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Geographical Names****2025 session**

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

Submitted by Sweden **

Summary:

The present report provides a summary of the major activities undertaken by Sweden since the 2023 session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names. In particular, it provides highlights of government initiatives aimed at increasing support for national minorities and minority languages in Sweden.

Since 2022, the Institute for Language and Folklore has hosted language centres for the national minority languages Finnish, Meänkieli, Romani čhib and Yiddish with the main purpose of promoting and fostering the increased use and knowledge of these minority languages. On January 1, 2025, the Institute was assigned a new, revised mandate to manage the language centres. Efforts targeting children and young people are to be given particular priority. The work of the language centres should be based on the needs of speakers of these languages for revitalization measures and be carried out in ongoing dialogue with the speakers. For the Sami languages, the Sami Parliament is responsible for the language centre activities related to these languages.

The Mapping, Cadastral and Land Registration Authority of Sweden (Lantmäteriet) has initiated minor projects concerning place name presentation in minority languages in registers and on maps, including the possibility of using Sami alphabets in various systems, such as the real property register. Another of its projects aimed at enabling equal font sizes for place names in Swedish and minority languages on national maps. In 2025 the possibility to registering Swedish addresses in minority languages will be explored.

The Lantmäteriet is preparing to set up a new place name database and thereby tackle questions related to managing, storing and presenting place names. A preliminary study was conducted in 2023 and 2024, and the project is now a top priority among the projects within Lantmäteriet geographic department. Preparations will continue during 2025, and the real project and actual development of a database is planned to start in 2026.

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Dialogues with counterparts of the Lantmäteriet in Estonia and the Faroe Islands have been initiated in order to investigate possibilities for cooperation and for sharing experiences regarding place name databases.

The Place Names Advisory Board of Sweden (Ortnamnsrådet) has noticed the need for clearer and more extensive advice to municipalities concerning certain issues related to place names. Two subjects discussed in recent years are the status and use of commemorative names and the application of the term *av hävd* (“by long usage”) in the regulations when considering good place name practice under the Historic Environment Act. The Board plans to publish new recommendations on these two subjects in 2025.

The full report provides a short overview of the Swedish legislation and the main authorities involved in the standardization of geographical names.

Swedish national name standardization

In 2000, provisions on ‘good place-name practice’ were introduced into Swedish law. They are covered in a section of the Historic Environment Act (Sw. Kulturmiljölagen), underlining the aim of preserving place-names as part of the intangible cultural heritage. Briefly, good place-name practice means not changing place-names that are established by long usage unless there is good cause to do so, and spelling place-names in accordance with accepted rules of linguistic correctness. The national, territorial minority names are to be used as far as possible in parallel with Swedish on maps and road signs. The supervision of the Act is the responsibility of the Swedish National Heritage Board (Sw. Riksantikvarieämbetet). The authority oversees the law, and does so by participating in the Place-Names Advisory Board.

The Act applies to central and local government activities relating to place-names and makes clear that the names approved by Lantmäteriet (the Mapping, Cadastral and Land Registration Authority of Sweden) are to serve as a guide. These names have been scrutinized by place-names experts and have assumed the role of a standard. The section in the Historic Environment Act emphasizes the preservation of place-names as part of the nation’s cultural heritage. This legislation contributes to enhance culture, heritage and language recognition as highlighted in strategy 4 of the strategic plan and serves as an example that promotes good naming practices.

Place-names in central and local government

Lantmäteriet serves as Sweden’s national place-names authority. Its responsibilities in this area are to officially adopt place-names, coordinate the place-name activities of the central government, and make recommendations relating to place-names. Lantmäteriet’s work relating to the standardization and preservation of place-names is designed to promote a system of place-names that is well managed and fit for purpose.

The responsibility of *the Institute for Language and Folklore* (Sw. *Institutet för språk och folkminnen*) is to collect, preserve, do research on and to make material relating to place-names available to the public. Its place-name work is carried out at departments in Gothenburg and Uppsala, and its collections of place-names comprise, in all, some 10 million index cards. As an authority responsible for standardization and preservation of place-names, the Institute comments on applications concerning the adoption of place-names and scrutinizes proposed names for use on official maps and in basic geodata. Most of this is done collaboratively with Lantmäteriet, a form of

cooperation that has existed in various forms for over a century. The Institute also gives advisory service for example to municipalities, the Church of Sweden and the Swedish government.

The Sami Parliament in Sweden is an elected parliament and an administrative authority under the Swedish government. The Sami Parliament also has the role of an advisory board and an expert on Sami issues. As regards place-names, the Sami Parliament has the responsibility to comment on applications concerning the adoption of Sami place-names and to scrutinize proposed names for use on official maps and basic geodata.

The local, municipal governments of Sweden (290 in all) are responsible for urban toponymy (streets, squares, parks, city blocks etc.) as well as for urban and rural addresses, which contain a considerable number of place-names.

The Place-Names Advisory Board

The Place-Names Advisory Board (Sw. Ortnamnsrådet) is an advisory body to Lantmäteriet, Sweden's national place-names authority. Its main responsibilities are to work with Lantmäteriet to develop principles and formulate goals for a sound policy relating to place-names and to promote good place-name practice in the country. The members of the Board are from Lantmäteriet, the Institute for Language and Folklore, the Swedish Local Heritage Federation, the Swedish National Heritage Board, the Sami Parliament, the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions, the Swedish Transport Administration and the universities.

The Place-Names Advisory Board has no formal decision-making powers, but acts in an independent capacity, providing advice and promoting dialogue. In that role, it seeks to guide local authorities and other name givers and to ensure that good place-name practice is observed in activities relating to place-names. The Advisory Board has been successful in its efforts to support good policies for the standardization of geographical names. The Board has published a guide on place-name standardization, *The Swedish Place-Names Advisory Board's Guide to the Standardisation and Preservation of Place-Names*. The guide provides information about the legislative concept of good place-name practice.

Since the last UNGEGN meeting, the Board has noticed the need for clearer and more extensive advice to municipalities concerning certain issues related to place-names. Two subjects that have been discussed during the last years are the status and use of commemorative names, and the application of the term *av hävd* 'by long usage' in the regulations when considering good place-name practice in the Historic Environment Act. The Swedish Place-Names Advisory Board plans to publish new recommendations on these two subjects in 2025. The recommendations regarding commemorative names will be based on UNGEGN's resolutions.

The Geographical Names Network

The Geographical Names Network is concerned with geographical names of all kinds, but its main focus is on how foreign names should be handled in Swedish and how Swedish place-names should be used in international contexts. The network brings together a range of organizations involved in various ways with names and their standardization. The network includes representatives of Lantmäteriet, the Institute for Language and Folklore, Uppsala University, the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Radio Sweden, the Swedish Standards Institute (SIS), the EU institutions, and the Institute for the Languages of Finland, and expert terminologists.

The network is consulted on particular questions related to names, including those relating to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs' publication *Utrikes namnbok*. In addition, the network's activities encompass a wide range of other name issues, including foreign personal names, names of

organizations and authorities, and official titles in the public sector. The network publishes its recommendations (in Swedish) on the webpage [Råd och rekommendationer - Institutet för språk och folkminnen \(isof.se\)](#).

The booklet *Utrikes namnbok* contains the names of Swedish government agencies, Swedish organizations and EU bodies, Swedish titles used in the public administrative system and country names. The terms are given in seven languages: Swedish, English, German, French, Spanish, Finnish and Russian.

The main body of the text in the *Utrikes namnbok* is written in Swedish, but the multilanguage list can be used without knowledge of Swedish. The terms listed in the sections on agencies and organizations (Myndigheter och organisationer) and titles (Titlar) are only applicable to the Swedish administration and cannot be applied to corresponding organizations in other countries. The country names are the official names used by Sweden. The booklet can be downloaded from the webpage for Government Offices of Sweden: [Utrikes namnbok - Regeringen.se](#).

Government initiatives aimed at increasing the support for national minorities and minority languages in Sweden

On January 1, 2025, the Institute for Language and Folklore was assigned a new and revised mandate to manage the language centers for the national minority languages Finnish, Meänkieli, Romani čhib and Yiddish; for the Sami languages, the Sami Parliament is responsible for the language center activities related to these languages. The overarching mission of the language centers is to meet the needs of the respective minority and support their rights to reclaim their language by actively promoting and encouraging increased language use, by strengthening individuals' ability to use and reclaim the language, and by spreading knowledge about the languages and the revitalization of them. The long-term goal of these measures is to enhance the use of the languages both at the individual level and within society at large, as well as to facilitate the effective transmission of the national minorities' languages and cultures to future generations. Efforts targeting children and the youth are to be given particular priority. The work of the language centers should be based on the needs of the speakers of these languages for revitalization measures and to be carried out in ongoing dialogue with the speakers.

Lantmäteriet has initiated minor projects concerning place-name presentation in minority languages in registers and on maps, including the possibility to use Sami alphabets in different systems, for example in the real property register. Another of its projects aims at enabling equal font sizes for place-names in Swedish and in the minority languages on the national Swedish maps. In 2025 the possibility to register Swedish addresses in the minority languages will be explored.

Major activities concerning the standardization of geographical names undertaken by Sweden since the 2023 session of UNGEGN

Names that have been approved by Lantmäteriet shall, according to the Historic Environment Act, be used in their approved form in the work of central and local government. These names are stored in Lantmäteriets place-name register and are made accessible to the public in the open web service Sök ortnamn (<https://ortnamn.lantmateriet.se/>). The place-name register is, however, becoming technically outdated. Lantmäteriet is therefore preparing to set up a new place-name database and thereby tackle questions related to managing, storing and presenting place-names. It is a complicated project that needs to be integrated with other processes and data within Lantmäteriet. A preliminary study was conducted in 2023–2024, and this project now has top priority among all projects within Lantmäteriet's geographic department. Preparations will continue during 2025, and the real project and actual development of a database is planned to start in 2026. A dialogue with Lantmäteriet's equivalents in Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the Faroe Islands, Iceland and Norway has

been initiated, in order to investigate possibilities for cooperation and to share experiences regarding place-name databases.

Within the Institute for Language and Folklore a citizen science project on place names in Tensta parish, Uppsala county, has been ongoing since 2022. Local volunteers have first worked with the already existing materials in the Place name archive, which were collected during field trips in 1935 and 1953. Their assignment has been to provide coordinates for all place names they are familiar with, and to comment on names they do not recognise. They have also recorded roughly 70 new names not previously in the Institute's name register. The aim of this project is to improve the quality of the Institute's archive material and to give the volunteers a deeper knowledge about their local area, all of which while facilitating a greater transparency between academia and local communities. The institute is currently in the process of publishing the hitherto received results in our database.

Recent articles and books on geographical names and geographical name standardization by Swedish experts

- Devine, Josefin. 2024. Ortnamnen i Jämtlands län 2:1: Bebyggelsenamnen i Bergs kommun. Hackås och Ovikens socknar. [The place names in Jämtland county 2:1: The settlement names in Berg Municipality. Hackås and Oviken Parishes.] Uppsala: Institutet för språk och folkminnen. <https://sprakochfolkminnen.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1875896/FULLTEXT02.pdf>
- Strandberg, Mathias, 2023. Skånes ortnamn Serie A Bebyggelsenamn Del 5 Färs härad. [The place names in Scania. Series A, Settlement names, Volume 5. Färs district.] Göteborg: Institutet för språk och folkminnen. <https://www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1819276/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Strandberg, Mathias, 2024. Behöver Skånes högsta punkt ett namn? [Does the highest point in Scania need a name?], <https://www.isof.se/namn/namnbloggen/inlagg/2024-03-13-behover-skanes-hogsta-punkt-ett-namn>
- Utrikes namnbok, 12 uppl. [Foreign names book, 12 ed.], 2024. <https://www.regeringen.se/informationmaterial/2024/04/utrikes-namnbok/>
- Wahlberg, Mats (ed.), 2025. Ortnamnen i Uppsala län 5:1 Uppsala kommun, Uppsalas gatunamn. 2 uppl. [The place names in Uppsala county, 5:1. Uppsala Municipality. The street names in Uppsala. 2 ed.] Uppsala: Ortnamnsarkivet.