

ESTONIA

Provided by Peeter Päll (peeter.pall@eki.ee) ... August 2009

1. Summary of regulations, acts, etc.

Standardization of geographical names in Estonia is governed by the Place Names Act which was adopted by the Parliament in December 1996. The Act came into force in 1997 and was revised in 2003.

2. Responsible bodies

- The municipality (local government) is responsible for names of all features that are exclusively in its territory (streets, squares, public transport stops, natural features, etc.) except for those that are listed below.
- The government decides upon names of administrative units (rural and urban municipalities, counties). Decision is taken on the basis of applications by local governments.
- The Minister for Regional Affairs decides upon names of populated places. Decision is taken only on the basis of applications by local governments (i.e. the Minister does not initiate any naming).
- Depending on the type of named feature, names are established for features located in the territory of more than one municipality or for water area features located outside the territory of municipalities either by the government or by the relevant minister according to his or her area of government.
- The Place Names Board of Estonia has the right to approve official place names for features for which place names have not been established by any other authority. This provision is used mainly when approving national listings of lakes, islands, etc.

3. Process of authorization

- Anyone can initiate officialization of place names. The names authority concerned, i.e. under whose authority the naming of the feature lies, will take the decision after consultations with parties concerned, adhering to the requirements set out in the Place Names Act, concerning the language and orthography of names, restrictions on the use of identical place names and requirements for the selection of place names (includes provisions on commemorative naming). Special provisions apply for the use of double names or non-Estonian names or changing existing place names.
- A draft on naming has to be published at least 15 days prior to the actual decision-making.
- Name disputes may be resolved by an administrative court, or extra-judicially by the Place Names Board if the dispute involves local governments and/or individual persons.

4. Storage and availability of authorized geographical names

- All official place names are entered into the National Place Names Register which is administered by the Estonian Land Board under the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior.

5. Use of authorized geographical names

- Official geographical names are to be used by all official Estonian bodies.
- Where a locality has two official names, both names should be used in all official documents, on signs, in maps, etc.

6. Availability of toponymic guidelines

The latest toponymic guidelines (3rd edition) were presented at the 9th United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (New York, August 2007, Document E/CONF.98/CRP.2) in the form of a booklet and are not currently available online.

The 2nd edition (October 1997) is available online:

http://www.eki.ee/knn/unegn/un7_gdl.htm

7. Relevant websites

A. Place Names Board of Estonia (information in Estonian, English and Russian):

<http://www.eki.ee/knn/index2.htm>

B. Place Names Act of Estonia (English translation of the original text without later modifications):

<http://www.eki.ee/knn/kns2.htm>

C. The National Place Names Register (with Estonian and English interface):

<http://xgis.maaamet.ee/knravalik/>

8. Email contacts

Ministry of the Interior (Place Names Board of Estonia): Aule Kikas (Secretary)

aule.kikas@siseministeerium.ee

Estonian Land Board (National Place Names Register): Aime Renser

aime.renser@maaamet.ee

General inquiries (concerning both the Place Names Board and the Place Names Register):
kohanimerregister@siseministeerium.ee

Institute of the Estonian Language (appointed as the office of onomastic expertise under the Place Names Act), contact person: Peeter Päll, peeter.pall@eki.ee