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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 Norway
(Submitted by Norway)**

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Agenda item 4: Reports of Nations

Report of Norway

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Summary

The activities related to place-name standardization in Norway have been continued in many fields since the 7th Conference. The Place Name Act has been in force for 11 years, and an evaluation committee has recently suggested some changes to the Act. The experiences so far indicate that the regulations are met with quite a few obstacles, especially concerning the use of Saami names. But also in general, for instance on road signs, incorrect spellings often occur. This state of affairs may be explained partly by reluctance against changes of traditional written forms, and partly by the costs of carrying through the changes. Nevertheless it should be underlined that the general interest in place name standardization and place name care is strong among the people in general. Especially there has been a growing interest in taking care of old place-names as part of the cultural heritage. This paper gives a survey of the main activities in the period since the 7th Conference.

National standardization; names authorities

Although the background of the Norwegian law on place-names has been given on previous occasions (and is presented in a historical context on a different paper at this conference) it may be useful to reiterate its main content. The Place Name Act of 1990 and the Regulations of 1991 and 1993 rule 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 names advisory services, the Norwegian Language Council and the Norwegian Mapping Authority have organized courses for municipalities and other public services to help them to tackle their tasks in a more satisfactory manner. There is also a permanent need of field collection of place names, and every year several local courses have been arranged for the collecting and recording of place names. This should be looked

upon as an urgent matter because 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. In addition to the initiatives taken of official bodies a private association called *Norsk namnelag* (*The Norwegian Society for Name Studies*) with about 400 members is acting to promote interest in collecting and protecting place names as a part of the nationale heritage.

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, but the spelling of the names 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 base is to be available to the public. Since the Act came into operation the Norwegian Mapping Authority has made decisions on almost 100 000 names. In addition the base includes the above mentioned names used in the main map series 1: 50 000 and names from other map series such as charts and economic maps. These names are accepted for official use because they already have appeared on maps. One should, however, mention that there have been some problems with the digitalizing of names on charts. Many of these were published in the early 20th century and hence the ortografi often deviates from present day spelling. The number of names in SSR now reaches approximately 900 000 names, and the aim is to establish a complete data base containing all names used on maps today.

The Norwegian Mapping Authority has also developed a WEB browser to give all Internet users free access to a minor part of the system. This element is called *Norgesglasset* with address: <http://ngis2.statkart.no/norgesglasset/stedsnavn/default.html>. After one has searched for a place name, one can view the place name on a raster map in the scale 1:1 000 000 up to 1:5 000.

The mapping authorities of the Nordic countries have earlier decided that a common Nordic toponymic data base be produced. The data base was planned to 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. However, the authorities involved have showed less interest in the project the last couple of years.

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, Faroese, 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 was completed in 2000, 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 the Internet.

Names in multilingual areas

The Norwegian Saami Language Council as well as the Finnish Saami Language Council have decided to use *Saami* as the English term for the former *Lappish*, and thus leaving out *Sámi* and *Sami*. It is expected that the Swedish Saami Council will follow these decisions. This means that Saami is the form which ought to be used officially.

In Norway the Saami language has official status and is used as an official language in addition to Norwegian in several municipalities in Northern Norway. The Norwegian place-name law decrees that Saami place names should be used on maps, signs and other official documents according to traditional use. Directions given to the law also define the different areas, in which North Saami, Lule Saarni and, respectively, South Saami orthography should be used. That means that the old Saami orthography gradually is changed to the new North Saarni orthography from 1979, to the new Lule Saami orthography from 1983 and to the South Saami orthography. That is the case in the official maps and also in the toponymic data base at the Norwegian Mapping Authority. This has been done essentially according to the resolution nr 36, *Problems of minority languages*, of the second UN conference on geographical names 1972.

In § 4 of the place-names act it is stated that Saami place-names should be spelled according to the official orthography of Saami. This means that place-names written in the old orthography of Saami will be changed into the new orthography of respectively North, Lule and South Saami. In the directions of the place-names act it is stated in which areas the orthography of the three different Saami languages are to be applied. Consequently the new orthographies gradually are replacing the old ones in the official maps and in the place-names data base at the Mapping Authority. The law also applies to names on road signs, in post addresses, and other official documents.

However, not all of the official divisions are following up the directions concerning the use of Saami place-names, and the Saami population often feels that their legitimate rights are being neglected. In his New Year's speech the Norwegian Prime Minister announced that the Norwegian government is prepared to settle the injustices which have been done to the Saami population throughout history.

The principles which are laid down for Saami names also apply to Finnish names in North-Norway.

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 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 proceedings of the conference entitled *Utanlandske namn i Norden/Foreign names in Norden* held in Oslo, Norway, 28–30 May 1997 were published in 1999 as volume 68 of the NORNA-rapporter. The proceedings are edited by Botolv Helleland and Leif Nilsson and

contain 18 papers. Three of these are written in English, the rest in Scandinavian languages, but with extensive abstracts in English.

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. There is now a new edition in which 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 an increased use of exonyms. This recent edition is available only on the Internet. The address is: <http://www.sprakrad.no/geografi.htm>.

Meetings and conferences

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.

The 27th Nordic Congress of Onomastics was held at Stiklestad 13–15 May 1999. The congress commemorated the Norwegian place name scholar Oluf Rygh. The proceedings of the congress were published in 2000 as volume 70A and 70B of the NORNA-rapporter. The proceedings are edited by Bent Sandnes, Jørn Sandnes, Ola Stemshaug and Lars F. Stenvik and contain 24 papers in Scandinavian languages with extensive abstracts in English.

The 9th National Conference of Onomastics was held in Oslo 11–12 May 2000. The theme of the conference was *Namn gjennom 2000 år – namn i år 2000/Names through 2000 years – names in year 2000*. The proceedings of the congress edited by Kristin Bakken and Åse Wetås were published in 2000 and contain 14 papers in Scandinavian languages with extensive abstracts in English.

A symposium on coordination of place name collections was held in Oslo 22 November 2001. The aim of the symposium was to make all the place name material accessible in a common format, eventually on the Internet. Proceedings of the symposium are to be published.