

# Concurrent standardization as a necessity: The genesis of the new official orthographic guidelines<sup>1)</sup>

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The new official orthographic guidelines were brought into force by the official state authorities on August 1st, 1998 and its principle goals were a standardized representation of the guidelines and a «gentle simplification in respect of content». This regulation was not supported by the public and in fact it was the starting point for a struggle for conceptual solutions and a quest for the achievement of a consensus between different possible norms. Since orthography is an officially codified standard taking up a prominent position among linguistic standards, it is of particular socio-political importance. It was the foremost task of the Council for German Orthography (Rat für deutsche Rechtschreibung), instituted in December 2004, to elaborate a compromise in order to bring the «orthographical war» (*Die Zeit*) to an end, which was led enthusiastically for more than a decade. – The concern of this article is to classify historically the agreement reached in 2006. Against this background, it can be stated that official guidelines will only be accepted, if they are based upon the usage in writing and if they take into account the interests of the reader. Both principles are characterizing the proposal made by the Council for German Orthography. An outlook on the Council's activities concerning orthographic standardization expected in the future will conclude this article.

On December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2006 peace was constituted by an impartial judge: «After long years of controversies, the heated debates were cut off temporarily by the so called orthographical peace».

In this way the Society for German Language (Gesellschaft für deutsche Sprache), which picks the «words of the year» annually, motivates its choice to declare «orthographical peace» a «verbal type fossil». These verbal type fossils determine the public discussion to a great extent. They stand for important topics or they may be characteristic in any other way.

«Peace» implies «war». And indeed, in the years leading up to 2006 many war metaphors were to be found in the press coverage of this topic. The orthographical war seems to have broken out (again) (*tirol*). Reports are submitted from the front line (*Die Zeit*) and the slogan «erase mistakes» is chanted (like Hitler) (*taz*). The «infamous dictation of Versailles» (*taz*), read Vienna, where the new orthographic rules were stated in the nineties, is claimed to bear responsibility for the controversies.

But what is the issue there? What happened in the years in-between? Where did the front line run? What induces a cartoonist to depict Germany once more as a divided country – a country cut into two parts – each with its own orthographic rules (cf. illustration 1)?



Illustration 1: «A Gap Through the Land»

The concern of this article is to answer these questions. In the first section, I will introduce the underlying conceptuality and in particular the main principles the German orthography is bound to. Subsequently, I will classify the reform of 1996 in the course of history and name its aims. From the present-day point of view, the conception of the orthographic reform, as well as its unwilling acceptance by the public, was the source for its failure and as a consequence an extensive revision took place in 2006. What conclusion can be

drawn from that concerning future processes of standardization? I will deal with this question in the last section of my article.

## I

Orthography takes up a prominent position among linguistic standards because it is the only official codified linguistic standard. *Codified* means that the orthographic rules are fixed in written form. *Standard* means that the abidance of these rules ensures correct and hence officially approved spelling. The crucial point for the pupils is the combination between «(officially) codified» and «standard»: Only those, who abide by the rules, are able to avoid mistakes, which could lead to bad marks.

Linguistic research assumes that the external standards undergo a process of internalization. During this process the standards are not transferred one-to-one, but they are necessarily enriched by a person's own generalizations and regulations. This necessity is due to the fact that one would not be able to write fluently, if there was a constant need to check the rules. A typical effect of internalization is the so called hyper-generalization.

This explains why every reform of German orthography cannot *possibly* achieve wide acceptance within the entire linguistic community – as reasonable as the modifications might seem when regarded singularly. Only those rules that conform to the internalized rules of the individual are likely to be accepted. This can be illustrated by utterances like «I have always spelled this word like that», which could be heard in the aftermath of the reform of German orthography in 1996.

The reform of German orthography in 1996 did not change the basic principles of German orthography. As generally known, German orthography is based on an alphabetic writing system, i.e. its elementary units are sounds and letters.

As sounds refer to letters and vice versa we can describe their correlation. This fact is outlined with the phonological principle.

The counterpart to the phonological principle is the morphological or semantic principle. The semantic principle enables the reader to extract the meaning of a word from its orthography. For this reason, the word forms of one particular word stem should have similar orthography. For example, the final devoicing of the final sound remains unmarked in the written text. According to a strict interpretation of the phonological principle, spelling should be <kint>, whereas the actual spelling <kind> is consistent with the standard. The spelling of the disyllabic <kinder> has been transferred to the monosyllabic word.

Obviously, the basic principles both are linked closely with the two basic functions of orthography, namely the function of recording and the function of perception. By writing something down, utterances and thoughts can be transformed into something written and the other way around. Something written can be transformed into an utterance or a thought. The phonological principle and the function of recording serve the writer of a language whereas the semantic principle and the function of perception serve the reader of a language.

In the course of its development, orthography has been altered in order to meet the reader's needs in a better way. The semantic principle became ever more effective. This development was sped up considerably by grammar books and scholastic works which indicate the semantic criteria for orthography very early. In the «Teutsche Grammatica» – published approximately in 1535 – Ickelsamer points out that in order to write words correctly, one has to consider their meaning and their composition (p. C<sub>7</sub><sup>r</sup>). For example, not knowing that a Haarband ('hair-band') is a band «which you bind your hair with» leads to an incorrect pronunciation and as a consequence the writer will spell it according to this pronunciation. The result could be a spelling like «harwät» or «harwand». With this statement, Ickelsamer provides the basic principle that has determined the orthography of the German language to a great extent.

Up to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the German orthography had developed based by an interaction of spelling usage and grammar books. Around 1800, the main features of the orthography were fixed, but there was still a wide range of variants. Firstly, these variants are yielded by the interference of the different principles. Secondly, they originate in the limitations of the two principles.

A paradigmatic example of the forementioned variants is the juxtaposing use in this period of the spellings *Mesner* and *Messner* ('sacristan') as well as *Dinte* and *Tinte* ('ink'), cf. *Deutsches Wörterbuch*:

The first example shows the interference of the principles. *Mesner* is derived from Middle Latin and as a loanword it presents a regular structure. The spelling with a single <ss> follows the phonological principle where two consonants indicate a short syllable. However, it is often related to *Messe* ('mass'). Because of this synchronous word relation, *Messner* may be spelled with <ss> following the semantic principle.

The second example – *Dinte* and *Tinte* – shows the limitations of the two principles. The difference in spelling is caused by a pronunciation variant within the German-speaking area.

This was the status quo in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was considered in an ever more critical way. Especially the schools asked for uniformity in orthography. Konrad Duden summarized the public opinion as follows: «Neither two teachers in the same school nor two proofreaders working for one typographer agreed in every detail concerning orthography. But there was no official authority to turn to» (Duden 1908:331). In short, the so called «orthographic question» had to be solved. Official authorities became involved in the efforts of agreeing upon a standard. The variants might have disappeared over time, but even if they had done so, it would have taken a long time.

The rulebooks published in Erfurt (in 1833) and in Zurich (in 1837) marked the beginning of the standardization efforts by the state. Even with a geographically limited purview, they can be seen as the crucial step towards a standardized orthography. Since they were valid exclusively for schools (and for the public authorities), they had a strong model function. In the years between 1833 and 1901, – all in all – twenty-three of these rulebooks were published in the German-speaking area.

In 1876, initiated by Prussia, a conference was held in Berlin to reach a larger consensus on German orthography, the «Verhandlungen der zur Herstellung größerer Einigung in der deutschen Rechtschreibung berufenen Konferenz». It was the first attempt to reach a standardized orthography. The conference made history under the title «First Orthographical Conference» which already indicates that it failed to achieve its aim. We find various reasons for its failure in research literature, but nevertheless these reasons pointed towards the future.

By comparing the aims, which the conference members set themselves, with the general observation I mentioned in the beginning, we can reveal clearly which were in the end the most important reasons for the failure of the conference.

The members of the conference held in 1876 had two aims: unity and simplification. To achieve the latter, the lengthening sign should be eliminated (among other things). For example, this included the elimination of <h> in words like <Bo(h)ne> ('bean') or <Gef(a(h)r> ('danger'). The distancing from common written usage was calculated. This is stated in the records taken during the conference:

The result of the meetings was summarized by the president who pointed out that [...] difficulties could be extracted from the traditional literature but that it did not provide a fundamental aspect in regard to the dimension of the reform. On the contrary, the orthography of traditional literature has to be modified to match the

temporary standard. If it was achievable for schools to have consequent and simple rules then this requested simplicity would indicate to develop orthography even further away from previous usage. (Verhandlungen 1876: 83)

The latter contradicts what was discussed above: A reform can get positive response only if it adopts the tendencies of usage in writing. Thereby it conforms to the writing intention of a large number of speakers of a language and to their internalized standards. Furthermore, the reform should not weaken the reader's position, who is interested in catching the meaning of an utterance quickly. The spelling with <h> signals the reader that the syllable is stressed.

Both aspects were not considered by the conference in 1876: The elimination of the lengthening sign is neither located in the written usage nor in the reader's interest because it only strengthens the phonological principle.

The propositions made by the conference were literally pulled to pieces by the newspapers and the administration did not pay any further attention to them. Only in 1901, an agreement on the orthographic question could be found in the course of the so called Second Orthographical Conference.

This Second Orthographical Conference had only one aim: unity. This uniformity was based on the existing usage of writing, i.e. the conference distanced itself consciously from any kind of reform. Konrad Duden stated for example the following in the preface of his «Orthographic Dictionary» in 1903:

The primary aim was to achieve unity in German orthography. This would hopefully be achieved by a moderate process. If you had tried to combine an overall reform of German orthography with the moderate process of standardization you would soon have got out of your depths and attempted to achieve the unachievable. [...] By talking about a progress I already indicate that on no account we are to stop this process. We have reached a stopover which everybody has to reach [...].

I have quoted Konrad Duden in detail, since many of those wishing to reform the German orthography after Duden did refer to his statements in order to underline the necessity of reforming.

The regulations fixed in 1901 were markedly liberal and moderate due to the great pressure of finding a consensus. The readiness to find such a consensus was so great that controversial aspects were either not at all codified but left out or the rules were formulated in a way that allowed tolerating opposed spellings. By the way of example, the regulations of 1901 do not include rules concerning separate and compound spelling and punctuation, and the guidelines concerning the case of three letters following each other in immediate succession are fairly open to interpretations:

It is possible to put only two consonants in compounds in which the same consonant would have to be written three times. This is the case with Brennessel, Schiffahrt, Schnellläufer (and so on) [...].

However, people did not appreciate the freedom of choice. The orthographic guidelines had hardly been decided when they already underwent restrictions on official and private level. The first to restrict the freedom of the choice was the «Official dictionary of German orthography to be used in Prussian chambers», published in 1903. In the case of spelling variants this dictionary for official use reported only one variant. Konrad Duden proceeded similarly in his Duden for typographers, which was published for the first time in 1903 as well. After his death, the Duden for typographers and the general Duden for German orthography were merged and from that time on the freedom of choice was almost eliminated.

Soon the Duden acquired an authority accepted by wide sections of the population, which made «Duden» a synonym for «dictionary of German orthography». In the following years, the rules published by Duden became more and more differentiated. To demonstrate this I will get back to the compounds with two or three consonants. The regulations of 1901 contained only one rule concerning the spelling of these compounds. In the Duden of 1991, we find no less than eight rules. In the 1991 version it is determined for example that *Kunststofffabrik* is spelled with two <f> whereas *Kunststoffflasche* is spelled with three <f> because of the additional consonant <l>.

In 1955, the Duden had achieved its maximum authority. The publishers of the Duden and the publishers of the competing dictionary by Mackensen accused each other of not having fulfilled the requirements of 1901. As a result the public was uncertain about what to believe, which became apparent in numerous newspaper articles. In order to bring an end to this discussion, the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs in the Federal States of Germany decided that in case of doubt the rules and spelling variants reported by Duden are the binding ones – at least until a revision of the rules would take place. Some kind of reform seemed to be imminent at that time. With this decision, the Standing Conference confirmed the regulations of the year 1901 and conferred a quasi official authority to the Duden. As we know today, the revision did not take place until 1996.

## II

The idea of reforming German orthography had remained present between 1901 and 1996. Therefore it is not surprising that during all these years

linguistic researchers were engaged in this idea. After several failed attempts – for example in Stuttgart (1954) and Wiesbaden (1958) – the so called International Working-Committee for German Orthography (Internationaler Arbeitskreis für Orthographie) was established in the seventies. It comprised researchers from Austria, Switzerland and the two German states.

This Working-Committee made it its business to follow Konrad Duden's ideas: their aim was to elaborate rules based upon unified criteria and to provide for simplification – in short, they wanted to bring about a reform. The Committee was awarded its mandate by the official political forces: for the Federal Republic of Germany it was awarded by the Standing Conference of the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Federal Ministry of the Interior in 1987. Both aims – unified criteria and simplification – were fixed in the final resolution of the so called First Vienna Colloquies in 1986, held upon invitation by the officiate Austrian Minister of Education and Arts, Herbert Moritz:

We have agreed on the revision of the regulations constituted by the Orthographical Conference in Berlin in order to suit them to the demands of our time. We are especially concerned with the simplification of several rules which have become more and more complicated in the course of time. (As quoted in Mentrup 1987:15)

The Vienna Colloquies took place in 1986, 1990 and 1994 and led directly to the regulations of the orthographic reform in 1996, which came into effect on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1998.

I have reduced the information about the historical facts to give you a general idea of the events that lead to the reform of the German orthography. It was a hard piece of work for all involved parts. Finally, only a small part of the original ideas was adopted into the regulation. Among these original ideas, that were abandoned, there were – among other things – the de-capitalization of nouns, the elimination of the lengthening signs to a great extent and the idea to spell ‘das’ with one <s> – both as a conjunction and a pronoun (e.g. Ich glaube, das er kommt).

The press coverage (with slogans like «Der Keiser sitzt im Bot und issst Al») had contributed to this to a large extent: initiated by an article written by a member of the Working-Committee published before the agreed date along with a highly critical commentary, it induced to the introduction of numerous corrections to the reform.

But also the decisions made in 1996 are not based upon a consensus, best illustrated by the initially mentioned expression «orthographical war». This war

evolved through several stages and it was fought roughly between two parties: on the one side official bodies and the reformers and on the other side the professional writers:

- On July 1<sup>st</sup>, 1996, the so called Vienna Declaration of Intent was signed by representatives of eight countries, in which German is the official or a minority language. They committed themselves to introducing the new regulations in schools and public authorities in their countries.
- In 1996, at the beginning of October, the teacher Friedrich Denk collected signatures against the reform of German orthography on the Frankfurt Book Fair. This so called Frankfurt Declaration was signed by numerous writers like *Günter Grass*, *Walter Kempowski*, *Sigfried Lenz* and *Martin Walser*. The writers expressed their opinion in the cover story «Nonsense Reform of German Orthography. Save the German language! Poets in uproar», published by the news magazine *Der Spiegel*.
- At the end of the same month, the Standing Conference issued the «Dresden Declaration» in which they rejected the Frankfurt Declaration.
- Between 1996 and 1998, many parents instituted legal proceedings against the new German orthography, until the Federal Constitutional Court ascertained in July 1998 that the decision upon the appropriate orthography for the schools falls within the sphere of responsibility of the federal states. Furthermore, the Court determined that the revision of the German orthography did not violate the constitutional rights of parents and pupils.
- In March 1997, the International Committee for German Orthography consisting of twelve members convened for the first time as provided for in the Vienna Declaration of Intent. Its composition is largely identical with the Working-Committee for German Orthography, which prepared the reform and its task was to accompany the introduction of the revision; its work is documented in biennial reports.
- In the referendum held in September 1998 in Schleswig-Holstein, 56.4 per cent of the electors voted against the new orthography. This vote was taken back only a year later by the parliament.

- After having introduced the new orthography in concert with the majority of the newspapers and new agencies on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 1999, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* reverted back to the old orthography in the summer of the year 2000. Albeit these retreats, the administration of the European Union introduced the new orthography on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2000.
- At the end of 2002, the German Academy for Language and Poetry (Deutsche Akademie für Sprache und Dichtung) presented a compromise proposing to keep the new orthography in all cases «where it makes sense or does not do harm».
- At the end of 2003, the International Committee handed in its fourth report, in which they held fast on the principles of the revision.
- In spring of 2004, the International Committee for German Orthography and the German Academy for Language and Poetry met under the direction of the Standing Conference. The attempt to find a compromise failed.
- In June 2004, the Standing Conference decided to remove the International Committee at the end of the year. It was replaced by the Council for German Orthography with international representatives; the Council includes deliberately also representatives of the critics of the orthographic reform. Nevertheless, it reinforced the termination of the transition period on July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2005, during which the old spelling was tolerated in schools.
- In August 2004, the Axel Springer AG and the publishing house of *Der Spiegel* announced their return to the old orthography. The Axel Springer AG holds a market share of 22.7 per cent of all daily papers (cf. the data published by the Commission on Concentration in the Media, KEK).

After that, the Council for German Orthography was formed quickly and began its work in December 2004 reaching a consensus on the basis of the official orthographic guidelines. I will come back to this topic later.

In the first place it is to be clarified why the reform in its 1996 version failed in the end. The objections raised in the public can be summarized as follows:

- Firstly, the revision was designed without regard to the practical usage. Due to its formal spelling criteria it is perceived as an artificial creation and its guidelines are far less functional than the old orthography used to be.

- Secondly, the revision was oriented only towards the needs of people, who do not write much. Its simplifications were introduced at the expense of the reader.

The caricaturist *Götz Wiedenroth* managed to present these objections in drawings I don't want to deprive from you (cf. illustration 2 and 3).



Illustration 2: «Gene Licence»

This is the depiction of a scientist who wants to take out a (European) patent for the new German orthography. By doing so he runs into God. God takes a look at the structure of the new orthography and tells his colleague (!) that it represents a new creation.

The message is clear: Scientists have presumed to re-invent the German orthography. Neither the scientist nor the government are competent for this task (in this context Europe usually represents over-regulation by the legislature). The revision was drawn up at a desk, hence it is scientific, rational and synthetic.

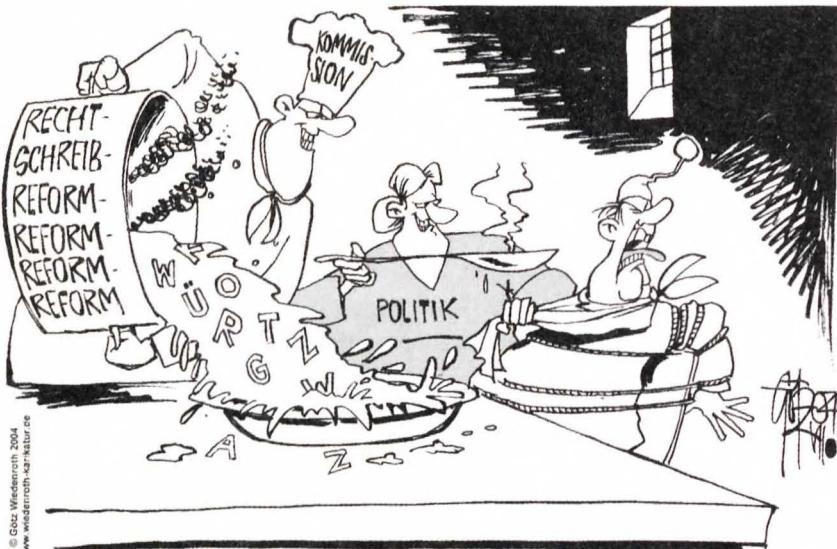


Illustration 3: «Reform Bungling: Here Orthography»

The so called German Michel (Deutscher Michel), the symbol for the common German citizen, is imprisoned in a dark cellar. He sits at a table, tied up with a cord, and politicians feed him with a «reform»-soup. The International Committee for German Orthography is serving the soup which consists of a mixture of «Kotz» (ugh) and «Würg» (ick).

Obviously, this cartoon does not need any further comment. The reform was decided in secrecy and imposed upon the citizens. Politics and the Committee form a «baneful alliance».

These are the main points of criticism that outcropped in the media coverage in those days. The main scientific criticism reads similar to the notions published in the media.

Since I will not go into the details of the critical remarks regarding the content for reasons of space, I will now, based on the remarks made at the beginning of this article, demonstrate on a more abstract level, in which way the reform of 1996 is to be evaluated. For this purpose, I will revert to the forecited concept of the semantic principle.

By the semantic principle the meaning is made transparent in writing. The meaning can be orthographically marked in different ways:

- In the domain of sound-letter classifications meaning can be marked by final devoicing (e.g. <kind> determined by <kinder>).
- In the domain of separate and compound spelling a new idiomatic meaning can be highlighted by compound spelling (e.g. <richtigstellen> in the sense of «to rectify»).
- In the domain of hyphenation the writer can mark the different components of a word (e.g. <be-greifen>).
- In the domain of capitalization a new idiomatic meaning can be indicated by capitalization (e.g. <das Schwarze Brett> as a synonym for «notice-board»).
- In the domain of punctuation meaning can be marked by subordination of clauses (e.g. «Ich hoffe, dass er kommt»).
- In the domain of syllabification and word division at the end of lines the meaning can be marked by the separation in accordance with the components of a compound (e.g. <Haus-tür>).

Thus it appears that the semantic principle affects every sub-area of orthography.

The revision of 1996 brought modifications to all sub-areas. Taking into account what has been said above, these modifications can be judged as follows:

The semantic principle is strengthened with regard to the sound-letter classifications and hyphenation, whereas it is weakened in every other orthographic domain.

The objection, that the position of the people who do not write much has been considered in an unbalanced way, is thus legitimate.

### III

How did these facts influence the Council's work?

In 2004, the political forces entrusted the Council for German Orthography to find a concurrent solution on the basis of the official guidelines. As a consequence, this could only mean, that – after a preferential and one-sided consideration of the writer – to strengthen again the reader's position, i.e. emphasizing the semantic principle in a greater extent.

The Council modified the official guidelines in those cases where the semantic principle had been weakened, i.e. in those cases where it has been

attempted to obstruct or even revert the ordinary linguistic evolution by the means of modifications. The domain of the separate and compound spelling was mainly affected, but also parts of the capitalization and of the punctuation rules as well as parts of the rules about the syllabification and word division at the end of lines. Since the Council was entrusted to integrate these modifications into the existing official guidelines, a relatively strict regulation was inevitably maintained. Thus, the Council did not dispose of the freedom to decide whether all these standards were really necessary or not.

Only within the domain of the separate and compound spelling rules, the Council disposed of more freedom of action. In this case, a complete revision was unavoidable, since the rules had to be re-elaborated according to the semantic principle. The Council had abstained from a complete regulation of all aspects: whereas the official guidelines of 1996 contain rules, which determine the compound spelling (e.g. *gutschreiben* in the sense of *anrechnen*) as well as rules, which allow compound and separate spelling (e.g. *gewinnbringend*, *Gewinn bringend*), but also rules, which determine separate spelling (e.g. *artig grüßen*), the Council limited their regulation to the first two cases using prototypes rather than formally delimiting groups. The regulation of the spelling of a verb accompanied by an adjective could serve as an evidence: The official guidelines of 1996 determined in general the separate spelling of adjective and verb, if the adjective has the endings <ig>, <isch>, <lich>. Therefore, even idiomatic expressions like *madig machen* (in the sense of «to spoil sth for so») and *richtig stellen* (in the sense of «to rectify») had to be spelled separately, as well as phrases with adverbs as *artig grüßen*. The guidelines of 2006 determine compound spelling, once there is a new, idiomatic meaning as it is the case with *madigmachen* and *richtigstellen*. Due to its structure, the phrases like *artig grüßen* are not mentioned by the guidelines, therefore it has to be spelled separately.

It will become apparent in the future, if the Council had chosen an adequate avenue. That much is certain: History taught us – with regard to the developments after 1901 – that it needs patience and advocacy, since every approach that offers a margin of freedom is exposed to pressure by single user groups, which elaborate new restrictions. This phenomenon is observable in the current approach to spelling variants or rather what is considered to be a spelling variant: in-house orthographic rulebooks are drawn up and the bogey of orthographic chaos is evoked in case of non-abidance by the rules. That there is a necessity for a unified spelling for certain types of text cannot be denied, but nevertheless we should avoid banning a correct spelling by the

means of the notion of spelling variants. The public opinion perceives for example *Gewinn bringend* and *gewinnbringend* as spelling variants, even if actually they have to be categorized as phrase and compound (cf. *großen Gewinn bringend* but *sehr gewinnbringend*).

The compromise proposal elaborated by the Council was adopted by the official state authorities in spring of 2006 and it became effective on August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006. It was soon accepted also outside the schools and public authorities, fulfilling thus one of the expectations related to the instauration of the Council: the public discussion should have been transferred to the Council. Its composition contributed certainly to this positive outcome, since the majority of the thirty-nine members belong to the publishing, pedagogical and journalistic as well as to the professional literary writing sector. Among others, the news agencies, the PEN center and the publishers of Duden, Wahrig and the Austrian dictionary (ÖWB) hold each one seat in Council, which is an international committee including representatives from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Liechtenstein, South Tyrol and Belgium.

Meanwhile the compromise has been accepted widely in the public life: the revised orthographic guidelines are applied by all newspapers and magazines published nationwide, i.e. also by *Der Spiegel*, the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* and by the Axel Springer AG. The orthographical peace has replaced the orthographical war not only in terms of search hits provided by the search engines: nowadays Google provides 1840 hits for «Rechtschreibfrieden» against 233 hits for «Rechtschreibkrieg» (October 2007).

## IV

By submitting the revised rules the Council has completed a first phase in its work. Its future tasks are defined in its statute and are described as follows:

This Council has been appointed to preserve the uniformity in orthography in the German-speaking area and to enhance the German orthography to the necessary extent on the basis of the official orthographic guidelines.

The statute thus not only determines, who has to assume these tasks, but it defines also their character and content.

It is the Council for German Orthography who has to assume these tasks, e.g., the Council is the leading authority for questions concerning the German orthography providing by its work a guideline for all publishing houses that publish dictionaries. Thus, the Duden has lost its monopoly of being authoritative in case of doubt.

It is the preservation of the uniformity of German orthography that is mentioned as the first task for the Council. Enhancement is mentioned only in second place, which have to be done «to the necessary extent». This implies that modifications should only be proposed, if a general linguistic change requires an update of the orthographic guidelines.

So the circle is closed again: Uniformity is again the most important feature of orthography. Comparing the regulations of 1876, 1901, 1996 and 2006 there is only one conclusion to draw: Since simplifications will never encounter consensus among all involved parts, it is thus opposed to the concept of a concurrent standardization. But without a concurrent standardization there is no uniformity and therefore no «Rechtschreibfrieden»!

### Note

<sup>10</sup> The article reflects the opinion of its author and follows most widely the presentation held in Norway. In order to preserve its fluent style, I decided not to use footnotes; the relevant bibliographical references are to be found in the list of references. I thank Wolfgang Mentrup for his advice and Dragana Molnár for her translation assistance.

### Summary

Die neue amtliche Rechtschreibregelung wurde zum 1. August 1998 von den staatlichen Stellen in Kraft gesetzt und hatte zum Grundsatz, neben einer einheitlichen Darstellungsweise der Regeln auch «behutsame inhaltliche Vereinfachungen» vorzunehmen. Diese wurden von einer breiten Öffentlichkeit jedoch nicht unterstützt, vielmehr setzte ein Ringen um Konzepte, d.h. um ein Sich-Einigen zwischen verschiedenen möglichen Normen ein. Da die Orthographie amtlich kodifiziert ist und somit eine herausgehobene Stellung unter den sprachlichen Normen einnimmt, ist sie von besonderer gesellschaftspolitischer Relevanz und die Frage der konsensuellen Normierung wird zur Notwendigkeit. Es kam dem im Dezember 2004 eingesetzten Rat für deutsche Rechtschreibung als Erstes zu, einen Kompromiss auszuarbeiten und damit den «Rechtschreibkrieg» um die neue amtliche Rechtschreibregelung (Die Zeit) zu beenden, der über zehn Jahre lang mit Verve geführt worden war. – Im Beitrag wird die im Jahre 2006 erzielte Einigung historisch verortet. Dabei stellt sich heraus, dass amtliche Rechtschreibregelungen nur dann angenommen werden, wenn sie auf den Schreibgebrauch gründen und die Belange des Lesers berücksichtigen. Beide Grundsätze kennzeichnen den Kompromissvorschlag des Rats für deutsche Rechtschreibung, auf dessen künftig zu erwartende Normierungstätigkeit abschließend ein Ausblick genommen werden soll.

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