

7 March 2021

English

United Nations Group of Experts on

Geographical Names

Second session

New York, 3 – 7 May 2021

Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda *

Reports: Governments on the situation in their countries and on the progress made in the standardization of geographical names

Report of Poland for the period 2019-2021

Submitted by Poland**

* GEGN.2/2021/1

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1. National standardization in Poland

1.1. Legal basis for standardizing geographical names

Official geographical names of the objects from the territory of Poland are established in different ways, depending on the type of an object:

- names of voivodships (województwo) are established by the act of Parliament,
- names of counties (powiat), communes (gmina) and national parks are established by the regulation of the Council of the Ministers,
- names of auxiliary units of a commune (rural administrative units, housing estates, districts), street and square names are established by the resolution of a commune council,
- names of localities (settlements) and physiographic objects are established by the regulation of the Minister of the Interior and Administration after obtaining the opinion from the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects,
- names of nature reserves are established by the regulation of the regional director of the environmental protection,
- names of landscape parks are established by the regulation of a voivode,
- names of Natura 2000 areas are established by the regulation of the Minister of the Environment,
- names of the protected landscape areas, natural monuments and other protected areas are established by the regulation of a voivode or the resolution of a commune council.

Apart from official names, there are standardized names in Poland, which are established in different ways, depending on the type of an object:

- names of physiographic objects (in case when an object does not have an official name) are established by the resolution of the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects,
- additional names of localities and physiographic objects in the languages of the minorities are established by the decision of the Minister of the Interior and Administration after obtaining the opinion from the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects,
- additional names of streets, squares, etc. in the languages of the minorities are established by the resolution of the commune council after obtaining a consent from the Minister of the Interior and Administration,
- names of other objects such as buildings, railway stations, airports and harbor docks are established by their proprietors,
- Polish names of geographical objects outside Poland (exonyms) are established by the resolution of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland.

1.2. Legislation concerning geographical names

The *Act of 29 August 2003 on official names of localities and physiographic objects* [*Ustawa z dnia 29 sierpnia 2003 roku o urzędowych nazwach miejscowości i obiektów fizjograficznych*]¹ was approved in 2003, in place of the *Regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland on establishing names of localities and numbering properties* [*Rozporządzenie Prezydenta Rzeczypospolitej o ustaleniu nazw miejscowości i o numeracji nieruchomości*] which came into force in 1934. In this Act the following were defined:

- objects for which official names are established,
- principles and the mode of establishing, changing and abolishing names of localities and their parts, and official names of physiographic objects,
- principles of the activity of the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects,

¹ See English translation:

http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/files/act_on_official_names_of_localities_and_physiographic_objects.pdf

- the way of establishing and proclaiming official lists of the names of localities and their parts and names of physiographic objects.

The other acts, that are relevant for establishing geographical names:

- the *Act of 24 July 1998 on the implementation of a three-level territorial division of the country* [Ustawa z dnia 24 lipca 1998 r. o wprowadzeniu zasadniczego trójstopniowego podziału terytorialnego państwa] – official names of voivodships (first level administrative units),
- the *Act of 5 June 1990 on the county self-government* [Ustawa z dnia 5 czerwca 1990 r. o samorządzie powiatowym] – official names of the counties (second level administrative units),
- the *Act of 8 March 1990 on the commune self-government* [Ustawa z dnia 8 marca 1990 r. o samorządzie terytorialnym] – official names of communes (third level administrative units), auxiliary units of a commune, streets and squares,
- the *Act of 16 April 2004 on environment protection* [Ustawa z dnia 16 kwietnia 2004 r. o ochronie przyrody] – official names of national parks, nature reserves, landscape parks, protected landscape areas, Natura 2000 areas, natural monuments and other protected areas,
- the *Act of 6 January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and on the regional language* [Ustawa z dnia 6 stycznia 2005 r. o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz o języku regionalnym] – additional names of localities and physiographic objects, streets, squares etc. in minority languages,
- the *Act of 17 May 1989 “Geodesy and cartography law”* [Ustawa z dnia 17 maja 1989 r. – Prawo geodezyjne i kartograficzne] – Polish names of geographical objects outside Poland.

1.3. Organizations standardizing geographical names

There is no one separate agency dealing with geographical names standardization in Poland. There are, however, two advisory commissions engaged in the standardization of geographical names:

- **Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects** [Komisja Nazw Miejscowości i Obiektów Fizjograficznych], affiliated to the Minister of the Interior and Administration, establishes names used within Poland’s boundaries
- **Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland** [Komisja Standaryzacji Nazw Geograficznych poza Granicami Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej], affiliated to the Surveyor General of Poland, responsible for standardizing Polish geographical names of the world.

Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects (website: <http://knmiof.mswia.gov.pl/>), established by the Minister of the Interior and Administration, is a consultative body as far as the names of the Polish territory are concerned. The Commission pronounces judgments on applications coming from particular communes to the Minister which concern establishing, changing or abolishing Polish names of localities, their parts or physiographic objects. The Commission pronounces judgments on analogous applications concerning changes of the officially established type of a particular locality or physiographic objects. The Commission has the right to put forward a proposal to the Minister concerning establishing, changing or abolishing a name. Within the scope of its activities, the Commission also standardizes the names of those physiographic objects, which have not been officially established yet. The Commission participates in developing national gazetteer. Since 2005 the Commission has pronounced judgments on applications coming from communes to the Minister which concern establishing additional names of localities and physiographic objects in languages of the national and ethnic minorities and in a regional language.

The decision process on establishing, changing or abolishing names of localities, their parts or physiographic objects runs as follows: after receiving the opinion of the Commission the Minister of the Interior and Administration changes the names. Such changes are being published once a year, as a Minister’s ordinance in the *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland* [Dziennik Ustaw Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej]. These changes always take effect on the 1st of January.

In the period 2019-2021 the following changes were made:

- on January 1, 2020: 4 new names of localities or its parts were established; 8 names of physiographic objects and 13 names of localities or its parts were changed as well as types of 8 localities or parts of localities were changed; 183 names of physiographic objects and 3 names of localities or its parts were abolished (full list in Polish: <https://dziennikustaw.gov.pl/DU/rok/2019/pozycja/2435>);
- on January 1, 2021: 4 new names of physiographic objects and 1 new name of locality were established; 14 names of physiographic objects and 6 names of localities or its parts were changed as well as type of 1 locality was changed; 282 names of physiographic objects and 37 names of localities or its parts were abolished (full list in Polish: <https://dziennikustaw.gov.pl/DU/rok/2020/pozycja/2426>).

Acting pursuant to the *Act on official names of localities and physiographic objects*, the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects, in the period of 2019-2021, issued its opinions on motions on determination, changing and abolishing official names of localities and types of localities proposed by the communes.

In 2019, the Commission also analyzed and standardized names of physiographic objects in Dolnośląskie, Lubelskie, Podlaskie, and Śląskie voivodships, in 2020 – physiographic objects in Łódzkie, Małopolskie, Opolskie, and Warmińsko-Mazurskie, as well as names of historical and ethnographical regions in Poland, and in 2021 the Commission has started standardization of names of physiographic objects in Mazowieckie Voivodship.

Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland (website: <http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/index.php>), established by the Surveyor General of Poland, is an advisory body for the geographical names of objects outside Poland. It also represents Poland in the matters of names on the international forum.

The Commission's tasks are:

- establishing, changing and abolishing the recommended Polish geographical names of the world (Polish exonyms),
- publishing lists of the world's geographical names and the established Polish exonyms,
- establishing the principles of romanization from languages which use non-Roman writing systems,
- pronouncing the judgments on publications concerning geographical names of the objects outside Poland issued by a variety of Polish publishers,
- putting forward foreign-language forms of names of more important geographical objects located on the Polish territory for the international purposes,
- representing Poland on UNGEGN forum,
- participation in UNGEGN works,
- participation in international conferences and meetings devoted to standardization of geographical names,
- conveying information about the progress of the works on names in Poland and binding principles of the use of Polish geographical terminology on international forum,
- developing the Polish toponymic guidelines,
- informing Polish institutions about international arrangements.

1.4. List of official names of localities and their parts

The third edition of the *List of official names of localities and their parts* was published in December 2019 in the *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland* as the *Announcement of the Minister of the Interior and Administration of 17th October 2019 on the List of Official Names of Localities and Their Parts* [*Obwieszczenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji z dnia 17 października 2019*]

r. w sprawie wykazu urzędowych nazw miejscowości i ich części]². This list is arranged similar as the previous one – as a table with eight columns.

The list contains 102,875 official names of localities and their parts, in it: 940 names of towns and cities, 43,057 names of villages, 6,783 names of parts of towns and cities, 36,044 names of parts of villages, 5,137 names of settlements, 4,585 names of hamlets of villages, and 6,329 other names.

Amendments to the *List of official names of localities and their parts* are introduced each year on January 1 after publication in the *Journals of Laws of the Republic of Poland*. These modifications are the result of both changes in the names themselves and changes in types of a locality (changes of a type can be the result of changes of boundaries of cities and towns). Moreover, regulations of the Council of Ministers on boundaries change might bring changes of a type of locality.

1.5. Multilingual areas

Consistent with the definitions in the *Act of 6 January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and on regional languages [Ustawa z dnia 6 stycznia 2005 r. o mniejszościach narodowych i etnicznych oraz o języku regionalnym]*³, national minorities (Belarusian, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Armenian, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian and Jewish), ethnic minorities (Karaim, Lemko, Roma and Tartar) as well as a minority using a regional language (Kashubian) appear in Poland. The *Act* allows the language of these 14 minorities to be used as a “supporting language” in contacts with commune bodies. A minority language as a supporting language may be used exclusively within those communes where the population belonging to the minority whose language is to be used amounts to at least 20 percent of a given commune’s population and the commune has been entered in the *Official Register of Communes in which a supporting language is used [Urzędowy Rejestr Gmin, w których jest używany język pomocniczy]*. Entry into the Register is performed exclusively on an application of the council of the commune in which the minority language is to be obligatory. There are 33 communes in which a supporting language was introduced: five with Belarusian language, one with Lithuanian, three with Kashubian, and 22 with German.

The *Act* also lays down that traditional names in a minority language for localities, physiographic objects and streets may be used as “additional names” alongside geographic names established in the Polish language. The additional names may be established for objects located in communes inhabited by a minority in whose language these names are used, constituting at least 20 per cent of residents. Names of inhabited localities may also be established for communes, which do not fulfill the quantitative criterion for the number of residents belonging to a minority. In the case of such localities, an additional name may be introduced provided that, as a result of social consultations, over 50 per cent of residents were in favor of this name.

Additional names in minority languages have been introduced in 1252 localities and parts of them, located in 62 communes (as of 26th January 2021). This number consists of 359 German names in 31 communes, 827 Kashubian names in 27 communes, 30 Lithuanian names in one commune, 27 Belarusian names in one commune and 9 Lemko names in 2 communes. However, no additional names for physiographic objects and streets have been introduced yet. 6 minority names were introduced in the period 2019-2021: 6 Kashubian names in three communes: 2 names of towns, 3 names of villages and one name of a settlement.

Full, consistently updated, list of additional names in minority languages is available on the website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland: <http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/mnip.php>.

² The *List of official names of localities and their parts* is available on the website of the Government Legislation Centre: <https://dziennikustaw.gov.pl/DU/rok/2019/pozycja/2360>, as well as on the website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland: http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/official_names.php.

³ See English translation: http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/files/act_on_national_minorities.pdf.

1.6 Toponymic guidelines for map and other editors

The fourth, revised and extended, edition of the *Toponymic guidelines of Poland for map editors and other users* was published in December 2010. The publication is available in electronic version in PDF format, at the website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland: <http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/tgp.php>.

Constantly updated information about administrative division of Poland is available at the website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names: http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/mapa_adm.php. This contains lists of current administrative units, maps, and some additional information about administrative division in Poland.

2. Exonyms

Standardizing exonyms is the task of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland affiliated at the Surveyor General of Poland. The Commission's decisions do not have normative power but are recommendations. The Commission meets at least 4 times yearly, delivering its opinions on proposals standardizing Polish geographical names of the world, their amendments or elimination from the list of recommended exonyms. All amendments introduced in Polish exonyms are published on the Commission's website (http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/nazwy_pol.php).

The second edition of the list of Polish exonyms, entitled *Official list of Polish geographical names of the world* [*Urzędowy wykaz polskich nazw geograficznych świata*], was published at the end of 2019. This is updated edition of the first list of 2013, without significant alterations. It lists Polish names for **13,599** geographical objects that lie outside the boundaries of Poland. For each object the Polish name and the original name (endonym) are given. For names in languages that are written in non-Roman scripts, Romanized forms are given in accordance with the principles adopted by the Commission for use in Poland for geographical names in a given language. Following these names, the objects' coordinates are posted. If necessary, the additional information and observations are provided, such as information about localization of the transboundary object in other countries, additional characteristics of the object or its localization, information about the location of part of locality in the boundaries of independent locality, and selected historical names of the object. The list is divided into eight parts (chapters): seven of them correspond to the traditionally determined parts of the world (Europe, Asia, Africa, North America, South America, Australia and Oceania, Antarctica), the eighth one is devoted to undersea objects.

The list has been published in Polish only, but the inset in English has been also prepared. The list is available on-line: http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/wpngs_en.php. The Commission regular updates the list of Polish exonyms. Information on the updates is available on the Commission's website (http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/zmiany_w_uwpngs_2019.pdf), but in Polish only.

3. Toponymic data files and gazetteers

The National Register of Geographical Names [Państwowy Rejest Nazw Geograficznych – PRNG] is maintained by the Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography subordinated to the Surveyor General of Poland. Currently (as on 14th January 2021) the Register holds 255,931 names of which 124,687 are names of localities and its parts and 131,244 are names of physiographic objects (22,884 names of water objects, 33,253 names of land shaping objects, and 75,107 names of other objects). In the Register the following types of names are collected: official names (i.e. names published by ordinance of the Minister – 137,776 names), standardized names (i.e. names adopted by the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects but not yet published by ordinance of the Minister – 16,534 names), unstandardized names (i.e. other names listed on topographic maps or other sources – 101,621 names), and minority names (1,252 names).

Since 17 July 2014 on the basis of the Geodetic and Cartographic Law of May 17, 1989 all data from PRNG are available free of charge on the Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography website⁴. The data are published in the following formats: .shp, .xls and .gml, separately for names of localities and for names of physiographic objects, and updated on the website every 3 months. Additionally, through a national access point⁵, it is possible to search, browse, view and download (including via ATOM service) names with attributes according to accepted criteria. PRNG is available in OGC (*Open Geospatial Consortium*) standard WMS (*Web Map Service*). The PRNG data available on Geoportal is updated once a week.

Moreover, the Statistics Poland runs the database of official geographical names named National Official Register of the Territorial Division of the Country [Krajowy Rejestr Urzędowy Podziału Terytorialnego Kraju]. That database contains a regularly updated list of units of the territorial division, a specification of names of localities (102,877 names as of 26th January 2019) and a specification of names of streets (280,922 names as of 26th January 2019)⁶.

The General Directorate for Environmental Protection [Generalna Dyrekcja Ochrony Środowiska] runs the Central Register of Nature Conservation Forms [Centralny Rejestr Form Ochrony Przyrody] that includes all areas of nature conservation in Poland (national parks, nature reserves, landscape parks, protected landscape areas, Natura 2000 areas, natural monuments and other protected areas) with their names, if they exist⁷.

4. Terminology in the standardization of geographical names

The last Polish edition of *Glossary of terms for the standardization of geographical names* [Słownik terminów używanych przy standaryzacji nazw geograficznych] was published at the end of 2014. It was prepared by the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland and published by the Head Office of Geodesy and Cartography. This is a translation of the English version of *Glossary of terms for the standardization of geographical names* of 2002 and *Addendum* of 2007. No significant changes and additions were introduced to this edition in relation to the English version – the original wording of the definitions and descriptions of introduction notes were retained. The publication is available in PDF format on the website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland: http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/glossary_of_terms_PL.pdf.

5. Writing systems and pronunciation

One of the scopes of activity of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland refers to establishment of “romanization rules governing names of states, non-self-governing territories, administrative units, localities, physiographic objects, and other geographical objects originally expressed by means of non-Roman writing systems”⁸.

As a part of its activity the Commission adopted, for each language exclusively, both rules of transliteration and rules of Polish phonetic transcription. There are some exceptions for Asian languages – for Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Thai, Lao, Burmese and Khmer only a transliteration is recommended.

Rules of romanization adopted by the Commission are available on Commission’s web site: <http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/latynizacja.php>.

⁴ The data from PRNG are available on the website: <http://www.gugik.gov.pl/pzgek/dane-bez-oplat/dane-z-panstwowego-rejestru-nazw-geograficznych-prng>.

⁵ National Geoportal: <http://www.geoportal.gov.pl>.

⁶ All names are accessible on the Internet website of the Central Statistical Office: http://eteryt.stat.gov.pl/eTeryt/rejestr_teryt/udostepnianie_danych/baza_teryt/uzytownicy_indywidualni/przekladanie/przekladanie.aspx?contrast=default.

⁷ Central Register of Nature Conservation Forms is available on-line: <http://crfop.gdos.gov.pl/CRFOP/index.jsf>.

⁸ *Regulation of the Minister of the Interior and Administration of 24 March 2000 on the manner and scope of activity of the National Council of Geodesy and Cartography and Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland and principles governing payment of their members*, section 3, paragraph 1, subparagraph 4.

Since 2019 the following rules were modified or adopted:

- **Burmese (Myanmar)** – clarified and expanded rules of transliteration (<http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/latynizacja/birmanski.pdf>),
- **Hindi** – slightly clarified rules of transliteration and Polish phonetic transcription (<http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/latynizacja/hindi.pdf>),
- **Mongolian (Mongolian script)** – recommended are: official Chinese romanization scheme based on Pinyin, scientific transliteration of the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Warsaw (modification of the Vladimircov-Mostaert system) and Polish phonetic transcription (<http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/pliki/latynizacja/mongolski2.pdf>).

6. Country names

In consultation with the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Council for the Polish Language of the Polish Academy of Sciences the fifth edition of the *Official list of names of countries and non-self-governing territories* [*Urzędowy wykaz nazw państw i terytoriów niesamodzielnych*] was published at the end of 2019 (the fourth edition was published in 2017; according to the regulation of the Minister of the Interior and Administration the list is published every two years). The list contains 195 countries recognized by the Republic of Poland (namely: 193 member states of the United Nations Organization, as well as Kosovo and Vatican City) and 69 non-self-governing territories. Attached to the register is a list of nine territories with undetermined or disputed international status and others. The names of countries, territories, and their capitals included in the list have obtained approval of the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The footnotes explaining the status of countries and territories have been provided by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The adjectives derived from names of countries and territories, as well as names of citizens and inhabitants have been provided in line with the opinion provided by the Orthography and Onomastics Unit of the Council for the Polish Language.

The list has been published in Polish only, but the inset in English has been also prepared. This inset includes translation of introductory part of the publication, i.e.: editorial page, table of contents, “from the Publisher”, introduction, Romanization rules, explanation of abbreviations, as well as translation of the footnotes contained in the publication. In addition four Polish-English dictionary are included in this inset: names of countries, names of non-self-governing territories, names of territories with undetermined or disputed international status, and names of languages.

The list is available in printed version as well as in PDF format on the Commission’s website: <http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/wykaz.php>.

7. Co-operation with neighborhood countries and international organizations

Members of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland participated actively in:

- 29 April – 3 May, 2019 (New York, USA): 1st Session of the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names,
- 30 April, 2019 (New York, USA): Meeting of the Joint International Geographical Union/International Cartographic Association Commission on Toponymy
- 30 April, 2019 (New York, USA): Meeting of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology,
- 1 May, 2019 (New York, USA): Meeting of the East Central and South-East Europe Division,
- 2 May, 2019 (New York, USA): 22nd meeting of the Working Group on Exonyms,
- 15 July, 2019 (Tokyo, Japan): Joint International Geographical Union/International Cartographic Association Commission on Toponymy workshop “Role and structure of national place-name boards”,
- 16 July, 2019 (Tokyo, Japan): toponymic sessions of the Joint International Geographical Union/International Cartographic Association Commission on Toponymy during the 29th International Cartographic Conference of the International Cartographic Association,
- 24-26 September, 2019 (Riga, Latvia): Meeting of the Baltic Division,
- 5-9 November, 2019 (Vienna, Austria): GeoNames19 Symposium “Place names and migration”.