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National standardization:

**Administrative structure of national names authorities,
legislation, policies and procedures**

Changes in Legislative Acts of Republic of Latvia (Regarding the standardization of geographical names)

Submitted by Latvia **

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Summary

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

- 1) 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, including a list of new administrative and territorial divisions of Latvia, was adopted in December 2008; the new administrative and territorial division was implemented in 2009; new **Regulations on the Address System** pursuant to this Law are adopted in late 2009;
- 2) 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;
- 3) the **Regulations on Geographical Names Information**, pursuant to the Geospatial Information Law and the State Language Law, are adopted in 2012; the Regulations comprises 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 in Latvia prescribes the principles and measures for the conservation and protection of culturally and historically valuable geographical names (including culturally and historically significant Latvian exonyms).

1. Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas (and territorial and administrative division of Latvia)

The “**Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas**” was adopted in December 2008. The law prescribes the conditions for the creation, registration, and modification of boundaries and establishing of the administrative centre of administrative territories and the territorial divisional units of a municipality, and the definition of the status of a populated area, the procedures for registration thereof and the competence of institutions in these matters.

A particular chapter states the procedures and conditions for granting official names to administrative units, territorial divisional units, populated places and renaming of them.

The law states that Administrative territories, the territorial divisional units thereof and populated areas are the basis of the address system.

A new structure of **the territorial and administrative division of Latvia** established with the “Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas” was implemented in 2009 (except establishment of regions what was postponed to 2013).

A list of cities and a list of municipalities and the territorial divisional units thereof along with the schematic map are promulgated as annexes to the law. The law and annexes have been changed several times already. The last edition of the law came into force at 1st of January, 2012.

New “**Regulations on the Address System**” pursuant to the “Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas” prescribing the basic principles of the address system, procedures for granting addresses and maintenance of the National Address Register are adopted by Government in November 2009.

2. Geospatial Information Law

The “**Geospatial Information Law**” was adopted in December 2009. The purpose of this Law is to specify the institutional system in the field of geospatial information, incorporating the conditions for the preparation, use, exchange and maintenance of geospatial information (including geodetic and cartographic basic data) in order to create an infrastructure for geospatial information in the Republic of Latvia. Amongst other the Law determines the purpose and status Geographical Names Database.

3. Regulations on Geographical Names Information

Since the Law on Geographical Names had not been adopted, the “**Regulations on Geographical Names Information**”, pursuant to the Geospatial Information Law and the State Language Law, were drawn up instead by the State Language Centre and adopted by Government on January 2012. The Regulations are in force since the 4th of February 2012.

The purpose of this legislative act is to regulate the formation, approval, use and conservation of geographical names, as well as the maintenance and distribution of the geographical names data. The Geographical Names Information Regulations (as far as possible) comprises of all aspects relating to national standardization of geographical names, which until now had been scattered among a wide range of laws and other regulations. The Regulations provide:

- the official place names should be in Latvian and in compliance with the Latvian language norms, but in areas historically populated by Livs (Livonians) - also in Liv (Livonian) language, according to the Liv language standards;
- local peculiarities of the language should be taken into account;
- adoption of new official names containing numbers or separate letters (for example, "Kalnmājas 1", "M-Upītes", "Siliņi A") should be prevented (except building numbers in cities, towns and villages);
- each geographical name should have one of the following three statuses:
 - a) **an official name** (name assigned in accordance with legislative acts being in force at the moment);
 - b) **an official parallel name** (a second name, assigned to the geographical feature in accordance with legislative acts being in force at the moment; may be used in addition the official name);
 - c) **an unofficial name** (all other geographical names);

The Geographical Names Information Regulations prescribe procedures of the Geographical Names Database data maintenance, content and accessibility for users.

With these Regulations, for the first time in Latvia, the **principles and measures for the conservation and protection of culturally and historically valuable geographical names** (including culturally and historically significant Latvian exonyms) are stated.

LINKS

1. Law on Administrative Territories and Populated Areas, with annexes ("Administratīvo teritoriju un apdzīvoto vietu likums", the last version along with actual lists of cities, municipalities and territorial divisional units, being in force since 1st of January 2012 and the schematic map (2010-2011), is available in Latvian, with link to the English translation of the previous version of the Law (2010)): <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=185993>
2. Map Browser "LĢIA Karšu Pārlūks" (offers search and viewing of actual (novadi, pagasti, pilsētas) and part of former (rajoni) administrative and territorial divisional units and boundaries): <http://kartes.lgia.gov.lv/en/kartes.html>
3. Geospatial Information Law (in Latvian, with link to the English translation): <http://www.vestnesis.lv/?menu=doc&id=202999>
- 3, Regulations of the Address System („Adresācijas sistēmas noteikumi”, in Latvian only): <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=200244&from=off>
4. Official Language Law (in Latvian, with link to the English translation): <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=14740>
5. "Regulations on Geographical Names Information" ("Vietvārdu informācijas noteikumi”, in Latvian only): <http://www.likumi.lv/doc.php?id=243610>