling is therefore of interest to the neighbouring country as well should retain their traditional generally used form wherever possible unless a solution satisfactory to both countries has been found.

II

As the governmental agency responsible for the publication of official maps the Federal Office of Gauging and Surveying has modified its instructions in accordance with resolution 4, recommendations B and C 2/ of the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names.

These revised instructions include the following specific provisions:

(a) Preparation of field research: The required names should be collected from all reliable sources available and entered in a special form. The names may be divided into two groups. The names of settlements should be taken from the official gazetteer of Austria and shall remain binding in this form. The Taschenbuch der Alpenvereinsmitglieder (Handbook of Mountaineering Association Members) and the Verkehrsbuch edited by the Verband alpiner Vereine Österreichs shall serve as authoritative sources for the spelling of the names of alpine huts, alpine hostleries and mountain inns not listed in the official gazetteer. The other geographical names listed in the form provide the surveyor only with a basic clue. The form should contain names compiled from the following sources: provisional Map of Austria at 1:50,000, maps of the old Survey at 1:25,000, the cadastre Flächenverzeichnis der österreichischen Flussgebiete (register of the area of the Austrian river basins), the Wasserbuch (hydrographic register), the tourist maps of Freytag Berndt and Artaria, forest maps, maps edited by the Mountaineering Association, guide-books, and the like.

(b) Field procedures: Although the names of settlements are as a rule taken over directly from the gazetteer it is still important to check and verify them. First of all, it is necessary to establish to what extent the names listed in the gazetteer are officially authorized. For this purpose mention must here be made of certain facts not discussed in the Report of the Austrian Government to the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1967 3/ (E/CONF.53/4, pp. 35-38). In Austria the spelling of the names of communes is generally the responsibility of the Provinces and requires the approval of the respective Provincial Government. Official sanction by the Federal Government must be obtained only in Burgenland. In many Provinces the spelling of the names of inhabited places and parts of inhabited places is determined by the communes themselves. Inhabited single buildings are named by the owner. Prior to every census the Austrian Central Statistical Office sends questionnaires containing the names given in the latest edition of the gazetteer to the communes. The communes are asked to report any changes falling within their competence and are informed that these names will have official character. A review of the names of settlements given in the gazetteer by the surveyor is necessary for two main reasons.

2/ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

3/ Ibid., vol. 2, Proceedings of the Conference and Technical Papers, (United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.69.I.8), pp. 35-38.

First of all, the communal authorities very often leave unchanged names of parts of inhabited places that have gone out of use but are given in the census questionnaires. It is, however, the task of the surveyor not to take up names which are meaningless to the map-user. The Federal Office of Gauging and Surveying reports controversial cases to the Central Statistical Office which will eliminate the discrepancy so that the same name is used in the map and the gazetteer.

Secondly, this review by the surveyor is necessitated by conditions encountered above all in the western part of Austria. In many cases, particularly in Vorarlberg, the main settlement of a commune does not bear the name of the respective commune or another proper name which is used outside the commune but some local name which is meaningful and understandable only within this particular commune, such as Hof, Platz, Dorf, Kirchdorf, and the like. These names, which are not given on traffic signs either, would be out of place in a map. It has been the practice to replace them by the name of the respective commune which is actually used in the region to designate the main settlement of the commune. There has been a slight tendency in the more recent editions of the gazetteer to adjust the names to practical linguistic usage, e.g. "Hof, auch Andelsbuch", "Platz, auch Bezau", etc. as compared with former "Hof" and "Platz" only.

When there is conflicting usage concerning the name of an alpine hut as given in the Handbook of Mountaineering Association Members and as given in the "Verkehrsbuch" of the "Verband alpiner Vereine Österreichs" the spelling used by the owner is authoritative.

In spite of these few exceptions the names of settlements do not present particular difficulties to the surveyor. The situation is completely different where other geographical names are concerned, i.e. names of bodies of water, glaciers, mountains, passes, valleys and areas of any kind. Although, as may be seen from the Report of the Austrian Government to the first Conference in 1967, different official reference sources with varying areas of application exist concerning such names, the surveyor who wants to produce a map which linguistically, too, is up to modern standards will have to investigate current usage and record it in the map. As has been shown above the field names given in the cadastre are very often obsolete. For this reason the surveyor has to consult reliable persons living in the respective area (preferably foresters, teachers, parsons, members of mountaineering associations, farmers, etc.) to obtain information on geographical names exclusive of names of settlements. Only such names as are actually used by the local population may be taken up into the map. Names which occur in written documents but are unknown to the population should not be adopted. Thus the surveyor may make use only of those names which have been confirmed to him by reliable persons. Unconfirmed or unchecked names must not be used.

As a rule the surveying personnel will hear the names in a dialectal form. These dialectal names should be transferred into the literary language in all those cases in which the relation between the dialectal pronunciation and the written form of a name is easily recognizable. Examples: Steinberg not Stoaberi; Altenbach not Oidenbach. If a word exists only in dialect a modified dialectal spelling has to be used which takes into account local spelling traditions.

Here the "Verzeichnis schwieriger in geographischen Namen vorkommender Wörter" (list of difficult words occurring in geographical names), revised by J. Brey and distributed by the Federal Office, has proved to be a valuable help (see also item IV). ^{4/} Generally a purely phonetic spelling of dialectal words should be avoided. When names are recorded in literary or modified dialectal spelling it is important that their meaning be clear. Names of uncertain meaning for which the surveyor himself cannot find a good spelling form should be taken down provisionally in phonetic spelling. All information required to describe the nature, extent and appearance of the topographical feature concerned should be gathered and handed over to the head of the field group who will submit the material to experts, for instance of the German Department of the University of Vienna.

It is necessary to make a sharp distinction between names of areas, fields, routes, etc. Very often names of areas, hydrographic features and routes are at the same time used to designate lands and fields. In such cases that topographical feature is indicated on the map which is of greater importance for the map-user. Examples: mountain and field are called "Steinberg" - indicate mountain; brook and field are called "Erlbach" - indicate brook; route and field are called "Laaber Steig" - indicate route. Moreover, attention has to be paid to the fact that in former times triangulation points situated on unnamed elevations were designated by the names of adjacent fields, settlements, hydrographic features etc. Therefore the names of these points very often are not real mountain names and should be used with caution. In the field the surveyor should generally write out all the names on the transparent sheet. The only exceptions are abbreviations used in connexion with a symbol (or a groundplan). In no case should the traditional abbreviation "A." be used, which may read either Alp or Alpe or Alm. In each case the surveyor should determine which of the three names is locally used.

^e The surveyor carries with him extracts from the general rules for the German spelling of geographical names from "Duden, Wörterbuch geographischer Namen Europa", edited by the Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen, Mannheim 1966. These rules which concern the use of capital letters and small letters as well as the writing of a particular combination as one word or more words with or without a hyphen must be closely observed.

(c) Evaluation of field work in the Office: Here the individual surveying maps must be brought in accord with the Map of Austria at 1 : 50,000. Moreover, all the necessary abbreviations should be in compliance with the official instructions. The standard list of abbreviations takes into account the latest research in this field and follows modern spelling rules. The Office furthermore checks the spelling of names, particularly as regards the use of capital or small letters and the writing of a particular combination as one or more words. Moreover, the Office is

^{4/} Ibid., pp.36-37.

responsible for the correct description of larger entities such as areas, groups of mountains, large valleys, and the like. The standard authority for the spelling of these important names is the "Duden, Wörterbuch geographischer Namen".

(d) Names in multilingual areas: These names are treated in accordance with the principles laid down in the paper submitted by the Austrian Government to the first Conference in 1967. 5/

III

In accordance with resolution 4, recommendation E 6/ of the first Conference, the Federal Office of Gauging and Surveying has, together with the Department for Cartographic Place-Names Research of the Austrian Cartography Commission, compiled a gazetteer of geographical names in Austria which will shortly appear in print. This is a first small edition based mainly on the names given in the official "Karte von Österreich 1 : 500,000" (Map of Austria 1 : 500,000). The plan of the book follows the pertinent recommendations of the First United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. The book will include:

- (a) The rules for the German spelling of geographical names;
- (b) A glossary of words frequently recurring in cartographic names;
- (c) An alphabetical gazetteer of all categories of geographical names in Austria with detailed definitions and information on location and pronunciation.

IV

In accordance with resolution 19, recommendation A 7/ of the first Conference, J. Breu has compiled the "Verzeichnis schwieriger in geographischen Namen vorkommender Wörter" (list of difficult words occurring in geographical names) mentioned above under item II 2, which contains 521 entries. It includes recommended spellings and spellings to be avoided, gives the meaning of the words and adds further observations where necessary.

5/ Ibid., section V, p. 37.

6/ Ibid., vol. I - Report of the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No.: E.68.I.9), p. 11.

7/ Ibid., p. 14.