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National standardization : Office treatment of names

An Online Service for Settlement Names in Finland

Submitted by Finland **

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The Institute for the Languages of Finland published an index for Finnish settlement names in 2016. This index, *Asutusnimehakemisto*, is freely available online at <http://kaino.kotus.fi/asutusnimehakemisto/>, and lists the names of all Finnish towns and municipalities as well as a rich collection of village names. The index, updated regularly and with around 21,000 entries, is most of all intended for journalists, translators and authorities, who need to make correct use of settlement names in their work. The online service fulfills UNCSGN resolutions I/4, VII/5 and VII/9.

The settlement names index seeks primarily to inform users on the correct inflection of names. One can also check the recommended spelling of a name and the name of an inhabitant (demonym) of an existing or former municipality. Users can also use the index to check the location of a place. The index lists the province of each municipality and, with settlements smaller than a municipality, gives the name of the municipality and the province of their location.

The online material includes mostly Finnish-language names. Corresponding Swedish-language names are listed from bilingual regions as well as certain Saami-language names from northern Finland. In addition to the names of the cities, municipalities and villages, the index contains names referring to parts of villages/cities and to residential areas, if information on their usage has been available. Also included are some names of places of business and cultural sites. Names of individual farms and estates are not included.

Some names have been linked to the MapSite (*Karttapaikka*) service of the National Land Survey of Finland (<https://asiointi.maanmittauslaitos.fi/karttapaikka/>), which gives access to maps depicting settlements and their location. Some data also come with maps showing the coverage of the possible inflections of certain types of names.

Inflection of place names in the Finnish language

Finnish is an agglutinative language where the affixes of, for example, locative cases are appended to a word stem. Locative cases in Finnish convey ideas of location and movement from and to a location. There are both internal and external locative cases, used variably with each expression of location. One cannot deduce from, for example, the structure of a settlement name whether to use an internal or an external locative case. The settlement names index therefore recommends that one should use forms commonly used in a given place. For example, the town name *Oulu* takes the internal locative case *Oulussa* (“in Oulu”), while the town name of *Vantaa* uses the external locative case *Vantaalla* (“in Vantaa”).

History of index for settlement names

As it is impossible for anyone to master or remember which settlement name takes an internal locative case and which uses an external locative, the predecessor of the Institute for the Languages of Finland – the Finnish Onomastic Archive Foundation – started in the 1970s already to collect data on Finnish settlement names and their inflection to assist, for example, journalists. The key sources were the place names collections of the Names Archives, supplemented by a questionnaire directed to Finnish municipalities. The corpus, consisting of around 20,000 settlement names with inflections and information on location and type of place was published in 1990 in *Alastarolla Ylistarossa. Suomen asutusnimet ja niiden taivutus* [On Alastaro in Ylistaro. Finnish settlement names and their inflection].

The material was digitized and added to at the turn of the millennium, and was published electronically in 2004 in conjunction with a dictionary of contemporary Finnish (*Kielitoimiston sanakirja*), which was subject to a charge. In 2004–2011 the material was updated every three years as far as necessitated by municipal mergers, whereas the online publication – available free of charge – has been added to and updated in a number of ways. In 2015, for example, the Finnish municipalities were sent a questionnaire on settlement names, which yielded new information both on the settlements and the names today.