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REPORTS BY GOVERNMENTS ON THE SITUATION IN THEIR COUNTRIES
AND ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF
GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE SEVENTH CONFERENCE

Report of the Netherlands

(Submitted by Netherlands)**

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Summary

Since the 7th United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1997, progress in geographical names standardization has been made in the following directions:

- updating the list of exonyms by the *Nederlandse Tuulunie*, and making this list accessible through internet
- extending the list of exonyms by a private publisher
- the production of a toponymic database for the Fryslân Frisian minority language area
- an extension of the restoring of Frisian toponyms on official maps
- the production of new gazetteers for topographic maps on the scale 1:25 000 and 1:250 000
- the passing of a new law on basic topographic mapping, which accounts for the collection of geographical names by the topographic survey
- the standardization of street addresses
- participation in the development of toponymy courses.

Introduction:

Until the year 2002 the only legislation regarding geographical names in the Netherlands was the 1947 Orthography law (Spellingswet) which stated that the spelling of geographical names should be determined by a separate government decree. In 1964 the government initiated a commission (called the Commission Damsteegt after its chairman Prof dr.B.C.Damsteegt) to advise on this issue, which reported in 1974. The recommendation in this report to adapt name spelling to the pronunciation of the geographical names (as has been the case in the other Dutch-speaking region, Flanders, since the Gemeentewet of 1931) have not been followed up. Neither have the UN-ECOSOC recommendations to initiate a geographical names authority for the national standardization of geographical names been followed up. In the Netherlands a pragmatic course was followed by which the spelling of geographical names was decided upon by the topographers of the various national mapping organisations, each responsible for specific name categories on the basis of official documents (laws, decrees, etc issued by national, provincial, municipal and polder board authorities). In practice these names are collected by the topographic survey (*Topografische Dienst*, the Netherlands, or TDN).

Dutch names for geographical objects situated outside the country have been standardised by the *Nederlandse Tuulunie*, the international body in which the Netherlands and Flanders participate and to which they have delegated the authority to decide on Dutch language issues. The orthography of the Frisian language, a minority language spoken by the majority of the inhabitants of the province of Fryslân, is decided upon by the Frisian Academy of Sciences. In accordance with this official orthography municipalities in Fryslân decide on the orthography of the names of the geographical objects under their jurisdiction.

Since the 7th United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1997, progress in geographical names standardization has been made in the following directions:

- updating the list of exonyms by the *Nederlandse Tuulunie*, and making this list accessible through the web

- extending the list of exonyms by a private publisher
- the production of a toponymic database for Fryslân
- an extension of the restoring of Frisian toponyms on official maps
- the production of new gazetteers for the scale 1:25 000
- designing of a new law on topographic mapping which accounts for the collection of geographical names by the topographic survey (they also collected names before, but without a legal basis)
- the standardization of street addresses
- participation in the development of toponymy courses

These issues will be dealt with consecutively:

2. Updating the list of exonyms by the *Nederlandse Taalunie*

A second revision of the list of Dutch exonyms (the first version was distributed at the 7th UNCSGN) was initiated by the Nederlandse Taalunie in 1997, by appointing a Standing Advisory Commission on Foreign Geographical Names chaired by Prof. Dr. R. Rentenaar, succeeded in 2000 by Prof. Dr F.J.Ormeling. This Standing Advisory Commission (*Adviescommissie inzake Buitenlandse Aardrijkskundige Namen* (BAN3) completed its task in 2001. The updated list will be published in book form after the incorporation of this list on the website of the *Nederlandse Taalunie* (www.taalunieversum.org). It is the intention of the *Nederlandse Taalunie* to add the official endonyms to these Dutch exonyms, for easier reference, and to add a pronunciation module as well. The Executive Committee of BAN3 consists of Prof. Dr. M. Devos (Belgium) and Prof. Dr. F.J.Ormeling.

3. Extending the list of exonyms by a private publisher.

SDU, the privatised State Publishing House, has published an extended version of the revised list of Dutch exonyms. Compiled by J. van Groesen and Dr G. Verhoeven, this publication, *Wijzer van geografische namen*, was published in May 2002. It not only contains the updated list of exonyms but adds additional information on endonyms for which no diverging Dutch variants exist and their handling, official name transfontation systems and sources of geographical names.

4. The production of a toponymic database for Fryslân province

The objective of this research project of the Frisian Academy of Sciences is to build a database of geographical names for Fryslân with the official name versions and their variant versions in the other official language in Fryslân (both Dutch and Frisian have official status in Fryslân). The structure and contents of this database must be consistent with its expected tasks, that is to serve for practical applications (production of names lists and maps on different scale levels) and for scientific applications (toponymic and etymological research, in relation with archaeology and history). The central aim of such a database is to put an end to the widespread confusion about toponyms in Fryslân. The project has started 1/9/2001 after a pilot phase, and is planned to be completed by 1/4/2003.

5. An extension of the restoring of Frisian names to official maps

The maps and files produced by TDN show a continuing, be it slow increase in the number of names that are rendered in Frisian only, sometimes after a period of showing both name

versions. This is in line with the increased attention by municipalities in the Frisian-speaking province of Fryslân, to standardise the geographical names in their territories only in a Frisian version. Until present, 15 municipalities have showed their inclination to do so eventually.

6. The production of new gazetteers

New digital gazetteers have been produced for the topographical map series M 1501 (scale 1:250 000) and for the topographical map series M733 (scale 1:50 000) by *Topografische Dienst Nederland* (TDN). These gazetteers have been generated from Microstation DGN files, which also contain the gazetteer codes (name categories), and the letter type and size, on behalf of map production. TDN is now working on a project in which the names are joined in the database to the topographic objects they refer to or – when this is not possible such as in the case of regional names - to separate names layers with accompanying polygons. This is to be realised for all the names for all the topographic map series by 2005.

7. Providing a new legal framework for geographical names

Passing of a new law on basic topographic mapping is expected shortly. This law will account for the collection of geographical names by the topographic survey, TDN (they also collected names before the law was passed, but without a legal basis).

8. New project for the standardization of street addresses

As addresses form a potential link between objects in data files, standardization of their spelling is required. For this end a legally binding address registration has been proposed, in which the definition, function and status of the addresses are determined. Within the framework of the project Streamlining Address Data (*Verkenning stroomlijning adresgegevens*) authentic address data are to be established, and that means that they have to be based on official documents in which these addresses are established. Within this documentation, standards for full and abbreviated writing of the names of streets and other public spaces is envisaged. Frisian streetnames in the province of Fryslân will be taken into account as well.

9. Participation in the development of toponymy courses

Experts from the Netherlands contributed to the UNGEGN-DGSD toponymy course held prior to the 8th United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN), while the Netherlands Government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) paid for the accommodation and catering of the part of the course held in the Netherlands.

On behalf of a new course in toponymy which is to be accessed freely through the web, a preliminary design was prepared for the 8th UNCSGN.