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**United Nations Group of Experts on  
Geographical Names  
2021 session**

New York, 3 – 7 May 2021

Relevant resolutions: **I/7, II/4, III/5, IV/24**

**Item 4a of the provisional agenda \***

**Reports: Divisions of the Group of Experts**

## **Report of the Norden Division**

Submitted by the Norden Division\*\*

### Summary:

The full report outlines the activities carried out by the Norden Division since the 2019 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and includes materials of common interest to the Division.

The main activity for the Norden Division was its online meeting in September 2020. Plans to hold a joint meeting with other divisions and working groups of the Group of Experts were put on hold owing to the ongoing coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

In total, 15 members of the Division attended the 2020 meeting, at which they gave overview presentations on their ongoing work and issues. The meeting was engaging, with many relevant and valuable discussions and much knowledge-sharing. In addition, the Division also held a meeting on 12 January 2021 with 11 participants, in preparation of the 2021 session of the Group of Experts.

The report will also refer to reports and working papers to be given by Division members at the 2021 session.

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\* GEGN.2/2021/1

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## Report of the Norden Division

### Virtual Norden Division Meetings

The main activities for the Norden Division have been two virtual Norden Division meeting held in September 2020 and January 2021. Plans for a symposium with joint meetings with other UNGEGN divisions and working groups have been postponed, owing to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

The Norden Division held its annual meeting on 29. September 2020. As mentioned, the event was a virtual event and was attended by 15 division members representing Denmark, Finland, Greenland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and the Kven community in Norway. The discussions and presentations of the meeting revealed that the division members are engaged in quite a number of activities, many of which are ongoing also in other member countries, as the following table shows:

<i>Activities</i>	<i>Countries</i>
Geographical names and exonym databases development, including web semantic technologies and ontologies	Denmark, Greenland, Iceland, Finland, Norway, Sweden
Geographical names web services	Finland, Norway
Digitizing and updating geographical names archives and registers	Finland, Norway, Sweden
Guides and manuals on name planning and good naming practise	Denmark, Finland, Iceland
Geographical names standardization eLearning courses	Norway, Sweden
Safeguarding minority names	Denmark, Norway, Sweden
Toponymical guidelines	Norway

In addition to reporting activities and issues, some attendants of the Norden Division Meeting gave presentations on issues and activities of special focus in their organisation. One presentation gave an outline of the Norwegian Language Council's planned eLearning course on geographical names standardization. The purpose of the course is to teach the contents of the Norwegian Place-Name Act and the main purpose of the act: to preserve geographical names as cultural heritage and to give them a correct spelling in accordance with the law – this course is also presented in the working paper GEGN.2/2021/20/CRP.20, under Agenda Item 10. the representative for the Kven language presented issues and problems related to standardization of minority language toponyms in a multilingual.

Other issues discussed were the coming UNGEGN-2021 2. Session and, in particular, the ongoing work of the UNGEGN Strategic Plan. Also discussed was the state of the Norden Division homepage, as elaborated on in a section below.

The second Norden Division meeting was held on 12. January 2021. The main focus of this meeting were preparations for the coming UNGEGN-2021 2. Session, where members were encouraged to submit working papers and advice was given to recent members on format of reports. etc. Also discussed was the planned virtual format of UNGEGN-2021.

The virtual Norden Division meetings must be considered to have been successful, in spite of concerns of not being able to meet in person. The online meeting format was well suited to division meetings as it was also found that participation was easier for members with limited travel funds. It is envisaged that some of the future activities of the division will continue to be in a virtual format, although the main activity format will consist of in-person meetings.

The minutes from this meeting will be available on the Norden Division homepage in due course: <http://nordendivision.nfi.ku.dk/about/meetings/>.

### **Updating of the Norden Division homepage**

One key issue discussed at the Norden Division Meeting in September 2020, concerned the Norden Division homepage. The homepage has not seen a major update for a some years. As a first step, it was agreed to revise the content in order to bring the information up to date. This work is ongoing and planned to last 2021 out.

### **EU General Data Protection Regulation and geographical names collection**

There are plans for a Norden Division workshop in 2021 on the issues of the EU *General Data Protection Regulation* (GDPR) relevant to the collection and digitizing of geographical names for use in research and standardization. The issue lies in how to interpret the regulations in relation to research and archive digitisation activities. If interpreted according to its intent, archives will not be able to make sources digitally available for use in standardization matters and geographical names research in general.

No date has yet been set for this meeting, but the workshop will be announced on the UNGEGN homepage.

### **The effect of the pandemic on activities**

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a severe impact on the activities of for the Norden Division and planned cooperation with other UNGEGN divisions and working groups. The much-awaited symposium *Cultural Heritage and Commercialization of Geographical Names*, 20-24 October 2020, in Halmstad, Sweden, as had to be postponed until further notice. The venue was planned to be a combined symposium under the auspices of UNGEGN and joint working group and division meetings.

The symposium has not been abandoned altogether, as it is planned to be held at a later date, post-COVID-19.

### **Reports and Working Papers given by Norden Division members**

The Norden Division is an active member of the divisions under UNGEGN, and a total of 13 reports and working papers, including the present report, have been prepared by Members of the Norden division, amounting to just under 15% of all the papers prepared for the 2nd UNGEGN Session.

This is the list of reports and working papers prepared by experts of this division for the current session:

- Report of Norway (GEGN.2/2021/10/CRP.10)
- Report of Denmark (GEGN.2/2021/24/CRP.24)
- Report of Iceland (GEGN.2/2021/29/CRP.29)
- Report of Sweden (GEGN.2/2021/49/CRP.49)
- Report of Finland (GEGN.2/2021/51/CRP.51)
- Report of the Norden Division (GEGN.2/2021/11/CRP.11)
- A New national geographical names archives service (GEGN.2/2021/12/CRP.12)
- Geographical Names Standardization in Greenland (GEGN.2/2021/44/CRP.44)
- Basis and principles of the standardization of geographical names in Finland (GEGN.2/2021/52/CRP.52)
- Update of Toponymic guidelines - Finland (GEGN.2/2021/53)
- E-learning course on the Norwegian Place Name Act (GEGN.2/2021/20/CRP.20)
- Standardized geographical names by language in the Nordic National Mapping Agencies' and Names Authorities' datasets in January 2021 (GEGN.2/2021/26/CRP.26)
- The Decline in Numbers of Danish Exonyms on European Cities (GEGN.2/2021/54/CRP.54)

Further reports by Norden Division members are also planned:

- Report of the Working Group on Publicity and Funding (Agenda Item 8)
- Report of the Working Group on Training Courses in Toponymy (Agenda Item 19)