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Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the
standardization of geographical names

Report of Denmark

Submitted by Denmark **

Summary:

Since the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Denmark has seen a strengthening of the cooperation between the Name Research Section at the University of Copenhagen and the Place Name Section at the national mapping and surveying authority, the Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency. The University of Copenhagen Name Research Section is the permanent chair of the Danish Place Name Committee and its secretariat. The objective of the cooperation is to ensure authorized spelling and standardization of place names in registers maintained by the Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency.

The cooperation entails:

- Defining a normative set of rules for the correct spelling of Danish place names.

- Developing a method for both spellchecking of currently registered Danish place names and registration of new place names (including commercial names and names of privately owned localities).

- Spellchecking of 120,000 Danish place names that are included in the Agency's register of Danish place names but have not been formally authorized. The register also contains approximately 25,000 standardized place names formally authorized by the Danish Place Name Committee (the limited selection is due to a statutory declaration that contains a vague reference to the importance of standardization on the basis of "practical need" and explicitly excludes the names of privately owned (residential) localities).

- Preparing geographical names legislation with the aim of strengthening the administrative uses of geographical names.

The report also contains:

- A brief account of the current state of the former Name Research Section at the University of Copenhagen

- An outline of expectations for the provision of expert knowledge in the registration and standardization of geographical names in expected geographical names legislation or in future statutory declarations.

- Information on a presentation of the Danish place names register and its potential as a part of the Danish Common Public Basic Data Program. (Data from the register are now easily accessible through a shared distribution platform, the Data Distributor. The data are standardized and can therefore be combined and used coherently by different systems.)

- A description of a project undertaken by the Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency to digitize analogue topographical names records for mapmaking. The records have been collected over several hundred years. An estimated 120,000 paper slips have been scanned and are currently being sorted and indexed for an intended publication.

- Information on the agreement between the Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency and the Danish Bureau of Statistics for an annual exchange of data. The Bureau receives a dataset of named cities, towns and villages with updated geographical extents, and it then calculates the number of inhabitants. Subsequently, the Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency publishes this data, including the named places. In order to update these extents, the Agency uses address data to indicate where new built-up areas have appeared.

SUMMARY

Since the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardisation of Geographical Names, Denmark has seen a strengthening of the cooperation between the Name Research Section at the University of Copenhagen and The Place Name Section at the national mapping and surveying authority The Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency. The University of Copenhagen's Name Research Section permanently holds the chair of the Danish Place-Name Committee and its secretariat. The agenda of the cooperation is to ensure an authorised spelling control and standardisation of place-names in registers carried by The Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency.

This includes:

- Defining a normative set of rules for correct spelling of Danish place-names
- Developing a method for both spell checking of currently registered Danish place-names and prospectively registration of place-names (including commercial names, names for privately owned localities etc.).
- Spell checking of 120.000 formally non-authorised Danish place-names registered in the Agency's register *Danske Stednavne* ('Danish Place-names'). The register also contains approximately 25.000 standardised place-names formally authorised by the Danish Place-Name Committee. (The limited selection is due to a statutory declaration vaguely defining relevance of standardisation as a question of "practical need" and explicitly excluding names of privately owned (residential) localities).
- Preparing geographical names legislation with the aim of strengthening the administrative uses of geographical names.

Other headlines of the report are:
- A presentation of the register *Danske Stednavne* ('Danish Place-names') and its potential as a part of The Danish Common Public Basic Data Program. (Data from the register are now easily accessible via a shared distribution platform, the Data Distributor. The contained data are standardised and thus, combinable and coherently usable by different systems).
- A description of an Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency-project of digitising analogue topographical names records for map making collected over several hundred years. The collection of estimated 120.000 paper slips are scanned and currently in the process of being sorted and indexed for intended forthcoming publication.
- A section concerning The Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency's agreement with the Danish Bureau of Statistics for an annual exchange of data. The bureau receives a dataset of named cities/towns/villages with updated geographical extents and the Bureau calculates the number of inhabitants. Subsequently, The Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency publishes this including the named cities etc. In order to update these extents the Agency uses address data to point out where new built-up areas have appeared.
- A brief account of the current state of the now former Name Research Section at the University of Copenhagen
- An outline of the expectations for ensuring expert knowledge in the registration and standardisation of geographical names within expected geographical names legislation and/or future statutory declarations.

REPORT FROM DENMARK ON THE PROGRESS MADE IN THE STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES SINCE THE ELEVENTH CONFERENCE

1. GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES STANDARDIZATION BOARDS

The Commonwealth of the Danish Realm consists of Denmark and the self-governed autonomous regions of the Faroe Islands and Greenland. Denmark, the Faroe Islands and Greenland have all Geographical Names Commissions, all with full jurisdiction in their respective areas. The job of the commissions is to establish and maintain authorized spellings of geographical names and to guide authorities and the public about the correct

spelling of geographical names in public use.

2. REGISTRATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES

For the Commonwealth of the Danish Realm, Greenland and the Faroe Islands have now taken over the registration and administration of geographical names over their own areas. Therefore, there are no longer national mapping agency geographical names registers in Denmark containing Greenlandic and Faroese geographical names. By updating the topographical maps of Greenland and the Faeroe Islands the Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency (Styrelsen for Dataforsyning og Effektivisering, abbreviated: SDFE) collaborates with the local geographical names authorities on the geographical names for display on maps.

The responsibility for the official administration and regulation of geographical names in Denmark is shared between the Danish Place-Name Committee and the Agency for Data Supply and Efficiency (SDFE). The Place-Name Committee is responsible for deciding the spelling of Danish geographical names and in that process secure the cultural-historical values associated with geographical names. However, the Committee is not specifically obliged to register geographical names, only to authorize the spelling of them and publish the list of authorized and standardized name-forms, currently containing approximately 25,000 geographical names. SDFE is responsible for the collecting and registering of geographical names in the register *Danske Stednavne* ('Danish Place-names'), and at the same time a classification and location of the names. There are in the region of 155,000 geographical names in *Danske Stednavne* (including the 25,000 names authorized by the Place-Name Committee).

3. COOPERATION BETWEEN THE NAME RESEARCH SECTION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN AND THE PLACE NAME SECTION OF THE NATIONAL MAPPING AGENCY

Since the Eleventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, Denmark has seen a strengthening of the cooperation between the Name Research Section at the University of Copenhagen and The Place Name Section at the national mapping and surveying authority SDFE. The University of Copenhagen's Name Research Section permanently holds the chair of the Danish Place-Name Committee and administrates the secretariat. The agenda of the cooperation is to ensure an authorised spelling control and standardization of place-names in registers carried by SDFE.

This includes:

- Defining a normative set of rules for correct spelling of Danish geographical names (work in progress)
- Developing a method for both spell checking of currently registered geographical names and for future registration of geographical names (including commercial names, names for privately owned localities etc.).
- Spell checking of 130.000 formally non-authorised geographical names registered in the SDFE's register *Danske Stednavne*. The register also contains approximately 25.000 standardized geographical names formally authorised by the Danish Place-Name Committee. (The limited selection is due to a statutory declaration vaguely defining relevance of standardization as a question of "practical need" and explicitly excluding names of privately owned (residential) localities and farm properties except the very large ones). It is a wish to have the entire body of geographical names in *Danske Stednavne* standardized, with as few exceptions as possible.
- Preparing geographical names legislation with the aim of strengthening the administrative uses of geographical names. Currently the authority of the Danish Place-Name Committee is only vaguely defined in an executive order (***) on Copenhagen University's Institute for Name Research dating back to 1978.

There is also a need for defining more clearly the roles of the Name Research Section and of the Mapping Agency (SDFE). The Name Research Section has the linguistic and onomastic expert knowledge, performs research and maintains a large archive of historic geographical names. The Mapping Agency are experts on geographic data handling and maintains a topographic collection of place-names. Both institutions join their efforts in working for the standardization of geographical names in Denmark.

4. THE REGISTER 'DANSKE STEDNAVNE' AND ITS POTENTIAL AS A PART OF THE DANISH COMMON PUBLIC BASIC DATA PROGRAM

In 2018 the Basic Data Program (****) was fully implemented for geographical data. Data from the register *Danske Stednavne* are now easily accessible via a shared distribution platform, the Data Distributor, which also contains data from other registers like the Danish Address Register, the Civil Registration System, the Central Business Register, and the Building and Dwelling Register. All the contained data are standardized and thus, combinable and coherently usable by different systems, both in the public and private sectors. Free of charge, with very liberal license conditions, and of course with respect to data privacy and GDPR.

With a precise geographic location for all named places, it is possible to associate and supply geographical names with additional information such as addresses and administrative divisions. It provides new opportunities for using geographical names to search information across public records and official registers. Emergency agencies, for example, use geographical names for alerting and coordination of action in case of accidents. The transportation network in Denmark has a common journey planner on the internet (*****), which uses geographical names to provide easy search facilities. SDFE has developed a comprehensive search component based on the register's 155,000 geographical names, all with fixed specified locations (polygons, lines or points), which can easily be built into web solutions containing maps. Apart from this, SDFE offers its geographical names data in different web services, where users can freely retrieve these geographical names for different purposes (******).

In general, geographical names provide an intuitively easy way to make provisions for first-class management by the Danish administration, citizens and private enterprises, and when these data are compliant with the common basic data model, they are easy to use between systems and registers.

5. DIGITISING ANALOGUE TOPOGRAPHICAL NAMES RECORDS
SDFE is working on a project of digitising analogue topographical names records for map making collected over several hundred years. The collection of estimated 120.000 paper slips has been scanned and are currently in the process of being sorted and indexed for intended forthcoming publication. The intention is to make them available for research and public use in an easily accessible on line digital form.

SDFE's collection of name slips origins from the so-called 'name block slips'. The name blocks (app. 1000 in total) consisted of loose slips gathered in a block with a wing nut. Originally assigned to a map number and ordered alphabetically, the block slips were prepared in the years 1901-06 based on the name lists showing place-names collected by the Danish ordnance survey. Each slip contains information on which maps and other sources the name was recorded from, and various spellings and toponymical information collected by topographers.

6. STATISTICAL INFORMATION ON TOWN POPULATIONS BASED ON DANISH PLACE-NAMES
SDFE has an agreement with the Danish Bureau of Statistics for an annual exchange of data. Every year the bureau publishes statistics for urban areas (*******), and for this purpose receives a dataset of named cities/towns/villages with updated geographical extents and then calculates the number of inhabitants. Subsequently, SDFE publishes these numbers as information connected with the named cities/towns/villages and their geographical extent. In order to update these extents SDFE uses address data and aerial photography to point out where new built-up areas have appeared. Where there are new populated or built-on addresses closer than 200 metres from the town limit, it indicates that the town has grown.

It attracts a lot of attention when the annual report on population statistics is published. Therefore, it is of great importance for the registrant to be consistent with the definition on built up areas and the 200 metres rule. Geographical town names and their extent have thus some years ago been regarded as the administrative basis for the authorities allowing towns of a certain size to build facilities like large shopping centres.

7. A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF THE CURRENT STATE OF THE NOW FORMER NAME RESEARCH SECTION AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN
In 1960, the Danish Place-Name Committee (founded 1910) became an independent institute at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Copenhagen with the status of research institute. The executive order of 1978

declares that three members in the committee should represent the Institute of Name Research. In all, the committee consists of thirteen designated representatives from different authorities including SDFE. This along with the responsibility of being secretariat and advisory unit secures the role of both University and linguistic expertise within standardization of place-names. In September 2017, a fusion of institutes resulted in a new situation for the former Name Research institute/section/centre, now defined as a research group consisting of four researchers within the largest department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics in Denmark.

8. AN OUTLINE OF THE EXPECTATIONS FOR ENSURING EXPERT KNOWLEDGE IN THE REGISTRATION AND STANDARDIZATION OF GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES WITHIN EXPECTED GEOGRAPHICAL NAMES LEGISLATION AND/OR FUTURE STATUTORY DECLARATIONS

As stated above the cooperation between SDFE and Name Research aims towards an upcoming geographical names legislation. The common interest is a strengthening of the administrative uses of geographical names. In that process, it is important to register names of all kinds of locations in an appropriate and correct form. A set of normative spelling rules specifically for place-names would be possible to administrate by register authorities and it would form a basis for both accepting correct forms and rejecting controversial forms. The work of UNGEGN underlines the importance and relevance of regarding names as a part of common cultural heritage, which is of great concern also in the Danish Place-Name Committee. This, however, is rather difficult to secure based on a set of normative spelling rules. A reasonable decision may require both knowledge of language and history and new research. To conclude, the ideal situation for a future strengthening of the administrative uses of geographical names would seem to be a names legislation that defines and describes the responsibilities of the different institutions, clarifies tasks and purposes of regulations and secures both orthographic correctness, expert knowledge and transparency.

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*** https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=73300 (only in Danish)

**** https://en.digst.dk/news/news-archive/2018/october/seven-basic-data-registers-are-available-on-the-data-distributor/ and https://en.digst.dk/data-and-it-architecture/basic-data/

***** https://www.rejseplanen.dk/webapp/index.html?language=en_EN

****** See examples on https://sdfekort.dk/spatialmap

******* https://www.dst.dk/en/Statistik/dokumentation/documentationofstatistics/urban-areas/