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Reports of the divisions

Report of the Baltic Division *

* Prepared by Aule Kikas (Estonia), Chair, and Peeter Päll (Estonia), in collaboration with divisional members.

REPORT OF THE BALTIC DIVISION

Prepared by Aule Kikas, Chair of the Baltic Division, and Peeter Päll (Estonia), in collaboration with divisional members

The report covers activities of the division since the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN, New York, 2007)

The Baltic Division of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) was formed in 1992, comprising of four members: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and the Russian Federation. The chairs of the division have been elected for a period between United Nations conferences on the standardization of geographical names. At the 10th Meeting of the Baltic Division in Tallinn (2006) it was decided that Estonia will coordinate the divisional activities since the Ninth UNCSGN (2007), and divisional Vice-Chair will be proposed by the Russian Federation.

1. Divisional meetings

The **11th Meeting of the Baltic Division** was held on 24th of August 2007 in New York during the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. 9 experts of all the four member states were present at the meeting. Outgoing Chair of the division, Ms. Danutė Mardosienė made a brief review of the divisional activities in the years 2002–2007. She thanked all experts for their contribution to the work of the division and expressed hopes for continued collaboration. In accordance with the decision made in 2006 the following persons were elected: Ms. Aule Kikas (Estonia) as Chair of the division, and Mr. Vladimir Boginsky (Russian Federation) as Vice-Chair of the division. The next meeting was scheduled for the third quarter of 2008 either in the Baltic region of the Russian Federation or in Lithuania.

The **12th Meeting of the Baltic Division** took place in Kaliningrad (Russian Federation) from 16th to 18th of September 2008. It was held on the invitation by the Federal Agency of Geodesy and Cartography of Russia and organized locally by the federal Baltic Aerial Survey Enterprise in Kaliningrad. 15 experts from three member countries (Estonia, Latvia, Russian Federation) and 4 observers from Poland and Ukraine took part in the meeting. Written reports were also received from Lithuania and disseminated at the meeting. The main topics included:

- National reports of member countries:
 - Estonia reported on continued changes in the official list of populated places, on the plans to compile a manual for authorities dealing with the official standardization of geographical names, on place name days held annually in different Estonian cities to promote local awareness; on the transition of the National Place Names Register to the responsibility of the National Land Board; on the work with names of maritime islands; on cooperation with the Cultural Council of Swedish Minority in Estonia; on various instructions for standardizing geographical names;
 - Latvia reported on the national geographical names authorities, a draft law on place names, on national mapping programmes and private mapping, on the geographical

names database of Latvia and other Latvian toponymic data repositories; on the Concise Gazetteer of Latvia available online; on various place names dictionaries; on the work with Latvian exonyms;

- Written reports sent by Lithuania concerned the revision of names of populated places containing the term „railway station“ in their name, and the publication in 2008 of Volume 2 of the Dictionary of World Place Names (30,000 geographical names of North America and South America exonyms in lithuanized form, and 35,000 endonyms);
- Russian Federation reported on the activities of the Federal Agency of Geodesy and Cartography of Russia in the national standardization of geographical names; on planned changes in the Law on Naming Geographical Features; on major cartographic products and further development and expansion of the National Catalogue of Geographical Names; on monitoring official name changes in Russia;
- Information from observers (Ukraine reported on national activities related to the standardization of geographical names, also on problems of preserving culturally valuable geographical names);
- Presentation of national databases of geographical names (Estonia, Latvia, Russian Federation; Ukraine);
- Discussion of the outcome of the Ninth UNCSGN and the implementation of resolutions adopted at the conference; active participation of division’s members in UN events was noted;
- Exhibition of products related to geographical names (maps, gazetteers, reference works).

The experts also had time to see the city of Kaliningrad and to make a visit to the national park of Kurshskaya Kosa. Participants expressed their gratitude to hosts of the meeting for perfect arrangements.

The next meeting of the Baltic Division is scheduled to take place in Lithuania in the second half of 2009.

2. International cooperation and joint projects

Since 2007, Baltic Division members have participated in several UNGEGN working group meetings. The meetings of the UNGEGN WG on Toponymic Data Files and Gazetteers were attended in Madrid (April 2007) and in Freising (June 2008) by experts from Latvia and Lithuania, in Brussels (February 2009) by experts from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Experts from Latvia presented papers at the international symposium GeoNames 2008 „Geographical names as part of the cultural heritage“, organized by the UNGEGN Dutch and German Speaking Division in Vienna (2008).

The meeting of the UNGEGN Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division in Sofia (May 2008) was attended by observers from Estonia and Latvia.

Estonian and Latvian experts have contributed information for the UNGEGN Database (sound files, romanizations).

An international seminar on the standardization of geographical names in Seoul (Republic of Korea, December 2007) was attended by an expert from Estonia.

Latvia and Lithuania make part of the reference group of the EuroGeoNames (EGN) project funded by the European Union, and experts have taken part in all its workshops and other activities. Both Latvia and Lithuania have completed the project's local implementation and made their national databases available through EGN gazetteer service (see <http://www.eurogeonames.com/refappl/>). Estonia became associated partner in the project in 2008 and also took steps to implement gazetteer service through EGN.

Baltic Division members took part in international onomastic events, organized mainly by the International Council of Onomastic Sciences (ICOS), especially the 23rd International Congress of Onomastic Sciences in Toronto (August 2008). Estonian onomastician, P. Päll, was a member of ICOS Board in 2005–2008. Estonian experts have also participated in some events organized by NORNA, such as a symposium in Haapsalu (Estonia) in May 2008. In November 2008 onomasticians from Estonia, Finland and Latvia held a seminar in Võrumaa, southern Estonia, to discuss projects related to place names dictionaries.

3. Conclusion

The Baltic Division of UNGEGN has held meetings almost yearly in recent times. Although there are currently no joint projects of the division, this active exchange of information between member countries has contributed significantly to the success of national standardization of geographical names in each member country and has helped to promote awareness about the importance of standardization.

ANNEX

Additional information provided by member countries

ESTONIA

National names authorities

The Place Names Board of Estonia has held meetings twice a year. During the period since 2007 there have been no changes to the administrative division in Estonia, but some revision is likely in 2009 before the next round of local elections in October. The opinion of the Place Names Board has been sought in several disputed cases of naming new proposed local government units, or some names of populated places. Five populated places have officially been reconstituted and the generic term (status) of six populated places has been changed. At the meetings of the Place Name Board there has been a discussion on modifications to the existing Place Names Act but no changes have yet been officially made. Main emphasis has been put on the compilation of official listings. The official list of lake names (2005) has been followed by the list of island names (April 2008), though it still needs some further research, especially regarding the names of Swedish minority.

An important aspect of the activities of the Place Names Board is publicity. Since 2003 there has been an annual event called place names day, held in different cities of Estonia. In 2007 the event took place in Kuressaare, and in 2008 in Võru. Usually there is a seminar where prominent local people deliver papers on the aspects of toponymy, this is accompanied by overviews on national standardization topics (principles of the Place Names Act, the National Place Names Register, etc.). The event is attended both by local government officials, and researchers on local history, geographers, etc.

Toponymic data files and gazetteers

The responsibility of maintaining the National Place Names Register has been transferred from Eesti Kaardikeskus enterprise to the National Land Board since July 1, 2008. The National Land Board has undertaken a thorough integration of information related to geographical names. In 2008 a Government regulation initiated a new Address System which will give public access to all data related to addresses in Estonia. Local governments are expected to bring all their address data into line with the regulation's requirements. The address data are integrated with place names data, and the National Place Names Register was newly designed at the end of 2008, the web version was completed in January 2009 (see <http://xgis.maaamet.ee/knravalik/>, the site is bilingual Estonian-English).

Revision of address and place names data has brought about a sharp increase in inquiries from local governments regarding the principles of names standardization. Names of cadastral units, minor populated sections, etc. require clarification. Extensive training sessions are currently being organized for local officials by the National Land Board and the Place Names Board.

Other activities

One of the aims of the Place Names Act is the protection of culturally or historically important geographical names. Recently there has been a movement to mark on roads the limits of historical parishes, originally ecclesiastical territorial units that have played an important part in Estonian history, and which still form the basis of linguistic and ethnographic territorial division in Estonia, as expressed also in local identity. The start of this action is planned for April 2009 to mark the 100th anniversary of the Estonian National Museum.

Estonian onomasticians are currently envisaging a one-volume dictionary on the etymology of Estonian place names. This would be a summary of current research on place names, but there are also many unexplored areas that need further research.

LATVIA

National names authorities

There are no changes during the reporting period - the current situation is the same as characterized in the Report of Latvia submitted to the 9th UNCSGN (see document E/CONF.98/134/Add.1).

Legislative acts

No changes since the previous reporting period (see document E/CONF.98/134/Add.1).

Toponymic data files and gazetteers

Geographical Names Database of Latvia is being maintained by the Laboratory of Toponymy, Latvian Geospatial Information Agency (LGIA). In January 5th 2009 it contained 121,8 thousand names for 100,8 thousand objects (1,89 names per square kilometer and 1,56 named objects per square kilometer).

The concise public version is available at: <http://db.lgia.gov.lv:8881/index.php> (at the moment - only in Latvian). It contains 7,500 names for 4,500 geographical objects.

Compiling of national gazetteers and local geographical names dictionaries was continued. The Concise Gazetteer of Latvia, scale 1:1 000 000 (parallel texts in Latvian and English) with cartographic appendices, has been updated and is available online at the LGIA website.

The gazetteer:

http://www.lgia.gov.lv/upload/geogr_nos_2009.pdf

cartographic appendices:

1) administrative districts and republic cities:

http://www.lgia.gov.lv/upload/pielik_2_admin.jpg

2) geographical map:

http://www.lgia.gov.lv/upload/pielik_3_fizgeo.jpg

3) administrative territories and administrative units:

http://www.lgia.gov.lv/upload/pielik_4_adminint.jpg

Compiling of local geographical names dictionaries (serving as sources of information, aid for place names standardization, popularizing the place names as a national cultural heritage) has also been continued. Two dictionaries have been prepared during the reporting period.

Toponymic education

Periodic scientific publication “Onomastica Lettica. 3”, issued in 2007, was partly devoted to toponymy.

Geographical names in mapping projects, exonyms

The LGIA has continued the state mapping projects. The most significant:

1. the Topographic Map of Latvia, scale 1:50 000 was completed at the end of 2007, the updating has been started (first 46 sheets were prepared in 2007-2008);
2. the Topographic Map of Latvia, scale 1:10 000 (32 sheets updated, 79 sheets prepared);
3. military mapping projects at scales 1:500 000–1:25 000 was continued.

Collaboration between cartographers and geographical name specialists in framework of all state mapping programs (civil and military) was constant and successful during the reporting period.

“Lielais Pasaules atlants” – “World Geographic Atlas”, containing more than 90,000 Latvian exonyms[†] of the world place names was compiled and published by mapping company “Jāņa sēta Map Publishers” in 2008. The volume of the atlas comprises 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 from 148 languages. Before beginning the atlas project, there were methodic aids for rendering into Latvian for 19 languages only. The basic principles and guidelines for rendering proper names from 129 languages were worked out by linguists with the support of the State Language Agency particularly for this project. As far as it was possible the foreign geographical names were rendered into Latvian directly from the original language using the phonetic principle. The publishing of the atlas is an outstanding event not only in the Latvian cartography but also in the Latvian culture on the whole.

RUSSIAN FEDERATION

Legal basis for the activities related to naming or renaming geographical features, standardization, use, registration, accounting and preservation of geographical names is constituted by the Federal Law on Naming Geographical Features, adopted in December 1997, and by several Government regulations.

In 2008 a Federal Law was adopted on Changes in the Law on Naming Geographical Features. The aim of the changes was to clarify certain concepts and spheres of usage in the Law, also to harmonize it with other existing legislation.

[†] Because of the structure of Latvian as inflectional language, there are very few endonyms among foreign place names used in Latvian.

The functions of devising national policy and approving normative regulations in the sphere of names standardization in recent years were executed by the Ministry of Transport of the Russian Federation, under whose authority also the Federal Agency of Geodesy and Cartography (Roskartografiya) functioned. In 2008, according to the Decree of the President of the Russian Federation these functions were given to the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation. In March 2009 Roskartografiya was abolished and its functions were given to the Federal Service of State Registers, Cadastre and Cartography, subordinated to the Ministry of Economic Development.

Interinstitutional coordination of activities related to naming geographical features was performed by the Committee on Geographical Names that worked according to plans annually confirmed by the Ministry of Transport.

In the period of 2006–2008 the following activities related to national standardization of geographical names in Russia should be mentioned.

1. Work on reviewing the Practical Guide on Naming and Renaming Geographical Features in the Russian Federation, and General Instructions on Establishing Geographical Names, Their Standardization and Spelling, was continued.

2. Expert statements were given regarding proposals to give or change names to geographical features of the Russian Federation, its continental shelf and the exclusive economic zone, also to geographical features in open seas and the Antarctic discovered or distinguished by Russian explorers. As a result, since the adoption of the Federal Law on Naming Geographical Features, there have been 93 federal acts approving names to 659 geographical features and renaming 348 features.

3. Compilation and maintenance of the State Catalogue on Geographical Names in order to fulfil functions stemming from the Federal Law on Naming Geographical Features, and also a Government regulation concerning the Catalogue. On 1 January, 2009 the Catalogue contained information on 320,000 names of geographical features from 76 constitutional subjects of the Russian Federation (altogether more than 9 million parameters of information).

Several drafts of administrative-territorial reference books on constitutional subjects of the Russian Federation were reviewed and approved. Inquiries and proposals by institutions and organizations, also by individual persons were replied to, supplying information on geographical names or giving recommendations on their usage. In 2008 alone, information was provided on more than 140,000 geographical features using the data supplied by the Catalogue.

4. In order to supply state authorities of the Russian Federation with the newest information, an electronic version of the Information Bulletin on official changes in the geographical names of Russia has been compiled; it will be updated annually.

5. Work on the transcription of geographical names of the Russian Federation and foreign countries for cartographic products has been continued. Based on this, more than 300 public maps and atlases have been produced, 80 of them being completely new. The most important of these is the National Atlas of Russia. This is a fundamental encyclopaedic scientific and reference work that contains official information on state administrative structures, nature, resources, population, economy, status of environment, history and culture of Russia. The National Atlas of Russia

comprises of four volumes: 1. General Character of the Territory (published in 2004), 2. Nature and Ecology (2007), 3. Population and Economy (2008), 4. History and Culture (currently being completed). Considering the aims of the National Atlas of Russia and the heterogeneous needs of users, the atlas is published both in printed and electronic version.

In these cartographic products one can see the practical realization of national policy on the standardization of geographical names in the Russian Federation.

6. The system of transliterating Cyrillic alphabet into letters of Roman alphabet GOST-83, adopted at the Fifth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (Montreal 1987) continues to be used in the Russian Federation when producing maps for international use.