

14 June 2002

English only

**Eighth United Nations Conference on the
Standardization of Geographical Names**

Berlin, 27 August-5 September 2002

Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

**Reports by divisions of the Group of Experts on
Geographical Names on the situation in their divisions
and on the progress made in the standardization of
geographical names since the Seventh Conference**

Report of the Baltic Division

Submitted by Latvia**

* E/CONF.94/1.

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This report covers the period since the 7-th United Nations Conference on standardization of geographical names. Four countries - Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania and Russian Federation were members of the Baltic division of UNGEGN during this time. In order of the schedule Latvia coordinated the activities of the division.

1. Meetings

The Baltic division held two meetings. The State Commission of Lithuanian Language in November 2000 hosted the 3-rd divisional meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania. It was the first meeting of the division, organized in Lithuania. The State Land Service of Latvia in April 2002 hosted the 4-th divisional meeting in Riga, Latvia.

Approximately 40 participants – experts and people having an interest in geographical names, attended both meetings. The agendas of the meetings covered all the main items of the geographical names standardization. The most actual topics were national standardization (place names authorities, place names on the national maps, standardization of dialectal names), geographical names databases and exonyms.

2. Web site

The web site of the Baltic division (<http://www.eki.ee/knn/ungegn>) is maintained in Estonia. The general information about the division and materials from the divisional meetings are displayed on it.

3. Interdivisional cooperation

Since the 7-th UN Conference experts of the Baltic division have taken part as observers in the 3-rd and 4-th Meetings of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia division of UNGEGN (Moscow, June 1999, Minsk, October 2001) and in Joint International Meeting on Geographical names – the 16-th Session of the East Central and South-East Europe Division of UNGEGN + Meeting of the Working Group on Gazetteers and Toponymic Data Files of UNGEGN (Ljubljana, April 2001).

4. Participation in UNGEGN activities

Experts from Latvia, Estonia and the Russian Federation participated in two UNGEGN sessions (19-th session in New York, 1998 and 20-th session in New York, 2000) with reports about current activities in the Baltic division. Also experts from the Baltic division have participated in UNGEGN working groups: Peeter Päll (Estonia) is convenor of the Working group on Romanization Systems (since the 20-th session of UNGEGN), Vita Strautniece (Latvia) is member of WG on Gazetteers and Toponymic Data Files. The contribution of the Russian Federation for the Working Groups is a conclusion about the *Country Names list* and Russian Federation translation of the *Glossary of Toponymic Terminology*.

5. National standardization

5.1. Geographical names authorities

Estonia. The Place Name Board is a consultative body, advising the government and coordinating the geographical names standardization activities. The government approves the names of administrative units and territorial units within parishes. Minister of Communications approves the names of railway stations, ports, navigation aids, airports, state roads and aquatorial features, the Minister of the Environment – the names of the natural features listed in national cadastres and registers, the Minister of Culture - the names for memorial sites and antiquities preservation areas. The opinion of local municipalities and Place Name Board is asked before the approving of names.

Latvia. State Language Law declares naming and the general principles on using of place names. The State Language Centre is working for implementation of the Law. The recommendations on spelling farm names and numbers of houses and regulations on spelling of addresses have been adopted and published.

The names of towns and administrative units, initiated by local municipalities are approved by the Government. The corresponding ministries approve names of railway stations, ports, navigation aids, airports, state roads and aquatorial features. Local municipalities are fully responsible for the naming of populated places. The main authority of names of natural features is the State Land Service but for official approving of the names also the agreement of the local municipalities is necessary.

Lithuania. The State Commission of the Lithuanian Language at Seimas (Parliament) functions as the geographical names authority in Lithuania. A consultative subcommission has been set up to deal with geographical names. The Commission's decision is legally binding, adherence to the standards is supervised by the language inspection body. The names of populated places initiated by local municipalities and accepted by the State Commission of the Language at Seimas, are approved by the Government. The changes are entered into the State Register of Administrative Units, Places of Habitation and Streets.

Russian Federation. The Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography of Russian Federation (Roskartografija) in 1998 was appointed by the government as the main federal body for implementation of national standardization in the Russian Federation. The Central Research Institute of Geodesy, Air survey and Cartography (CNIIGAiK) is appointed by Roskartografija as the body responsible for scientific and methodical support of the standardization. The permanent Interdepartmental Committee on Geographical Names co-ordinates efforts of different agencies to develop a common approach in naming of geographical features.

5.2. Place name laws

Place name laws were adopted in Russian Federation in 1997 and Estonia in 1996. The implementation and updating of the laws is going now. The draft of such a law was prepared in Latvia too, but had not been accepted by the Parliament.

5.3. Field collection of place names

Latvia. Field collection of place names has been done very intensively in Latvia by the State Land Service for the compilation of place names coverage of the Satellite Map of Latvia M1:50 000 until 1998. It is continuing now for *Topographic Maps of Latvia*, scale 1:50 000 and 1:10 000. This field collection includes mainly consulting local governments about the names of villages, hamlets, farms, etc. Also field collection has been done for the compilation of local and regional place names dictionaries and as a scientific research work.

Estonia. Field survey of place names is being carried out at the Institute of Estonian Language (mainly with the help of students and local enthusiasts) and at cartographic enterprises conducting their own field collections and consulting both the local municipalities and the collections held at the Institute of Estonian Language.

Lithuania. The process of collecting place names has been completed in Lithuania (the last expedition took place in 1986). The data have been stored at the Institute of the Lithuanian Language.

5.4. Official treatment of geographical names (names on the maps, in the official registers etc.)

Estonia. Compiling and publishing of different map series is continuing: *Basic Map of Estonia* (1:10 000, printed version 1:20 000); *Base Map of Estonia* (1:50 000); *Navigation charts* (1:100 000, etc.); *Map of Estonia* (Eesti kaart, 1:50 000).

In 1999 a new administrative map of Estonia (1:300 000) was published containing all the officially approved names of populated places.

The state cartography enterprise *Eesti Kaardikeskus* is collaborating with the specialists of toponymy. According to the Place Names Act of Estonia the official names have to be used on maps.

The most comprehensive privately produced cartographic work is the Estonian Road Atlas 2002/2003 (1:150 000) by *AS Regio*, an updated version of the atlas of 1997/98. The atlas includes an index of over 11 000 place names.

Latvia. The Satellite Map of Latvia scale 1:50 000 was published by the State Land Service of Latvia in 1998-1999. The map consisting of 131 sheets comprises from 20-1300 place names per sheet, depending on the area of land on the sheet. Therefore it is the richest in toponymy map of Latvia, whatever has been compiled in Latvian language. Updating of the map is continuing.

The Topographic maps of Latvia scale 1:50 000 and scale 1:10 000 is being compiled now. The first sheets have been issued.

The state topographical mapping authority – State Land Service of Latvia maintains the Laboratory of Toponymy that is responsible for field collection and processing of place names, compiling or checking the place names drafts for each map sheet. Since the 2001 all the maps, compiled in the State Land Service, have to be checked by specialists of the Laboratory of Toponymy.

The private map publishing company “*Jāņa sēta Map Publishers*” has continued the production of regional maps of Latvia, scale 1:100 000, city and town plans, scale 1:15 000 – 1:20 000, school maps and atlases, maps of foreign countries. A new version of the *Road Atlas of Latvia* (1:200 000) is published in 2002, containing an index list of over 21 thousand geographical names of Latvia. A CD-ROM *JS Latvija*, containing all the latest maps of territory of Latvia produced by “*Jāņa sēta Map Publishers*” and date base with information about more than 15 000 settlements, natural objects, points of interest is issued.

Lithuania. During the reporting period the Department of Geodesy and Cartography of National Land Service of Lithuania (the State Service of Geodesy and Cartography until 2001) worked on different map series of Lithuania. The map at *scale 1:50 000* (based in the satellite images), *Navigation charts* at scale 1:225 000 are completed and published. *Orthophoto Map of Lithuania* at scale 1:10 000 covers 99% and the Topographic map at scale 1:50 000 covers 70% of the territory of Lithuania.

The specialists of the Institute of Lithuanian Language have checked all the place names on the maps.

The Law on Geodesy and Cartography (2001) prescribes the using of place names on maps and in geo-referential databases according to the recommendations of United Nations on the standardization of geographical names.

Delimitation maps of the state borders between all the member states of the Baltic division have been compiled with participation of specialists on geographical names.

Committee of Geodesy, Cartography and Land Reform of the Republic of Lithuania, Republic of Estonia, and Republic of Latvia under the Baltic Council of Ministers is promoting the regular exchange of national cartographic products between Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

Lack of harmonization of place names information between the different state registers, databases and other information systems, state and private mapping enterprises is recognized.

5.5. Standardization of dialectal place names

Estonia, Latvia. Standardization of dialectal place names is a problem going to the solution in Estonia and Latvia. The names of populated places in several municipalities in dialectally more diverse part of Estonia have been standardized in their local form. The local forms of natural features names are used on Basic Map of Estonia.

The standardization of village, house and natural feature names in their local dialectal forms in the eastern region of Latvia is recommended since 1993. Part of the village and house names has been standardized according that. Many local forms of names of natural features and villages are used on the Satellite Map of Latvia scale 1: 50 000 and on the topographic maps.

Lithuania. The standardization of the place names basically carried out before the Second World War, in 1935 and 1936.

5.6. Standardization in multilingual areas

The Place Names Act of Estonia recognizes the right of historical minorities to use place names of their own language, in some cases two parallel names are allowed and officially approved. In Latvia the State Language Law stated the right of the historical minority (Livs) to use their national place names.

5.7. Toponymic guidelines

Estonia compiled the second edition of Toponymic guidelines in 1997. There are not yet guidelines for Latvia, Lithuania and the Russian Federation.

6. Exonyms

Estonia. In 1999 a dictionary of foreign geographical names (*Maailma kohanimed*) was published containing about 4200 name articles with name variants in multiple languages.

Latvia. ISO-3166-1:1997 “Codes for the representation of names of countries and their subdivisions – Part 1: Country codes”, comprising short and official country names, their letter and numeral codes, has been adopted in the status of Latvian National Standard LVS ISO 3166-1:1997. Latvian forms of the official names of countries and their subdivisions were checked by the specialists of geographical names.

State Language Centre has adopted and published recommendations on spelling Latvian place names in English and a short list of country names (short and official names) in English.

A manuscript of the new edition of the Orthographic Dictionary of the Latvian Language has been compiled comprising more exonyms than the previous one.

Recommendations on spelling Polish and Hungarian proper names, including place names, have been worked out and published.

Issues concerning the spelling of Chinese, Korean, Turk and Arabic personal names enclose the corresponding transcription tables.

Consultations concerning spelling foreign geographical names etc. are available at the Information & Consultation Department, State Language Centre.

Lithuania. In 1997 the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language has adopted several decisions on spelling foreign geographical names in Lithuanian texts, maps etc. Foreign names and place names of languages based on other than the Latin alphabet are transcribed, taking into account the pronunciation of the words and the prevailing writing traditions in the Lithuanian language, or they are transliterated. Russian names and place names are transcribed in accordance with an instruction approved by the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language. The traditional Lithuanian exonyms are preserved, although both adapted Lithuanian and original foreign place name forms can be used – one of them in brackets (except the schoolbooks).

The Commission has drawn up separate lists of the names of states and capital cities (1995, 1996; revised in 2001, 2002). ISO-3166-1:1997 “Codes for the representation of names of countries and their subdivisions – Part 1: Country codes” is being adopted in the status of the Lithuanian National Standard (LST EN ISO 3166-1).

At the end of 2001, the first volume of The Comprehensive Lithuanian Encyclopaedia was published. Unlike the encyclopaedia published in Soviet times this one presents the place names of the languages based on the Latin alphabet in the original. But the publishers of the encyclopaedia tried to make it possible that the readers who know at least one form of a proper noun in a foreign language, whether authentic or adapted, could find information about it.

Lists of Lithuanian Traditional place names of Poland, Byelorussia, Kaliningrad region and Latvia have been adopted by the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language (1997–2000) and are published.

Russian Federation. Reference book *Countries and Subdivisions of the World*, containing recommended forms of Russian Federation spelling of the names of countries, their capitals and subdivisions was published in 1999.

Instructions for Russian transcription of geographical names of Moldova and Belarus are going to be confirmed and published.

7. Place name data bases, registers, card files, lists, gazetteers, other publications

There are significant place names card files in each of the Division member states. The process of establishing and developing of electronic geographical names databases was continuing during the reporting period.

Estonia. The Government on 30 November 1998 officially endorsed the National Place Names Register envisaged by the Law on Place Names. The aim of the Register is to maintain the official place names information. It will serve the needs of the state cartography according the map scale 1:50 000.

Another database of place names (approximately 60 000 entries at present) is being compiled at the Institute of Estonian Language. The Institute has also the largest collection of Estonian place names – a card file containing about 600 000 entries, collected in fieldwork.

Latvia. The coverage of place names of the Satellite Map of Latvia is used as the basic data source for the Geographical Names Database of Latvia, being formed in the Laboratory of Toponymy, State Land Service. The theory and methodology of the Database are being worked out since 1998. The first stage in the development of the Database is already complete. Drafts of two place names dictionaries are the first output of it.

Since the 1997 compiling of the place names dictionaries is going on in collaboration between the State Land Service and University of Latvia and two regional toponymic dictionaries have been published.

The dictionary of village names and local dictionary of place names of Sēlpils civil parish are under completing.

Lithuania. A state enterprise, The Cadaster and Register of Land and Other Property, is in charge of the Register of Administrative Units, Places of Habitation and Streets (the Interior Ministry of the Republic of Lithuania manages the register. The data in the register are given according to the system LKS-94 coordinates). The specialists of the Institute of the Lithuanian Language have linguistically checked the names.

The Institute Lithuanian Language has the largest collection of Lithuanian place names – a card file containing about 1 000 000 000 entries (700 0000 contemporary place names and another 3000 000 historical ones).

The State Commission of the Lithuanian Language approved the List of Lithuanian Place Names on 28 August 1997. The place names are stressed, with the stress paradigm (for the accentuation of other than the nominative case); the administrative status and locality are indicated.

In 2001 the Language Commission completed deliberating The Dictionary of Place Names, which contains the names of about 12,000 of residential places, rivers, lakes, forests, marches, hillforts and others. It also includes the names of Lithuanian ethnic lands and the places of exile. In 2002, the dictionary is expected to be published both in printed and electronic versions.

A systematic electronic register of officially used Lithuanian place names, the names of hydrographical features; ethnic Lithuanian place names etc. will be started.

Russian Federation. The automated National (State) Catalogue of Geographical Names is being developed by Roskartografija as an electronic database covering the territory of the Russian Federation according to the topographic map scale 1:100 000 and smaller. It will include the standardized geographical names.

Dictionary of hydrographical features of the Russian Federation and the CIS countries (more than 12,5 thousand names, standardized Russian and romanized forms) was published in 1999.

8. Features beyond single sovereignty

Names in all the official languages of such features are used on the maps (for example: Latvian name Vilce for the river in the territory of Latvia and Lithuanian equivalent Vilkija for the same river in the territory of Lithuania).

9. Writing systems

Estonia. On 25 March 1998 the Government of Estonia issued a decree on the romanization of Russian names. The amended Estonian transcription table was accompanied by the international romanization system, approved by the Fifth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (1987). The Romanization System for the Russian Federation Names GOST-83 is also used on official maps. In May 1998 the Minister of Education approved a modified Estonian-Russian transcription table.

Russian Federation. GOST-83 is constantly used in Russian Federation for cartographic products intended for international use. Output of cartographic products using the romanization system is growing - the World Atlas containing more than 250 000 geographical names was published in 1999 (the second edition is planning), compiling of the National Atlas of Russian Federation and completing of the Political Atlas of the World is continuing.

Latvia, Lithuania. Romanization System GOST-83 is used also in Latvia and in Lithuania for maps covering the territory of Russian Federation (except school maps where traditional exonyms dominate).

Lithuania not on maps Russian names and place names are transcribed in accordance with an instruction approved by the State Commission of the Lithuanian Language (The Instruction on the Transcription of Proper Nouns from Russian into Lithuanian and from Lithuanian into Russian. Vilnius, Mokslas, 1990).

The State Commission of the Lithuanian Language has approved Lithuanian equivalents for the international spelling of Chinese and Japanese characters (1995, 1997).

10. Toponymic education and practice

Estonia. The courses for onomastics at the University of Tartu and the Tallinn Pedagogical University were held dealing with topics like applied toponymy and names standardization.

Latvia. Lecture courses on Toponymy are being delivered at the Faculty of Geography and Earth Sciences and the Faculty of Philology, University of Latvia. Student's papers on toponymic topics are being compiled at University of Latvia each academic year.

Lithuania. Lectures on Toponymy are delivered for geographers at the Faculty of Natural Science at Vilnius University every academic year. The students and professors of Vilnius Pedagogical University research and defend studies into toponyms. The Institute of the Lithuanian Language writes reviews of schoolchildren's papers on toponyms at the request of the Ministry of Education and Science.

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