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**United Nations Group of Experts on**

**Geographical Names**

**Second session**

New York, 3 – 7 May 2021

**Item 4a of the provisional agenda \***

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

**Report of Finland**

Submitted by Finland\*\*

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\* GEGN.2/2021/1

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The report of Finland provides general information on the standardization of geographical names in Finland and particular information on the progress made and measures taken during 2019–2021.

### Background information on the standardization of place names in Finland

In Finland there is no one national authority responsible for geographical names or any specific law that would determine who has the power to decide on different place names and their spelling, who registers the approved names and what place names the authorities should use.

The Institute for the Languages of Finland acts as an authoritative and coordinating organ in matters relating to the standardization of place names by providing guidance for administrative bodies and by checking geographical names in the Geographic Names Register of the National Land Survey. The National Land Survey of Finland has the responsibility to take care of national mapping activities and the maintenance of the national topographic data system, to support and coordinate the development of the national spatial data infrastructure and to release, publish and share map data and other data in its field of activity.

More detailed background information on Finland's language situation, the lack of place name legislation, place name authorities, place name collections, office treatment of place names, place name datasets and services, as well as a list of essential place name publications are available on the Institute for the Languages of Finland's website at [https://www.kotus.fi/standardisation\\_of\\_geographical\\_names](https://www.kotus.fi/standardisation_of_geographical_names).

### Field collection of place names

During the period 2019–2020, the Institute for the Languages of Finland's Names Archive has been supplemented with around 400 Finnish name entries. The Names Archive comprises about 2.7 million annotated place name entries based on field collection. The collection work done in the Finnish areas in the past decades has been mostly renewed collection.

### Checking and correcting names in the Geographic Names Register

Geographic Names Register is maintained, and national topographic maps are published by the National Land Survey of Finland. The Institute for the Languages of Finland has been checking the names in national topographic maps covering the entire country since 1976.

A total of 3,897 place names were checked in 2019–2020 and added or corrected in the Geographic Names Register if needed. Corrections concerned, for example, spelling, location of the named place and categorization of the type of place. The names of certain types of places, such as churches, museums, and ports, were systematically checked. In cooperation with Metsähallitus (agency responsible for the state-owned land and water areas) the names of the wilderness huts were revised.

### Statements, recommendations, and training on place names

The Institute for the languages of Finland acts as an authoritative and coordinating organ in matters relating to the standardization of place names by providing information, giving guidance, and organizing onomastic training for administrative bodies and the general public.

Between 2019 and 2020, the Institute issued two opinions and two separate statements to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health on the terms and names of the administrative units and areas to be established.

In addition, the Institute gave a statement on the laws to be enacted in conjunction with the becoming administrative reform. The statement suggested that the name of region *Pohjanmaa* (sv *Österbotten*) should be changed into *Rannikko-Pohjanmaa* (sv *Kust-Österbotten*), in order to better describe the dimension of the area it refers to.

A few other statements were also issued (names of postal code areas, house names, the name of a new municipality created through a municipal merger). Some names of residential areas, address names for islands, and the place names mentioned in the texts of an exhibition of the Saami Museum and Nature Center Siida were checked by order.

The Institute's experts compiled distance learning material with their assignments for a course on office treatment of names and name planning in the University of Helsinki in the spring of 2020.

In 2019–2020, the Institute's toll-free telephone and e-mail advice service answered more than four hundred questions on the spelling, use, meaning and planning of place names.

The experts of the Institute answered questions on place names in radio programs and wrote articles and gave interviews on place names in newspapers and magazines. In addition, information was given on Twitter (@Kotus\_tiedotus in Finnish; @Sprakinstitutet in Swedish) on the Facebook pages for Institute for the Languages of Finland (@kotustiedotus) and Clear Administrative Language (@virkakieli) and on Instagram (@kielenjuhlaa75 in Finnish during 2020; @sprakinstitutet in Swedish).

### Toponymic datasets and services

In 2021, the National Land Survey of Finland introduced URI-based (Uniform Resource Identifier) information cards for the places and place names stored in the Geographic Names Register. The permanent URI allows the linking the information card to any site, document, or service on the internet. The data for the information cards comes from a National Land Survey's geographic names web feature service (OGC API – Features). An example of the information cards and URIs is Ivalo Airport, <http://paikkatiedot.fi/so/1000772/10889461>. The cards are in Finnish, Swedish and English.

The digital Names Archive maintained by the Institute for the Languages of Finland was opened in December 2017 at <https://nimiarkisto.fi/>. Each name entry in the digital archive includes the spelling of the place name, the year of collection, the name of the collector, and the type of place. Most of the name entries have a location given as point coordinates.

In 2019–2020, the collections of Finnish place names, and a part of the collection of Swedish place names (250,000 names) have been digitized into the database format. At the same time, errors in digitization, such as incorrect location information, were corrected.

More information on the digital Names Archive is available in the website of the Institute for the Languages of Finland at [https://www.kotus.fi/en/corpora\\_and\\_other\\_material/names\\_archive](https://www.kotus.fi/en/corpora_and_other_material/names_archive). Information on the digitalization process is available in working paper [WP 28/16](#) of the 29th UNGEGN Session.

### Publications, campaigns, symposiums, and websites

#### The gazetteer of Finnish Exonyms supplemented

In November 2020, the online gazetteer of Finnish exonyms (<https://kaino.kotus.fi/eksonyymit/>) was supplemented by 936 Finnish composite exonyms in which only the generic term has been translated, e.g. *Chapalajärvi* ← *lago de Chapala*, *McDonaldinsaaret* ← *McDonald Islands*. In addition to Finnish-language exonyms, every name record contains information on the feature type, location, equivalent name in English, endonym and language code and as well as any corresponding names used in other languages – at least in English, French and German – along with their relevant language codes.

While resolution III/19 does not recommend to compile gazetteers on exonyms in which only the generic term has been translated, the inclusion of these names is relevant for spelling-related reasons that are related to how Finnish-language words are structured: when the generic term of a name is translated, its specific element is transferred into Finnish either in its nominative or genitive form and the specific element always precedes the generic term (e.g. *Chapalajärvi*,

*McDonaldinsaaret*). The parts of a name can also be written together or separately depending on the type of specific element and generic term used (e.g. *Skageninniemi* but *Skagenin riutta*).

More information on the gazetteer is available in working paper [GEGN.2/2019/54/CRP.54](#) of the UNGEGN Session in 2019.

### Online manual on name planning

In 2019, the Institute for the Languages of Finland launched a project to compile the Online manual on name planning. The goal is a digital, freely available publication that contains guidelines for those who plan and decide on the names of public administration. The target group is especially state and municipal employees.

There will be three sections in the publication. The first part deals with the names of areas and traffic sites, such as the choice of a municipal name in municipal mergers or the formation of names of administrative areas. The second part focuses on the planning of names of town plans and address names (including consideration of bilingualism and traffic planning solutions, and island address names). The third part provides guidance on the naming of organizational units and public services. The publication will be made in both Finnish and Swedish.

### The Finnish Place Name Lexicon put online

The Finnish Place Name Lexicon, published in print in 2007, was put online in pdf format on the website of the Institute for the Languages of Finland in the spring of 2020. The lexicon contains almost 10,000 names and presents the meaning and origin of the most important Finnish place names. The Place Name Lexicon is available at [https://kaino.kotus.fi/www/verkkojulkaisut/julk63/SuomalainenPaikannimikirja\\_e-kirja\\_kuvallinen.pdf](https://kaino.kotus.fi/www/verkkojulkaisut/julk63/SuomalainenPaikannimikirja_e-kirja_kuvallinen.pdf).

### Other publications

In 2019–2020, approximately 1,610 additions or corrections were made to the Index for settlement names in Finland of the Institute for the Languages of Finland, mainly on the basis of a survey sent to municipalities. More information on the index is available in working paper [E/CONF.105/77/CRP.77](#) of the 11<sup>th</sup> United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 2017.

The Institute for the Languages of Finland participated in updating the municipal address system guide published by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities. The updated guide contains information on the principles of name planning and how to create a working address name. It is available at <https://www.kuntaliitto.fi/julkaisut/2020/2064-kunnan-osoitejarjestelma-ohjeet-ja-suositus>.

Etymological studies of Karelian and Ingrian settlement names were published in pdf format on the website of the Institute for the Languages of Finland. The studies were compiled by Saulo Kepsu and Laila Lehikoinen. The works are available at <https://www.kotus.fi/julkaisut/nimijulkaisut>.

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A List of essential publications on standardized place names can be found in the website of the Institute for the Languages of Finland at [https://www.kotus.fi/standardisation\\_of\\_geographical\\_names](https://www.kotus.fi/standardisation_of_geographical_names).

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