

10 March 2025

English

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

2025 session

New York, 28 April – 2 May 2025

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 Denmark

Submitted by Denmark **

* GEGN.2/2025/1

** The full report was prepared by Report was prepared by associate professor Rikke Steenholt Olesen (Name Research Archive, University of Copenhagen), Chair of the Danish Place Name Committee, together with Senior Adviser Marie P. Thomsen (Agency for Climate Data) and associate professor Johnny Grandjean Gøgsig Jakobsen (Name Research Archive, University of Copenhagen), member of the Danish Place Name Committee.

Communication for increased Reporting of Place Names

The Agency for Data Supply and Infrastructure has become the Agency for Climate Data (Danish: Klimadatastyrelsen). The Mapping unit (Danish: Kontoret for Kortlægning) is responsible for and maintains the national place name registry *Danish Place Names*, which is the official register of place names in Denmark. The Danish municipalities (all 98) can report place names online to the national place name registry. In recent years, the number of reports has decreased. To reverse that trend, the Agency has initiated a campaign focused on the importance of reporting place name data and on how the municipal effort contributes to the registry and the registry's end users. The campaign includes articles in relevant magazines, information on courses for municipal employees and presentations at network meetings. The ambition is to collect 100 reports on place names from the municipalities in 2025.

Standardized Danish Place Names on display in a historical perspective

The register of standardized Danish place names administered by the secretariat of the Danish Place Name Committee (at the Department of Nordic Studies and Linguistics at University of Copenhagen) is continuously updated and reviewed for errors. A new version of the register will be publicly available in the middle of 2025. The register has in recent years been published as an excel-file to be downloaded directly from the Place Name Committee's website. This model will be continued in the future as data in this format is easily accessible and usable. However, the data could with advantage be linked to maps especially requested by municipal employees. An external website provided this service over several years, but for various reasons it has not been possible to maintain it. The excel-file contains no historical information about when a place name was standardized in the current form or if the standardized spelling was previously different from the current. This information is potentially relevant for both administration and public. Information about the linguistic interpretation of a place name that is in fact a basis for the decided standardized form is not linked to the excel-file either. Therefore the secretariat of the Place Name Committee at the University of Copenhagen has decided to implement standardized place names including names of administrative units; municipalities, parishes and smaller cadastral districts (Danish: ejerlav) in the publicly accessible research database *Place Names of Denmark* (Danish: Danmarks Stednavne) as part of a planned re-establishing and revitalizing of the database on Danish place names in the aftermath of a hacker attack in April 2022. The database links to locations on maps and provides for a large part of standardized names both older source forms and linguistic interpretations. In the autumn of 2024, a small project group was created to prepare a concrete plan for revitalizing the historical database including several systematic alignments. An important focus point is the systematic integration of standardized forms. In practice forms of reference are already the present standardized forms. In addition the aim is to include forms from initial lists (the first was published in 1919) to the present as source forms. In this way any changes will be displayed along with an exact time for when a change took place.

Danish place name-selection in the new edition of the Danish spelling dictionary

In November 2024, the Danish Language Council published a new edition of the Danish spelling dictionary, including a selection of Danish place names. The secretariat of the Danish Place Name Committee served as a consultant by setting criteria for which place names should be included. The former (and fourth) version of the dictionary from 2012 contained 228 Danish place names, that is names on geographical locations within the borders of present-day Denmark. These had been selected by the editors of the dictionary based on its older versions and new names considered relevant. The selection criteria were, however, not specified, and the 'fairness' of why some names had been included and not others were not straightforward. The editors of the fifth version therefore asked the secretariat of the Place Name Committee to provide a list of place names recommended for inclusion. The secretariat set up a set of specified criteria, which matched the names included in the fourth version as much as possible. Apart from the country name Denmark itself, the list includes names on larger provinces, administrative units (regions and municipalities), settlements with more than 10,000 inhabitants, and larger maritime areas, islands, lakes, streams, hills, forests and bridges, all with a concrete lower limit of size. Based on the new selection criteria, the secretariat compiled a list of 206 Danish place names recommended for inclusion in the new dictionary. 153 of these were already present in the old version, while 53 new names were recommended. 75 names in the old version did not comply with the new criteria and were therefore suggested left out, although the secretariat recommended five of them reconsidered for other

reasons. The editors of the Danish Spelling Dictionary's fifth version have almost completely followed with the suggestions made by the secretariat. The only addition is the inclusion of nine names on Danish localities, which are included on UNESCO's list of World Heritage.