



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
21 May 2012
Original: English

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 Estonia

Submitted by Estonia**

* E/CONF.101/1.

** Prepared by the Place Names Board of Estonia (Aule Kikas, Peeter Päll, and others)

Report of Estonia¹

In the period from 2007 till 2012 there have been several major steps taken regarding the official standardization of geographical names in Estonia.

The **Place Names Act** continues to be the legal basis of geographical names standardization in Estonia. After the adoption of a new Spatial Data Act it became necessary to revise some articles of the Place Names Act. The revisions have been prepared and are now in the administrative process of going through different ministries and government bodies for consultations.

The **Place Names Board** (*kohanimenõukogu*) is the main names authority in Estonia, being a consultative body responsible to the Minister of Regional Affairs. Meetings are held usually twice a year, additionally decisions are made by e-mail voting. The topics discussed at Board meetings include revisions in the Place Names Act, use of place names in the new address data system, changes in the listing of populated places, listings of natural features, etc. There is also a development plan for geographical names standardization that is regularly updated. The Board approved on 23 April 2008 an official listing of 1253 island names. Following new aerial photos taken on the Estonian western shoreline, it was considered necessary to amend the listing, as several islands had ceased to be islands, and new islands had emerged; work is still ongoing. On 14 December 2011, the Board approved changes into names of 20 undersea features in the Estonian territorial waters, based on their usage by the local population.

Regarding **administrative changes** in Estonia, sometimes the municipalities that merge need advice on the new name for the municipality, and the Board follows a recommendation approved in 2000. At least in one case in 2009, the whole merger has been cancelled because the merging municipalities simply could not agree on a new name. This proves the cultural importance of geographical names that are essential part of the local identity.

On 10 March 2009 the Place Names Board officially approved names for **108 historical parishes**, originally ecclesiastical territorial units that have played an important part in Estonian history, forming the basis of linguistic and ethnographical territorial division in Estonia, also being essential in local identity. Based on this decision, the limits of parishes were marked with signposts on the main roads; the campaign was part of celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Estonian National Museum. On 19 April 2010 the Board approved names for village groups (*nulka*) in Setumaa, a traditional Orthodox area which is not divided into parishes. Traditional city quarters have also been marked in the capital Tallinn.

Although **commemorative naming** is still very rare in Estonia, there has been one exception: in March 2009 the Tallinn Airport was given the name of Lennart Meri (1929–2006), the former president of Estonia.

The regulation on the **Address Data System** (ADS) was adopted by the Government in the end of 2007. The regulation provides uniform principles for ADS, including establishment and presentation of geographical addresses, processing of address data and the provision of address services. Since 2007 the Estonian Land

¹ Prepared by the Place Names Board of Estonia (Aule Kikas, Peeter Päll, and others).

Board has a department on address data which is in charge of ADS. In the course of preparing the address data, the Land Board undertook to check all major address components: street names, cadastral names, etc. Particularly the revision of names for cadastral units has been thorough, involving tens of thousands of names. The spelling regulations for these names have sometimes caught public attention, as many owners are reluctant to replace the old spelling of the names. As the work with address data is extensive and many questions have emerged in municipalities and elsewhere, advice was needed. The solution was an online book – it is easily accessed and renewed. The web book consists of 68 chapters (about 180 pages of text). At the moment, the handbook is available only in Estonian.

In order to clarify the regulations concerning place names, and address requirements, training courses were organized. During 2009, 22 training courses were held for some 900 officials working with geographical names and addresses in local governments. Also, a training seminar was arranged for some 70 people from organizations that use names and addresses (banks, postal services, communications, electricity, telephone services, mapmakers). Many other seminars are held to keep users and address data providers up-to-date with any changes in the address data system or in regulations.

Since 2003 the Board has continued its annual public events, **place names days**, for wider audience that deal with issues of place names standardization. These are meant primarily for local officials but are open to all interested persons. The events take place in different locations, there are also papers dealing with local toponymy and cultural history. Place names days were held in Kuressaare (2007), Võru (2008), Rapla (2009), Valga (2010), and Jõhvi (2011).

All the documents concerning the activities of the Place Names Board have been published on its **website** (<http://www.eki.ee/knn/>), mainly in Estonian but also with English and Russian summaries. News on the current activities of the Board are regularly updated in all three languages.

Minority names

The Place Names Act supports the use of minority place names, in some cases two parallel names are officially established. For example, there are parallel Estonian and Swedish names in the municipality of Noarootsi. In 2008 the Swedish Minority Cultural Board in Estonia and the Place Names Board discussed ways of promoting awareness on the use of Swedish minority names in north-western Estonia. Swedish parallel names have been approved in 2009 for one completely new populated place in Noarootsi (Telise/Tällnäs) and in 2011 for three populated places on the island of Naissaar near the capital Tallinn (Lõunaküla/Storbyn, Tagaküla/Bakbyn, and Väikeheinamaa/Lillängin).

In June 2010, a seminar was organized in Kolkja, the traditional area of Russian population, to explain the principles of safeguarding minority, particularly Russian names.

In south-eastern Estonia the names of populated places in several municipalities of the counties of Võrumaa and Põlvamaa have been standardized in their local form, i.e. in the Võru variety. This has been done with the aid of the Võru Institute. Recently the use of local, or dialectal names has also been spreading in other regions, e.g. on the island of Kihnu which has a peculiar variety. (The use of local varieties of Estonian has become popular also in public broadcasting, e.g. there are weekly news in radio in the Kihnu, Mulgi, Seto and Võru variety.) The Basic Map of Estonia (printed version) uses almost exclusively local name forms for natural features. Differences with the formerly used name variants are mainly phonetic.

Cartographic programmes and training courses

Field survey of place names is being carried out in two directions. At the Institute of the Estonian Language there are collections of place names which are expanded mainly with the help of students and local

enthusiasts. Field work is also being done by the Võru Institute, the data are entered into a database. Cartographic enterprises, when preparing new map products, conduct their own field collections, consulting both the local governments and the collections held at the Institute of the Estonian Language.

The Estonian National Topographic Database is the central database that contains basic topographic data for services and topographic maps. The initial core was formed of the digital data of the Estonian Basic Map at scale 1 : 10,000. The Estonian National Topographic Database was established in 2007. The most important products are digital maps in different scales. Exchange of data between the Estonian National Topographic Database and other databases improves the quality of data. Every year some layers and some parts of the territory are updated. Updating of the core database is not automatically accompanied by the renewal of map products. The digital topographic map 1 : 10,000 is updated once a year and the printed version of the Basic Map 1 : 20,000 is published approximately at the rate of 10 sheets per year. Updated core data is however directly available through Public Web Map Services offered by the Estonian Land Board.

Air navigation charts. The Estonian Civil Aviation Administration produced in 2004 an air navigation chart of Estonia (1 : 500,000) which was last updated in 2010.

Nautical charts. The Estonian Maritime Administration (EMA) has produced 65 sheets on Estonian territorial waters (scale 1 : 250,000, 1 : 100,000, 1 : 50,000, etc.). Since 1998 the production of charts is done digitally. Digital charts cover all coastal areas (scale 1 : 90,000 and 1 : 180,000). To facilitate navigation for smaller ships 4 folios have been produced. Chart compilation is based on digital hydrographic database. To date 85 electronic navigational charts (cells) have been compiled, covering berthings (20), harbours (12), Narva river (5), Emajõgi (6), approaches (21), coastal areas (14) and general maps (7). 11 of these charts cover inland waters.

From 1 December 2009, a new map application is available on the Internet, displaying Estonian land and sea areas. The application is the result of cooperation between the Estonian Maritime Administration, the Estonian Land Board and PRIMAR (a worldwide Electronic Navigational Chart service operated by the Norwegian Hydrographic Service), and it is based on the Land Board's web map server X GIS. The information given about sea areas is based on electronic navigational charts which rely on the data collected by the Maritime Administration and the data submitted about ports. The application enables the viewer to get information about depths of sea areas, hazards, AtoN and other details, and no specific hardware or software is required for viewing. The maps of Estonian sea areas displayed in the map application are however not suitable for navigation. The application can be accessed via the Maritime Administration website (<http://www.vta.ee/atp/?lang=en>).

Other maps. The most comprehensive privately produced cartographic work is the Estonian Road Atlas (1 : 150,000) by AS Regio, which is annually updated. The atlas includes an index of over 11,000 place names, it is also available on a CD. An online-version (<http://regio.delfi.ee/>) includes a search engine with about 4000 place names.

Other maps include several road maps of Estonia, county and municipality maps. Map companies have also published world atlases and maps for schools.

There have been several courses on onomastics at the Universities of Tartu and Tallinn which deal with topics like applied toponymy and names standardization.

Gazetteers and databases

The **National Place Names Register** (<http://xgis.maaamet.ee/knravalik/>) was in 2008 transferred to the responsibility of the Land Board that undertook to integrate geographical names data into its other databases.

The Place Names Register was newly designed at the end of 2008, the new bilingual (Estonian-English) web version became operational in January 2009. Currently (May 2012) the register contains appr. 35,800 named features with some 39,000 names.

A database of standardized place names, including names from Estonia and abroad **KNAB** (appr. 141,000 features with more than 400,000 names at present, <http://www.eki.ee/knab/knab.htm>) is being compiled at the Institute of Estonian Language. The Institute has also the largest collection of Estonian place names, containing 540,615 cards, collected in field work. This collection was scanned in 2011 and put online (<http://heli.eki.ee/kohanimed/>). The database of place names of the historical county of Võrumaa **AVKA** (appr. 23,000 entries) is being compiled by the Institute of Võru. In 2009 a new **Estonian Place Names Dictionary** project was started. More information on these databases and the dictionary will be given in a separate document.

The **Estonian Maritime Administration** has produced *Sailing Directions for Estonian Waters* (in English, 2004; the Estonian edition was published in 2003). This richly illustrated reference book contains many toponyms of coastal areas. A 6th edition of the *List of Lights – Estonia* was published in 2010. *Estonian Pilot Book* (2003, 2nd edition 2007) is available in Estonian. Since September 2011 a new pilot book is being prepared which will be in many ways different from the previous edition, being a transition to a completely digital resource that will be linked to electronic charts. Geographical names in this book will be standardized in cooperation with the Institute of the Estonian Language and the Place Names Board, and then officialized.

The Maritime Administration published in 2010 a new issue of *Chart 1 (INT 1) Symbols, Abbreviations and Terms on Navigational Charts*, compiled in accordance with the requirements established by the IHO. *Chart 1* contains all symbols and abbreviations used on Estonian and international charts (INT); it is written in Estonian and English, and in total there are 95 pages.

One of the prerequisites for safe seafaring is the availability of corrections to navigational charts. In the monthly editions of *Notices to Mariners*, the Estonian Maritime Administration publishes corrections to navigational charts, and *List of Lights and Sailing Directions* issued by the Administration. Starting from 1 May 2011, *Notices to Mariners* and *List of Lights* (http://www.vta.ee/atp/public/list_of_lights.pdf), updated monthly, are issued only in digital format on the Estonian Maritime Administration web page www.vta.ee.

EXONYMS

Recommendations on the spelling of foreign geographical names are given by the Estonian Language Committee at the Mother Tongue Society jointly with various institutions (Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Geography Institute at the University of Tartu, BNS News Agency). The overall policy has not changed during the last 15-20 years: the use of exonyms is limited and in principle any endonym used in an Estonian text should not be considered a „mistake“.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Representatives of Estonia have actively participated in the Baltic Division of UNGEGN, attending the 11th meeting of the Division in New York (August 2007), the 12th meeting in Kaliningrad (September 2008), the 13th meeting in Vilnius (October 2009), the 14th meeting in Vienna (May 2011), and the 15th meeting in Rīga (March 2012). During that time, Estonia was coordinating the activities of the Division. Experts are also involved in some of the working groups of UNGEGN.

ANNEX

Changes in the administrative division of Estonia (2007–2012)

There was only one change occurring in the period from 2007 till 2012:

Old name(s)*	New name*	Date of decision**
Kaisma vald + Vändra vald	Vändra vald	June 12 th , 2009

* *vald* = rural municipality.

** the decision on amalgamations came into force after municipal elections that took place in October 2009.

During 2007–2012, 19 new populated places have been created, and the status of 13 populated places updated.

Summary

The report outlines main activities regarding the official standardization of geographical names in Estonia in the period from 2007 to 2012, including planned updates to the Place Names Act, approval of the list of island names, and that of parishes (*parochia*). Extensive work was undertaken with the establishment of the Address Data System (ADS) in 2007 including the spelling revisions for names of cadastral units. Annual place names days have been continued. New minority names have been approved in Swedish.

Since 2007 there is the Estonian National Topographic Database which contains basic topographic data for services and topographic maps. New digital maps are also produced by the Estonian Maritime Administration that in 2009 opened a new map application on the web.

The National Place Names Register currently contains about 35,800 features. The Maritime Administration publishes several documents with geographical names data on its website.

Estonian experts have participated in all five meetings of the Baltic Division held since 2007, coordinating the Division's activities during that period.