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### **Tenth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names**

New York, 31 July – 9 August 2012

Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

**Reports by Governments on the situation in their countries and  
on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names  
since the Ninth Conference  
(for distribution only)**

Report of Latvia

Submitted by Latvia\*\*

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\* E/CONF.101/1.

\*\* Compiled by Vita Strautniece (Latvian Geospatial Information Agency) using data provided by the institutions and public information sources mentioned in the Report

The report covers the period between the 9<sup>th</sup> and the 10<sup>th</sup> UNCSGN.

## **I International activities**

The Latvian Geospatial Information Agency as the holder of the Geographical Names Database has continued to participate in the project **EuroGeoNames** developing the European geographical names data infrastructure and services based upon the decentralizedly kept and maintained national names databases, providing a gazetteer service for Europe (see at <http://www.eurogeonames.com/refappl/>).

The State Land Service as the holder of the National Address Register participated in the eContentplus project “**European Address Infrastructure (EURADIN)**” in 2008-2010. The project aims at constituting a Best Practice Network to promote the European Addresses harmonization.

## **II National activities**

### **1. Names authorities**

In accordance with the new “Regulations on the Toponymic Information” being in force since the 4<sup>th</sup> of February 2012, and other legislative acts, the decision makers (having rights to adopt the official names) are: Parliament and Government, several ministries (Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Transport, Ministry of Environment and Regional Development, Ministry of Agriculture), all municipalities, and the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency.

Controlling and advisory body is the State Language Centre. Consulting and scientific bodies are: the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency, the Latvian Language Agency and the Latvian Language Institute, University of Latvia.

### **2. Legislative acts**

Changes in legislation of Latvia regarding the geographical names standardization have taken place since 2007.

The **Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas**, prescribing the procedures and conditions for creation, modification and naming of administrative and territorial divisional units and populated places as well as stating a **new administrative and territorial division of Latvia**, was adopted in December 2008. The new administrative and territorial division was implemented in accordance with this law during 2009. The law has been changed several times already. The **Regulations on the Address System** pursuant to the Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas were adopted in late 2009 (to succeed the outdated Regulations on Addressing adopted in 2002).

The **Geospatial Information Law** stating the conditions for the preparation, use, exchange and maintenance of geospatial information and determining the purpose and status of the Geographical Names Database was adopted in late 2009.

The **Regulations on the Toponymic Information**, pursuant to the Geospatial Information Law and the State Language Law, were adopted in 2012. The Regulations comprise almost all rules relating to the standardization of geographical names, which until now had been scattered among a wide range of laws and other regulations. For the first time, the principles and measures for the conservation and protection of culturally and historically valuable geographical names (including culturally and historically significant Latvian exonyms) have been stated.

(More detailed information on this issue is given in the paper “Legislative Acts of Republic of Latvia”.)

### 3. Field collection of place names

The field collection of place names closely related to the state mapping projects has strongly decreased due to the economical crisis.

The field collection of place names has continued as a scientific research work at the University of Latvia and at some other institutions of higher education.

### 4. Toponymic data files and gazetteers

The **Geographical Names Database of Latvia** maintained by the Laboratory of Toponymy, Latvian Geospatial Information Agency contains 130 thousand names of 103,8 thousand objects (data on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2012). The concise public version of the Geographical Names Database (5<sup>th</sup> edition, containing 58 thousand names out of 41 thousand geographical objects) is available at <http://vietvardi.lgia.gov.lv> (interface is in Latvian only, a brief description in English available at <http://map.lgia.gov.lv> ).

The **dictionary of village names of Latvia “Latvijas ciemi”** prepared by LGIA, is available on the Web (in Latvian with English Introduction and English Summary) at <http://map.lgia.gov.lv>. The dictionary comprises 14 012 names out of 8 879 villages.

The **National Address Register** maintains data on addresses containing names of 76 cities and towns, 110 counties, 497 municipality rural territories, 7 267 villages, 16 771 streets, 219 002 buildings and houses (data on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2012). The National Address Register is available on the Web (with users interface in Latvian and English), at the data distribution portal of the State Land Service of Latvia <https://www.kadastrs.lv>.

The **Card Index of Place Names of Latvia** containing approximately 1.5 million entries has been maintained by the Latvian Language Institute, University of Latvia. The cards comprise mainly linguistic information. The Card Index serves as a main source for compiling the comprehensive **linguistic dictionary of Latvian place names “Latvijas vietvārdu vārdnīca”**. The volume “*Pracirika - Puožu*” has been compiled and published in 2010 by the Latvian Language Institute.

### 5. Toponymic education

Lecture courses on Toponymy have been given at some universities. Besides, specialists of the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency delivered a number of lectures and presentations on toponymic themes for different groups of interest in 2010-2011.

During the 15<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Baltic Division of UNGEGN (organized on 27-29 March 2012 by the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency) a workshop and exhibition on geographical names standardization and research issues was held. 25 papers were presented and discussed, 64 persons attended the event. In addition to the participants and observers from neighboring states and the organizing institution, a wide range of Latvian institutions and persons having duties and concerns regarding the geographical names was involved.

### 6. Geographical names in cartography, exonyms

The Latvian Geospatial Information Agency has continued the topographic mapping projects. The most significant projects regarding the geographical names are:

1) the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of the **Topographic Map of Latvia, scale 1:50 000** (2007 – 2012, 129 sheets); the last 10 sheets are about to be accomplished, the preparation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition is starting in 2012, the toponymy for this map is compiled by the Laboratory of Toponymy;

2) the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the **Topographic Map of Latvia, scale 1:10 000** (2557 sheets) is being prepared in digital format only (8300 sheets covering 30% of the territory of Latvia are to be completed by the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2012). The toponymy for this map is being compiled and checked by cartographers using the Geographical Names Database of Latvia and in conjunction with the Laboratory of Toponymy, if needed. The Laboratory of Toponymy of the Geospatial Information Agency as far as possible follows the principle stated in the UN resolution VII/5 in 1998 - geographical names standardization, based on a local usage of the local place names forms, collected through the field work.

The test version of the **web map browser “LĢIA Karšu Pārlūks”** was published on the Web by the Latvian Geospatial Information Agency in 2010. It offers search of geographical names on different maps of Latvia in scales 1: 1 000 000 - 1:10 000 (central part of Riga at scale 1: 2 000) prepared by Geospatial Information Agency. The Map Browser **has an English interface** since February 2012, available at <http://kartes.lgia.gov.lv/>

The private mapping company “Jāņa sēta Map Publishers” is the only enterprise in Latvia preparing world and national atlases and cartographic editions for schools. The most significant cartographic products regarding geographical names and Latvian exonyms, compiled and published by private mapping company “Jāņa sēta Map Publishers” during the reporting period, are:

1) the **World geographic atlas “Lielais Pasaules atlants”**, containing more than 90 000 Latvian exonyms (compiled and published by “Jāņa sēta Map Publishers” in 2008; 512 pages, 280 of them are devoted exclusively to geographical names: 4 pages – explanations, 276 pages – Latvian exonyms index and original names index). Names are rendered into Latvian from 148 languages. The basic principles and guidelines for rendering proper names from 129 languages into Latvian have been worked out by linguists with the support of the Latvian Language Agency especially for this project. As far as it was possible, the foreign geographical names were rendered into Latvian directly from the original languages using the phonetic principle. (Before the atlas project, there were detailed rules for rendering proper names into Latvian from only 19 languages into Latvian). The publishing of the atlas is an outstanding event not only in the Latvian cartography, but also in the Latvian culture in whole.

1) the **World Political Reference Atlas** (Latvian and international version, 352 pages; 57 000 geographical names) - the atlas is significant because it contains not only traditional information about countries and dependencies, but also includes data on all worlds’ autonomies; the basic part of the atlas consists of regional political maps with highlighted administrative subdivisions);

2) the **Great Atlas of Latvia “Lielais Latvijas atlants”** in scale 1:100 000 (1:20 000 for cities and largest villages) – the largest ever published atlas of Latvia – issued in spring 2012 (over 500 pages, more than 100 000 geographical names);

3) the **map of Latvia for Garmin navigation equipment** (10000 settlements, 162 000 farmsteads, more than 215 000 address points and 6 200 names of rivers and lakes).

The **web map viewer of Baltic countries “Baltic Maps”** (offering a geographical names search on the maps prepared by “Jāņa sēta Map Publishers”) has been further developed. Besides, the internet version [www.balticmaps.eu](http://www.balticmaps.eu) with users interface in English, Russian and Lithuanian, the versions for *iPhone* and *Android* format based smartphones are available now.

The Latvian Language Experts Board at the State Language Centre is responsible for the **standardization of the Latvian forms of foreign geographical names**. The State Language Centre website, section „Valstu un valodu nosaukumi” (Names of countries and languages) at <http://www.vvc.gov.lv/advantagecms/LV/valstuunvalodunosaukumi/valstuunvalodunosaukumi.html> is updated with the list of regions of the European Union Member States („Eiropas Savienības dalībvalstu

reģioni”) in 2012. It comprises national territorial unit names of European Union Member States – in English, in Latvian and in original languages. The list is reviewed and approved by the Latvian Language Experts Board.

Consultations on the spelling of foreign geographical names etc. are available at the Consultation Department of the Latvian Language Agency.

Rules for rendering proper names from **Armenian** into Latvian (including a list of geographical names) have been prepared by linguist Valda Salmiņa and were published by the Latvian Language Institute, University of Latvia in 2009.

Concise rules for rendering the proper names from **Croatian** into Latvian have been worked out by linguist Ojārs Bušs and were published by the Latvian Language Agency in 2011.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION MAY BE OBTAINED FROM:**

### **Latvijas Ģeotelpiskās informācijas aģentūra,**

*(Latvian Geospatial Information Agency)*

Ojāra Vācieša iela 43

Rīga, LV-1004

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### **Valsts valodas centrs**

*(State Language Centre)*

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### **LU Latviešu valodas institūts**

*(Latvian Language Institute, University of Latvia)*

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### **Valsts zemes dienests**

*(State Land Service)*

11. novembra krastmala 31

Rīga, LV-1050

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[www.vzd.gov.lv](http://www.vzd.gov.lv)

Tel.: (+371)67038608, fax: (+371)67038829

e-mail: [vzd@vzd.gov.lv](mailto:vzd@vzd.gov.lv)

**„Karšu izdevniecība Jāņa sēta”**

(*Jāņa sēta Map Publishers*)

Stabu iela 119

LV-1009 Rīga

Latvia

<http://www.kartes.lv>

Phone: (+371)67317 540; (+371)67038800, fax: (+371)67317541

e-mail: [kartes@kartes.lv](mailto:kartes@kartes.lv)

### SOME USEFUL LINKS

1. Geospatial Information Law (in Latvian with link to the English translation):

<http://www.vestnesis.lv/?menu=doc&id=202999>

2. Regulations of the Address System („Adresācijas sistēmas noteikumi”, in Latvian only):

<http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=200244&from=off>

3. Official Language Law (in Latvian with link to the English translation):

<http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=14740>

4. Data on administrative and territorial division of Latvia (Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas, the actual version in Latvian with Annex 1 (list of cities). Annex 2 (list of municipalities and the territorial divisional units thereof), Annex 3 (schematic map of cities and municipalities 2010 - 2011) and with link to English translation of the previous version of the law):

<http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=185993>

[http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=185993#saist\\_11](http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=185993#saist_11)(English translation of previous version is at

<http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=185993>)

5. Country names list in Latvian (1997, with updates made in 2006):

<http://www.vestnesis.lv/?menu=doc&id=140081>