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REPORTS OF THE DIVISIONS

REPORT OF THE BALTIC DIVISION

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Submitted by Peeter Päll, Chairman of the Baltic Division.

## REPORT OF THE BALTIC DIVISION

Since the Seventeenth Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) the Baltic Division has held two meetings: one in Tallinn and a working meeting in Rīga. Each country within the division has pursued its national name standardization policy while generally closely following the recommendations of the United Nations Conferences and UNGEGN\*. Information on the activities of the Russian Federation in the standardization of geographical names will be presented in the Report of the Eastern Europe, North and Central Asia Division of UNGEGN.

### 1. National standardization; names authorities

**Estonia.** On 2 November 1994 the Governmental Place Names Committee was formed, with a mixed membership from both government and scientific institutions. The Committee's Chairman is by statute the Minister of the Interior. Its tasks are to work out principles for the standardization and official use of place names within Estonia, to participate in preparing legal acts concerning place names, to consult the Government of the Republic in name matters and to disseminate training materials and other information on Estonian place names both at home and abroad. The Committee has discussed naming principles and given recommendations on the restoration of authentic names for undersea features, on the spelling of farm names, names of ports, etc.

Provisions for place names have thus far been incorporated into the Language Law and the Law on the Administrative Division of the Territory of Estonia, both adopted early 1994. Because of the inadequacy of these provisions a special Place Names Act was worked out by the Place Names Committee. The draft of the Act was presented to Parliament and the first reading of the Act took place in June 1996.

Since 1994 11 new towns have been formed on the basis of former second-grade towns (Abja-Paluoja, Karksi-Nuia, Kehra, Lihula, Loksa, Narva-Jõesuu, Põlva, Püssi, Rapla, Räpina, Võhma). The borough of Viivikonna was incorporated into the city of Kohtla-Järve and the town of Paldiski was temporarily (till the next local elections, due in October 1996) subjected to the town of Keila. The parish of Uulu was renamed Tahkuranna in 1995.

**Latvia.** At present the following provisions exist for the official adoption of geographical names. Names of districts (first-order administrative units) and centrally governed cities are determined by Saeima (Parliament). Names of ordinary towns, civil parishes and villages are approved by the Cabinet of Ministers. Railway stations and stops, ports and airports are named by the Ministry of Communications. Names for natural features are established by the State Land Survey. Names of farms and other objects are the responsibility of local governments. A Committee on Toponymics

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has been established at the Cabinet of Ministers. It has 13 members, among them linguists and geographers, the chairman is Mr. Ojārs Bušs. The tasks of the 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. The Committee's prior approval is needed in the case of adopting names for administrative units, populated places (except farms), railway stations, ports and natural features. Latvian parliament is discussing at present a draft Law on Toponyms, prepared by the governmental committee.

In 1994-1996 the settlements of Salaspils and Skrunda were raised to the status of towns.

**Lithuania.** Standardization of geographical names is the responsibility of the Government. The State Committee of the Lithuanian Language at Seimas (parliament) of Lithuania functions as the names authority. A consultative subcommittee has been set up to deal with geographical names, it comprises linguists, cartographers as well as representatives of various government agencies. The subcommittee reviews all naming proposals, name lists, spelling rules, etc. prior to their approval by the State Committee. The committee's decision is legally binding, adherence to the standards is supervised by language inspection.

The Law on Local Government Units and Their Boundaries stipulates that names of populated places, initiated by local governments and accepted by the State Committee of the Lithuanian Language at Seimas, shall be approved by the Government. Local governments shall be responsible for naming streets, squares and other local features within their boundaries. The official use and approval of other toponyms will be regulated by a law on place names, currently being prepared by the State Committee of the Lithuanian Language.

## **2. Field collection of place names, mapping programmes and training courses**

**Estonia.** Field survey of place names is being carried out in two directions. At the Institute of Estonian Language the collections of place names have been expanded by about 15,000 new records, mainly with the help of students and local enthusiasts. The National Land Board has continued its two major mapping programmes: the base map of 1 : 50,000 on 112 sheets and the basic map of 1 : 10,000 (1 : 20,000 in printed format) on appr. 470 sheets. Place names for the maps have been gathered among others by field research with the help of local institutions, such as the Institute of Võru that has significantly contributed to the provision of place names for the south-eastern part of Estonia.

26 sheets of the basic map of Estonia (1 : 20,000) have been printed till May 1996. The Eesti Kaardikeskus (Estonian Mapping Centre) state enterprise is expected to complete the compilation of the digital base map series (1 : 50,000) at the end of 1996. The National Maritime Board and Regio Ltd. have issued 9 charts on scale 1 : 100,000 covering virtually all of Estonian territorial waters. Various other town or county maps have been issued by private companies, such as a 1 : 150,000 series of county maps by AS E.O.Map, although place names on such maps have not always been linguistically checked.

There have been several courses for onomastics at the University of Tartu and the Tallinn Pedagogical University which deal with topics like applied toponymics and names standardization.

**Latvia.** The toponymy section of the State Land Survey of Latvia is conducting field collection of place names on maps of 1 : 25,000 to support the base map of 1 : 50,000 and to gather information for the toponymical database. About 1/3 of the whole land has been surveyed, 30,000 names have been gathered and processed. Publication of maps on scale 1 : 50,000 and 1 : 10,000 has been planned.

Specialists of the toponymy section have consulted local government officials in the procedures with toponyms. Local enthusiasts, often school teachers and pupils have been involved in the collection and mapping of place names. Instructions have been compiled on naming land properties and farms in the course of land reform. The Committee on Toponymics has adopted principles for the spelling of place names.

**Lithuania.** The field collection of Lithuanian place names was started in 1935 and is now almost complete with about 800,000 names stored at the Institute of Lithuanian Language. Each name record in the files indicate localisation of the named feature (district, apilinka or parish, settlement), pronunciation of the name (often in the local dialect), year of collection, etc. Another source of names are lists of various standardized toponyms in compilation of which extensive field work was also carried out.

National mapping authority, the Land Survey of Lithuania, in compiling various maps, relies mainly on published sources and the collections of place names at the Institute of Lithuanian Language. In 1995 the topographical map of Lithuania (1 : 200,000) on 24 sheets was published, also several tens of sheets of maps on scale 1 : 10,000 have been printed, as well as a marine chart 22006-L (1 : 200,000). A digital mapping (1 : 50,000) on the basis of satellite pictures is expected to be completed at the end of 1996.

### **3. Registers, gazetteers and toponymic data files**

**Estonia.** At the Eesti Kaardikeskus state enterprise there is a toponymical database being formed on the basis of digital maps of 1 : 50,000, currently containing about 10,000 entries. The data is stored as a separate layer of map information, names characterize the features similarly to other conventional map signs. Another database of place names (appr. 30,000 entries at present) is being compiled at the Institute of Estonian Language. The data include name variants from different sources, location of named objects by administrative divisions and geographical coordinates as well as other linguistically important information (pronunciation, declension types, etc.). The Institute has also the largest collection of Estonian place names, containing about 500,000 entries, collected in field work. A national place names register is envisaged under the draft Place Names Act and it is likely to be connected with mapping programmes.

No new gazetteers have been issued since the 17th session of UNGEGN, although there are plans to revise the official lists of settlements, watercourses and to compile lists for the names of e.g. lakes and undersea features.

**Latvia.** The largest card index of Latvian toponyms (about 1,500,000 entries) is in the Latvian Language Institute (formerly the Institute of Language and Literature). The collection originates in the end of the 19th century, containing excerpts from old historical documents and maps. It is supplemented each year in the course of field work. There are two indexes: the alphabetic index of all Latvian toponyms and the card index of 512 civil parishes. The collection is of a linguistic character supplying information on name variants (incl. dialectal) and pronunciation, possible etymologies, etc.

At the Scientific Laboratory of Regional Geography and Toponymy, University of Latvia there is a collection of names of natural features with about 50,000 entries, begun in 1970. The names are partly standardized and mapped. Information includes precise localisation and description of the named feature and name variants.

A digital toponymic database has been started at the State Land Survey of Latvia. Initially it will comprise all names from the base map (1 : 50,000) of Latvia.

Published gazetteers of Latvia (1990 - 1996):

- 1) Latvijas apdzīvoto vietu un to iedzīvotāju nosaukumi (Names of populated places and their inhabitants in Latvia). (1990, V. Dambe)
- 2) Valkas rajons. Dabas objektu nosaukumu vārdnīca (Gazetteer of natural features of the Valka district). (1993, J. Kavacs)
- 3) Kuldīgas rajons. Dabas objektu nosaukumu vārdnīca (Gazetteer of natural features of the Kuldīga district). (1994, Z. Goba)
- 4) Latvijas upes. Nosaukumi un ģeogrāfiskais izvietojums (Rivers of Latvia. Names and geographical location). (1994, R. Avotiņa, Z. Goba)

**Lithuania.** Apart from the collections of place names at the Institute of Lithuanian Language (cf. item 2 of the report) the following published sources of standardized names could be mentioned: Lietuvos TSR administracinio-teritorinio suskirstymo žinynas. Vilnius 1974-1976 (names of populated places, officially reaffirmed in 1991); Lietuvos TSR upių ir ežerų vardynas. Vilnius 1963 (names of rivers and lakes of Lithuania).

In 1994-1996 the following gazetteers were published:

- 1) Lietuvos miškų vardynas. I (Names of Lithuanian forests, an alphabetical index of 8,000 forests). Kaunas 1994
- 2) Lietuvos durpynų kadastras. I-II. (Names of Lithuanian peat bogs, 7,000 names). Vilnius 1995
- 3) Vietovardžių kirčiavimo žodynas (Pronunciation dictionary of Lithuanian place names, compiled by M. Razmukaitė and V. Vitkauskas. Vilnius 1994)

A comprehensive dictionary of Lithuanian place names "Lietuvos vietovardžių žodynas" is envisaged, although the work is only in a preparatory stage.

#### **4. Standardization of names in multilingual or dialectally diverse areas**

**Estonia.** The draft of the Place Names Act recognizes the right of historical minorities to use place names of their own language, in some cases two parallel names will be allowed. Already now some local municipalities (e.g. Noarootsi) in the north-west of Estonia have started to use Swedish parallel names of villages. On the other hand, the Governmental Place Names Committee is currently discussing a list of names to be recommended for use in the south-eastern border areas of Estonia (Setumaa) with some parallel Estonian and Russian name variants.

As some of the Estonian dialects significantly differ from the standard language, a more liberal attitude has been adopted towards the "dialectal" place name forms. On the recently published map sheets of Võrumaa the names of most features reflect their local pronunciation preserving e.g. vowel harmony and other distinctive features of that dialect. Where there is an officially established name, the local form has been added in brackets.

**Latvia.** The only autochthonous language besides Latvian is the Livonian language, therefore the draft Law on Toponyms provides for the use of place names in Livonian. In practice, however, the language is used by a very small number of speakers only.

In districts where the second variation of the Latvian standard language, i.e. Latgalian is used, the governmental Committee on Toponyms has decided (29 March 1993) to standardize all names, excl. those of parishes and their centres, on the basis of local usage.

**Lithuania.** Historically there have been no linguistically mixed areas in Lithuania, these started to emerge only at the end of the 19th century as a result of the policy of polonized land-owners and Russian authorities.

All toponyms of Lithuania are standardized according to the standard language, dialectal name forms may be used in informal speech only. Because of great dialectal diversity phonetical variations are not allowed but other dialectal features may be preserved, incl. old Baltic substrata found in Lithuanian toponyms.

#### **5. Exonyms and principles of writing foreign place names**

**Estonia.** It has been a long-established policy of the Estonian language planning bodies and also of the geographers' associations to discourage the use of exonyms. While the actual use of exonyms has not decreased lately, new name listings tend to reduce the number of exonyms to be used as the first variant. In December 1995, after a break of 60 years, a new Globe in Estonian was published by Regio Ltd. and A/S Scanglobe which strictly adheres to the said policy. Geographical names of the countries of the former Soviet Union are spelled according to their

local official name forms.

The Minister of Education formally sanctioned in February 1996 the official use of the United Nations romanization system for Russian (1987). While the Estonian transcription system will remain in use for a while, the new international system will gradually be introduced to documents and maps.

**Latvia.** The main principle of writing foreign place names in Latvian has been to reflect as closely as possible the original pronunciation of the names with the inventory of Latvian orthography, i.e. to transcribe names. In official map production, however, the original spellings of foreign names have been introduced to maps since the beginning of the 1990's. In actual Latvian-language texts nevertheless the main principle is adhered to.

Among exonyms there are translations, such as *Dienvidslāvija* 'Yugoslavia', *Baltkrievija* 'Belarus', *Jaunzēlande* 'New Zealand', etc., as well as names with different etymology *Igaunija* 'Estonia', *Vācija* 'Germany', *Zviedrija* 'Sweden', *Krievija* 'Russia', and other conventional name forms: *Francija* 'France', *Pērnavā* 'Pärnu', *Pleskava* 'Pskov', although the number of such names is decreasing (*Zilonkaula krasts* 'Ivory Coast' → *Kotdivuara* 'Côte d'Ivoire')

**Lithuania.** The principles of writing foreign place names are undergoing a period of transition at present. For place names the traditional practice has been transcription and this was reflected in the instruction for writing non-Lithuanian names in the Lithuanian encyclopædia (1986). In compiling the map of 1 : 200,00 of Lithuania the first attempt was made to use the original spellings or transliterations of names. Transliteration rules for Russian and Byelorussian names were adopted in 1990-1991. In 1991 the State Committee of the Lithuanian Language allowed the use of original, i.e. non-transcribed name forms in scientific and other special texts, however recommending that traditional transcriptions be preserved in educational literature. Rooted exonyms like *Lenkija* 'Poland', *Vokietija* 'Germany', *Paryžius* 'Paris', *Viena* 'Wien', etc. will be maintained.

A special category of exonyms are authentic Lithuanian place names of adjoining territories that reflect historical relationship of Lithuania with the places. Another problematic area that needs special attention and historical reevaluation is the Kaliningrad area of the Russian Federation.

The State Committee of the Lithuanian Language approved in January 1995 the list of names of countries (short and long forms of names in Lithuanian, published in "Gimtoji kalba" 1995 No 3) and in May 1996 the list of capital names. The Committee also adopted in February 1996 the Lithuanian equivalent to the international system for the romanization of Chinese names (*pinyin*). Also a list of exonyms has been presented to the subcommittee on toponyms by the Geographical Society of Lithuania.

## 6. Meetings and conferences

The First meeting of the Baltic Division was held in October 1995 in Tallinn, Estonia, organized by the Place Names Committee. Apart from Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian experts guests from Belarus, Norway, Sweden, Ukraine and the United States attended the meeting. The meeting discussed national standardization of place names, policy on exonyms and the implementation of United Nations resolutions on names standardization. Experts elected Mr. Päll chairman and Mr. Bušs vice-chairman of the division and discussed a plan of actions for the future. Following the first meeting, in May 1996 there was a working meeting of the Division in Rīga where it was decided to research into the possibilities of organizing toponymical training courses for the region next year. Also the importance of toponymic guidelines for map and other editors was emphasized. Lively discussion took place on the role of dialects in standardizing place names.

Representatives of Estonia and Lithuania were guests at the first meeting of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division of UNGEGN, held in Kiev, Ukraine in October 1994.

## 7. Publications

**Estonia.** M. Kallasmaa, Place names of the island of Saaremaa I (Saaremaa kohanimed). Tallinn 1996. 528 pp. In Estonian. • M. Kallasmaa, Plural forms in the place names of Saaremaa. - Keel ja Kirjandus 1995 No. 1, p. 20-28. In Estonian • M. Kallasmaa, Folk etymology and the principle of historicism in onomastics. - Keel ja Kirjandus 1995 No. 11, p. 763-766. In Estonian.

**Latvia.** L. Balode, The exotic borrowings in Latvian toponymy. - First Conference on Baltic Studies in Europe. Rīga 1995. • O. Bušs, Place names of Latgale in the Latvian literary language. - Baltu filoloģija V. Rīga 1995, p. 34-37. In Latvian • Z. Goba, Saving and protection of Latvian place names. - Līdzvarota attīstība Latvijas nākotnei. Rīga 1994, p. 140-142. In Latvian • J. Kavacs, Large-scale map making in Latvia and the peculiarities of place name registration. - Latvijas Vēstures institūta žurnāls 1995 No 2(15), p. 98-107. In Latvian • O. Kovaļevska, Place names located near Daugava in the Krāslava region. - Daugavas raksti. No Koškovciem līdz Daugavpilij. Rīga 1996, p. 96-103. In Latvian • V. Strautniece, Place names in the parish of Matkule, as element of cultural environment. - Līdzvarota attīstība Latvijas nākotnei. Rīga 1994, p. 129-131. In Latvian.

**Lithuania.** A. Vanagas. Names of Lithuanian towns (Lietuvos miestų vardai). Vilnius 1996. 322 pp. In Lithuanian. • M. Razmukaitė, Oiconyms of Minor Lithuania (Mažoji Lietuva). - Lietuvininkų žodis. Kaunas 1995, pp. 528-546. In Lithuanian. • M. Razmukaitė, *Volynė* or otherwise? - Kalbos kultūra 1995 No. 67. In Lithuanian. • L. Bilkis, Reškutėnai. - Gimtoji kalba 1995 No. 8/9, pp. 8-10. In Lithuanian.



## 8. Further information may be obtained from:

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