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

Berlin, 27 August-5 September 2002

Item 9 (e) of the provisional agenda\*

**National standardization: toponymic guidelines  
for map editors and other editors**

**Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors:  
Finland**

**Submitted by Finland\*\***

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## 1. Languages

Finland is a bilingual country. According to the constitution, Finnish and Swedish are the national and official state languages. The central principle is the equal status of the national languages. In 1991, the speakers of Saami were also granted the right to use the Saami language(s) when dealing with the authorities. – For a more detailed account of Finnish and Saami; cf. National standardisation: toponymic guidelines for map and other editors: Finland. Seventh United Nations conference on the standardisation of geographical names. New York, 13 – 22 January 1998. E/CONF. 91/L.17. 11 November 1997.

The linguistic proportions have remained roughly the same in Finland in the past few years. There were 5,195,000 inhabitants in Finland at the end of 2001. 92.3 percent of them spoke Finnish as their mother tongue, 5.6 percent spoke Swedish, and 0.03 percent Saami. The number of foreign-language speakers has been on the increase lately; in 2001, their share of the population was ca. 98,500. The largest group was the speakers of Russian (0.6 percent). The speakers of other languages represented 1.5 percent of the population.

The use of the national languages, Finnish and Swedish is regulated by the language law. According to the law, a municipality (*Fi kunta, Sw kommun*) is considered bilingual if the speakers of the minority language constitute at least 8 percent of its population or, alternatively, if they are more than 3,000. Saami is spoken in the northernmost municipalities of the Finnish Lapland. The speakers of Saami are a linguistic minority in all of the municipalities.

We are currently preparing a new language law, which is expected to become effective on 1 January 2004. The Finnish government has approved of the draft law, and it will be discussed at Parliament in the summer of 2002. The new language law only covers the national languages, Finnish and Swedish. Saami would continue to be regulated by virtue of a separate special law. The new legislation would be based on the linguistic rights of the individuals, and its objective would be the reinforcement of the linguistic equality. In addition to the officials, the law would also concern state enterprises. The statements issued on the draft law have also called for a law on place names in connection with the reform of the language law.

Most place names in Finland are Finnish. A Swedish-speaking population has lived on the western and southern coasts and south-western archipelago since the Middle Ages, and the Swedish place names of Finland are centred on these regions. Saami names have been best preserved in Lapland, which is the northern part of the country.

Names in bilingual areas are written on maps in both languages, with the majority-language name mentioned first. The guidelines for the name planning in bilingual areas were published in 2001; more details can be found in the report *National standardisation: treatment of names in multilingual areas*.

## 2. Names authorities and names standardisation

Names are planned and handled by several authorities in Finland. A committee established by the Research Institute for the Languages of Finland for the clarification of name issues (Sirikka Paikkala, Ritva Liisa Pitkänen, Peter Slotte) drafted a report *Paikannimet – yhteinen omaisuutemme. Tarvitaanko Suomessa paikannimilakia?* [Place Names – our joint asset. Does Finland need a law on place names?], which was completed in 1997. The report proposed the drafting of up-to-date regulations for place names, defining the bodies that ratify the different names and which body could issue statements on them on demand. We should also consider establishing a national board of place names and appoint a body to maintain a register of the official names. The law on place names is related to the new language law, which is currently being prepared.

### 3. Transliteration and other standards

We have established three standards for foreign place names in Finland:

Heprealaisen kirjaimiston translitteraatio [Transliteration of Hebrew characters]. Suomen Standardisoimisliitto SFS [Finnish Standards Association SFS]. SFS 5824. Ratified 30 March 1998, 7 pp. – Includes the transliteration guidelines for scientific and standard-language texts in Hebrew and Yiddish, as well as a list of exceptions in the spelling of names and words.

Kyriillisten kirjainten translitterointi. Slaavilaiset kielet [Transliteration of Cyrillic characters. Slavic languages]. Suomen Standardisoimisliitto SFS [Finnish Standards Association SFS]. SFS 4900. Ratified 17 August 1998, 7 pp. – Includes the guidelines for the transliteration of Russian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Serbic, Ukrainian and Belarusian.

Maiden ja niiden osa-alueiden nimien tunnukset. Osa 1: Maiden nimien tunnukset [Codes for the representation of names of countries and their subdivisions. Part 1: Country codes]. Suomen Standardisoimisliitto SFS [Finnish Standards Association SFS]. SFS-EN ISO 3166-1. Ratified 20 April 1998, 18 pp. – Includes the short form and the official long form of the name of the country, 2-letter country code, 3-letter country code, 3-digit country code, as well as various notes.

### 4. Administrative divisions of Finland

For the catalogues of the linguistic situations of Finland's historical provinces, administrative provinces and municipalities; cf. National standardization: toponymic guidelines for map and other editors: Finland. Seventh United Nations conference on the standardization of geographical names. New York, 13 – 22 January 1998. E/CONF.91/L.17, 11 November 1997.

#### 4.1. Provinces

Since September 1997, the regional administration of the State is divided into 6 provinces (Finnish *lääni*, Swedish *län*). With the exception of Åland, all provinces are either unilingual Finnish or bilingual with a Finnish majority, but they all have two official names.

The catalogue lists first the Finnish name (Fi), then the Swedish name (Sw) and finally the English name (En).

1. Etelä-Suomen lääni Fi, Södra Finlands län Sw, Province of Southern Finland En
2. Länsi-Suomen lääni Fi, Västra Finlands län Sw, Province of Western Finland En
3. Itä-Suomen lääni Fi, Östra Finlands län Sw, Province of Eastern Finland En
4. Oulun lääni Fi, Uleåborgs län Sw, Province of Oulu En
5. Lapin lääni Fi, Lapplands län Sw, Province of Lapland En
6. Ålands län Sw, Ahvenanmaan lääni Fi, Province of Åland En.

#### 4.2. Municipalities

Since 1998, the following changes have been introduced to the names of the municipalities in connection with the municipal mergers. All the municipalities mentioned are in Finnish. Their Swedish name, if there is one, is italicised.

Anttola

Mikkeli – *S:t Michel*

Mikkelin mlk. – *S:t Michels lk.*

The municipalities merged on 1 January 2001; the new name is Mikkeli – *S:t Michel*.

Jämsä

Kuorevesi

The municipalities merged on 1 January 2001; the new name is Jämsä.

Temmes

Tyrnävä

The municipalities merged on 1 January 2001; the new name is Tyrnävä.



