# Report

# Kommunalflaggen.eu: a wiki about municipal flags

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**Abstract**

*A number of websites deal with municipal flags. One is virtually dead, while the others all face difficulties in finding contributors and editors. The author proposes her new website – kommunalflaggen.eu – and describes its intention to improve on existing sites.*
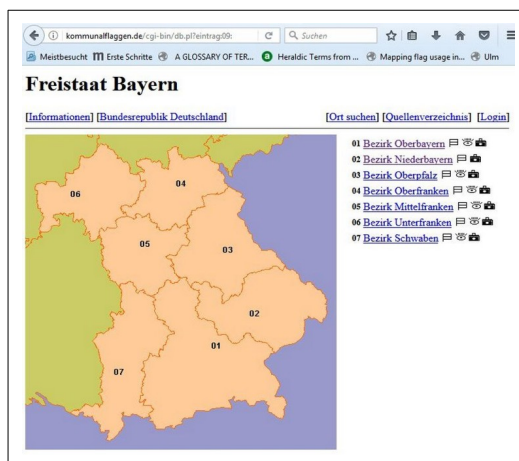
**Introduction**

The author has recently launched a new web project – kommunalflaggen.eu – online since February 2016. The site concentrates exclusively on municipal flags and uses wiki software, like Wikipedia.

**Influences**

The new website aims to improve on previous attempts and to break new ground.

One of the first was kommunalflaggen.de, a project headed by Stefan Schwoon. It was a collaborative project on German municipal flags, involving several German vexillologists. It was editable by anyone with an account, and used text and images (photographs and artwork) accessed via clickable maps. Its main current drawback is that it is practically dead.



*kommunalflaggen.de website: clickable map of Bavaria*

The Flags of the World website – fotw.info/flags (plus several mirrors) – is a collaborative project involving many vexillologists worldwide. It covers flags of all kinds and is editable only by the editor responsible for a particular page. It

includes text and images (largely artwork in GIF format). Its main drawbacks are awkward editing processes and almost insuperable difficulties in reforming them.



*Flags of the World (FOTW): sample Bavarian municipal flag*



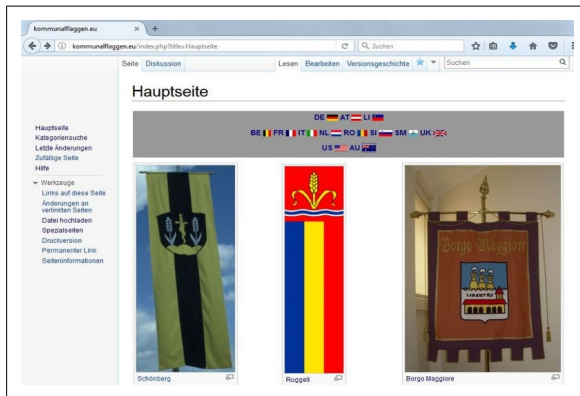*Wikipedia: arms and flags of Liechtenstein municipalities*

Wikipedia is likewise a collaborative project of many individuals worldwide.

Anyone can edt it, using an easy wiki markup language. It is available in multiple languages and includes text and images (JPG or PNG). Its main drawback is that it does not include any original research.

The new website – kommunalflaggen.eu – will be devoted solely to municipal flags. It is designed as a collaborative project, editable by anyone with an account, using an easy wiki markup language.

It is navigable via maps, categories and a navigation bar. It will include text, images (JPG, PNG and SVG) and PDFs.

It is also designed to fight 'link rot'. Its main current drawback is that it needs collaborators.

*kommunalflaggen.eu: current home page*



*kommunalflaggen.eu website: San Marino and Liechtenstein index pages*

**Technical aspects**

The proposed site uses MediaWiki 1.23. There is 60 GB available webspace, of which 7.9 GB is currently used.

The content at the moment includes 12,668 files (mainly images) on 4,010 content pages. It also includes a revision history, a Native SVG Handler and a Multi-Category Search. Currently identified issues include the language(s), SVG support of browsers, and maps.

While focused solely on municipal flags, the site will also include flag-relevant material in other municipal symbols such as coats of arms or logos.

The information will be presented in several ways, but will concentrate on photographs. As the author wrote in 2001:

> A detailed report about municipal flags therefore needs a *combined* evaluation of different sources: 1. information from archives; 2. information from the municipalities; 3. information from flag makers; 4. personal inspection with photography and measuring of the flag.

Why concentrate on photographs?

Written sources are sometimes insufficiently precise, descriptions are often misleading and design drawings frequently differ from the actual flag.

The website wishes to show the real flag and all the variations.



*'… and all the variations.'*



*Left, flag of Altenmünster, near Augsburg, Bavaria: the flag depicts the coats of arms of the communities comprising this municipality*

*Right, flag of Wieseth, Bavaria: the regulations describe a vertical tricolour but this flag has horizontal stripes*



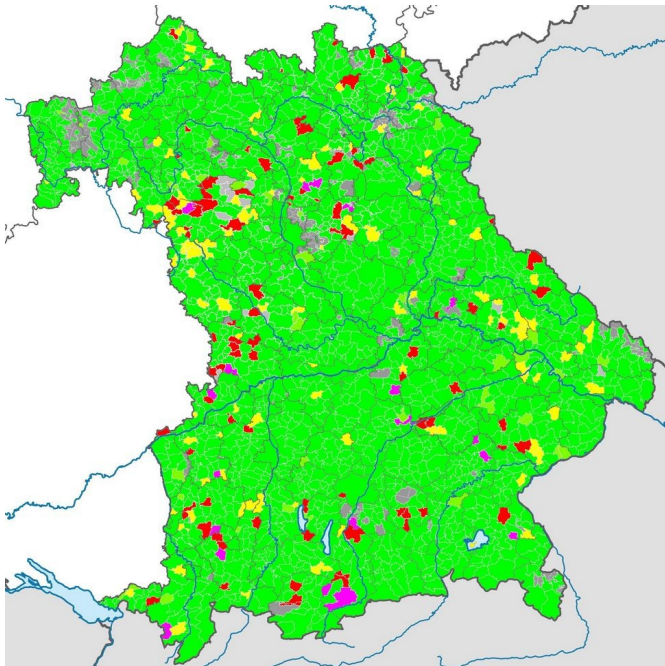*Flag of Dieterskirchen, Bavaria: as portrayed in official drawings*



*Two Dieterskirchen flags that justify the author's decision to focus on photographs of real flags*
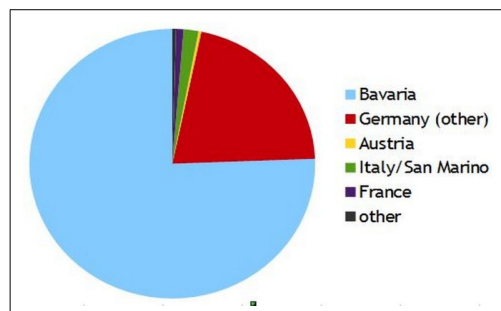
Initial work has focused on 'Project Bavaria'. At 3 August 2017, of 2,056 municipalities:

4.3 per cent have no flag;

0.9 per cent have a flag but choose not to use it;

5.4 per cent have a flag, and the author has the official description or drawing;

88.6 per cent have a flag, and the author has at least one photograph;

0.7 per cent offer no information.



*kommunalflaggen.eu website: Bavarian municipalities:*
*green = no flag (4.3%); pink = flag not used (0.9%); yellow =*
*written description (5.4%); red = photograph (88.6%); grey = no*
*information (0.7%)*

Outside Bavaria, the author has her own material covering the rest of Germany and will clone that for Austria from FOTW.



*kommunalflaggen.eu website: coverage by country*

She has smaller amounts of information for Liechtenstein, San Marino and Italy (mostly South Tyrol), while that for France, UK, Hungary and the Czech Republic consists only of by-catches, obtained largely via twinning arrangements.

*Flags of twin towns:*

*left, Wimborne Minster, UK, in Ochsenfurt*

*right, Phalsbourg, France, in Berg (Starnberg)*

*left, Beek, Netherlands, in Gundelfingen*

*right, Anina, Romania, in Nassenfels*

*left, Taksony, Hungary, in Rain*

*right, Nowe Miasto nad Wartą, Poland, in Vestenbergsgreuth*

*left, Ivančna Gorica, Slovenia, in Hirschaid*

*right, Horni Planá, Czech Republic, in Kollerschlag, Upper Austria*

The author therefore invites potential collaborators to get in touch.

Permanent collaborators will be able to use the easy, Wikipedia-style editing; occasional contributors can still have a role by submitting material. She is anxious to obtain any relevant photographs, drawings, descriptions, citations, relevant literature, or coats of arms. Offers of help in organising the site, in
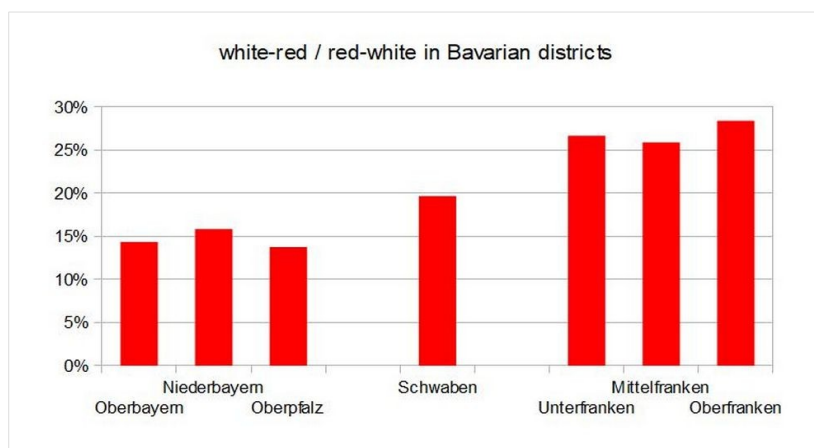
technical or administrative matters, or in drawing SVG maps are also greatly welcomed.
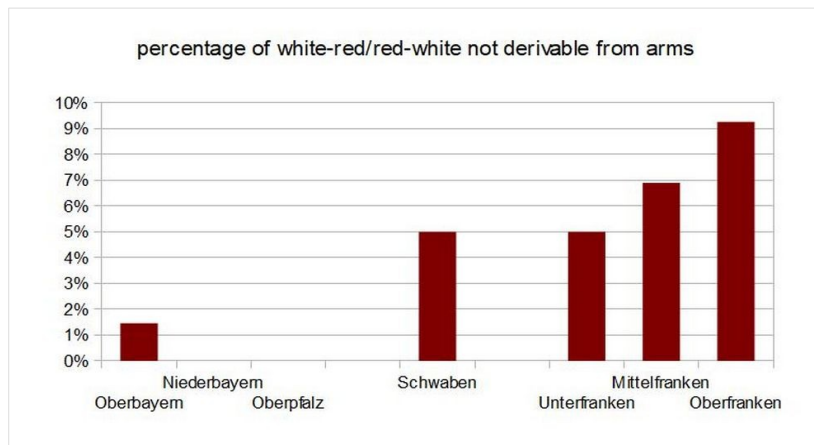


In his book *Quo Vadimus?*, Peter Orenski noted that the basis of most scientific research is systematic collection.

Vexillologists should (as a first step) build systematic collections to avoid the risk of constructing hypotheses from insufficient data. Once the data is collected then they can use the scientific method to construct informed hypotheses.

The new website brings together the data (the flags) and the scientists (vexillologists). As an example of observed data, the author presents these two graphs, depicting the flags of Bavarian districts whose colours, specifically red and black, cannot be derived – unlike many German municipalities – from the respective coats of arms.



*Does Bavaria have a white-red divide?*

*Does Bavaria have a white-red divide?*

Municipal flags are not relevant enough, therefore we cannot ask relevant questions. All we can do is recount their history but not yet ask the important questions: 'how?' or 'why?'