



Economic and Social Council

Distr.
LIMITED

E/CONF.91/CRP.15
12 January 1998

ENGLISH ONLY

SEVENTH UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES
New York, 13-22 January 1998
Item 4 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
SIXTH CONFERENCE

Report of Norway

Paper submitted by Norway**

* E/CONF.91/1

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Report of Norway

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National standardization; names authorities

The main content of the Norwegian Place Name Act of 1990 and the Regulations of 1991 and 1993 is that place names in public use shall be laid down on the basis of inherited, local pronunciation and in accordance with current spelling principles. The same principle applies to place names in multilingual areas. The spelling is laid down by the public body which is responsible for the name of the thing concerned, e.g. the Public Roads Administration, Postal Administration, county, municipality. The vast majority of names on maps are laid down by the Norwegian Mapping Authority through the 18 county mapping offices. To implement the provisions of the Act five regional names advisory services *have* been established together with an appeals board to decide appeals against the spelling of place names. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs is about revising the law in order to make it easier to practise. The name consultants and representatives of the Mapping Authority and the Ministry of Cultural Affairs meet annually to discuss matters concerning the practising of the place name law.

Field collection of place names and training courses

To follow up the Place Names Act the Ministry of Cultural Affairs *has* arranged a number of courses and conferences in which the names advisory services, the Norwegian Language Council and the Norwegian Mapping Authority have participated. The Norwegian Mapping Authority and the names advisory services have for their part organized courses for municipalities and other public services to help them to tackle their tasks in a more satisfactory manner. Most of the municipalities have by now attended the courses. Several local courses have also been arranged for the collecting and recording of place names.

During the last two decades some three quarters of a million place names, mostly microtoponyms, have been collected and partly computerized in Norway. Still there is a lot of work to do, but gradually it gets more difficult to get hold of the material because the number of good informants diminishes every year. Younger generations do not know as many names as did the older generations because the names are not used to the same extent as before.

Registers, gazetteers and toponymic data files

Index to names on 1:50.000 scale maps of Norway was published by the Norwegian Mapping Authority and Forsvarets karttjeneste in three volumes (1990-91). It contains the names from the *Topographic Main Map Series*, approximately 340.000 names. This gazetteer was official when it was published.

The spelling of the names in this *Index to names in 1:50 000 scale maps of Norway* has not been evaluated or treated in compliance with the rules of the Norwegian Place Name Act, which came into force in 1991. Names which have been treated by these rules, are found in the Central Register of Place Names (SSR), an official data base at the Norwegian Mapping Authority.

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs has given the Norwegian Mapping Authority the responsibility for establishing and maintaining a central data base of all place names that have been decided in pursuance of the Place Names Act (the Central Register of Place Names/SSR). The base is to be available to the public. In the first instance the base is to include the above mentioned 340,000 place names to be found in the main map series 1:50,000. Since the Act came into operation the Norwegian Mapping Authority has made decisions on approximately 60,000 names. These are all to be added to the base. The base will be continuously updated.

The data base of names at the Norwegian Mapping Authority is to be gradually enlarged to include names from other public map series such as charts and economic maps. The number of names may then reach approximately 1.5 million.

In 1997 National Imagery and Mapping Agency, Washington D.C. published *Gazetteer of Norway* Vol. I-IV, based on the Norwegian map series 1:250,000. The four volumes contain 96 783 names.

The mapping authorities of the Nordic countries have decided that a common Nordic toponymic data base be produced. The data base will contain approximately 20,000 geographical names and cover Denmark with the Farøe Islands and Greenland, Finland, Iceland, Norway with Jan Mayen and Svalbard, and lastly Sweden.

The Norwegian Mapping Authority has gone through the different ISO standards to arrive at the character set that is as complete as possible for Saami characters. In this connection it seems to be most natural to take as a basis ISO 8859-10 - Latin alphabet, which was published for the first time in 1992. It has been adapted for the following languages: Danish, English, Estonian, Finnish, Færøese, Greenlandic, Icelandic, Latvian, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Farøese, Saami (North, Lule and South Saami), Swedish and German. This is an 8-bit character set in conformity with ISO 2022 or ISO/IEC 4873. The data are stored in a relational data base on a Unix machine and are accessed from client programmes on the users' PCs. The work will be done in respect of the UNGEGN resolutions concerning the use of exonyms and endonyms and of names in multilingual areas. No date is given for the completion of the data base.

At the Norwegian universities as part of the labour market measures a documentation project has been set up with a view to transferring collections of name material on cards and in manuscripts to a data base. The work, which will be completed this year, has been conducted through cooperation with the universities and local registration centres. The computerized material, which encompasses several hundreds of thousands entries, is *made* available through Internet.

Names in multilingual areas

The Place Names Act 1990 and the Regulations issued in 1991 with amendments in 1993 have laid down the principle that place names in multilingual areas shall be used in conformity with inherited name usage, and the spelling of place names in these areas is in the main in the process of becoming stabilised. Yet there are still problems of a legal, practical and linguistic kind when it comes to real equality of status between majority and minority languages, which include North Saami, Lule Saami, South Saami and Kven (Finnish).

Discussions have taken place between the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, the Norwegian Mapping Authority and the Norwegian Defence. The Mapping Authority produces maps for both civil and military use, and the Defence claims that the maps should have only one name for each geographical item, not two or three, which is stated as the main rule in the Place Names Act.

Exonyms

The most important step during the period concerning exonyms/endonyms was the conference on "Foreign names in the Nordic countries" (cf. Meetings and conferences below). Generally it can be said that the national language council is not in favour of further reducing the number of exonyms. At the meeting of the Norden Division in Oslo 1996 it was agreed that the members should do more to make United Nations resolutions known.

In 1991 the Norwegian Language Council published a list of foreign names (Geografilista), in which the principle of using the individual country's spelling as a basis (endonym) was followed to a great extent. For a new edition consideration is being given to a certain reduction of diacritics, among other things for the sake of electronic data processing, even though this may mean increased use of exonyms.

Meetings and conferences

The 11th Nordic name research congress was held at Sundvollen near Oslo from 19 to 23 June 1994. The theme of the congress is dual: 1) Onomastics in the light of the history of the subject and the theory of science. 2) Name patterns in regional and chronological variation. During the meeting of the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS) in Oslo in June 1994 one of the items on the agenda was a proposal for closer cooperation between ICOS and UNGEGN. In November 1993 the 7th national conference was held in Oslo with "Place names and the cultural landscape" as main theme, whereas the 8th national conference, held in Oslo in November 1996, had "Name research in schools and universities" as the main theme.

A Norden Division conference on "Foreign Names in the Nordic Countries" was held in Oslo 28-30 May 1997 with the participation of approximately 50 persons from Nordic universities, mapping authorities, language councils, news agencies etc.. The aim of the conference was to focus on the historical, linguistic and practical aspects of foreign names, especially place names, which are or have been used within the Nordic countries. Special weight was laid on orthographic and standardization problems of foreign names. Altogether 22 papers were read. Each paper was followed by a short discussion. A main theme of the discussions was to which extent exonyms should be accepted or even recommended. It seems that the national language councils are inclined to accept exonyms to a greater extent than what is expressed in the UN resolutions.

Norden Division News

Since the 6th United Nations conference on geographical names *Botolv Helleland*, Norway, has been serving as chairman of the Norden Division. At the divisional meeting on 30 May 1997 in Oslo *Hans Ringstam*, Sweden, was elected new chairman of the Norden Division. Ringstam is divisional director at the National Land Survey of Sweden in Gävle. *Leif Nilsson*, who is working as a place name consultant at the Place Names archives at Uppsala, was elected vice chairman.