

**Minutes of the  
Workshop on Toponymic Exchange**  
organized by the Working Group on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers  
UN Headquarter, New York

28 August 2007, 13.30 – 14:45 hours

Convenor Pier Giorgio Zaccheddu gave a brief introduction to the item and presented the note from Randall Flynn. Print-outs or copies of Flynn's paper called "thoughts for discussion" as well as of the presentations were disseminated to the participants.. Zaccheddu explained the different meanings and understandings with regard of "data exchange formats". Are they related to the exchange "formats" of data from a database to a GIS or to a web service (XML, dbf, etc)? Are they related to the "content" of the data, means defining a certain minimum set of attributes / content of data (e.g. name, feature type, coordinates)? Or are they related also to a certain structure of the data elements modelled or listed (e.g. data types, character sets)?

The main issue for the workshop was: what can the WG TDFG do?

Zaccheddu emphasized that the issue of data exchange "formats" will not be touched on within this workshop. In order to illustrate the issue of data "content" and "structure", 3 examples of 3 different European countries were presented.

**Example 1: Norway**

Norway since 1991 did not have a GN DB. Norway created a more complex feature-oriented DB. One or more names in different languages are linked to one feature. These names can be used for different products (e.g. maps). A distinction is made, if a name is "main name", "Side name" or "Sub-name".

**Example 2: Spain**

Spain makes a distinction between "mandatory" and "optional" elements in terms of data content. They also use unique identifier for features, i.e. they are also modelling the names information feature-oriented. The database comprises also variant names. "Preferent names" is used at the national level but "variant names" are only used at the local level. The data model contains names from the previous 50 years. "Status" is an important element in the data model. Spain presented a proposal for an update of the "draft toponymic data exchange standard".

**Example3: Finland**

In Finland place names are classified as feature names. They use place-ID and placename – ID. They maintain also the map name features and map nameID in the database. All unique IDs are 8-digit integers. The status of different languages in each municipality (official/unofficial, majority/minority) is important information stored in the database. The database is the rationale for the production and thus comprises all the different elements according to that.

**Discussion:**

The new proposal have to be more feature-oriented and has to deal with the issues of more than one language and status of a names.

The given presentations visualise that the three different approaches are feature-oriented. But, the task to create a common data model for geographical names information to be used world-wide is out of focus for the WG. Nevertheless, a common understanding of a minimum set of attributes for GN information is still needed. That might be used in countries, where a database is to be created and might be useful when exchanging datasets between different countries.

The WG TDFG will try to extend the document of 1996 to see it more feature-oriented. Johnny Anderson volunteered to prepare a first amended draft.