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English

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

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Item 4 (b) of the provisional agenda \*

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

**Report of the Netherlands**

Submitted by the Kingdom of the Netherlands \*\*

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## Report of the Netherlands

The various relevant developments, actions and achievements have been reported under the headings of the relevant resolutions adopted by the consecutive United Nations Conferences on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN).

### **Res. I/4 and V/15 Establishment of national geographical names authorities**

The Netherlands is one of the few countries in Europe that have not yet formally established a national geographical names authority. Furthermore, there are no formal or informal rules or procedures for geographical names standardization agreed between the governmental agencies involved in the registration of geographical names, of which the municipalities and several national governmental agencies are the most important.

However, there is a Commission on Geographical Names (*Commissie Aardrijkskundige Namen*, CAN) which is responsible for the standardization of Dutch exonyms as well as for consultancy on the orthography of domestic geographical names within the Dutch language area (the Netherlands, Flanders, Suriname, and the Dutch Caribbean). The commission is a part of the Dutch Language Union (*Nederlandse Taalunie*), a supranational organization in which the governments of the Netherlands, Flanders and Suriname, together with the Dutch Caribbean countries of Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten cooperate on Dutch language policy.

The Commission on Geographical Names consists of members from academia and representatives from various governmental agencies, media organizations, publishers, translators, and language advisors. Its main tasks are the maintenance of the Dutch exonyms website, advising on the use of exonyms in Dutch, setting up guidelines for and giving advice to governments in the Dutch language area when they choose a new geographical name, advising on the use of domestic geographical names, maintenance of the Toponymic Guidelines of the Netherlands, supporting the development of automated transcription modules for languages that use a non-Roman script, and in performing all these tasks applying the UN resolutions on geographical names.

The website of the Commission on Geographical Names can be found at <https://namen.taalunie.org/>, with a section in English at <https://namen.taalunie.org/dutch-exonyms>.

Authoritative geographical names data of the Netherlands can be found in two governmental key registers:

- Key Register Topography (*Basisregistratie Topografie*, BRT), which consists of the topographic databases and maps of the Netherlands. The data and the database are updated and maintained by Kadaster.
- Key Register Addresses and Buildings (*Basisregistratie Adressen en Gebouwen*, BAG), which contains official street names and populated place names that are used in addresses. The data are updated and maintained by the municipalities, the database is maintained by Kadaster.

### **Res. VI/7 Toponymic guidelines**

A start has been made to update the Toponymic guidelines of the Netherlands, which were last edited in 2017. The aim is to update the information on name authorities, source material, glossaries and abbreviations as well as to include information on the languages and names of the Dutch Caribbean.

### **Res. VI/13 Training courses**

In June 2023, two lecturers from the Netherlands participated in the International Training in Toponymy in Bali, Indonesia, co-organized by the Indonesian Geospatial Information Agency (*Badan Informasi Geospasial*, BIG) and UNGEGN. The theme of the training course was Geographical Names as Cultural Heritage. Lecturers from the Netherlands contributed to the program with a module on geographical names as cultural heritage and a module on data processing and management. More information on this training course and the training materials can be found on the [training course pages of the UNGEGN website](#).

### **Res. VIII/1 Promotion of minority group and indigenous geographical names**

In the Key Register Topography, a review of Frisian water names has been performed. Many previously missing Frisian water names have been added to the database, especially names of canals in towns and villages. In the small town of Hindeloopen (Hylpen in Frisian) for example, canal names in the distinct local Frisian language Hylpers have been registered. Additionally, many names of bridges and tunnels have been added.

On topographic maps, the additional names are only rendered if they fit in the map image. Names in Frisian are given preference over Dutch names.

**Res. VIII/4: Exonyms**

A new database and website structure is in development for the exonyms website of the Dutch Language Union.

The Dutch exonyms website contains all exonyms for geographical features around the world. The main list of exonyms is based on common Dutch language use, while separate sections also contain historical exonyms: exonyms for historical geographical features as well as obsolete exonyms for still existing geographical features. The main list of common Dutch exonyms is prescribed by the Dutch Language Union for general use in the Dutch language, although every language user still has a free choice to use the corresponding endonym if desired. The exonyms in the historical exonyms section are only meant to be used in a historical context or can be used as a reference when reading historical sources. The Dutch exonyms website is widely used by governmental agencies and various (media) organizations in the Dutch language area. In some cases usage has been made mandatory within an organization or by government, e.g. in education material such as school atlases.

The new database and website structure should make it easier to maintain the database behind the exonyms website, but adding additional linguistic information is also taken into consideration.