

## **Crowd-sourcing of geographical names in Latvia**

Latvian Language Institute of the University of Latvia with its more than a century of experience with the involvement of civil society in collecting language data, has created a crowdsourcing tool for collecting geographical names of Latvia. It was elaborated to collect new names which cannot be found in geographical maps and to preserve linguistic data and cultural heritage of geographical names as well as to raise awareness of place names and naming.

In the tool, called Folk place names database (<https://vietvardi.lu.lv>), everybody can review the list of registered geographical names, read the instruction for the gathering of names, and register their own place names. Registering is allowed only with authorized access (it is possible in three ways: via e-mail, Facebook, or Google account). There are three mandatory fields for input of geographical name: geographical name, category of geographical object, and geographical location of name. There is also an opportunity to provide parallel forms of geographical names, location in the electronic map, description and history of the place, and folk etymology of the name. More than 6000 place names are collected so far. From the names already registered, we can see that submitters usually fill in the information in all non-mandatory fields – mostly the geographical name stories are provided (where the history of name and place is explained).

Currently, a new platform of crowdsourcing tool for collecting Latvian geographical names (<https://vietvardi.lu.lv>) is being developed. Technologies used are VueJS framework for frontend and Laravel for backend. Data is stored in MySQL database. The new tool will allow to register names via geographical map and to record the pronunciation of the geographical names (we should keep in mind that major features of 512 subdialects are still alive). The celebratory opening of it is planned for June 2023 – in Valmiera (the place where Jānis Endzelīns (1863-1961), the outstanding Latvian linguist and author of the dictionary of Latvian geographical names was born).

We would like to encourage every country for such collaborative work (please do not hesitate to ask for help). It provokes awareness and interest in geographical names, their history and value. It shows the real usage and cognitive background of geographical names (for example, in Latvia, several parallel forms of name are used by one user in many cases, and the place story is very important – the geographical name is used as a title of place description). And, at last, it helps to preserve also those geographical names which cannot be displayed on the standard maps.

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