**United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names
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Item 13 of the provisional agenda [*]
Exonyms

Database of German Exonyms

Submitted by Germany[**]

Summary

The permanent committee on geographical names (*Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen*) has published the third issue of its list of German exonyms as a database. The list follows the relevant resolutions adopted by the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names and includes slightly more than 1,500 common German exonyms. It is therefore entirely possible to implement the recommendations of the toponymic experts as laid down in resolutions VIII/4, V/13, III/18, III/9, IV/20, II/28 (available at www.ngii.go.kr/portal/ungn/mainEn.do) which addresses the use of exonyms.

The database software is open source. The database can be accessed on the permanent committee's website as open data under a Creative Commons licence. The data sets can be queried by means of a user interface equipped with an extensive search function, or retrieved in the GeoPackage data format for geographic information system, which is non-proprietary, platform-independent and standards-based.

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[*] GEGN.2/2021/1
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Background

In 2002, the Permanent Committee on Geographical Names representing the German speaking countries, has published the second edition of the list of "Selected German Language Exonyms". The StAGN now has prepared an updated list of exonyms as an online version, hosted by the Federal Agency for Cartography and Geodesy (BKG). The printed version from 2002 has been re-engineered to a database and extended with exonyms of the following categories, which were not included in the former edition of the list:

- exonyms differing only slightly from the official endonym, e.g. Ardennen / Ardennes (FR), Sumatra / Sumatera (ID);

- selected names based on the translation of transparent (generic) elements of the toponym, e.g. Nordirland / Northern Ireland (GB), Weißer See / Beloe ozero (RU);

- common German short forms of country names, e.g. Ungarn / Magyarország, Jordanien / Al Urdun.

This means that the number of existing German exonyms has not increased rather than the restrictive specifications of the second edition have been untightened.

Content of the database

This revised online edition contains some 1,500 entries of German exonyms. For each dataset entity, the following attributes can be found:

- A standardized spelling of the German exonym;

- Country where the geographical feature is situated. For this indication the country code according to ISO 3166-1 Alpha-2 is used. For border-crossing features all countries with a share on the feature are listed.

- Grammatical gender and number of the exonym;

- Pronunciation of the German exonym in IPA transcription;

- Spelling of the endonym(s). Names written in a Non-Roman script are Romanised using the UNGEGN recommended conversion systems or national recommended systems. Nevertheless, there are some exemptions. For instance, for Arabic DIN 31635 is applied, which is the standard conversion system for Arabic into Roman script used by German and not the system approved by the UNGEGN or ISO 233.

- Alternative Romanized form(s), using traditional conversion systems used by German if they are still in common use.

- Spelling of the endonym in original characters / script if the language of the endonym is originally written in a Non-Roman script.

- Language(s) of the endonym(s). For this the language code according to ISO 639-3/639-5 is used.

- A detailed geographical feature category the feature belongs to, and the assignment to the appropriate feature category of the "Infrastructure for Spatial Information in Europe" (INSPIRE) classification.

- Geographical co-ordinates of each feature by one point as exactly as degrees and minutes.

- A map link shows the location of the feature on a zoomable map.

Next steps

There is still ongoing work necessary to amend inconsistencies and fix some bugs so the database will publicly accessible via the StAGN website as open data most probably in autumn 2021. The content will be open to be used under the Creative Commons license.

Within the StAGN website the exonyms and all their attributes can be queried through a user interface via an extensive search function or retrieved as a dataset in a non-proprietary, platform-independent and standards-based data format for geographic information system (GeoPackage).

Points for discussion

The Group of Experts is invited to:

(a) Take note of the report and the progress made for the German exonyms as a database
(b) Comment and provide input on similar work being carried out in other countries