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Writing Systems: Romanization

**National System of Geographic Names Transmission
into Roman Alphabet in Belarus**

Submitted by Belarus **

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** Prepared by the State Committee of the Property of the Republic of Belarus.

National system of geographic names transmission into Roman alphabet

Since 2001 in the Republic of Belarus the Regulation on the Roman alphabet transliteration of geographic names of the Republic of Belarus has been in use and is obligatory while producing cartographic and other works designed for international use. The Regulation was approved by the State Committee for Land Resources, Geodesy and Cartography of the Republic of Belarus on the 23d of November, 2000 (№ 15) and was registered in the National List Register of Legal Statements of the Republic of Belarus in 2001, № 3, 8/4488.

The basis of this present Roman letters Transliteration (*latinka*) was traditional Belarusian *latinka*, which was historically certified and was used in popular scientific and fiction periodicals of the XIX – beginning of XX centuries equally with Cyrillic. For example, the social-political weekly *Nasha Niva (Our Field)* was published in two prints (in 1906 – 1915), and so were the works of such Belarusian classical authors as Yanka Kupala, Yakub Kolas, Franishek Bogushevich, Vincent Dunin-Martsinkevich and others. In the course of active use *latinka* was well adapted for the transmission of the features of Belarusian language.

In 2007 *latinka* underwent an examination by experts and was recognized to meet all the requirements necessary for the National system of transmission into Latin letters. There is a professional conclusion with the notes only on separate details.

Taking into account all the suggestions of the experts, linguists and cartographers The National Committee OF Property of the Republic of Belarus carried out the Project of regulation “On alteration and amendments to the Regulation of geographic names of the Republic of Belarus transliteration with the letter of Roman Alphabet”.

The Project was submitted a question for discussion with all interested organs of state administration of the Republic of Belarus and as a result of it got an encouragement of them.

The regulation of the State Committee of the Property of the Republic of Belarus of the 11th of June, 2007 № 38 “On alteration and amendments to the Regulation of geographic names of the Republic of Belarus transliteration with the letter of Roman Alphabet” was registered in the National List Register of Legal Statements of the Republic of Belarus in 18th of June, 2007 № 8/16668

All the fundamental criteria of the Regulation have been kept and the system of transliteration is to follow them. The system is intended to provide

the tasks of international connections, so it has to take into account the following:

- alignment to be understandable by the population of all or many countries in which Roman alphabet is used (the lack of tie-in to the only one single language);

- unambiguity (availability of the only one equivalent for the original sign);

- reversibility (ability to make reverse reproduction of transliterated forms);

- conventionality (the presence of long-termed practice of use).

The Regulation has been in force since 2000. It is used in the publishing of the normative reference book “The names of settlements of the Republic of Belarus” in six volumes, in producing cartographic and other works, intended for international use.

INSTRUCTIONS

for Transliteration of Geographic Names in the Republic of Belarus into Letters of the Roman Alphabet

(Scope – mandatory for all)

1. The Instructions for Transliteration of Geographic Names in the Republic of Belarus into Letters of the Roman Alphabet (referred to below as the Instructions) establish rules for converting geographic names from the Belarusian system of writing to the Roman alphabet on cartographic and other documents produced in foreign languages in the Republic of Belarus for international use.

2. The specifications in the Instructions are mandatory for all ministries, national administrative bodies, institutions, enterprises and organizations, regardless of form of ownership, and for individual persons, including foreign persons, holding special permits to perform activities in the field of geographic names in the Republic of Belarus.

3. The conversion of geographic names in the Republic of Belarus into the Roman alphabet begins with their correct spelling in Belarusian, authenticated by official sources.

If there are no official documents in the Belarusian language, names shown in cartographic and encyclopedic publications in that language should be used. Corrections can be made in accordance with studies conducted by the Toponymic Commission of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus and the National Toponymic Commission of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, standardized dictionaries of the Belarusian language, and other sources.

4. The conversion of geographic names is accomplished by transliterating the characters (symbols and letters) of the Belarusian alphabet into corresponding characters of the Roman alphabet. The appearance of the word is preserved without

adjustment for precise conveyance of its sounds, which ensures reversibility from the Roman to the Belarusian spelling. The transliteration is a means of generalizing and standardizing the romanization system so that it can be used in all Roman-alphabet countries.

5. The transliteration rules in the Instructions do not extend to depiction of toponyms in Roman-alphabet countries adjacent to the Republic of Belarus (Poland, Lithuania, Latvia). Geographic names in these and other Roman-alphabet countries should be shown on maps in the national system of spelling approved for each country.

6. The transliteration of geographic names in countries adjacent to the Republic of Belarus which use the Cyrillic alphabet should meet the following requirements: for Russia – the GOST in effect in the Russian Federation for transliteration from Russian orthographic spellings; for Ukraine – the rules in effect in Ukraine for transliteration from Ukrainian orthographic spellings. The geographic names in these and other Cyrillic-alphabet countries are romanized in accordance with the newest cartographic, encyclopedic and other reference publications of the respective country in the romanization system it has approved.

7. Geographic names in the Republic of Belarus are transliterated from their current Belarusian spelling.

8. The transliteration rules are similar to the GOST standard in effect in the Russian Federation. Exceptions are cases involving peculiarities in the toponymy of Belarus and differences in the Belarusian and Russian alphabets. This pertains to the letters Г (Belarusian toponymy does not have an explosive Г, which is transliterated from Russian by the letter G), Ў and the apostrophe ('). They are transliterated from Belarusian by the following symbols:

Г – by the grapheme H (instead of G in GOST rules),

Ў – by the grapheme U (as in GOST rules for Y) with added diacritic (˘), i.e., Ŭ.

Since the Г is rendered by the Roman letter H, the letter X is denoted by the digraph Ch, as permitted by other standards (instead of H in GOST rules).

Considering that the letters Е е, Ё ё, Ю ю, Я я in Cyrillic have a dual meaning (at the beginning of words and after vowels and separation symbols, they denote two sounds [j] + a vowel; after consonants they denote softening of the preceding consonant + a vowel), they are transliterated in accordance with these characteristics. In the first case by Je je, Jo jo, Ju ju, Ja ja (apostrophe and separatings soft sign are unnecessary), and in the second case by ie, io, iu, ia.

Palatalization of consonants marked by soft sign [Ь] in Belarusian Roman alphabet has to be marked by a diacritical mark „(˘)“ added on top of the corresponding character: дзь – dź, зь – ź, ль – ł, нь – ñ, сь – ś, ць – ć.

The rules for transliterating Belarusian letters into Roman letters using the diacritical mark (˘) for some of them, as in the GOST standards, are given in the

table of transliteration of Belarusian alphabet into Roman alphabet as given in Appendix¹.

9. The use of upper-case and lower-case letters in the Roman alphabet should correspond to their use in names written in Belarusian:

Мінскае мора — Minskaje mora

Чырвоны Бераг — Čyrvony Bierah

Агародня-Кузьмініцкая — Aharodnia-Kuźminickaja

10. A similar approach is used for transliteration of generic geographic terms before or after a name, whether represented in full or in abbreviated form:

бал. Чысты Мох — bal. Čysty Moch

Ашмянскае ўзвыш. — Ašmianskaje ŭzvvyš.

Свянцянскія грады — Sviancianskija hrady

Вял. Сяло — Vial. Sialo

Дняпроўска-Бугскі канал — Dniaproŭska-Buhski kanal

воз. Нарач — voz. Narač

Чыгірынскае вдсх. — Čyhirynskaje vdsch.

Abbreviated forms of generic terms in documents (catalogs, reference books, geographic maps) should be included either in a list of abbreviations with their translation into other languages in full form, or in the map legend with appropriate explanatory text in other languages. This pertains especially to terms rarely used on internationally used maps.

11. Complex and compound names written together, separately or with a hyphen retain those forms in the romanized version.

12. In indexes, the transliterated geographic names are placed in the alphabetical order of the basic letters of the Belarusian National Roman alphabet: a, b, c, č, d, e, f, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, š, t, u, v, y, z, ž. In the case of ignoring diacritical marks the main function of an index – alphabetical arrangement – is undermined as different letters – c (s) and ш (š), ц (c) and ч (č), з (z) and ж (ž) – are distributed unsystematically, chaotically. Ignoring diacritical marks complicates queries and identification of transliterated names.

13. If a map is being produced which does not allow geographic names to be depicted in both the Belarusian and Roman alphabets (i.e., if the names are shown only in the Roman alphabet), it is suggested that a table of transliteration of Belarusian alphabet into Roman alphabet be placed in an empty portion of the

¹ This transliteration system eliminates both the apostrophe and the diacritics (˘) and (˙) over the E e to render the letters Ě ě and Э э, respectively, the use of which is improperly permitted by other standards used in cartography.

margin (or on the reverse side). The title of the table and the notes, along with the other textual portion of the map, may be given in several languages.

14. The Government Committee on Land Resources, Geodesy and Cartography of the Republic of Belarus is responsible for checking whether the requirements of the Instructions are met.

to Instructions for Transliteration of Geographic Names of the Republic of Belarus into Letters
of the Roman Alphabet

**Table
of transliteration of Belarusian alphabet into Roman alphabet**

Letters of Belarusian alphabet	Corresponding letters of Roman alphabet	Examples of transliteration of Belarusian geographic names
1	2	3
А а	A a	Аршанскі — Aršanski
Б б	B b	Бешанковічы — Biešankovičy
В в	V v	Віцебск — Viciebsk
Г г	H h	Гомель — Homieĺ, Гаўя — Haŭja
Д д	D d	Добруш — Dobruš
Е е	Je je (*) ie (**)	Ельск — Jeĺsk Бабаедава — Babajedava Венцавічы — Viencavičy
Ё ё	Jo jo (*) io (**)	Ёды — Jody, Вераб’ёвічы — Vierabjovičy Мёры — Mioŕy
Ж ж	Ž ž	Жодзішкі — Žodziški
З з	Z z	Зэльва — Zeĺva
І і	I i	Іванава — Ivanava, Іўе — Iŭje
Й й	J j	Лагойск — Lahojsk
К к	K k	Круглае — Kruhlaje
Л л	L l	Лошыца — Lošyca, Любань — Liubań
М м	M m	Магілёў — Mahilioŭ
Н н	N n	Нясвіж — Niasviž
О о	O o	Орша — Orša
П п	P p	Паставы — Pastavy
Р р	R r	Рагачоў — Rahačoŭ
С с	S s	Светлагорск — Svietlahorsk
Т т	T t	Талачын — Talačyn
У у	U u	Узда — Uzda
Ў ў	Ŭ ŭ	Шаркаўшчына — Šarkaŭščyna
Ф ф	F f	Фаніпаль — Fanipaĺ
Х х	Ch ch	Хоцімск — Chocimsk
Ц ц	C c	Цёмны Лес — Ciomny Lies

Ч	ч	Č	č	Чавусы — Čavusy
Ш	ш	Š	š	Шуміліна — Šumilina
Ы	ы	Y	y	Чыгірынка — Čyhiryuka
Ь	ь			Чэрвень — Červień, Друць — Druć
Э	э	E	e	Чачэрск — Čačersk
Ю	ю	Ju	ju (*) iu (**)	Юхнаўка — Juchnaўka Гаюціна — Hajucina Цюрлі — Ciurli, Любонічы — Liuboničy
Я	я	Ja	ja (*) ia (**)	Ямнае — Jamnaje, Бяры — Bajary Валяр’яны — Valiarjany, Вязынка — Viazynka

* Initially, after vowels, apostrophe, soft sign and ŷ

** After consonants