

28 June 2002

Original: English

**Eighth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

Berlin, 27 August-5 September 2002

Item 9 (e) of the provisional agenda*

**National standardization: toponymic guidelines for
map editors and other editors**

**Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors,
Federal Republic of Germany, fourth edition**

Submitted by Germany**

* E/CONF.94/1.

** Prepared by Jörn Sievers, Chairman, Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen (StAGN).

Summary

Toponymic guidelines constitute one of the most important and effective measures for speeding the process of international standardization in the field of geographical names. In Germany the Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen (StAGN) (Permanent Committee on Geographical Names) is concerned with the spelling of geographical names and the preparation of the corresponding recommendations or guidelines.

The toponymic guidelines of Germany were presented for the first time at the ninth session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN), held in New York in 1981. After the reunification of Germany, a preliminary second edition was submitted to the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in New York in 1992. The third edition of the toponymic guidelines was thoroughly checked and comprehensively updated after the administrative reform of the five new Länder (federal states). Explanations concerning the languages of the cultural and linguistic communities of the Sorbs and Danes in Germany and the German dialects were extended and supplemented by sketch maps of the area of distribution. For the convenience of interested users at both the national and international levels, these guidelines were published for the first time in German and English.

The fourth edition, presented here, takes into account the orthographic reform of the German language and its implications for the spelling of geographical names. The reform became effective in German-speaking countries and regions in 1998/99. Geographical names will or may be affected by the reform. However, as in the case of personal names, a change in the spelling of a geographical name cannot be made simply by applying an orthographic rule or by decision of a names committee. In Germany, in the case of populated places (about 250,000), the spelling of a name is in general officially designated by the commune concerned. In the case of hydrographic features (about 500,000), the water authorities of the German states or other authorities are responsible. In the case of other regional geographic features (about 2 million), in general the land survey or cadastral offices are responsible. The communes are responsible for some 3 million street names.

In 1999 a working group was established to formulate a recommendation on the application of the orthographic reform to geographical names. The group included representatives from the Austrian and German land survey administrations, a member of the commission for the orthographic reform of the German language and the Chairman of StAGN. The group issued a recommendation that encouraged all responsible authorities to follow the new rules and change name spellings accordingly, where applicable. The text of the recommendation is annexed to the fourth edition of the toponymic guidelines.
