



**Economic and Social Council**

Distr.: General

29 June 2007

Original: English

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

New York, 21 - 30 August 2007

Item 9 (b) of the provisional agenda\*

**National standardization:**

**Office treatment of names**

**Addresses and place-names in Sweden**

Submitted by Sweden\*\*

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\* E/CONF.98/1.

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Future Swedish statistics on households and dwellings will be produced by Statistics Sweden (SCB) and will be based entirely on registers. These statistics will replace the former Censuses of Population and Households, the last of which was carried out in 1990. Over 200 countries around the world conduct regular population and housing censuses. Both the UN and the EU encourage and support these activities and have issued guidelines on how they should be undertaken.

In earlier censuses, the general public had to provide information by filling in and sending in questionnaires every five years. In recent censuses it has been possible to draw increasing amounts of information from administrative sources. Future statistics will be based entirely on such information. This means that the general public will not be required to submit questionnaires. In order to facilitate this, a register of housing units is needed. In May 2005 the Swedish Government proposed a new law to establish a dwellings register. The law came into force on 1 July 2006. The more detailed provisions needed to set up the register was incorporated in a subsidiary ordinance to the law in March 2007.

The dwellings register will only be possible if the country's municipalities establish "location addresses" to the required extent. Central government has set a timetable for the process throughout the country.

Location addresses have been used for a long time in most urban areas, as part of the real property register, but only to a certain extent in rural areas of Sweden. Most municipalities are already participating in preparations for the register on a voluntary basis, by establishing addresses for all residential buildings. This project has been under way for several years. The objective is to ensure that every dwelling has a unique address.

A large part of the addressing process involves changing today's letter-box addresses in rural areas of Sweden and replacing them with addresses based on settlement names or road names. This will make it easier for rescue services, the police, taxis and others to find dwellings quickly.

Consequently, today's most important place-name project in Sweden is the reorganisation of the address system in rural areas, which represents a major challenge for the country's municipalities.

To help the local officials responsible, the Swedish Standards Institute produced a national standard for location addresses in 1998 (SS 63 70 03). In its bill proposing a Dwellings Register Act, the Government points out that this standard is to be followed when the new addresses are created. It also notes that there is a new section on place-name practice in the Swedish Heritage Conservation Act. It is headed "Good place-name practice" ("God ortnamnsed") and reads as follows:

Central and local government authorities shall follow a code of good practice when handling place-name questions.

This means that

- established names shall not be changed without strong reasons for doing so,
- the spelling of place-names shall normally follow accepted linguistic rules unless there are other, well-established spellings,
- the effect on established names shall be considered when new names are created, and
- Swedish, Sami and Finnish names shall, as far as possible, be used together on maps, signposts and other signs in multilingual areas

Names that have been approved for use on public maps shall be used in the approved form in other contexts as well.

The section on good place-name practice was originally proposed by the Cultural Heritage Inquiry (“Kulturarvsutredningen”). In its 1996 report, this provision was referred to as a “due consideration provision” (“allmän hänsynsregel”). The inquiry stressed that the proposed rule would be given greatest effect by means of information initiatives to enhance understanding of these issues in the community. It was pointed out that the Place-Name Advisory Board had a central responsibility for such initiatives and for interpreting the meaning of good place-name practice. In response to this, in 2001 the Board published guidelines on the careful use and preservation of place-names (*God ortnamnsred. Ortnamnsrådets handledning i namnvård*), to be used both by central and local government bodies and by other “public” bodies involved in place-name matters. The Government has now recommended, in its May 2005 bill, that these guidelines be used by local officials, in order to create a better understanding of naming and improve the quality of the place-names used in addresses. But the timetable for the reform is fairly tight, and the lack of sufficient resources within local authorities to discharge this enormous task is a problem.

The aspect of preservation is one that is accentuated in Swedish place-name standardization, but the emphasis on “established” names in the law may cause problems. When should a linguistically incorrect name be regarded as “sufficiently established” to be approved? It is stated in the Government’s commentary on the code of good place-name practice, though, that the provision implies that accepted rules of linguistic correctness are to be followed. It is not the intention to “support archaic spellings” (Bill 1998/99:114 p. 73). The normative function of the place-name register at the National Land Survey is also a guarantee against incorrect spellings. But the size and significance of the address project now under way is considerable, and it includes a large number of names that have never before been checked with regard to their linguistic correctness.

The final decision on location addresses is taken by the local authorities concerned, so if they wish to they can ignore the code of good place-name practice. This is, of course, not normally the case, nor is it the intention, but I have seen a number of place-names in this context that would never be approved under regular name review procedures. When such place-names are published on municipal and hence public maps, those maps do not represent good place-name practice.

Some authentic examples can serve to illustrate what I mean:

<u>Official spelling</u>	<u>“Address spelling”</u>
<i>Kesätter</i>	<i>Kjesätter, Kesäter</i>
<i>Vilan</i>	<i>Hvilan</i>
<i>Kvarnmon</i>	<i>Qvarnmon</i>

Apart from these linguistic aspects of place-names, there are also fears that many old names will be abolished in this process. According to the Swedish Local Heritage Federation (Sveriges Hembygdsförbund, the national organisation of the local heritage movement, which deals with questions affecting all local communities), many new addresses are in conflict with the code of good place-name practice.

In a recent report to the Parliamentary Committee on Cultural Affairs, the Federation points out that the local usage of names must be taken into consideration to a much greater extent than is presently the case. The new location address is sometimes a construction that is not accepted either by the household concerned or by the local population. As a result there may be two competing addresses, causing confusion for visitors, emergency vehicles and transport services, particularly where no guidance is offered by maps or road signs.

According to the law, “established names shall not be changed without strong reasons”. The Federation questions whether the benefits for the household and population census are sufficient to justify an address reform which threatens the existence of many old settlement names. It therefore suggests a number of alterations:

- The local name practice and name tradition must be reflected in the address.
- Technical solutions must not govern the naming process.
- Parish names (or the equivalent), now in jeopardy in Sweden, must be included in the dwellings register.

When the Swedish Standards Institute produced the national standard for “location addresses” in 1998, no name expertise was involved. The standard has just been revised, and this time the Place-Name Advisory Board was represented in the working group dealing with name issues. The provisions on good place-name practice have been taken into consideration in the new standard that will come into force this year.

This means that the linguistic problems mentioned, as well as the objections of the Local Heritage Federation, will as far as possible be dealt with. However, the chances of creating a dwellings register that everyone is happy with as far as place-names are concerned do not seem particularly good.

By way of conclusion some figures to describe the scope of this project: 225 out of 290 municipalities now have complete address coverage, including urban areas. There are more than 150 000 street or road names and more than 300 000 settlement names in a total of more than 3,3 million addresses.