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NATIONAL STANDARDIZATION

Report on the Project on the Organization of the Geographical
Names of the Basque Region **

Paper submitted by Spain

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On 8 March 1986 a co-operation agreement was signed between the Councillor of the Department of Territorial Policy and Transport of the Basque Regional Government and the Rector of the University of Deusto; under whose terms the parties agreed to conduct a study aimed at preparing geographical names for the cartography of the Basque Region.

The lack of previous related experience in the Region, and the need for a permanent toponymic service has turned the study on geographical names of the Basque Region (for mapping on a scale of 1/25,000) into a project that can serve as the starting-point for the creation of a toponymic service of this kind and act as the springboard for an extensive investigation of geographical names that will lead to linguistic and cartographic standardization of the toponymy of the Basque Region.

Creating a toponymic service involves much more than a project. It means launching a very ambitious study that will deal with geographical names themselves in an interdisciplinary fashion (philology, linguistics, geography, history, sociology, etc.), and will also serve as an indispensable tool for use in many fields (cartography, geography, text editing, signs and signals, historical studies, linguistic policy and standardization, etc.).

Because of its close links to the linguistic and socio-linguistic situation of the Region and the use that will be made of it by different and varied areas, the most suitable location for the above-mentioned toponymic service might be in the Secretariat for Linguistic Policy. Decree 6/1983 that created the Secretariat charges it with "co-ordinating linguistic research policy". The Secretariat has a Research Service "responsible for planning and structuring research on the Basque language with regard to standardization and usage, and supervising studies in this field commissioned by the Basque government".

The following departments and institutions will also be very directly involved with the toponymic service:

- The Secretariat for Linguistic Policy (planning and linguistic standardization).
- The Basque Institute of Public Administration.
- The Department of Territorial Policy and Transport (cartography, signs and signals).
- The Department of Culture and Tourism (editing of texts and various kinds of publications).
- The Department of Education, Universities and Research (the University).
- The Provincial Deputation (Diputacion Foral) of Araba.
- The Provincial Deputation of Bizkaia (Territorial Information Service).

- The Provincial Deputation of Gipuzkoa (Statistics and Cartography Services).
- The Royal Academy of the Basque Language, Euskaltzaindia (official consulting institution on the Basque language).

It should be noted that the Central Government (National Statistics Institute, Geographic Institute), municipal governments (especially those with statistical and cartographic services), the universities (linguistics and territorial studies departments, etc.), private enterprise (book and map publishing etc.), and the other regions of Spain are also very directly involved in the entire process.

In view of this, the scope and commitments of the Convention grew into something quite different from the original, and it became necessary to expand it in function of the objective, i.e., the preparation of geographical names for the cartography of the Basque Region.

This expansion opens up two different and complementary lines of investigation, which are also divided into two different time frames, i.e.:

1. Short-term investigations.
2. Medium-term investigations.

Also, by way of introduction, the report includes information on Euskal Herria or the Basque Region: its geography and politico-administrative situation; different aspects of the linguistic question; and legal aspects related to the standardization of geographic names in the Basque Region (sections I, II and III).

Vitoria-Gasteiz
12 July 1987
