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***The Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kartographische Ortsnamenkunde (AKO) as the
Austrian model of a national names board***

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Unlike many other countries, Austria does not have one central institution responsible for the standardization of geographical names. This is due to the federal structure of the country: as a federal republic, Austria is divided into nine federal provinces (Bundesländer). These federal provinces are not only administrative divisions, but have some distinct legislative authority separate from the federal government.

When we talk about standardization of geographical names in Austria, we first have to state that from the legislative point of view, only names of inhabited places are standardized. Until a few years ago they used to be published by the Federal Office of Statistics (Statistik Austria). For more recent years they can be found in the name data base GEONAM of the Federal Office of Metrology and Surveying (Bundesamt für Eich- und Vermessungswesen). Geonames other than names of inhabited places (names of mountains, hills, valleys, rivers, lakes, glaciers etc.) are collected by the Federal Office of Metrology and Surveying. As the maps produced by this office are an official publication of a Federal Institution, the names of uninhabited places used in these maps are to be regarded as de facto official. The names of inhabited places within these maps are identical with the names published in the gazetteers of the Federal Office of Statistics.

These two official agencies, the Federal Office of Statistics and the Federal Office of Metrology and Surveying, are assisted in their work by boards on geographical names. All Austrian provinces (except Carinthia) have their own boards on geographical names; they are mostly linked to the respective Provincial Archives. Nevertheless there is, additionally, another board for Austria as a whole, which is called the Working Committee on Cartographic Toponomastics (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kartographische Ortsnamenkunde, or AKO for short).¹ This Committee was founded in 1969; its main aim is to promote the standardization of geonames within Austria according to the recommendations of the United Nations. Originally, the AKO was founded as a Division for Cartographic Onomastics within the Cartographic Commission of the Austrian Geographic Society. In 1994, it entered into conjunction with the Austrian Academy of Sciences and was renamed the Working Committee on Cartographic Onomastics.

The main duty of the AKO is to fulfill a coordinative function between several institutions and bodies concerned with geonames. The committee usually meets twice a year. These meetings serve as a forum where experiences and information are exchanged. Institutions and bodies represented in the AKO are, for example, the Federal Office of Statistics, the Federal Office of Metrology and Surveying, the Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management, the Federal Ministry of Defence, the Austrian Standards Institute, the Austrian Cartographic Society, the Institute of Lexikography of Austrian Dialects and Names and the Institute for Urban and Regional Research (both of the Austrian Academy of Sciences), the Institute of Geography and Regional Research of the University of Vienna, the Austrian Society of Onomastics, the Association for Austrian Field Names Research, representatives of the private cartographic industry, etc. Representatives of the boards on geographical names of the provinces are also part of the Committee, together with a representative of the Provincial Archive of Southern Tirol (Italy) as an observer.

¹ <www.oeaw.ac.at/dinamlex/AKO/AKO.html> (26 Nov. 2008).

The Committee also serves as a contact point for problems or queries regarding geographical names. It promotes the publication of manuals and guidelines for the use of geonames in Austria. The most important of these publications, stimulated by or published with active participation of AKO members, are the following:

- BREU, Josef (1975): Geographisches Namenbuch Österreichs, bearbeitet nach den Empfehlungen der Vereinten Nationen [Gazetteer of Austria, edited according to the recommendations of the United Nations]. Wien (= Forschungen zur theoretischen Kartographie 3).
- BREU, Josef (1979): Toponymic Guidelines for International Cartography. Austria. Working Paper No. 5, Eighth Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, New York, 26 February – 9 March 1979; online: <<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo/8th-GEGN-Docs/working-paper5.pdf>> (11 Nov. 2008) [first sample worldwide for Toponymic Guidelines for Map and other Editors].
- Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Kartographische Ortsnamenkunde (Hrsg.) (2000): Geographische Namendatenbank Österreich [Geographical Names Database of Austria]. Wien [CD-ROM].
- Abteilung für Kartographische Ortsnamenkunde (AKO) der Österreichischen Kartographischen Kommission in der Österreichischen Geographischen Gesellschaft (ÖGG) (Hrsg.) (1994): Vorschläge zur Schreibung geographischer Namen in österreichischen Schulatlanten [Recommendations for the Use of Geographical Names in Austrian School Atlases]. Wien (= Wiener Schriften zur Geographie und Kartographie 7).
- ÖROK-Empfehlung [Nr. 46] zur Standardisierung geographischer Namen [Recommendation Nr. 46 of the Austrian Conference on Spatial Planning on the standardization of Geographical Names]. Wien 1998; online: <www.oerok.gv.at/fileadmin/Bilder/5.Reiter-Publikationen/OEROK-Empfehlungen/oerok_empfehlung_46.pdf> (11 Nov. 2008).
- BERGMANN, Hubert / HAUSNER, Isolde (2006-2007): Toponymic Guidelines for Map and other Editors. Revised edition. Vienna; online: <www.oeaw.ac.at/dinamlex/AKO/AKO.html> (11 Nov. 2008).

At the very moment a working group within the AKO is elaborating guidelines for the use of geonames in Austrian educational media.

Last but not least, the AKO is also active on the transnational and international level. Members of the AKO attend the meetings of the Germany-based Permanent Committee on Geographical Names (Ständiger Ausschuss für geographische Namen, or StAGN for short), along with representatives from other German-speaking countries. AKO Members also participate in activities of the UNGEGN, attend UNGEGN conferences and sessions, as well as meetings of UNGEGN working groups. At the present moment, the AKO chair (Peter Jordan) also holds the chair of the Dutch and German-speaking division (DGSD) within the UNGEGN.