

**Ninth United Nations Conference on the  
Standardization of Geographical Names**

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Item 4 of the provisional agenda\*

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

**Report of Poland 2002-2007**

Submitted by Poland\*\*

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## Report of Poland 2002-2007

### 1. National standardization

#### *Establishing geographical names*

Geographical names within Poland are established in various ways, depending on the type of object described:

- the names of administrative units (voivodships, counties and communes) and their seats being established by Council of Ministers acts and bills
- the names of districts of Warsaw city are established by act
- the names of localities and physiographic objects are established by ordinances of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration, after consultation with the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects
- the names of areas of protected nature are established at central government (names of national parks), voivodship (landscape parks, reserves) and local levels (reserves and other protected areas)
- the names of streets squares, parks etc. are established by commune and city councils

#### *Organizations standardizing geographical names*

Two organizations exist in Poland which deal with standardizing geographical names:

- *Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects affiliated to the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration* establishes names used with Poland's boundaries
- *Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland affiliated at the Surveyor General of Poland* responsible for standardizing Polish geographical names of the world.

The Commission for Establishing Names of Localities nominated in 1948 initially dealt with standardizing geographical names in Poland. In 1948 it was transformed into the Commission for Establishing Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects and in 2003 into the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects. The Commission delivers opinions on applications to establish, amend or eliminate official geographical names, on projects of official lists of geographical names as well as proposes the establishing, amending or eliminating of official names of unpopulated localities and their parts. On receiving the opinion of the Commission, the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration changes the names, such changes being published once yearly 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 1 January. Since 2002 the following ordinances of name changes have been published (addresses of the Internet websites of the appropriate ordinances in the *Journal of Laws of the Republic of Poland*):

- The ordinance of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration of 17 December 2002 on establishing and changing official names of certain localities in Dolnośląskie, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Lubelskie, Lubuskie, Mazowieckie, Opolskie, Podlaskie, Pomorskie, Śląskie, Świętokrzyskie, Warmińsko-Mazurskie, Wielkopolskie and Zachodniopomorskie Voivodships, as well as a physiographical object in Podkarpackie Voivodship [Polish: Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji z dnia 17 grudnia 2002 r. w sprawie ustalenia i zmiany urzędowych nazw niektórych miejscowości w województwach: dolnośląskim, kujawsko-pomorskim, lubelskim, lubuskim, mazowieckim, opolskim, podlaskim, pomorskim, śląskim, świętokrzyskim, warmińsko-mazurskim, wielkopolskim i

zachodniopomorskim oraz obiektu fizjograficznego w województwie podkarpackim] (Journal of Laws No. 233, 2002, item 1964:

<http://isip.sejm.gov.pl/servlet/Search?todo=open&id=WDU20022331964>)

- The ordinance of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration of 24 December 2003 on establishing and changing official names of certain localities [Polish: Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji z dnia 24 grudnia 2003 r. w sprawie ustalenia i zmiany urzędowych nazw niektórych miejscowości] (Journal of Laws No. 229, 2003, item 2288: <http://isip.sejm.gov.pl/servlet/Search?todo=open&id=WDU20032292288>)
- The ordinance of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration of 7 October 2004 on establishing and changing official names of certain localities and a physiographical object [Polish: Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji z dnia 7 października 2004 r. w sprawie ustalenia i zmiany urzędowych nazw niektórych miejscowości oraz obiektu fizjograficznego] (Journal of Laws No. 229, 2004, item 2312: <http://isip.sejm.gov.pl/servlet/Search?todo=open&id=WDU20042292312>)
- The ordinance of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration of 27 December 2005 on establishing, changing and eliminating official names of certain localities and physiographical objects [Polish: Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji z dnia 27 grudnia 2005 r. w sprawie ustalenia, zmiany i znoszenia urzędowych nazw niektórych miejscowości oraz obiektów fizjograficznych] (Journal of Laws No. 264, 2005, item 2208: <http://isip.sejm.gov.pl/servlet/Search?todo=open&id=WDU20052642208>)
- The ordinance of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Administration of 15 December 2006 on establishing, changing and eliminating official names of certain localities and a physiographical object [Polish: Rozporządzenie Ministra Spraw Wewnętrznych i Administracji z dnia 15 grudnia 2006 r. w sprawie ustalenia, zmiany i znoszenia urzędowych nazw niektórych miejscowości oraz obiektu fizjograficznego] (Journal of Laws No. 240, 2006, item 1746: <http://isip.sejm.gov.pl/servlet/Search?todo=open&id=WDU20062401746>)

It was the Commission of Geographical Names appointed in 1951 at the Polish Geographical Society which initially dealt with standardizing Polish geographical names of the world. That commission was moved to the Institute of Polish Geography in the Polish Academy of Sciences in 1953 and renamed the Commission to Establish Geographical Names. The Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names of the World was appointed at the Ministry of Higher Education and Technology in 1973. In 1984 its name was changed to the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside Poland. The Commission operated under the Minister of National Education since 1988 and since 2000 at the Surveyor General of Poland. In 2001 its name was changed once more to Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland. The Commission changed its ministerial affiliation several time in recent years: in 2005 it was shifted to the Ministry of Transport and Construction, in 2006 to the Ministry of Construction and in 2007 to the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Administration.

The Commission mainly deals with establishing the Polish exonyms and the spelling of foreign geographical names used in Poland. The Commission's decisions are currently published on website ([www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/nazwy\\_pol.php](http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/nazwy_pol.php)).

### ***Legislation concerning geographical names***

An “Act on official names of localities and physiographical objects” was approved in 2003, in place of the “Ordinance of the President of the Republic on establishing names of localities and on numbering properties” which came into force in 1934. The following were defined in the new Act:

- objects for which official names are established
- principles and manner of establishing, amending and eliminating official names of localities and their parts and also official names of physiographical objects
- operating principles of the Commission on Names of Localities and Physiographical Objects
- the manner of establishing and publishing lists of official names of localities and their parts and also physiographic objects.

In 2005 an “Act on national and ethnic minorities and on regional languages” was approved. It is the first ever Act in Polish post-war history which comprehensively regulates issues of national, ethnic and linguistic minorities; till recently Polish legislation concerning these matters was fragmented in many legal regulations while some issues had never been codified at all. From the viewpoint of geographic names, two regulations of this Act are of great significance which introduce the possibility of using minority languages in selected areas and also geographic names in those languages.

### ***Multilingual areas***

Consistent with the definitions in the “Act of 6 January 2005 on national and ethnic minorities and on regional languages”, national minorities (Belarusian, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Armenian, Russian, Slovak, Ukrainian and Jewish) and ethnic minorities (Karaim, Lemko, Roma and Tartar) appear in Poland as well as a minority using a regional language (Kashubian). The new Act allows the language of these 14 minorities to be used as a “supporting language” in contacts with commune bodies and also in first instance court procedures. 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 Municipalities where a Supporting Language is Used”. 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. A minority language was introduced in 15 communes by the end of 2006 (the Kashubian language in one, the Lithuanian language in one and the German language in 13 communes).

The Act also establishes that traditional names in a minority language may be used for localities, physiographical objects and streets as “additional names” alongside geographical names established in the Polish language. By the end of 2006 eleven German names had been introduced for localities in one commune in Opolskie Voivodship. Geographical names in a minority language may be used only after the Polish name.

### ***Toponymic guidelines for map editors and other editors***

The first part of the publication “Collecting and elaborating geographical names. A toponymic guide” appeared in 2002 entitled “Collecting names in the field”, in which means of collecting own names of geographical objects in the field were discussed. The second part of this publication entitled “Linguistic elaboration of names” appeared in 2003 in which geographical names was characterized as a part of the Polish language. The third part of this publication entitled “Using and arranging inscriptions on maps” was issued in 2004 and

concerns cartographic aspects of geographical names. This three-part publication appeared only in a Polish version.

## **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 4 to 7 times yearly, delivering its opinions on proposals standardizing Polish geographical names of the world, their amendments or elimination from the list of recommended exonyms. The Commission met 26 times since the 8 Conference in August 2002, at which it delivered 1886 decisions on geographical names. All amendments introduced in Polish exonyms are published on the Commission's website ([www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/nazwy\\_pol.php](http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/nazwy_pol.php)).

Work on issuing a gazetteer of the world's more important geographical objects has been undertaken since 2002, which is also to contain all Polish exonyms. During work on this gazetteer working brochures are issued, with work connected with its publication being planned for 2008.

## **3. Toponymic data files**

The final stage of work on elaborating a State Register of Geographical Names is presently under way, consisting of names verification. Work on it is to conclude at the turn of 2007. Currently the State Register of Geographical Names holds 172,251 names of which 104,445 are names of localities, 15,853 are names of water objects and 51,953 are names of land shaping objects. The names contained in the Register will be published in a national gazetteer both as an Internet georeference database as well as a printed publication. Separate parts of the gazetteer of Poland will appear as the verification process progresses.

Apart from the State Register of Geographical Names, at present being elaborated, the official base for official geographical names, lies in the Head Office of Statistics National Official Register of the Territorial Division of the Country at present being drafted. That latter document contains a regularly updated list of units of the territorial division (4078 names), a specification of names of localities (100,125 names) and a specification of names of streets (218,246 names).

Geographical names bases are being elaborated and are held also by other government and scientific institutions but these are mainly not official collections but have only been created for the short-term purposes of a specific institution.

### ***National gazetteer***

Consistent with the decisions of the "Act of 29 August 2003 on official names of localities and physiographic objects" a list of official names of localities and their parts should appear by the end of 2008 and a list of official names of physiographical objects by the end of 2013. Work is presently under way on collecting standardized forms of names in the State Register of Geographical Names. The outcome to the present of this work is the publication in 2006 of the first volume of a national gazetteer of Poland "Geographical Names of Poland, volume 1. Hydronyms". A total of 15,857 names are mentioned in the list – 8100 names of streams, 136 names of sources (springs), 16 names of waterfalls and 7605 names of standing waters. The list is also accessible on the Internet website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland: [http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/english/ngopv\\_01.php](http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/english/ngopv_01.php).

### ***Other lists***

Since 2002 the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland has been working on the publication of a gazetteer of the world's more important geographical objects entitled: "World geographical names", which is also to contain Polish exonyms. Volumes of the gazetteer are being published as work progresses, conclusion of work connected with its publication planned for 2008. To the moment 9 volumes of the gazetteer have appeared, containing around 50,000 names:

- Volume 1. America, Australia and Oceania (published in 2004)
- Volume 2. Middle East (published in 2004)
- Volume 3. Africa (published in 2004)
- Volume 4. South Asia (published in 2005)
- Volume 5. Central Asia and Transcaucasia (published in 2005)
- Volume 6. Belarus, Russia, Ukraine (published in 2005)
- Volume 7. South-East Asia (published in 2006)
- Volume 8. Antarctica. (published in 2006)
- Volume 9. East Asia (published in 2006)

The Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland, since 2004 has been elaborating a list of historical names from territories which have historically been inside Polish borders but which are presently not parts of the Republic of Poland. Apart from contemporary endonyms the list is to include historical names both in Polish as well as in other languages. Work on this list should be concluded in 2008.

## **4. Toponymic websites**

The commissioning of a georeference Internet database is planned for 2008 on [geoportal.gov.pl](http://geoportal.gov.pl) website. Toponymic data can presently be found on the Internet website of the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland ([www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/](http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/)). Data in this website are regularly updated in the following lists:

- changes in Polish names of the world: [www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/nazwy\\_pol.php](http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/nazwy_pol.php), only in Polish
- National Gazetteer of Poland, Volume 1. Hydronyms: [www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/english/ngopv\\_01.php](http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/english/ngopv_01.php)
- list of names of voivodships, counties and their seats: [http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/english/mapa\\_adm.php](http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/english/mapa_adm.php)
- list of communes (third stage administrative units) and their seats: [http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/pliki/podzial\\_administracyjny\\_gminy\\_2007.pdf](http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/pliki/podzial_administracyjny_gminy_2007.pdf), only in Polish
- list of changes in the administrative division of Poland: [http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/mapa\\_adm.php](http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/mapa_adm.php), only in Polish
- list of names in minority languages in Poland: <http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/nwjmwpl.php>, only in Polish
- list of country names: <http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/english/wykaz.php>

A list of names of administrative units, localities and streets arranged in the administrative division contained in the National Official Register of the Territorial Division of the Country is available on the website of the Head Office of Statistics (the list is available only in Polish: <http://www.stat.gov.pl/broker/access/definitionTree.jspa>).

## **5. Terminology in the standardization of geographical names**

In 2006 the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland approved its own definition of the Polish exonym “EXONYM – name presently used in Poland in Polish language for geographical feature situated outside its territory and different in graphical form from standardized endonym of this feature”. Approval of this new definition stemmed from the fact that both the presently valid definition of an exonym published in the “Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names” as well as the proposals of a new definition presented by the Working Group on Exonyms and the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology are rather ambiguous and make it impossible in many cases to state whether a name is an exonym or not.

## **6. Features beyond a single sovereignty**

In the national gazetteer of Poland at present being elaborated, objects which are partly situated within the borders of Poland and partly outside have been given only Polish names. The elaboration of a list containing both Polish endonyms as well as endonyms used in countries neighboring on Poland is not planned for such objects. For objects situated only partly in Poland the Polish endonym is given on Polish topographical maps, while the endonym used abroad is given only if there is sufficient space (and the endonym itself is known, which is not always the case for small geographical objects).

## **7. Writing system**

Since 2002, during work on elaborating a gazetteer of more important geographical objects of the world, the Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland approved the principle of Romanization for 41 languages not using the Roman alphabet. In most cases these are UNGEGN or ISO recommended principles. Only in a few cases has the Commission introduced its own modifications to UNGEGN or ISO recommended systems (e.g. for the Urdu, Persian and Tajik languages). Traditional Polish transcriptions are used for 31 languages. The list of approved systems of Romanization has been given in the list “Names of countries, their capitals and inhabitants” while the Romanization tables for the separate languages have been placed alongside the lists for individual countries contained in the working volumes of the gazetteer of more important geographical objects of the world.

## **8. International cooperation**

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

- 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> UNGEGN Sessions
- meetings of the East Central and South-East Europe Division
- meeting of the Baltic Division
- meetings of the Eastern Europe, Northern and Central Asia Division
- meetings of the Working Group on Country Names
- meetings of the Working Group on Toponymic Terminology
- meetings of the Working Group on Romanization Systems
- meetings of the Working Group on Exonyms

- meeting of the Working Group on Promotion of Indigenous and Minority Group Names

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

- 4, 5 and 6 meetings of the Working Group for Geographical Names of the International Council for Geodesy, Cartography, Cadastre and Remote Sensing of Commonwealth of Independent States Member Countries (2004, 2005, 2006)
- the International Conference on Minority Names/Indigenous Names and Multilingual Areas (2005)

## 9. Country names

The Commission on Standardization of Geographical Names Outside the Republic of Poland in 2003 published the second edition of “Names of countries their capitals and inhabitants” in which the names of independent countries, non-self-governing, dependent and selected autonomous territories are taken into account. The names of the capitals of these countries and territories, the names of the inhabitants of countries, territories and their capitals as well as the adjective forms of the names of countries, territories and their capitals are also given. The names of countries, territories and their capitals are also given both in their Polish-language version (should such a version exist) and also in the local version (in all official languages). Endonyms written in original non-Roman alphabetic systems have been given exclusively in the Romanized version. That list was presented to the 22<sup>nd</sup> meeting of UNGEGN, each participant of the meeting being given a copy.

In 2006 the Commission published a “Country names” list containing only the names of independent countries – the Polish names and names in all official languages of those countries. The list was presented to the 23<sup>rd</sup> meeting of UNGEGN, each participant being given a copy.

In mid-2007 the Commission published the third updated issue of the “Names of countries, their capitals and inhabitants” list which contains similar information to that in the second issue of 2003. This list names 193 independent countries, 72 non-self-governing territories and territories of undetermined or disputed status as well as 34 autonomous territories. The list presents all accessible information of names in the official languages of the countries and territories, taking into consideration names of countries and territories as well as their capitals in those languages. As a result the list holds names in 123 official languages, 41 languages are given in official non-Roman alphabets. A Polish-English dictionary of country names is enclosed to the list.

All lists are accessible on the Commission’s website:

[www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/english/wykaz.php](http://www.gugik.gov.pl/komisja/english/wykaz.php).