

Denmark

Agency for Climate Data

Achieving the digitisation of Danish-German border documentation

“The digitisation of the Danish-German border delineation is a substantial and important task. For many years there have been calls to transition the analogue recordings to a digital version, and I am proud that we have now succeeded in initiating this task despite the differences between the two countries in areas such as administration and technology. This achievement testifies to a strong relationship, great trust and good cooperation across the border.”

Rikke Zeberg
Director General,
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An important cooperation between authorities in Denmark and Germany has realised a long-held ambition to digitise the technical and legal documentation of the Danish-German 1920 border. The digitisation project was presented at the August 2024 joint border inspection, where the Agency for Climate Data represented Denmark.

The project aims to digitise, modernise and secure the analogue Border Atlas documenting the delineation of the border that spans more than 100 years. This honours the Danish-German treaty from 1920, following the Treaty of Versailles and the end of World War I, where the authorities of the two countries are obliged to cooperate on the maintenance of the border.

The so-called Border Atlas describes the delineation of the border in text and hand drawn sketches with both absolute and local coordinates. It is a requirement that the border is visible and therefore it is marked physically in the landscape by numerous border markers, and by the

essential subsurface network of benchmarks. After more than 100 years, the old documents and the physical markers have partially deteriorated. This has been an increasing problem for fulfilling the joint obligation.

Now and in the coming years, extensive data collection fieldwork is being carried out. The physical attributes are measured in ETRS89 (European Terrestrial Reference System 1989), forming the basis for an equally extensive digitisation of the old sketches, coordinates and the many historical protocols documenting changes. The work is partly carried out simultaneously and the results are mediated if differences arise.

The digitisation secures the documentation and makes future maintenance more efficient. At the same time, it is a good example of the fine cooperation between the administrative authorities of the two countries, also contributing to the support and development of a good relationship between neighbours.

What does the 1920 treaty dictate and the Border Atlas contain?

- In 18 articles, the Danish-German treaty from 1920 regulates the many challenges arising from drawing a new border. Two of the articles describe the workflow and cooperation for the physical maintenance of the border.
- The Atlas serves as both the technical and legal documentation. It contains detailed documentation of the delineation of the border, described in text and by hand-drawn sketches with absolute and local coordinates related to the subsurface network of benchmarks. The Atlas also contains all historical protocols during the course of more than 100 years.

