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REPORTS OF THE DIVISIONS

Report of the Baltic Division



Seventeenth session of the United Nations  
Group of Experts on Geographical Names

REPORT OF THE BALTIC DIVISION\*

Since the first regional meeting of the Baltic states on the standardization of geographical names on 7 - 8 May 1992 there have been no formal meetings of the Baltic cartographers and onomasticians on this subject. However, contacts have been kept between linguists, also the Baltic mapping authorities have actively co-operated in joint cartographical projects, especially the base map of 1 : 50,000.

National standardization in Estonia

1. General remarks

Since the introduction of a new Constitution in 1992 some changes have been made in the administrative division of Estonia (see *Toponymic Guidelines of Estonia*, Document E/CONF.85/L.76; 1992). The six centrally governed cities have lost their previous status and are now on the equal with the other towns and parishes. The status of second-grade towns (Estonian, *alev*) has been abolished. Several of them have been turned into towns, while others are termed as parishes although they may continue to use the term 'alev' in their official management. Five new parishes have been created and two parishes renamed since 15 May 1992. The four city districts of Tallinn have been reorganized as eight city boroughs with restricted local government functions.

New legislation and the structure of state authorities has brought certain legal vacuum in place name matters. The function of naming and renaming has not been transferred to any specific authority, so technically only the Riigikogu (parliament) can e.g. rename parishes as has once been done. A draft law on boundary and name changes of local administrative units has been prepared and is to be discussed by the Government before submitting it to the parliament.

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## 2. Cartographic publications and mapping programmes

Since the Sixth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1992 several new maps have been published on Estonia, foremost the 4-sheet topographic map of 1 : 200,000, ordered by the National Land Board. AS Regio has produced a General Map of Estonia (1 : 400,000, 1992) and 'Estonian Mires' (1 : 400,000, 1993). Various town plans and county maps have been published by other private companies, although the names on these are not always reliable. The National Maritime Board and AS Regio jointly have started a charting programme, 2 sheets of charts on a scale of 1 : 100,000 have been published so far, others are to follow soon.

The National Land Board has been involved in three major projects.

1) In cooperation with the Swedish Space Corporation SATELLITBILD a national base map of 1 : 50,000 with a digital database (ARC/INFO) is being compiled. The 130-sheet map is expected to be ready by the end of 1995, the sheets are to be published in a limited number of copies. A database of cartographic names is being formed on the basis of the 1 : 200,000 map at the Eesti Maauuringud state enterprise. This mapping project is also shared by the Latvian and Lithuanian authorities and the sheet indexing system has been specially designed to cover all the three countries.

2) A co-operation agreement has been signed between the National Land Board and the US Defense Mapping Agency, aimed at modernizing the content of the current maps of 1 : 50,000 used by the DMA on Estonia.

3) The compilation of the basic map 1 : 20,000 has progressed steadily, work is done by the newly formed Estonian Mapping Centre. There are plans to publish the accomplished sheets for general use, two example sheets have already been issued. A database of cartographic names for the basic map has also been started.

## 3. Standardization of names

The Institute of the Estonian Language (formerly the Institute of Language and Literature) of the Estonian Academy of Sciences and the National Language Board have continued to act as authoritative organs in matters relating to the standardization of geographical names. Consultation has been given to various state institutions and the press on the use of place names. Names on maps of AS Regio and the National Land Board have been checked at the Institute, though not on a regular basis.

The Institute has started a project of compiling a standardized names gazetteer of Estonia, containing approx. 10,000 entries, incl. older and parallel name variants, linguistic instructions, descriptions of location and the extent of named features and cross-references. The first stage of the project, a full computerized index of names should be ready by the end of 1996.

Two publications have emerged since 1992. The handbook on the writing of names of the former Soviet Union (*Nimekirjutusraamat*. Tallinn 1993, 304 pp.) contains the Estonian transcription tables for the Russian, Ukrainian, Belarussian, Georgian, Armenian, Azerbaijani (Cyrillic), Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Tajik, Turkmen and Uzbek names; also, inter alia, the place names' lists of the Ukraine, Belarus and Georgia. The book gives an introduction to the principles of names standardization.

A list of country names in Estonian, English, French, Russian and the local official languages (*Maaailma maade nimed eesti, inglise, prantsuse, vene ja riigi ametikeeles*. Tallinn 1994, 102 pp.) has been published, containing long and short versions of the names of countries, names of capitals, official languages, ISO two- and three-letter codes for the representation of names of countries and names of major administrative units (states, autonomous provinces, etc.). The aim is to provide a uniform Estonian spelling for these names as well as to guide in translating various texts.

In 1993 an article was published in *Keel ja Kirjandus* monthly on the principles of the international standardization of geographical names with the Estonian translations of the major resolutions of the UN conferences (e.g. I/4, IV/4, V/13).

In 1993 a productive dialogue was started with Swedish and Finnish-Swedish colleagues on the possible standardization of Estonian-Swedish place names on Vormsi (Ormsö) island. The move was initiated by local environment protection authorities willing to use local place names in their studies. The problem of Swedish place names in Estonia is complicated by the fact that today there are no substantial numbers of Swedish-speakers in these areas, and secondly, the local dialect was quite different from the Standard Swedish. The study of the name material and discussions with the Swedish colleagues resulted in a common understanding that while the settlement names could follow the traditional standard Swedish orthography, the names of natural features could reflect peculiarities of the local dialect.

## National standardization in Latvia

### 1. General remarks

In recent years there have been no major changes in the administrative division of the country. The town of Stučka has been renamed as Aizkraukle, so also the district. From 1992 the status of second-grade towns (Latvian, *pilsētciemats*) has been under revision, some of them have been turned into towns, others are termed as rural settlements.

By the Act of Saeima (parliament) in October 1993 some changes were made into the law concerning changes in the administrative division and names of populated places. While the names of districts (first-order administrative units) and centrally governed cities are established by the Saeima, other names such as those of ordinary towns, parishes, city districts and villages are determined by the Cabinet of Ministers.

### 2. Cartographic publications

The main mapping authority is the Latvian Land Survey (Latvijas Zemes dienests), reorganized in 1993 and including the former Department of Geodesy and Cartography. In 1993 a 4-sheet topographic map of 1 : 200,000 was published, on the basis of which also some district maps have been printed.

Other maps have been produced by private companies. "Jāņa sēta" has published an administrative map of Latvia (1 : 400,000; 1993), containing district and parish boundaries; two editions of road maps (1 : 600,000 and 1 : 750,000), some town plans and other regional maps. The names on the maps have been checked carefully, the company has formed its own database of settlement names. "Vade mecum" has produced a road atlas of Latvia (1 : 200,000; 1993).

The Department of Geography at the Latvian University is involved in collecting and mapping names of natural features. The aim is to produce gazetteers and schematic maps (1 : 100,000) for every district, that of Valka district has already been published, five gazetteers are in a preparatory stage. Also there are plans for parish gazetteers, accompanied with maps on a scale of 1 : 30,000. This year a schematic map of streams (1 : 1,200,000) was produced with names checked at the Latvian Language Institute.

### 3. Standardization of names

The Latvian Language Institute and the Latvian University are the main onomastic research centres. The toponymic collections at the Institute amount to about 1,500,000 entries. Much attention has been paid to linguistic aspects of the names: phonetics, morphology, etc.

A Committee on Toponymics has been established at the Cabinet of Ministers. It has 13 members, among them linguists and geographers, the chairman is Ojārs Bušs. The tasks of this consultative body are to review name proposals submitted to the Cabinet, regulate the use of names in cartographic products and advise various government authorities on names. Geographical names that are not decided by either the Saeima or the Cabinet of Ministers are determined by the Committee.

The Committee has discussed various principal questions related to the standardization of names, e.g. how to standardize names in the region of Latgale where the local dialect differs considerably from the standard Latvian. Also the pronunciation of Latvian *o* as [uo], [o:] or [o] in place names has been discussed.

Issues of minority place names have also been addressed. Special attention is paid to the collection and maintenance of Livonian-language place names in the coastal area of Kurzeme. The Russian and Polish place names in Latgale are written in their original form, only in the Latvian-language context they are adapted. Due to grammatical reasons (the type of declension of names is determined by specific nominative endings) there has been a tradition in Latvia (and Lithuania) to transcribe all foreign place names irrespective of their original spelling.

The Committee has compiled a draft law on the protection of place names. Preamble of the Law states that the place names used in the Republic of Latvia as well as those reflected in historical documents and people's memory form part of the national heritage and belong to the whole of the Latvian nation, not to any individual persons or organizations. Protection of historical place names shall be the obligation of the State under the national cultural policy. The draft law would determine the competence of various state authorities in giving names and would give a central role in securing the enforcement of the Law to the Committee on Toponymics.

The Committee envisages also that the official geographical names will be included in the so-called standard documentation that would form the basis for protecting names. The standard documentation would contain standard maps and supplements (gazetteers), filed at the State Language Cent-

re. The standardized name forms would be obligatory in official documents, maps and registers.

## **National standardization in Lithuania**

### **1. General remarks**

No significant administrative changes have been made in Lithuania in recent years. Major renamed towns are Marijampolė (earlier temporarily Kapuskas) and Visaginas (formerly Sniečkus).

A draft law concerning administrative units and their boundaries has been prepared by the Government. Article 9 of the draft law states that names of populated places will be given or changed by the Government as proposed by the local governments and approved by the National Committee of the Lithuanian Language at the Seimas (Parliament). Names of streets, squares and other objects on the territories of local governments shall be determined by the local governments themselves in co-ordination with their names committees. The use of other toponyms will be regulated by a special act being prepared by the National Committee of the Lithuanian Language.

### **2. Cartographic publications**

The main mapping authority is the National Department of Survey and Mapping (Valstybinė geodezijos tarnyba). In 1992 an administrative map of Lithuania (1 : 600,000) was published showing names of neighbouring territories in the Lithuanian transcription. A topographic map of 1 : 500,000 was published in 1993 on the same principles. At present a topographic map of 1 : 200,000 is under preparation; the geographical names of neighbouring countries will be shown in their original (Latvian, Polish) or romanized (Russian, Belarussian) form.

Further maps, e.g. town plans and maps of culturally significant places have been published by private companies, foremost by Briedis.

Actively participating in the national mapping programme are also the Laboratory of Cartography at the University of Vilnius and the Kaunas Cartography Department of the State Institute of Land Management.

### 3. Standardization of names

The Institute of the Lithuanian Language is the main onomastic research centre. The toponymic collections amount to about 750,000 entries. The Institute coordinates its activities in the field of names standardization with the National Committee of the Lithuanian Language that has assumed the responsibilities of a national names authority.

The most thoroughly treated and standardized names are those of populated places. A gazetteer of such names (*Lietuvos TSR administracinio-teritorinio suskirstymo žinynas*. Vilnius 1974 - 1976) in two volumes contains approx. 24,000 names. The names in the publication are standardized with the indication of accent and declination. Though this seems reasonable basis for the normalization of the use of names, a new publication of the same kind has become necessary, after the new law on the administrative division has been adopted.

As this gazetteer was published by the former Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Lithuanian S.S.R. the names in the gazetteer were obligatory for the official use. In 1991 the National Committee of the Lithuanian Language reenforced this list of names, thereby making it the only official source of names of populated places.

Hydronyms have been published in the gazetteer *Lietuvos TSR upių ir ežerų vardynas* (Vilnius 1963), prepared at the Institute of the Lithuanian Language and Literature. It contains about 11,000 names that have been linguistically checked and adapted to the standards of literary language. As it was published thirty years ago with a few shortcomings a new edition has become necessary.

Other geographical names, incl. microtoponyms, have been less available to the general public. The edition of forest cadastre and the catalogue of swamps with the corresponding geographical names are in the final stages. There are plans for a toponymic dictionary of Lithuania that would be based on the collections of the Institute of the Lithuanian Language. The dictionary would be mainly of a scientific character but it would also meet practical needs.

Apart from the gazetteer of settlement names, the other publications are in principle recommendatory, nevertheless they are usually adhered to. To give a gazetteer an official status it would have to be approved by the National Committee of the Lithuanian Language.

As to the use of minority place names, in 1993 the Lithuanian Language Committee decided that in places of compact non-Lithuanian population

the residents have the right to use geographical names in their local form. These names may be used in the local press and literature and they are shown on signs. That decision concerns mainly Polish names in the districts of Vilnius and Šalčininkai.

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