

**Twenty-eight session**

**28 April – 2 May 2014**

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**Item 4 of the Provisional Agenda**

**Report of the divisions**

**Report of the Norden Division  
(Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden)\***

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## **Report of the Norden Division**

*Resolutions concerned:*

*I/8, II/4, II/28, II/29, III/5,  
III/17, III/20, V/13, VIII/1,  
VIII/2, VIII/5, IX/4*

### **I. Divisional meetings**

Since the 27<sup>th</sup> Session in New York 2012, the Norden Division has held two meetings. The first meeting took place in August 2012 at the 27<sup>th</sup> Session, the second as part of a joint Baltic and Nordic Division meeting in Tallinn, Estonia in September 2013. The 2014 Norden Division Meeting will take place in connection with the current, 28<sup>th</sup> UNGEGN Session.

There were eight persons present at the 2012 Norden Division meeting, where such matters as news from EuroGeoNames and INSPIRE projects, including a briefing on application schemas were discussed. The Norden Division Homepage was also touched upon. At the 2013 meeting in Tallinn, fifteen members were present at the meeting, including a representative of the Sámi communities. A central point at this meeting was the recently released geospatial data, in particular geographical names data, from most of the Norden Division member countries (Denmark, Finland, Norway and partly Sweden). The release of official NMA geodata will ensure an easier distribution and usage of correct and officially sanctioned data in Scandinavia. Otherwise, the meeting focused on the status of the INSPIRE and EuroGeoNames projects and the Norden Division homepage.

It was an interesting and instructive experience to have a joint meeting with the Baltic Division. There was much to learn from this type of venue and it is hoped that such meetings can take place in the future, too.

### **II. Norden Division homepage**

The Norden Division has had its own homepage since 2008, namely: <http://nordendivision.nfi.ku.dk/>. There have been no major revisions of the homepage since last report, although a few textual updates and additions of information have been supplied in 2012-2014. The homepage seems to fulfil its aim in presenting concise information about UNGEGN and the Norden Division.

### **III. Joint Norden Division project**

As reported in previous Norden Division Reports, geographical names used by linguistic minorities are standardized at a national level even though the linguistic minorities as entities are often

transnational. This allows for the possibility of mismatching standardizations of minority geographical names. To remedy this, the Norden Division is looking into the possibility of producing an online web-service based resource for Minority geographical names within the Norden Division area.

With the release of official NMA geographical names in Denmark, Finland and Norway (and to some extent in Sweden) through web-services, this possibility has become increasingly feasible. However, no decision on whether to undertake this project, or not, has been made.

#### **IV. Geographical name laws and geographical name usage within the Norden Division area**

##### Sweden:

##### *Legislation:*

In July 2000 a paragraph on “Good Place-Name Practice” was included in the Swedish Heritage Conservation Act (Swedish: *Kulturminneslagen*). As of January 1st 2014 the title of the Act is changed to the Historic Environment Act (Swedish: *Kulturmiljölagen*).

At the same time, the place-name paragraph has undergone two changes:

- Meänkieli is an officially recognized minority language in Sweden with the same legal status as Saami and Finnish, but it was not a part of the original text of the paragraph. To enhance the awareness and protection of the place-names of this minority language, as well, Meänkieli is now included.
- Also the last sentence is changed. It now states that names that have been approved by the national place-name authority Lantmäteriet – the Swedish mapping, cadastral and land registration agency – shall be used in their approved form by state and local governments.

The relevant paragraph in the new Historic Environment Act reads as follows:

##### **“Good place-name practice**

In state and local government operations good place-name practice shall be observed.

This means that:

- place-names established by long usage shall not be changed without good cause,
- place-names shall be spelled in accordance with generally accepted rules for linguistic correctness, unless spelling forms established by long usage otherwise require,
- the impact on names established by long usage shall be taken into account when forming new place-names, and

- names in Swedish, Saami, Finnish and Meänkieli shall, as far as possible, be used in parallel on maps and also for signs and other marking in multilingual areas.

Names that have been approved by Lantmäteriet shall be used in their approved form in state and local government operations.”

*Geographical Names Network in Sweden:*

The Geographical Names Network (Swedish: *Namnårsgruppen*) is a newly established group under the Swedish Foreign ministry’s responsibility. The purpose of the group is to provide guidance on the use of foreign names (of countries and other important geographical locations) in the world, and to give advice or recommendations concerning individual name issues, not just place-names but also names of authorities and job titles in public service. The group shall also develop the Swedish terminology on these matters and promote good place-name practice.

*Parish names and Swedish population registration:*

A general review of the Swedish Population Registration Act has been conducted. Future population registration will take place according to municipality as well as by building and apartment. To meet the need of a stable division between properties and municipalities, a new “district division” will be introduced. The geographic form of the district will be based on the former division into parishes. The names of the districts shall be specially investigated by Lantmäteriet during 2014, in consultation with the Institute for Language and Folklore and other agencies and organizations. The Government shall decide on the names of districts and on any changes in their names.

*Implementation of UNCISG Resolutions:*

The Institute for Language and Folklore has published two reports connected to the Unesco Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. It is expected that the Institute will be given a co-operating responsibility as regards the future handling of this convention. One obvious issue will be the implementation of UNCISG Resolution IX/4 Geographical names as intangible cultural heritage.

Norway:

*Legislation:*

The Ministry of Cultural Affairs is in the process of revising the Norwegian Place Names Act of 1990 with amendments of 2005. As the Parliament (Norwegian: *Stortinget*) has voted for giving the owners of land holdings the right to decide on the spelling of names, the Ministry seeks to find an acceptable wording which on the hand side ensures a standardised spelling of farm names, and on the other hand includes the same names used as a single holding name – names which often have the same origin, for instance *Vik* (farm name) and *Wiig* which the owner prefers to use for his single holding.

According to the current Norwegian Place Names Act, Sámi place names must be taken into use, but in reality this regulation is not always followed. There are problems to get the Sámi place names in official use. This has been confirmed in the report *Samiske tall forteller 6*, 1/2013. This report shows that especially the Road Authorities do not follow legislation protecting Sámi place names. Sámi place names are not always used on e.g. road signs. This issue will be followed up by the Sámi Parliament.

*Implementation of UNCSGN Resolutions:*

According to the current Norwegian Place Names Act, traditional/inherited geographical names shall be safeguarded, but in practice this regulation is not always followed. Changes in local agglomerations sometimes lead to changes in the existing name usage and old names may be left out. How to deal with this "illegal" practice was discussed at the annual meeting of the Mapping Authority and the Place Names consultancies in 2013. The issue will be taken into consideration in connection with the ongoing revision of the existing law.

Norway has joined the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, and in its commendation for joining the Convention the Norwegian Foreign Ministry refers to the Norwegian Place Names Act as one of the regulations that supports/is in line with the requirements of the Convention. The Central Place Names Register, administered by the Mapping Authority, contains the approved forms in accordance with the Place Names Act. According to Article 12 of the Convention it is the duty of all states to keep a register of intangible cultural heritage. In this respect, Norway fully lives up to UNCSGN Resolution IX/4.

Finland:

*Legislation:*

In January 2013, the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland set up a working group to draw up an action plan with proposals on ways to make sure administrative language is clear, appropriate and comprehensible.

The action plan of the Working Group for Clear Administrative Language published in January 2014 includes a proposal to introduce an act on place names for clarifying the use of traditional place names and the planning of new names (Working Paper, Item 7, Plain language and geographical names).

Denmark:

*Implementation of UNCSGN Resolutions:*

The Danish Place-Name Commission (Danish: *Stednavneudvalget*) has started publishing a set of recommendations for naming of geographical features based on UNCSGN Resolutions. This has been done in order to increase the awareness of international rules and regulations in naming of geographical features and clearly state how they should be implemented in Denmark. Resolutions concerned so far are: I/4, II/29, III/16, III/17, V/13 and VIII/2 (see webpage: [http://www.stednavneudvalget.ku.dk/snu\\_anbefaler/](http://www.stednavneudvalget.ku.dk/snu_anbefaler/)).

## V. Cooperation with other Divisions and Working Groups

As mentioned above, the Norden Division held its 2013 Meeting together with the Baltic Division in Tallinn, Estonia. In conjunction with the meeting, a geographical names seminar, with the title *Integration of onomastic data into geo-spatial infrastructure*, was also held. The concept of a joint meeting and a seminar was found to be so successful that the Norden Division is willing to partake in similar events in the future.

Norden Division members are very active in UNGEGN, not only holding Working Group Convenorships, but also giving several Working Papers at the 28. UNGEGN Session, including under:

- Item 4: Reports of the Divisions  
*Report of the Norden Division* (Norden Division).
- Item 7: Implementation of resolutions and activities relating to the Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation  
*Plain language and geographical names* (Finland).
- Item 10: Activities relating to the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology  
*Report of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology* (Sweden).
- Item 13: Activities relating to the Working Group on Publicity and Funding  
*Report of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding* (Denmark).
- Item 14: Activities relating to the Working Group on Exonyms  
*A gazetteer of Finnish exonyms* (Finland).
- Item 16: Activities relating to the Working Group on Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage  
*The conflict of official and private spelling of place names* (Norway).
- Item 17: Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors for international use  
*Updating of Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors, Finland* (Finland),  
*Toponymic guidelines – Revision* (Norway).
- Item 18: Other toponymic issues  
*The present and prospective status of place name research* (Norway)

## VI. Geographical names news in the Norden Division area

### Norway:

The Norwegian mapping authority has joined the European location framework project. For the Norwegian Place Name Register (Norwegian: *Sentralt Stedsnavnregister*) this means that web-services, such as WFS services, are being set up according to the INSPIRE Directive. This 3 year

project is supposed to give one geographic information reference source for Europe. 15 European mapping authorities have joined the project.

The Norwegian Geological Society (Norwegian: *Norsk Geologisk Forening*) and the Norwegian Trekking Association (Norwegian: *Den Norske Turistforening*) initiated, quite untraditionally, a competition regarding the naming of the central mountain ridge running down through Norway and Sweden. The winning suggestion was *Nordryggen* (<http://www.fjellkjeden.no/>). However, the competition has resulted in much protest and bewilderment, especially from Sweden, as no representatives from this country had participated in the planning or undertaking of this competition.

#### Denmark:

On January 1st 2013, the Danish National Survey and Cadastre (Danish: *Kort- og Matrikelstyrelsen*) changed name to the Danish Geodata Agency (Danish: *Geodatastyrelsen*). At the same time, a large part of the Agency's geographic data was released for free-of-charge public and private use, including topographic and cadastral data, aerial imagery, elevation models as well as geographical names. Geographical names at sea are also included in the release, but not sea-chart data. The Danish Geodata Agency is currently producing 65 new sea-charts of Greenland in cooperation with the Greenland authorities. In this process geometries are added to geographical names (as in the rest of Denmark) to achieve a better geographical location.

A new modernized database for geographical names is also being developed. The objective of this initiative is to make geographical names into an effective reference dataset to use for e-government. The dataset is thus set to go from being used for map production to a system that can also contain external geographical names databases.