

2. NAMING COMPETENCE


<previous - next>

Names of administrative units are approved in most cases by the central government or parliament; only rarely may the representatives of the units themselves decide upon its names. Fairly common seems to be also the practice of allowing local municipalities to approve names to features within their area, such as streets, parks, municipal buildings and sites.

But there is still a vast number of features that appear on maps with names for which there are no universal rules regarding who is entitled to approve them officially. These include: populated places, natural features (lakes, rivers, mountains, capes, islands, etc.), artificial features (roads, bridges, junctions, buildings, railway station, etc.) and the like.

Several ways of approving of names:

1. The most efficient way of dealing with geographical names and granting them full official status is to set up a **geographical names authority** with decision-making power.

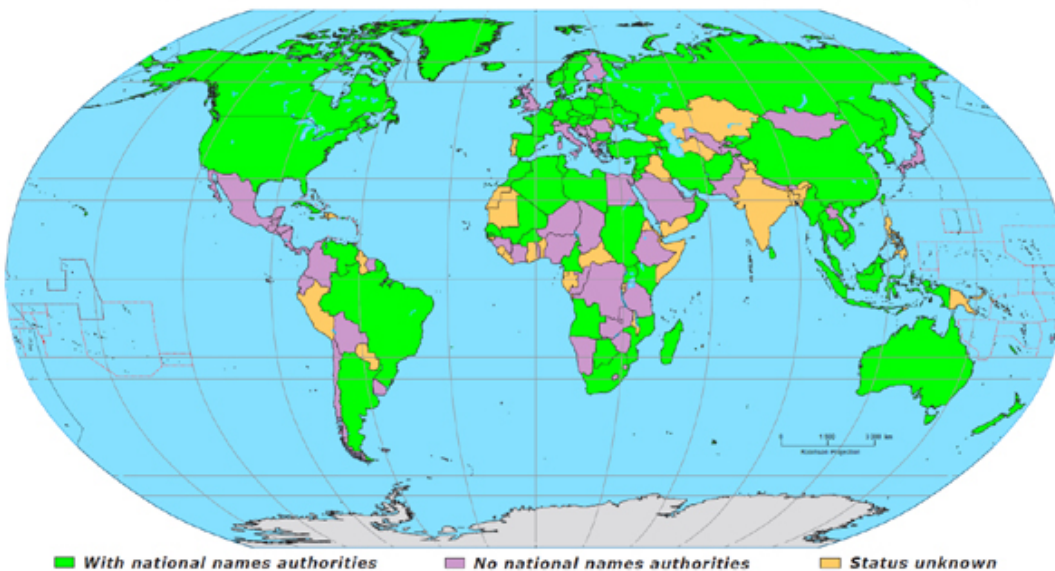
For examples click here 

2. The examples mentioned in the previous bullet illustrate cases where names authorities have full responsibility over geographical names, as mandated by legal acts. It seems, however, that a more common option in many countries is to have an **advisory names authority**.

The process of granting names an official status might work well also with this arrangement, provided that the decision makers would listen to the advice given.

3. In quite many countries the **national mapping authorities** themselves are considered as names authorities and, consequently, names published in official maps are regarded as official.
4. The least advantageous situation is the situation in countries where there are **no national or regional names authorities**. Name decisions in these countries might depend on arbitrary motivations by individual officials or politicians.

Geographical Names Authorities (May 2011)



Click [here](#) for enlargement.

<previous - next>