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Issues of toponymic standardization

Standardization of geographical names in Poland

Submitted by Poland*

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Standardization of geographical names in Poland (Summary)

Collection and standardization of geographical names has a long tradition in Poland. The process started on a bigger scale in 18th century together with the development of maps and gazetteers of local names covering the whole country or its parts. After Poland regained independence in 1918, standardization works accelerated significantly in 1921 as a result of conducting the general census throughout the country. In 1934 the Commission on Establishing the Names of Localities, subordinated to the Minister of the Interior and Administration, was established.

Standardization of geographical names in Poland after World War Two was initially tackled in 1945 by Commission for Establishing Names of Localities. In period 1946-51 German names of localities and physiographical objects on the Regained Territories were Polonized. From 1964 to 1974 Commission published *Official names of localities and physiographical objects* in 197 volumes – each volume contained names of localities and physiographical objects of one county (second order administrative unit). Between 1980 and 1982 *List of official names of localities in Poland* was published. That gazetteer includes approximately 111,000 official names of localities and their parts.

At present, official geographical names of the objects from the territory of Poland are established in different ways, depending on the type of an object, but more important in this process is the *Act on official names of localities and physiographic objects* which came into force in 2003. Apart from official names, also other names are standardized.

In Poland there is no separate agency dealing with geographical names standardization. There are, however, two advisory commissions engaged in the standardization of geographical names Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects establishes names used within Poland's boundaries, and Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland responsible for standardizing Polish geographical names of the world.

Standardization of geographical names in Poland

1. History and organization of the geographical names standardization

Collection and standardization of geographical names has a long tradition in Poland. The process started on a bigger scale in 18th century together with the development of maps and gazetteers of local names covering the whole country or its parts. *Geographic dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and other Slavic countries*¹ is of great importance in this process. This monumental work consisting of 15 volumes published between 1880 and 1902 contains names of localities, rivers, mountains, lakes and other geographical objects*. The entries of the Dictionary constitute the first attempt of standardization of geographical names of the Polish territory.

After Poland regained independence in 1918, it became necessary to standardize geographical terminology of the areas, which for more than 100 years had belonged to Prussia, Austria-Hungary and Russia. Standardization works accelerated significantly in 1921 as a result of conducting the general census throughout the country. During the census, information about the names of localities was collected and the result of the process was Index of the localities of the Republic of Poland drawn up on the basis of conclusions of the first general census from 30 September 1921 and other official sources². It was the first Polish gazetteer of all names of localities.

Until 1934 there had not been any authorities that would officially approve names of localities and physiographic objects. Only the names of administrative units were approved formally³. *Regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland from 24 October 1934 on establishing names of localities and numbering of the real estate* having the power of an act, regulated the issues of establishing official names of the inhabited localities. By virtue of the regulation, the Commission on Establishing the Names of Localities, subordinated to the Minister of the Interior and Administration, was established. The Commission operated until 1939 and during the period established: names of Polish towns and cities⁴, names of localities of Wileńskie Voivodship⁵, names of localities of Kieleckie Voivodship⁶.

The period after the Second World War brought a necessity of further works on standardization and, on vast areas of so-called Regained Territories, creation and establishment of geographical terminology. The works were undertaken by the Commission on Establishing the Names of Localities which was reactivated in 1945. In 1948 the scope of

¹ *Słownik geograficzny Królestwa Polskiego i innych krajów słowiańskich (Geographic dictionary of the Kingdom of Poland and other Slavic countries)* can be viewed or downloaded from several Internet sources i.e. http://dir.icm.edu.pl/pl/Słownik_geograficzny/ where apart from browsing it, you can look up particular names included in the Geographic dictionary.

² *Skorowidz miejscowości Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej opracowany na podstawie wyników pierwszego powszechnego spisu ludności z dn. 30 września 1921 r. i innych źródeł urzędowych (Index of the localities of the Republic of Poland drawn up on the basis of conclusions of the first general census from 30 September 1921 and other official sources)*, published by Central Statistical Office between 1923 and 1926 in 16 volumes.

³ The exception was the autonomic Śląskie Voivodship where in 1922, 700 official names were given to towns, villages and manor areas – all unassisted localities within the borders of the voivodship: *Spis powiatów, należących do nich gmin miejskich i wiejskich, obszarów dworskich oraz miast wyjętych z powiatów*, Dz. U. Śl. z 1922 r. nr 13, poz. 43 (*List of counties with urban and rural communes, manor areas and cities excluded from counties*, Journal of Silesian Laws as of 1922 r. no 13, item 43).

⁴ Gazetteer published in 1937 as a *zarządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych z dnia 28 lutego 1937 r. o ustaleniu urzędowych nazw miast*, M. P. z 1937 r. nr 69, poz. 104 (*Regulation of the Minister of the Interior and Administration from 28 February 1937 concerning establishing names of towns/cities*, Official Gazette of Poland as of 1937 no 69, item 104).

⁵ *Wykaz miejscowości Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej. Tom I. Województwo wileńskie (List of localities of the Republic of Poland. Vol. I. Wileńskie Voivodship)* published in 1938.

⁶ The list was not published and the material got lost during World War II.

establishing official names of unoccupied localities and physiographic objects was expanded. The name of the Commission was changed for The Commission on Establishing the Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects (since 2003 as a Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects). The works primarily focused on establishing the names of the Poland's newly incorporated lands. The result was *Dictionary of geographic names of Western and Northern Poland*⁷.

In the following years, the names of the remaining parts of the country were standardized. Until 1974, 197 volumes of *Urzędowe nazwy miejscowości i obiektów fizjograficznych* (*Official names of localities and physiographic objects*) together with toponyms of particular counties had been published. Between 1980 and 1982 *Wykaz urzędowych nazw miejscowości w Polsce* (*List of official names of localities in Poland*) was published. That three-volume gazetteer includes approximately 111,000 names of localities and their parts and constitutes so far officially binding index, containing names of the localities of the whole country. Geographical names from the territory of Poland, either official or not, are collected as a part of the national register of geographical names.

2. 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 are established by the act
- names of counties, communes 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 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, standardized names are established:

- 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

⁷ *Słownik nazw geograficznych Polski Zachodniej i Północnej* (*Dictionary of geographic names of Western and Northern Poland*) published in 1951 by S. Rospond. The dictionary contained over 30,000 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.

3. Legislation concerning geographical names

An Act of 29 August 2003 on official names of localities and physiographic objects⁸ was approved in 2003, in place of the Regulation of the President of the Republic of Poland from 24 October 1934 on establishing names of localities and numbering of the real estate which came into force in 1934. In the new 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 Physiographical Objects,
- the way of establishing and proclaiming official indexes of the names of localities and their parts and names of physiographic objects,
- principles of publishing national gazetteer.

The other acts, that are relevant for establishing 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 1998 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 the languages of the minorities
- 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.

⁸ *Ustawa z dnia 29 sierpnia 2003 r. o urzędowych nazwach miejscowości i obiektów fizjograficznych*; see English translation: http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/files/act_on_official_names_of_localities_and_physiographic_objects.pdf.

4. Organizations standardizing geographical names

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

- **Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects** (Komisja Nazw Miejscowości i Obiektów Fizjograficznych), affiliated to the Minister of Internal Affairs 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 at the Surveyor General of Poland, responsible for standardizing Polish geographical names of the world.

Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographic Objects⁹, 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 the 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 particular communes to the Minister which concern establishing additional names of localities and physiographic objects in the languages of the national and ethnic minorities and in the regional language.

The Commission has only the position of the advisory body, however until now the Minister of the Interior and Administration has not made any decisions contradictory to the Commission's recommendations. The decision process runs as follows: after receiving the opinion of the Commission the Minister of Internal Affairs 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 Polski)*. These changes always take effect on the 1st of January¹⁰. Addresses of the Internet websites of the appropriate ordinances in the *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland* are listed on: http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/urzedowe_nazwy_miejscowosci.php.

Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland¹¹, established by the Surveyor General of Poland, is an advisory body for the geographical names of objects outside Poland. It represents Poland in the matters of names on the international forum.

The first official body in Poland which undertook the issues of geographical terminology of the objects outside the country was the Commission on Geographical Names

⁹ Commission's website: <http://knmiof.mswia.gov.pl/>.

¹⁰ For example, on January 1, 2011 two new names of hills, one new name of forest and 35 new names of localities or its parts were established; 47 names of localities or its parts were changed as well as types of 44 localities or parts of localities were changed and 107 names of localities or its parts were abolished.

¹¹ Commission's website: <http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/index.php>.

established in 1951 and subordinated to Polish Geographical Society. The Commission was a scientific organization without an official status but its recommendations were taken into account by a wide circle of recipients. The Commission went into establishing the indices of geographical names of the territories outside Poland. Apart from standardization of geographical names of the world, the Commission worked internationally participating in the first United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names which was held in 1967 in Geneva. Poland was represented by the chairman of the Commission, Lech Ratajski.

Standardization works on geographical names accelerated owing to Poland's activity on UN forum. After initiation of the works on standardization of geographical names on the UN forum and appointment of United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, Poland started to seek for establishing an official body authorized to establish geographical names of the world. These efforts finished with success and in 1973 the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names of the World, subordinated to the Ministry of Science, Higher Education and Technology, was established. The result of the Commission's works was the official index of names of countries, their capitals and inhabitants. The Commission demonstrated initiative on international arena as well – the member of the Commission, Mieczysław Szymczak, was elected the chairman of East Central and South-East Europe Division of the UNGEGN for the term from 1977 to 1982. The Commission has operated until the present day and is subordinated to the Surveyor General of Poland (from 2001 under the name of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland).

Polish activity on UNGEGN forum contributed in years 1994 to 1996 to the publication four volumes of *Polskie nazwy geograficzne świata (Polish geographical names of the world)* with 6400 Polish exonyms. In 1993, 1999, 2002, and 2010 four editions of the Polish toponymic guidelines were issued. In 1998 Polish version of *Glossary of terms for the standardization of geographical names*, which was a translation of the dictionary compiled within UNGEGN, was published. From 2004 volumes of *Nazewnictwo geograficzne świata (Geographical names of the world)* have been published. They include Polish and non-Polish names of the most important geographical objects of the world. Until 2010, all 12 volumes with over 53,000 names had been published.

The Commission's current tasks, according to Regulation of the Minister of the Interior and Administration¹², are:

- establishing, changing and abolishing the recommended Polish geographical names of the world (exonyms)
- publishing indexes 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

¹² *Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji z dnia 24 marca 2000 r. w sprawie trybu i zakresu działania Państwowej Rady Geodezyjnej i Kartograficznej i Komisji Standaryzacji Nazw Geograficznych poza Granicami Polski oraz zasad wynagradzania ich członków (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)*, see English translation: http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/files/regulation_KSNG.pdf.

- putting forward foreign-language forms of names of more important geographical objects located on the Polish territory for the international purposes,
- participation in UNGEGN works
- representing Poland on UNGEGN forum
- 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.

The Commission met 15 times in the years 2009-2011, during which it delivered 1102 decisions on geographical names. The Commission's decisions are currently published on website: http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/nazwy_pol.php.

All Commission's publications are listed on website: <http://ksng.gugik.gov.pl/english/wydawnictwa.php>, most of them are available to download in PDF format.