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Issues of toponymic standardization

ISSUES OF TOPONYMIC STANDARDIZATION

Place-names and the standard for location addresses in Sweden

Submitted by Sweden*

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Place-names and the standard for location addresses in Sweden

Due to the Swedish Apartments Register Act (2006:378) the responsibility to establish location addresses has to a great extent been regulated by law, stating that for every entrance in residential buildings the municipality shall establish a location address. Before that there was an agreement between Sweden Post and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities (from 1994) implying that the municipalities are responsible for the address assigning.

In the Swedish Apartments Register Ordinance (2007:108), it is regulated how, within each location address, unique designations for dwelling units shall be composed. To help the local officials responsible, the Swedish Standards Institute has produced a national standard for location addresses.

The location addresses always contain place-names. It is with the help from place-names that a location address becomes unique and unambiguous. In order to use a place-name in an address it must be known in a larger circle of place-name users. The place-names are at the same time an important carrier of a country's cultural heritage.

When establishing the names in location addresses, one shall observe "good practice for place-names" in accordance with section 1 § 4 in the Swedish Heritage Conservation Act. This means that place-names shall be written in compliance with established rules for linguistic correctness and that established place-names may not be changed without compelling reasons. This is supported by the standard. The standard is supplemented by a recently published handbook which in an informative manner describes and exemplifies how the standard may be used in practice.

The Swedish Standards Institute (SIS)

SIS is the centre for work on standards in Sweden and a working partner in the European and global networks, CEN and ISO. SIS produced a national standard for "location addresses" in 1998, but no name expertise was involved. The standard has now been revised, and this time the Place-Name Advisory Board was represented in the working group dealing with name issues. The provisions on good place-name practice have been taken into consideration in the new standard that came into force in 2007.

Local authorities currently have a particularly essential part to play since today's most important place-name project in the country is the reorganization of the addressing system in rural areas, a major task for the 290 municipalities.

This is being done for the purposes of Sweden's population and housing censuses (Sw. *Folk- och bostadsräkningen, FoB*). Future censuses are planned to be based entirely on information from registers and various other administrative sources. To achieve this goal, a register of housing units is needed. A new law to establish an apartments register (Sw. *lägenhetsregister*) came into force in 2006. A precondition for such a register is that each Swedish municipality establishes location addresses (Sw. *belägenhetsadresser*) to the required extent.

The standard is supplemented by a handbook which in an informative manner describes and exemplifies how the standard may be used in practice. The handbook is aimed at people handling with e.g. municipal addresses, and others having interest in and being in need of location addresses and of other practical use of the standard.

Purpose of the new standard

This standard relates to location addresses within Sweden. Its aim is to provide support for the work on address-assigning and approving of location addresses as well as for exchange of data concerning location addresses. The standard shows how location addresses are constructed and registered. It also contains an application schema showing what information is needed regarding location addresses for the exchange of data between different systems and how this information shall be designed and packaged. The standard also shows how a register for location addresses may be set up. In the handbook examples of location addresses are given together with recommendations for their assigning, spelling and presentation on various kinds of signs.

The standard is an application of the standard SS-EN ISO 19112:2004 which shows how the sub-division of areas is documented and how a register of place-names can be constructed. The application is made so as to be able to represent location addresses as a combination of names and designations constructed from a well-defined sub-division of areas.

Function of the location address

A location address indicates where a geographical place is situated. It indicates the place and points out a phenomenon located on, or represented by this place. This method of indicating the geographic location constitutes an indirect reference system. As the location of a place also may be described by coordinates, the place may be described as well by the indirect reference system as by a coordinate based reference system, which is a direct such system.

Different types of addresses have different purposes. A postal address gives e.g. information to a post-office employee about the final destination for postal items, and a visiting address describes where someone or something may be found. In order for a location address to fulfil its purpose, it is necessary that it is unique, meaning that each location address only occurs once. Thus, it must in an unambiguous manner point to only one location. From this follows that location addresses must be assigned, approved and registered in a uniform manner and that in each geographical area an organization is appointed as responsible for this activity.

The location address has an important function by being able to act as an identifier for the building or construction to which the address is tied. This function may be utilized when establishing registers for e.g. dwelling units or non-residential premises for various activities.

Contrary to many other reference systems, location addresses are well-known and used by those who live at, work at, or visit the place. They often occur on maps and on street, road and building signs. Location addresses are particularly important to occasional visitors.

Current status

In 2010 most of the apartments register was completed, and during 2011 and 2012 the Swedish Tax Agency will coordinate this register with the population register of Sweden. There will be a total of close to 5 million apartments, and the first official statistics are expected to be published in 2012.

