

13 March 2023

English

**United Nations Group of Experts on
Geographical Names
2023 session
New York, 1 – 5 May 2023
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**

Summary:

The report of Finland provides general information on the standardization of geographical names in Finland and specific information on the progress made and measures taken during the period 2021–2023 in relation to the following topics: field collection of names; office treatment of names and guidance on name planning; names data sets and services; and publications, campaigns, conferences and websites.

Following are the most important measures that were taken by the Institute for the Languages of Finland:

- Checking name changes made in the Geographic Names Register, which is maintained by the National Land Survey of Finland
- Compiling an online manual on name planning, to be published in 2023
- Issuing statements regarding Finnish country names (translation of International Standards Organization standard 3166-1:2020) and the use of the Finnish name of a bilingual municipality
- Following are the most important measures that were taken by the National Land Survey of Finland:
- Continuously updating and systematically supplementing the Geographic Names Register
- Developing names data services and products

* GEGN.2/2023/1

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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 2021–2022.

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 and up-to-date 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 data sets 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.

Field collection of place names

During the period 2021–2022, the Institute for the Languages of Finland's Names Archive has been supplemented with around 1,500 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 4,664 place names were checked in 2021–2022 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 zoos, amusement parks, allotment gardens and swimming areas were systematically checked. An extensive project to check all the names of urban areas in the register, including parts of cities, towns, and population centers, began in 2022 and continues in 2023.

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.

In 2021, the Institute gave a statement related to language policy. The statement concerned the names of a bilingual municipality with a Swedish-speaking majority. Larsmo municipality (*Luoto* in Finnish) wanted to give up its Finnish name, which is originally an inherited village name. The Institute emphasized that it is not recommended to give up an established name, but also pointed out that in bilingual municipalities only planned names (such as street names) must be in both Finnish and Swedish, while inherited names (such as names of villages and natural features) can also be in only one language. According to the Finnish Language Act, a bilingual municipality shall serve the public in Finnish and Swedish and shall demonstrate to the public both in its services and in its other activity

that it uses both languages. Giving up an established Finnish name of the municipality in official communication does not follow this regulation.

In 2022, the Institute gave two statements to the Finnish Standards Association. Statements concerned

1. the Finnish names of the countries in the national standard *SFS-EN ISO 3166-1:2020: – Codes for the representation of names of countries and their subdivisions. Part 1: Country code (ISO 3166-1:2020)* and
2. the alphabetization of proper names in the national standard *SFS 4600:2022 – Ordering of characters and names in Finnish texts*.

The Institute also gave a statement on the proposal for Finland's Cultural Heritage Strategy prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The statement emphasized the role of place names as intangible cultural heritage as well as the need for place name legislation in Finland.

In 2021–2022 the Institute's toll-free telephone and e-mail advice service answered almost 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, wrote articles in Institute's website 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).

Toponymic data sets and services

In 2021, the National Land Survey of Finland introduced a beta version of URI-based (Uniform Resource Identifier) information cards for the named places and place names stored in the Geographic Names Register. The permanent URI allows linking the information card to any site, document, or service on the internet. The data for the information cards come 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 production version of the information card service will be published in 2023 at <https://tietokortit.maanmittauslaitos.fi/nimisto>.

The digital Names Archive maintained by the Institute for the Languages of Finland is available 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 2021–2022, the collections of Finnish place names, and the collection of Swedish place names (250,000 names) have been digitized into the database format. Digitizing continues in 2023. At the same time, errors in digitization, such as incorrect location information, were corrected.

More information on the digital Names Archive is available on the website of the Institute for the Languages of Finland at 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

An e-learning course on planning names for organizational units and public services

In 2021, an e-learning course on name planning was published on the common platform for e-learning courses for the state administration. The course is part of a course series on clear administrative language containing six different courses. It is freely available and meant for all officials in the public administration. The course does not concentrate directly on place names but

relates to them. It gives guidelines on planning names for agencies, projects, and public services such as hospitals, schools, and libraries in which place names play a significant role. It is recommended to name such services after the place where they are situated.

Compiling online manual on name planning continued

The Institute for the Languages of Finland continued compiling guidelines to the Online manual on name planning. The goal is a digital, freely available publication that contains guidelines for those planning and deciding on names in 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 and is to be published in 2023.

Other publications

In 2021–2022, approximately 200 additions or corrections were made to the Index for settlement names in Finland of the Institute for the Languages of Finland. Over 2,000 map locations were added. A new survey was also sent to municipalities. More information on the index is available in conference paper [E/CONF.105/77/CRP.77](#) of the 11th United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 2017.

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

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An up-to-date list of essential publications on standardized place names can be found on the website of the Institute for the Languages of Finland at https://www.kotus.fi/standardisation_of_geographical_names.

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